

Olympic City: The Future as a Battlefield

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Specific power relations and political agendas produce discursive formations that are centred in the “future”. These future agendas legitimate particular projects and actions in the present, reinforcing and naturalizing particular worldviews. Under what conditions does the discursive formation of “future” enables spatial transformations in the present?

In this work I argue that it is crucial to grapple with multidimensional processes that legitimize, naturalize and enable new rounds of capital circulation and the opening of material and immaterial borders of accumulation. In this research my goal is to investigate the dispute over the “future” and how its “conquest” by specific power formations activates political projects with drastic present effects associated with spatial transformations, specifically in the context of the Olympic Games.

The study of the future is mainly dominated by neoclassic economics and politics of probability, based on quantitative techniques and sophisticated forecast models. The sociology of future (Bell and May, 1971) emerged focused on imbuing the social theorist with an active role in the ongoing production of social projects and therefore the future. The Anthropology of future (Appadurai, 2013) is intended to aim on the study of “imagination”, “aspiration” and “anticipation”. In this work my goal is to explore a gap in these traditions and focus on the discursive dispute over the future as a strategic moment of present capitalist reinvention.

The Olympics are crucial moments where broader future discourses and local interests are connected, imbuing the host city with symbolic properties that enable institutional and regulatory reformulation that are materialised in drastic spatial transformations. With that in mind this research intends to relocate the future as a contested arena in the present, developing a dynamic methodology to grasp the power relations involved in the “battle for the future”.

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