

Branding Brazil Through Cultural Policy: Rio de Janeiro as a Creative, Audiovisual City

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This article examines trends in Brazilian cultural policies from 2003 to 2014, programs specific to the audiovisual sector, and efforts to make Rio de Janeiro a creative, audiovisual city. I argue that cultural policies have functioned as a way to brand Brazil for domestic and international audiences. First, I outline how cultural policies were informed by premises of the creative economy, and I consider how these ideas impacted the audiovisual sector, emphasizing the film industry. Then I focus specifically on the film industry in Rio de Janeiro. Cultural policies specific to the audiovisual sector have sought to make Rio de Janeiro a key site for the new creative economy and a site for global consumption.

Keywords: Brazilian cultural policy, Brazilian film industry, creative economy, nation branding, Rio as creative city

In recent years, scholars have taken up the concept of branding as a way to understand better how emerging societies assert renewed cultural identities domestically and redefine roles in the international sphere. New theoretical approaches to branding allow for a multifaceted understanding of the intersection of art, society, politics, and economics. Thus, branding should not be examined as the development of strategies, their implementation, and then assessment of the degree to which an agenda was successful. To do so may offer useful information, but such analyses paint incomplete portraits. Rather, contemporary theoretical discussion of branding demands a multidimensional approach. This is particularly important when considering nation branding, which must be seen as more than a unidirectional (i.e., external or internal) signifying process and demands examining overlapping processes. For instance, what new profitable narratives about a nation are being cultivated, and how? How are individuals and groups encouraged to engage with these new narratives and values? How are local and global economics and politics intersecting in ways that inform the development of new ideas about places and people? Finally, what are the contradictory influences and consequences in a broader process of seeking economic and sociopolitical profit?

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Branding is a discursive process that uses certain strategies to communicate. This article takes cultural policy in Brazil as one of its communicative “tools.” For BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), it is certainly important to consider the cultivation of a new image or global presence—especially through international mega-events—but it is imperative to examine less obvious dimensions of nation branding. Thus, I offer a critical interpretation of contemporary cultural policy as engaging in a complex process of nation branding. I map the key tendencies of contemporary cultural policy and their relationship to the audiovisual sector. As it is outside the scope of a single article to discuss all audiovisual sectors, I focus on the film industry and, more specifically, efforts to make Rio de Janeiro a creative “film capitol” of Latin America. Film in Brazil is a particularly important creative industry to examine as the film sector reemerged in the 1990s after the neoliberal dismantling of the industry. Starting around 2002, film production increased and new laws and funding policies were developed. This occurred at a particular socioeconomic juncture when Brazil was also becoming a much-heralded emerging nation. In short, the film sector shows evidence of becoming a product and participant in a neoliberal context of nation branding.

The fundamental purpose of cultural and public policies is to organize and develop (or give shape to) social life in geopolitical units (towns, cities, nations). Cultural policies can offer practical as well as discursive interventions, meaning that they set the tone for cultural production as much as provide structures upon which creative efforts can be built. Branding is also a discursive process that involves fictionalization, mythmaking, and creating profitable affective associations with a product, place, or people. In recent years, the concept of branding has evolved beyond the corporate world and its meaning as an image or reputation to include other aspects of the marketization and commodification of everyday life, as a strategy for international diplomacy, and as a form of sociopolitical expression and organization (Aronczyk, 2013; Aronczyk & Powers, 2010; Arvidsson, 2006; Lury, 2004).

Nation branding involves the mediation of a geopolitical space and can best be defined as a contingent, relational phenomenon that communicates new notions of national and cultural identity in the current context of economic globalization. Notably, place branding involves the development of new geographical imaginaries (Pike, 2011), and it has become particularly important as a driver of economic and political development for countries in transition (Anholt, 2005, 2007; Szondi, 2007). A nation’s brand image is an amalgam of perceptions and associations with a given country that impacts socioeconomic investment—from direct economic flows to having a voice in international forums. A central claim of place and nation branding is that if perceptions about a place can change, then a given location can change its role in a broader economy. Fundamentally, branding involves strategies that are at once promotional (i.e., want to “sell” something) and that intervene in value systems. These promotional strategies seek a socioeconomic profit or advantage.

Like narratives, cultural policies are open to ideological critique. Thus, a central claim in my assessment is that shifting understandings of Brazil (locally and globally) have informed contemporary cultural policy in Brazil—in general terms and as specifically related to the film industry. Succinctly stated, local and international actors have played a role in constructing new ideas about Brazil, which have informed cultural policies since approximately 2003. In turn, cultural policies have sought to intervene in symbolic and economic processes by motivating new values (linked to Brazil as a place and its people) and

stimulating participation in the cultivation of new markets. In the first section, I outline how cultural policies adopted premises of the creative economy, and I examine how these ideas impacted the audiovisual sector. In the second section, I focus on the audiovisual sector in Rio de Janeiro. My discussion shows that cultural policies specific to the audiovisual sector have been intended to make Rio de Janeiro a key site for a new creative economy and for global consumption.

Cultural Policy and the Creative Economy: Local and Global Actors

The day after Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (or Lula) took office as the president of Brazil in January 2003, Gilberto Gil assumed the head of the Ministry of Culture. In his acceptance speech, the acclaimed and politically committed singer and songwriter asserted that the nation had expressed popular support at the polls for an essential and strategic change. While celebrating foundational ideas about Brazil as a nation (its racial, ethnic, and geographic diversity; its syncretism; the people's inherently peaceful nature and creativity), Gil (2003) called for a cultural opening. This would be achieved by the Ministry of Culture fostering a broader definition of culture that crossed class lines (i.e., breaking down divisions between "high" and "low" cultural manifestations) and by stimulating access to cultural production as a matter of citizenship rights. Gil rejected the notion that the administration was invested in making culture. Conversely, the state was deeply committed to cultural production as a vehicle for national construction and integration.

The state intended to act through cultural policy and cultural institutions. Indeed, Gil clearly announced that cultural policy would be seen as part of a general project of "constructing a new hegemony" to establish "a truly democratic, plural and tolerant Brazil" (2003, para. 10).¹ This comprehension of cultural production and cultural policy would join a new configuration of actions working in tandem with other ministries (of Tourism, Education, Environment, Work, Sports, and National Integration) with the larger purpose of, not only achieving greater sociopolitical inclusion, but, notably, seeking a new role for Brazil in the world. However, a judicious balance between social and economic development is not easily achieved. Tereza Ventura asserts that Brazilian cultural policy since 2003 has walked a fine line between a neoliberal economic logic that seeks social integration by way of the market and a neosocialist logic of distribution and expansion (Ventura, 2014).

The Lula administration's approach to culture heralded a new era for Brazil in which cultural policies would be retooled to intervene in the shape of national and cultural identity as well as to develop a new model of development. That is, cultural policy would be a strategic tool to seek multiple profits: social, economic, and political. Cultural production was central to creating a cultural democracy and overcoming social exclusion, and it was defined as a way to generate employment and attract investment in the country. In the words of Lula, his administration saw culture "in all its dimensions, from the symbolic to the economic" (Ramos & Brazil 2006, p. 5), and his administration began a period of culture-led regeneration.

¹ All translations are by the author.

During the first Lula administration (2003–2006), one finds concerted efforts to reformulate cultural production and overcome social, economic, and cultural divides. The state defined itself as the guarantor of citizenship rights and took on a more significant role in supporting cultural production, promising greater access, and promoting increased social participation to reflect the nation's diversity. The Ministry of Culture launched a series of initiatives to expand access to culture; examples include the programs *Cultura Viva* (2004) and *Mais Cultura* (2007) and the more recent *Vale Cultura* (2012) and *Cinema Perto de Você* (2012).

A second phase can be identified around 2006, when one finds an economic turn to cultural policies and orientation that continued to the end of the first Rousseff administration (2011–2014). Brazilian scholars characterize the shift in cultural policy during the first Lula administration as a watershed, democratic moment (Calabre, 2013; Rubim, 2010) but critique the more recent embrace of economic-driven policies as a "backward march" (Silveira et al., 2013). Whereas the first Lula administration prioritized a diversity agenda, the second administration took steps toward further positioning cultural production as part of a creative economy. In 2006 the Ministry of Culture published the "Cultural Plan for the Development of Brazil," which stated that cultural and economic development are interrelated and that public policies should simultaneously aim for the general cultural development of Brazilian society, contribute to social inclusion, generate income and employment, and affirm Brazil's unique position in the world (Ramos & Brazil, 2006, p. 13). That is, cultural production was invested with a strategic social, political, and economic role to construct a more just society and affirm Brazil's sovereign place in the world. Thus, cultural production became a space for realizing four aspects of citizenship—cultural, political, class (or economic), and global. Notably, the 2006 Cultural Plan defined the audiovisual sector as a strategic area for cultural policy and as a broad field that included filmmaking, television, and new digital technologies. Audiovisual production was defined as a vehicle to enact change domestically, and it was cast as having an external reach to reposition Brazil internationally.

The Lula administration's adoption of principles of the creative economy can be understood within an international framework. First, a number of scholars debated the idea of the creative economy, creative industries, and the creative class, defining them as integral to the current global economy (Florida, 2002; Howkins, 2001). Several nations adopted the premises of a creative economy to jumpstart their postindustrial economies (e.g., the United Kingdom, Australia). Creative cities have been cited as the nodal points of global flows of a creative economy (Flew, 2012), and their creative industries are central to urban development (Flew, 2013). Adding to these discourses and international examples, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) promoted the notion of the creative economy among emerging nations. At the Tenth UNCTAD held in Bangkok, the audiovisual sector and related culture industries were identified as prime areas for developing countries to improve their trade in services (UNCTAD, 2000, p. 43). In 2002, the UNCTAD convened an expert meeting on improving the participation of developing countries in audiovisual services. The Summary Report of the Expert Meeting frames audiovisual production as a "nation-building instrument" and "a pillar of the new economy" (UNCTAD, 2002, p. 2). Documents published on the eve of the 2004 UNCTAD meeting held in São Paulo assert that creative industries can "open up new opportunities for developing countries to increase their shares of world trade and to 'leap-frog' into new areas of wealth creation" (UNCTAD, 2004, p. 3). Finally, the international zeitgeist also helps explain the adoption of principles of creative economy. Around 2004,

predictions seemed to be coming true that Brazil was a significant emerging (or BRICS) nation, as predicted years earlier. It is at this time that the growth rate of Brazil's gross domestic product (GDP) began to surpass the United States and slightly outpace global averages. A need for greater socioeconomic integration at home was met with an increasing international interest, which took on desperate tones during the economic crisis of 2007–2008.

The creative economy was embraced as one way to restructure society at home and reposition Brazil on the global stage. Principles of the creative economy were integrated into the 2010 National Plan for Culture (Plano Nacional de Cultura). In 2011, the Ministry of Culture published the Plan of the Secretariat of the Creative Economy: Policies, Guidelines and Actions, 2011–2014. Ana de Hollanda, as minister of culture (2011–2012), called for a Secretariat of the Creative Economy to develop a national plan, called *Brasil Criativo* (Creative Brazil), that would capitalize on Brazil's international reputation as a creative nation and simultaneously craft a new mode of development (Brazil, 2011). In 2012, a federal Secretariat of the Creative Economy was officially established and charged with developing policies to realize the strategic potential of the creative sector. Regarding the turn to the creative economy in Brazil, Ana Carla Fonseca Reis offers two explanations. First, the creative economy was to have a role in promoting the image of Brazil (Reis, 2008, p. 17). Second, the failures of the traditional economic system, which has not promoted development and inclusion, prompted the search for a new economic model as architect of new social and economic relations (Reis, 2008, p. 130).

Thus, culture-led regeneration in Brazil involves three interconnected processes on two stages—local and global. Cultural policies were formulated to make cultural production part of the creative economy. In turn, a creative economy lends support to a neoliberal economy of branding. Cultural policies became strategic interventions to achieve broader sociopolitical integration and communicate as well as celebrate new notions of cultural identity. This would make cultural policies seem simply a tool for contemporary nation building. Yet, from the perspective of nation branding, cultural policies in Brazil at this time sought this goal en route to broader, profitable, symbolic reformulations of the nation, cultural production, and cultural identity. Brazil and Brazilianness became flexible commodities for local and global consumption during a fervent period of redefining Brazil as an emerging nation.

Scholars of the creative economy and creative industries note overlaps between place and nation branding. O'Connor and Gu see creative industries as part of the knowledge economy that are also geographically rooted and exemplify local histories and cultures (O'Connor & Gu, 2013, p. 43). These authors argue that creative industries policy should be seen as a sort of urban policy. They emphasize how creative industries contribute to developing new symbolic values tied to places and participate in the generation of new narratives about urban spaces. What is more, they contend that creative industries benefit from, and contribute to, the image of a city (O'Connor & Gu, 2013, p. 52). In other words, creative industries contribute to place branding.

As discussed later in the context of Rio de Janeiro, a creative economy reconfigures the social, political, and economic function of cultural production, and it also impacts the development of targeted creative industries. In turn, creative industries reconfigure geographic spaces and cultural identity. As part of this new development model, creative cities and creative territories become the locus of new cultural

productions, with urban spaces themselves becoming enmeshed in the process of becoming new cultural constructions. In a context of culture-led regeneration, one finds an opportune moment for the symbolic reconstruction of the city that fits local and international paradigms. Formerly disconnected areas come into alignment and peripheral locations are reconfigured, not just as threats against an economic system, but as productive spaces of exchange. Spatial transformations thus surpass physical dimensions and take on symbolic functions.

New Paradigms for the Audiovisual Sector

The audiovisual sector is identified as a significant contributor to the creative economy. To fulfill this new role, the sector experienced two expansions: conceptual and financial. It is outside the scope of this article to review all areas of audiovisual production, and the following discussion emphasizes film as the industry was coming into being in a particular socioeconomic climate. After the Collor administration (1990–1992) abolished state funding for the arts and closed the state film agency (Embrafilme), new laws were passed and filmmaking in Brazil reemerged. Regarding this period, referred to as the *retomada*, or renaissance, of Brazilian cinema from about 1995 to 2002, scholars note that filmmaking became increasingly market oriented (Meleiro, 2010; Rêgo, 2011). Dennison and Shaw observed an “international flavor” as a trend among *retomada* films (2004, pp. 204–205), suggesting a possible new geopolitical project on the horizon. The state renewed its investment in filmmaking in 2001 when the federal film agency Agência Nacional de Cinema (ANCINE) was created. Under the influence of cultural policies informed by principles of creative economy, filmmaking in Brazil underwent a process of rebranding in which its social, economic, and cultural roles were redefined.

One expansion concerns a convergence. First, the audiovisual sector was defined as being multifaceted. Film became one of several forms of audiovisual practice seen in transmedial perspective, responding to changes in technology and reflecting broader shifts in the understanding of culture. This expanded transmedial view of the audiovisual sector coincides with the promotion of creative industries within a creative economy and primes audiovisual production for providing more opportunities for civic integration. As head of the Secretariat of Audiovisual (SAV) sector, Ana Paula Dorado Santana called for an expansion of audiovisual activities in 2012 and declared that one of the goals of the SAV is to transform the audiovisual sector into “a major factor contributing to the fulfillment of the main goals of the Federal Government” (Secretaria do Audiovisual, 2012, p. 66). She further affirmed that policies concerning the audiovisual sector must be aligned with the government’s programs Brazil Without Poverty (Brasil Sem Miséria) and Bigger Brazil (Brasil Maior) in order to effectively “include production, income generation and the due recognition of audiovisual concerns as part of strategic state policy for economic, social and cultural development within these goals” (Secretaria do Audiovisual, 2012, p. 66).

A second expansion concerns new funding schemes that allow for some diversification of expression but mostly focus on creating commercially viable products. Broadly speaking, a modest fiscal incentive period has been followed by consistent steps to provide economic support to make filmmaking part of a creative economy. During this transition one finds a focus on producing commercially successful films and capturing a greater share of the internal market. ANCINE reported a “constant and significant” increase from 2002 to 2006 in funding for audiovisual production (2006, p. 70). However, the more

significant trend is the emphasis on the production of more economically successful works. For instance, the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES) conducted an analysis of the audiovisual sector in 2005 and subsequently changed the selection criteria of those projects in which it invested. Projects had to show commercial potential, and the production company had to provide a clear business plan and a consistent business strategy (Gorulho, 2012).

There have been efforts to distribute funding based on social or artistic factors. The period from 2003 to 2009 is notable for the diversification of funding mechanisms, most notably in the form of *editais* (public competitions for grants), which were instituted to foster partnerships between civil society and the state. While various incentive laws constitute an indirect means of supporting production, ANCINE has directly supported production through *editais* and prizes awarded for artistic merit or market success (ANCINE, 2006, p. 44). The *editais* have allowed for some more equitable access to funding, but an Additional Prize for Revenue (Prêmio Adicional de Renda) and an ANCINE Incentive Prize for Brazilian Cinema Quality (Prêmio ANCINE de Incentivo à Qualidade do Cinema Brasileiro) are intended to stimulate productions deemed competitive in the market or successful at festivals (ANCINE, 2006, p. 55).

Rio de Janeiro as a Creative, Audiovisual City

Cities and their urban territories are seen as playing key roles in the creative economy. Rio de Janeiro has long been a center of audiovisual production and, more generally, a cultural center for Brazil given the historic concentration of government agencies and financial investment in cultural activities in the city and state. Despite being one city in a nation of continental proportions, Rio de Janeiro often serves as metonym for all of Brazil. Yet Rio de Janeiro has been at the center of efforts to develop a creative economy in Brazil, in which the audiovisual sector has been defined as a key creative industry. Drawing on the case of Rio de Janeiro and efforts to make it a creative, audiovisual city allows for exploring salient themes in cultural policy: diversifying expression, stimulating the internal market through exhibition and production, and making efforts to seek external projection. Also, the audiovisual sector has joined other initiatives of urban redevelopment.

In recent years, the federal government as well as local and international institutions and agencies have collaborated to define Rio de Janeiro as a creative city and international cultural hub. They also help define the city as spectacle. In 2012, UNESCO declared the entire city of Rio de Janeiro a World Heritage site, a decision that made the city one of the first in the world to be honored in this way. A series of mega-events (e.g., the United Nations Rio+20 of 2012, World Catholic Youth Day of 2013, the FIFA World Cup of 2014, Summer Olympics of 2016) originally orchestrated during the Lula administrations have stimulated significant (and controversial) urban development projects but have also cultivated Rio de Janeiro as a focal point for international attention.

Rio de Janeiro began efforts to define itself as a creative city in 2000 with the inauguration of the Superintendency of the Cultural Economy. More recently, support of Rio as a creative city has also come from two key regional institutions. The first is Rio Criativo (Creative Rio), an incubator for the creative economy in the state of Rio de Janeiro that was established by the State Secretariat of Culture with support from the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro. Rio Criativo is not only the first incubator

of the creative economies in Brazil, but the UNCTAD has cited it as one of the most relevant examples in the world in fostering the creative economies. The success of Rio Criativo has served as an example for the development of a national network of creative economy incubators as part of the Brasil Criativo program. Another institution is the regional economic entity the Federation of Industries of the State of Rio de Janeiro (Federação das Indústrias do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, or FIRJAN). According to a study conducted by FIRJAN in 2008—the first of its kind in the nation to map out the creative sector—the creative industries represent approximately 18% of all economic activity of Rio de Janeiro and audiovisual is a top sector (FIRJAN, 2008, pp. 4, 15).

Defining Rio de Janeiro as a creative city in terms of audiovisual production and making Rio de Janeiro more consumable in audiovisual works have been the goals of two key agencies, RioFilme and FilmeRio (The Rio Film Commission). In short, the audiovisual industry in Rio de Janeiro has set on its agenda to rebrand Rio de Janeiro as a creative city and an appealing regional and global audiovisual hub. This effort to redefine cities as creative audiovisual centers is echoed in other cities of other emerging nations such as Shanghai and Beijing in China.

Over the course of its existence, RioFilme has transitioned from being a more limited, regional distributor to becoming a key player in the nation's audiovisual sector. In 1992, the city of Rio de Janeiro founded RioFilme, which operated at the time as a regional distributor of films during the gradual rebirth (*retomada*) of Brazilian cinema in the 1990s. During the cultural transition period inaugurated by the Lula administration, RioFilme developed a number of programs that were consistent with federal cultural policies informed by ideas of the creative economy and that intended to create a stronger cultural democracy and democratize access to culture.

Stimulating the Internal Market—Exhibition

As it renewed its dialogue with the film industry in Brazil, ANCINE declared that distribution and exhibition were vital to the expansion and sustainability of the Brazilian audiovisual sector. In 2013, ANCINE published its future goals, which emphasized inclusion and development (2013, pp. 9, 15–27). The federal agencies ANCINE and the Secretariat of Audiovisual (SAv) have worked in tandem to support film as an important sector in the creative economy by increasing access and supporting the expansion of the market base (i.e., assisting in the construction of hundreds of new cinemas throughout Brazil). A series of programs has sought to change the geography of cinema and democratized access to Brazilian productions.² Two notable initiatives include the Programadora Brasil (Brazil Programmer), which distributes Brazilian works to alternative venues throughout the nation, and the Cine Mais Cultura (More Culture-Cinema) program, which provides projection equipment, Brazilian content, and training to cineclubs to screen Brazilian films throughout the nation. What results is a vast network of alternative exhibition spaces especially in the periphery of urban centers as well as in the rural interior of the country. These venues provide low-cost or free admission to view Brazilian works. The program is an example of the democratization of access to culture and, according to the SAv, the Cine Mais Cultura network is

² These include Cine Mais Cultura, Cinema Perto de Você, and the Cinema da Cidade programs. Additional information is available through the Brazilian Ministry of Culture website at www.minc.gov.br.

poised to be the world's largest noncommercial exhibition circuit (Secretaria do Audiovisual, 2010, pp. 27–28). It also helps stimulate demand for national productions, thereby strengthening the internal market.

In the city of Rio de Janeiro, an example of such an alternative exhibition venue is the CineCarioca initiative sponsored by RioFilme. The program consists of building low-cost cinemas in suburban areas of Rio de Janeiro. To date there are two theaters in the network, with plans to develop an additional 10. In 2010, RioFilme inaugurated the first 3-D theater located in a favela, the CineCarioca Nova Brasília in middle of the Complexo do Alemão favela, a former bastion for Rio's drug traffickers. In 2012, the CineCarioca Méier was inaugurated in a poor area of the city and located at the site of the former Cine Imperator, a movie theater from the 1950s that used to screen *chanchadas* by the company Atlântida Cinematográfica. The Cine Imperator had been the largest cinema in all of Latin America, with 2,400 seats, but it closed in 1986 due to falling ticket sales. The investment in these cinemas is consonant with broader national policies to democratize access to cultural production and, it is believed, overcome ingrained inequalities. Theaters show primarily blockbuster Brazilian and foreign films and ticket prices are kept low (at approximately \$2) to ensure affordability and access. The CineCarioca venues certainly democratize access to culture and stimulate new urban experiences, but they also promote an aspirational middle-class lifestyle and cultivate an interest in going to the cinema.

In addition to stimulating the habit of going to the movies, these neighborhood cinemas play a role in restructuring urban spaces, making them more just and dynamic locations. If cinema was born in the streets of urban metropolises, then its resurrection in suburban locations can potentially rejuvenate them. Indeed, there are a number of historical precedents in Brazil for using cinema exhibition as a vehicle for modernization in the early decades of the twentieth century (Conde, 2012; Navitski, 2013). In the past, the renovation and construction of new exhibition venues led to material urban transformations both in terms of new buildings and public plazas and in terms of social and economic development. Just as having people occupying public spaces stimulates greater social interaction, businesses near cinemas benefit from increased customer traffic. The CineCarioca theaters have certainly had an impact on the local urban environment, and they join a broader effort to develop the creative economy in Rio's favelas. Next to the Nova Brasília cinema, a Praça do Conhecimento (Knowledge Park) was built, where local residents can get training in audio, visual, and digital skills.

Diversifying Expression

A central premise of the creative economy is that creative industries generate employment and wealth. For the Brazilian government, broad participation in cultural production celebrates the nation's diversity and aims to realize greater socioeconomic inclusion. Both São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro have been centers of audiovisual production for decades, but there have been efforts to expand production outside both cities. A push to geographically diversify audiovisual production has received federal support in recent years. In 2004, the SAV initiated the program Revealing Brazils (Revelando os Brasis), which provides audiovisual training workshops to members of small- and medium-sized communities with the intent to mobilize communities around the production of videos and incorporate new points of view on Brazil's cultural diversity. In 2014, the federal government announced the ambitious program Brazil All Screens (Brasil Todas as Telas). The program consists of four lines of action: to expand the exhibition

sector, further training and education programs as well as stimulate the development and distribution of Brazilian audiovisual content. The program specifically targets cinema and television production with the goal of developing regional production centers throughout the nation. If developed, regional production centers may allow for greater diversity of cultural expression in audiovisual productions, which subsequently play a part in symbolic reformulations of Brazilian cultural identity. These diverse reflections will become part of a larger economic process in which what is unique and different are desired, intangible qualities at home and give "added value" to works exported abroad. As if by alchemy, cultural diversity becomes Brazil's (inter)national currency.

These federal programs to diversify film and media production follow on the heels of several preexisting efforts that had developed in civil society in Rio de Janeiro. The 2002 film *City of God* is a watershed work, not only in the sense that it closes the *retomada* period, but also because it functions as a departure point for thinking about the diversification of access to cinematic production and efforts to use audiovisual production as a path to greater social and cultural inclusion. Directors Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund collaborated with the urban cultural organization Nós do Morro (literally, "We from the Hillside"), a community-based theater company and school founded in 1986 and located in the Vidigal favela of Rio de Janeiro. Numerous actors from the organization took on roles in *City of God*. Youth from Vidigal, who had participated in the workshops offered by the directors in 2000 as part of the casting process, wanted to continue their work in audiovisual production. Subsequently, the group Nós do Cinema (literally, "We of the Cinema") was established in 2002 and a Popular Cinema School focused its efforts on youth with the objectives to produce films treating topics with aesthetics familiar to lower-income groups and insert youth into the film labor market. In 2006, the organization changed its name to Cinema Nosso (Our Cinema), relocated to the center of Rio, and gained support from the federal government. Cinema Nosso has become one of the largest popular film schools in Latin America, and films produced by its students have been shown in hundreds of national and international festivals. Cinema Nosso is joined by many similar efforts to democratize audiovisual production with a focus on youth and young adults from low-income backgrounds.³ These programs allow a diverse population to gain skills in audiovisual production, enter the creative economy, and contribute to the symbolic and economic reformulation of suburban locations. Such is the case of *5x favela—Now by Ourselves* (2010) and *5x Pacification* (2012), both multidirector works by filmmakers from the favelas of the North Zone of Rio that critique narratives associated with favelas as violent zones and affirm them as complex, creative urban spaces.

Stimulating Production

In 2009, efforts significantly increased to sell and shape the audiovisual and urban landscape in Rio de Janeiro. In broader context, 2009 also marks the culmination of an extended bidding process to secure Rio as the site for the 2016 Olympics and a moment when emerging nations took center stage as profitable territories after the global economic crisis of 2007–2008. It is at this time that RioFilme was reorganized and took on a more proactive role in the funding of cinema and television production as well

³ Other organizations include the Escola Popular de Comunicação Crítica (ESPOCC); Central Única das Favelas (CUFA), dedicated primarily to black youth; Centro de Criação de Imagem Popular (CECIP); ArtCult; Tá na Rua; Opção Brasil; Casa de Cultura Tainã; Rede Mocambos; and the Instituto Educarte.

as collaborating with other local agencies to actively promote and market Rio-based audiovisual productions. RioFilme began to shed its reputation as a minor agency and become a key investor in cinema, television, and new media. For instance, in 2014 RioFilme signed an unprecedented contract with YouTube to develop digital media content; at least 30% of the YouTube-RioFilme projects will come from audiovisual initiatives developed in Pontos de Cultura (A. Muselet, personal communication, May 15, 2014). In this way, RioFilme has taken the lead in opening new venues for Brazilian content and developing future audiovisual practices. More generally, RioFilme has become the second largest investor in filmmaking in the nation (after federal funding) and has helped fund some of the highest-grossing Brazilian productions.

To gain this foothold in supporting audiovisual production, RioFilme has created two lines of funding for cinema and television: refundable and nonrefundable. The refundable line of investment is also "automatic," meaning that proposed projects are not judged by subjective measures such as the script or a synopsis. Rather, projects by Rio-based producers and national distributors are selected based on their commercial and economic potential based on the number of tickets sold for previous productions (RioFilme, 2014, pp. 15–17). This line of investment is considered refundable because RioFilme retains a portion of the profits to reinvest in future productions.

In essence, RioFilme is investing in blockbusters as a way to generate steady income to invest in future blockbusters and, in theory, support its nonrefundable line of investment in less commercial works. Film and media studies scholar Courtney Brannon Donoghue notes that local blockbusters have become a trend, not just in Brazil, but also among emerging media industries outside the Anglophone market (2014, p. 537). However, Donoghue underscores that Brazilian filmmakers do not simply replicate Hollywood but rather adapt strategic elements "to reimagine the scale and commercial nature of a national cinema within global terms" (2014, p. 538). For instance, RioFilme has invested in a good number of culturally specific comedies, which have been some of the highest grossing films in recent years. In 2013, RioFilme invested in 19 films, of which eight (42%) were comedies (RioFilme, 2014).

Meanwhile, the second line is the nonrefundable fund for projects of great artistic value but with less probability of significant box-office success. These projects go through a process of selection by industry experts. According to RioFilme's former commercial director Adrién Muselet, RioFilme's budget has jumped from a meager R\$1.1 million in 2008 to R\$50 million in 2012; consequently, RioFilme invested in only 22 projects in 2008 but 124 projects in 2013 (A. Muselet, personal communication, May 15, 2014).

Having reestablished itself in the local and national arenas, RioFilme aims to make Rio de Janeiro a Latin American center for cinema, television, and new media production (RioFilme 2014). Indeed, film trailers advertise RioFilme's role in making the city a site for local and global film production (see Figures 1 and 2). A RioFilme promotional flyer further underscores Rio as a filmmaking mecca. The similarity to the Hollywood sign clinging to the hills outside Los Angeles helps to promote Rio as a powerful international center of production that aims to capture more share of a market that has been previously dominated by foreign productions (see Figure 3). Whether or not Brazilian production reiterates Hollywood

blockbuster models, there remains a complicated relationship with Hollywood as an influence chronically looming over the audiovisual space and serving as a cultural point of reference. RioFilme's recent slogans demonstrate the intent to take a more self-defining role and insert Rio into the local and global audiovisual market.



Figure 1. Rio as a regional site of filmmaking.



Figure 2. Rio as an international site of filmmaking.

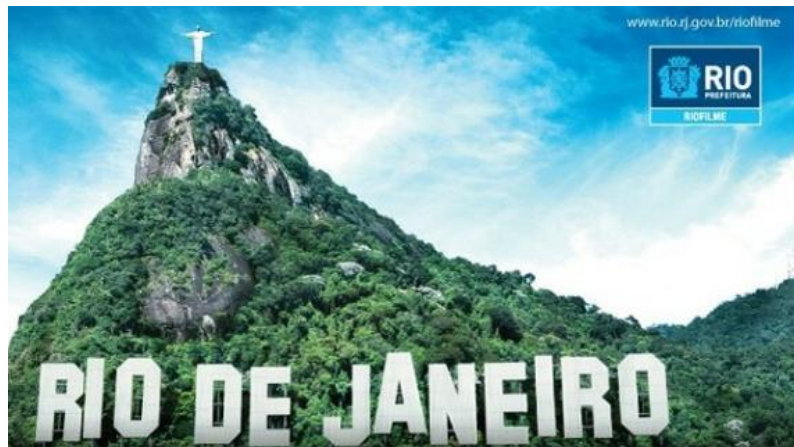


Figure 3. Promoting Rio as a film mecca.

Seeking External Projection

The year 2009 also marks the time when the agency FilmeRio–The Rio Film Commission was established. The Rio Film Commission is charged primarily with drawing foreign productions to Rio de Janeiro and assisting production crews when on location in the state or city of Rio de Janeiro. Representatives of the Rio Film Commission attend film festivals and international content markets such as Cannes and Berlin. Steve Solot, the president of the Rio Film Commission and former vice-president of the Latin American operations of the Motion Picture Association, has outlined in various essays the prime opportunities that the audiovisual sector in Rio de Janeiro can take advantage of given the increased attention and interest in the region that results from the series of international mega-events. That is, unique opportunities exist to develop the creative economy to promote the image of Rio and Brazil more generally.

Unlike other film commissions in Brazil that have formed recently, the Rio Film Commission offers some modest production subsidies to foreign film productions. For instance, in 2012 it offered nearly \$1 million US to productions based on their marketability and their promotion of Rio de Janeiro. Despite the clear uptick in interest on the part of foreign production crews and producers, film commissions in Brazil need greater structure and organization to meet external demands. Solot has advocated for ensuring that trained professionals be employed at Brazil's film commissions and called repeatedly for creating financial incentives to attract productions, which generate significant revenue for local businesses. Solot notes an overall strengthening of film commissions in other regions of Latin America (e.g., Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Chile) in terms of their organization and development of financial incentives to attract foreign production companies but this has not occurred at the same pace in Brazil (Solot, 2012).

Besides reshaping the audiovisual industry of Rio de Janeiro, in recent years the work of RioFilme and the Rio Film Commission has engaged in two significant trends: an upswing in the international promotion of Rio de Janeiro and its audiovisual sector and the taking on of a role in local urban

development. Both trends are clearly involved in further branding Rio de Janeiro as a creative city. In 2013, RioFilme joined the Films from Rio initiative, which is a consortium of Rio's top film and television institutions that serves as an international promotional agency for the region's film and television industries (Films from Rio, n.d.). The work of Films from Rio parallels that of the promotional agency Cinema do Brasil, which is based in São Paulo but promotes films from all over Brazil. In addition to promoting Rio-based productions, Films from Rio coincides with the Rio Film Commission in its goal to promote Rio de Janeiro as a prime location for international shooting and co-productions. Despite these efforts to promote the audiovisual sector in Rio de Janeiro, Adrién Muselet does not feel that there has yet been an effective place-branding strategy and that the city needs to do a better job of this to more proactively compete in the global audiovisual market (A. Muselet, personal communication, May 15, 2014).

Cultural Policy, Creative Industries, and Urban Development

The activities of both agencies have directly and indirectly intervened in developing the urban landscapes of Rio de Janeiro. The CinesCarioca program is only a modest indication of the plans that RioFilme has for converting culture-led regeneration into urban renewal. While mega-events have been at the forefront of stimulating urban development projects and stimulating local and national economies, the audiovisual sector in Rio has been defined as a key area of economic activity and one that would take the lead in development post-2016—after the Summer Olympics. In order to do so, the audiovisual sector must improve its infrastructure. In 2013, RioFilme announced plans at the Cannes Film Festival to develop an Audiovisual City in a derelict area of the city known as São Cristóvão. This is a clear merging of cultural policy and urban development and shows an evolution in the activities of RioFilme. Indeed, then-president of RioFilme Sérgio Sá Leitão stated that RioFilme's evolution has gone from financing production to distribution, and more recently to TV series production. Now it is moving into infrastructure development and training (Hopewell, 2013). RioFilme signed a 35-year rental agreement in September 2013 to occupy an abandoned police headquarters, and plans are for the Audiovisual City to be located in an abandoned postindustrial area near Rio's port, adjacent to the Porto Maravilha (Marvelous Port) development area and close to where Trump Towers are planned to be erected. This project joins the previously announced plans to expand and develop the Rio Film and Video Pole in the area of Barra da Tijuca to the south of Rio's center (Mango, 2013). The Pole, which was initially developed in the early 1990s to become a cinema city and akin to a Brazilian Hollywood, had remained an unfinished project.

Since 2013, little has been reported on these projects, likely owing to recent economic and political crises. Whether or not the Audiovisual City becomes a reality, other institutions (of other sectors of the creative industries) have taken root in Rio's central urban districts as part of the Porto Maravilha redevelopment project, which merges cultural and urban development to modernize Rio's central urban landscape. The project is presented within a creative economy framework in that it asserts the preservation of cultural heritage and fostering socioeconomic inclusion. Considered one of Latin America's largest urban redevelopment projects to date, the Porto Maravilha project aims to redevelop Rio's postindustrial waterfront area, similar to projects that have been completed in European cities like Barcelona and Rotterdam. Like many redevelopment initiatives, the Porto Maravilha project aims for "urban upgrading" or adding value to urban districts, which it will achieve in part through the development

of cultural institutions (Rio Prefeitura, n.d.). For instance, the project includes the construction of the Rio Museum of Art and the Museum of the Future, dedicated to science and technology. In what is a clear strategy of place branding, the project aims to develop cultural venues in an effort to make the district a more attractive destination for tourists as well as local residents while also increasing real estate values.

While more modest, the Rio Film Commission has also taken on a role to intervene in urban development through its connections with local tourism boards. In the course of encouraging and assisting productions to come to Rio de Janeiro, the Rio Film Commission has developed partnerships with TurisRio, a public company linked to the Secretary of Tourism, Sports and Leisure; RIOTUR, the Municipal Tourism Agency of the city of Rio de Janeiro and part of the Special Tourist Secretary of Rio de Janeiro; and the Rio Convention and Visitors Bureau. On its website it promotes various prime shooting locations (e.g., beaches, cathedrals, colonial plantations, etc.). Steve Solot (2015) has promoted “cinematographic tourism” in Brazil in order to take advantage of increased on-location shooting in Brazilian municipalities. Cinematographic tourism consists of receiving visitors to a location used in an audiovisual production and seeks additional economic benefits. It is a form of urban development that evolves out of the audiovisual branding of a place and the economic benefits brought by curious fan-tourists.

Whether cinematographic tourism is long-lasting or a more ephemeral mode of development, there is a history of promoting and developing cinema tourism. Fans of the Kevin Costner film *Field of Dreams* (1989) flocked to rural Iowa in the United States, and hundreds of tourists have similarly made Highclere Castle a travel destination after it was made famous in the British series *Downton Abbey*. If cinematographic tourism develops in Rio de Janeiro, it can take advantage of the documents prepared by RioFilme that identify significant sites in the city that are part of Brazilian Cinema history. The promotion of former location shooting sites as tourist destinations clearly engages in place branding activity and furthers the idea of Rio de Janeiro as a creative city. Finally, these efforts to make Rio de Janeiro a creative city through audiovisual production align the city and region with the demands and opportunities of the global marketplace.

Not everyone has been pleased with the efforts and programs developed by RioFilme and the Rio Film Commission. In a statement posted online in 2014 and publicized during the Rio Film Festival of that year, the movement calling itself Rio: Mais Cinema, Menos Cenário (Rio: More Cinema, Less Setting, or RMCMC), formed by approximately 200 professionals from the audiovisual sector—including, among others, Júlia Murat, Maria Augusta Ramos, Daniel Caetano and Anna Azevedo—called on local and regional officials to develop more democratic, transparent policies that were attentive to the city’s cultural diversity.

The RMCMC (2014) reiterated the tone and objectives set forth in 2003 by Gilberto Gil as minister of culture. Noting that current policies prioritize and concentrate funds in a few, already well-established production companies, the open letter called for increased funding overall for the audiovisual sector in Rio de Janeiro and, perhaps more importantly, demanded the deconcentration of resources to allow for more diverse audiovisual production (Carta Aberta). The group noted that since 2008, RioFilme has directed a third of its funds to only 10 production companies; the remaining two thirds of funds have been given out piecemeal to 147 companies (Carta Aberta). To further illustrate the imbalances, the group cites

RioFilme's 2014 budget of R\$42 million of which R\$18 million (43%) was invested "automatically" in projects that were selected exclusively based on economic criteria with little or no regard for artistic or social merit; meanwhile, only R\$6 million (14%) of the budget went to projects that underwent a selective process (Carta Aberta). Notably, these figures contradict a more equitable distribution claimed by then-director of RioFilme Sergio Sá Leitão.

RMCMC has rejected the notion that it pits market-oriented cinema against independent or "art" films. Rather, it has called for a more balanced approach to government policies and has critiqued the current model that focuses on supporting a competitive audiovisual industry, which promotes Brazilian films that may bring box-office success but follow preestablished genres and formats. In essence, the protest group RMCMC rejects recent strategies to promote a particular type of Brazilian cinema that not only conforms to a supply-and-demand logic of the local and global marketplace but also homogenizes and simplifies the cultural diversity of the city.

Conclusion

Given that nation branding is a strategic discursive process, this article has outlined the policies involved in producing a "new Brazil" as a nation of great cultural diversity that would overcome social and cultural divides through the development of a creative economy, of which the audiovisual sector was defined as holding a key role. On the whole, these policies have aimed for a strategic rearticulation of Brazilian cultural identity. In an effort to make Rio de Janeiro a creative audiovisual city, both RioFilme and the Rio Film Commission have, directly and indirectly, contributed to the creation of new narratives about urban spaces and people. That is to say, they are enacting cultural policies that contribute to the symbolic reconstruction of Rio de Janeiro and, by extension, Brazil generally. Both agencies also undertake programs that aim to make Rio a knowable location for mass consumption. However, recent protests have questioned the "staging" of Rio de Janeiro as a site of unbalanced market-oriented audiovisual production and consumption.

Branding is a productive framework for thinking about Brazilian cultural policies, which have sought to modify Brazil's existing nation brand—as a country reductively known for samba, soccer, carnival, social inequality, violence, political corruption, and environmental degradation. This (inter)national portrait is one that has been particularly difficult to overcome in recent years. Cultural policies in Brazil sought to strengthen the relationship between state and civil society, redefine the role and nature of cultural production in the economy of Brazil, and overcome longstanding socioeconomic exclusion as a way to reformulate *brasildade* (Brazilianess). Time will reveal if current economic and political crises in Brazil are a time of reckoning that will lead to deeper structural changes so the nation can truly affirm its unique position in the world.

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