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Chapter 10

Image Making, City Marketing, and the Aesthetization of Social Inequality in Rio de Janeiro

Anne-Marie Broudehoux

City marketing and image making were key features of urban governance in the late twentieth century. With growing interurban competition for global flows of capital and visitors, city managers in search of increased tax revenues and new sources of employment have increasingly been pressured to develop a distinctive urban image to advertise their locales on the world market. However, despite this strong economic rationale there has also been a social logic to the practice of selling places. Urban image construction through public works and marketing campaigns has often served as a tool of social control, as dominant groups have used visual and spatial strategies to impose their views and set the terms for membership in society, sanctioning some actors as participants in urban life, while ignoring, segregating, and making others increasingly invisible.

While most of the literature on the social dimensions of image making and city marketing has referred to the experience of First World cities, the impact of such practices has been felt with even greater magnitude in cities of the developing world.[1] Third World cities have been faced with specific urban realities which demand that different priorities be given for the use of scarce public funds. Recent global restructuring and economic instability have contributed to a widening of income disparities and an increase in social conflicts in most cities of the developing world. This chapter examines recent urban beautification efforts in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to understand the mechanisms of urban image construction and the relationship between space, power, and social justice in the practice of selling places in a developing economy.

Image Matters

Observers of the contemporary city have described the late capitalist urban condition as characterized by a trend toward aestheticization, where the primacy of the visual and the centrality of the image have reduced the city to a landscape of visual consumption, an object to be gazed upon, or a spectacle.[2] Current urban design practices are said to nourish this appeal for the embellishment of the material world by giving precedence to appearance over substance, and by establishing the primacy of the facade in the creation of urbane disguises, thereby reducing the effect of much architecture to two dimensions.[3]

The growing predilection for the production and dissemination of urban images has generally been justified based on economic imperatives. According to this logic, in the course of the last few decades the changing configuration of the global political and economic order has forced cities worldwide to undergo major restructuring to become more competitive in the international market. In their struggle for economic survival, and in search of new sources of employment and revenue, cities have turned to marketing, image making, and in some cases urban 'imagineering' – the Disney expression for the engineering of imaginary places – to boost local distinctiveness and attract visitors and capital. With a growing awareness of their city's position in the global hierarchy, city officials and local entrepreneurs have collaborated to exploit city images and 'sell' localities by harnessing actual or perceived attributes.

As one of the fastest-growing global industries and the largest employer in the world, tourism has played an important role in the development of this urban image-construction process. Tourism can be seen as one of the most concrete and pervasive forms of globalization, reaching out to the most remote regions on earth and bringing people from distant places face-to-face on an everyday basis. Since the 1980s large cities have arguably become the most important type of tourist destination, and tourism has grown as a source of revenue for many metropolitan areas, thus greatly influencing their economic and physical development. To tap into this attractive source of foreign exchange and employment, urban managers have tried to refashion their municipalities to match the expectations of potential investors and tourists.[4]

It would be a mistake, however, to consider image making to be a purely economic phenomenon and to overlook its social implications. Urban images are constructed both through discourse – as in marketing campaigns, promotional brochures, and tourist advertising – and by more concrete means, including the transformation of the built environment through public works, historical preservation, and redevelopment programmes. Such interventions may alter a community's material and symbolic capital, and thus have an impact upon collective representation.

In order to grasp fully the social implications of urban image construction, it is first necessary to consider the relationship between space and society. The built environment is intimately related to the social construction of meaning, and it plays a central role in the formation of collective consciousness and self-perception. In fact, society and the built environment can be conceived as reciprocally constitutive of one another. Thus, while human intent and actions inscribe meaning and transform space into experienced places, places in turn structure human values and actions. As the physical embodiment of specific ideologies, and of social, cultural, political and economic relations and practices, the built environment not only represents but also constrains and enables these same relations and practices.[5]

The recognition of position within both society and space is fundamental for identity formation.[6] People's associations with and consciousness of the places where they live constitute vital sources for cultural identity construction, a point of departure from which people orient themselves in the world. Local history and collective memory, embodied in the walls and streets of the city, play a central role in the construction of meaning.[7] Alteration of the urban environment, through rhetorical or physical interventions, is thus bound to have an impact on both individual and collective identities.

Place image – often equated with place identity – also represents a source of symbolic capital that may be exploited in city-promoting activities. But since no two people experience space the same way, there are at least as many place identities as there are people. The imposition of single-stranded images onto urban diversity in the process of city marketing and the reduction of place identity to constricted and easily packaged urban 'products' thus represent necessarily exclusionary processes that often privilege the views of one group over another. More specifically, the ready-made identities assigned by city boosters and disseminated through the mass media generally serve the aspirations of dominant groups in a city, and, as such, reflect the values, lifestyles and expectations of potential investors and tourists.[8]

Recent studies of the late-twentieth-century city have raised issues about social justice and the right to representation of certain urban populations who have been made increasingly invisible by such processes of urban image formation.[9] Central to the problem of image making is thus the question of what is to be promoted and valued, and in whose interest. As urban-growth entrepreneurs and property investors have used spatial and visual strategies of social differentiation to set the terms of membership in society and symbolize 'who belongs where', major urban centres have become the sites of battles over the right to the city.

As indicated above, the aestheticization of the urban environment has also served an ideological purpose, not only acting to legitimize

consumerism and social acceptance of the imperatives of capitalism, but also to help depoliticize the city. With the city thus reduced to a surface assumed to be transparent and unproblematic, aestheticization has distracted attention from real social and economic injustice.[10] Urban image construction can also be understood as a means of social control where urban managers have attempted to manipulate cultural forms and symbols to engineer consensus among city residents, either to insure social stability and unity, or to reinforce political allegiances. Similarly, image-making projects have enabled ruling minorities to use the power of visual imagery and mental and emotional associations to determine who will dominate, use, live in, and profit from urban spaces. Finally, image construction has also been used to boost the confidence of local commercial interests, encourage civic pride, and (as in the case of capital cities) foster national sentiment. Overall, urban images must thus be read as ideological and historical products, behind whose unified appearance may exist struggles between various organized groups and disputes over use and design.[11]

Image Making in Rio de Janeiro

Contemporary Rio de Janeiro constitutes both a unique and a typical case for the study of city marketing and image making in a Third World context. As Brazil's capital of culture and tourism, Rio is known as the *cidade maravilhosa*, the marvellous city. But the city is also marked by some of the highest income inequalities in the world, and due to Rio's unique geography, rich and poor have come to live and work in very close proximity to one another (figure 10.1). The 1990s were considered Rio's 'urban renaissance', a decade devoted to the restoration of the city's reputation, both locally and abroad. One reason was that since 1990 Rio's city government has embarked on a massive image-making programme in an attempt to revamp the city's economy.

Such intense preoccupation with international image has not been without precedent in the city's history. Brazilian ruling elites have long been image conscious, and they have repeatedly tried to use architecture to advertise Brazil's progress to the more advanced nations of the world.[12] Most importantly, at the turn of the nineteenth century the public health and beautification campaign of the Passos Reforms, which led to Rio's Haussmannization and the construction of imitation Parisian buildings and boulevards, was conceived as a means of attracting foreign capital and competing with other more modern trading centres, such as Buenos Aires. By providing a familiar image to the international elite, Rio's reformers hoped to convince an international audience that Brazil was a serious and deserving participant in the European economic order.[13]

However, with the shift of the national capital to Brasilia in 1960, Rio's economy lost one of its main driving forces. And the city was subsequently
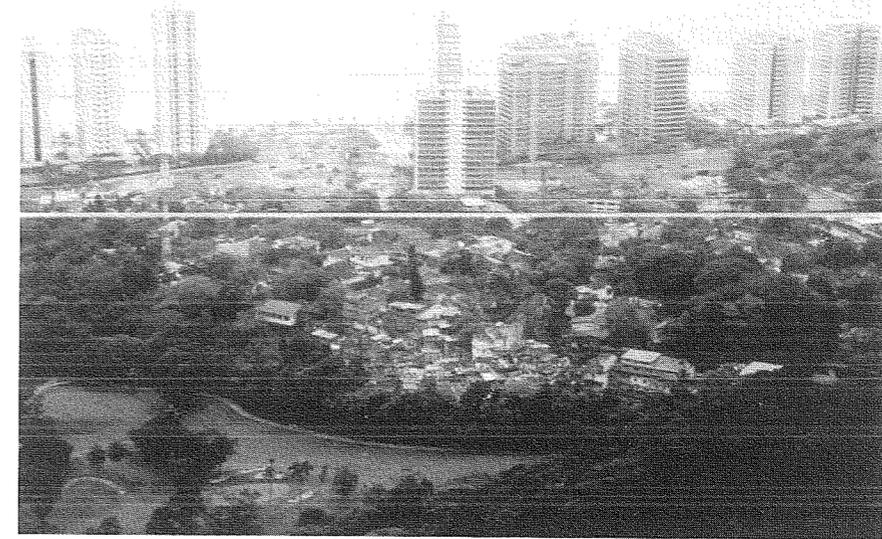

Figure 10.1. Face-to-face but worlds apart: social inequalities are clearly inscribed in Rio's landscape, as rich and poor literally live side by side. A golf course, a *favela*, upper-class residences, and beachfront luxury condominiums are juxtaposed in the exclusive São Conrado. (Photo by author.)

hit hard by the economic crisis of the 1980s, when a lack of public funds led to massive disinvestment, creating serious urban problems.[14] As a result, the late 1980s and early 1990s were characterized by rising trends toward poverty, criminality and insecurity, which tarnished the national and international image of Rio and threatened its identity as *cidade maravilhosa*.[15] During this period tourism suffered terribly, and there was a nearly 50 per cent drop in the number of international tourists entering Brazil between 1986 and 1990. Public safety was cited as the main cause of dissatisfaction among visitors to Rio.[16]

In preparation for the 1992 United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development, however, the city government initiated a major clean-up operation. Parks were weeded, main thoroughfares were resurfaced, and street children were rounded up and put out of sight.[17] As part of the Rio Orla project, the city's main beachfronts were also remodelled with new paving, lighting systems, urban furnishing, and uniform food kiosks. Such interventions did little to improve the citywide quality of life, however. And a few months after the Rio Summit, the city's most disenfranchised expressed their discontent in a series of riots on the affluent beaches of Copacabana and Ipanema, creating panic among the sunbathers.[18] The city's international image was further tarnished when, within the next year, a group of street children were killed by the police and

the national army occupied several of the city's *favelas* (squatter settlements) in an attempt to curb endemic crime.

It was under such circumstances that after 1993 the city government resolved to restore the city's image in hopes of restraining investment flight and making the city competitive again on the world tourism market. As part of this process, Rio's entry in the competition for hosting the 2004 Olympic Games led to the drafting, in the mid-1990s, of the Strategic Plan for the City of Rio de Janeiro.[19] This plan was strongly influenced by such foreign urban interventions as the revitalization of Barcelona for the 1992 Olympics (and was, in fact, developed with the help of an advisory board from that city).[20] The launching of the strategic plan was also stimulated by Brazil's 1988 constitutional reform, which returned central government revenues and political control to local governments. Significantly, this constitution guaranteed that matters of urban development would be placed under the control of municipal governments, and that master planning would be mandatory for all Brazilian cities with populations of more than 20,000.[21]

Three Public Programmes

Since 1993 a series of public-works programmes have significantly transformed the image of Rio de Janeiro. Closer analysis of three of these programmes as they have been recently implemented by the Rio's city government provides a better understanding of the mechanisms of image construction in the city and their effects on social relations. The programmes illustrate how space, power, and social justice are closely intertwined in the process of image making in cities of the developing world.

Rio Cidade

First among the city's recent renovation programmes was Rio Cidade, or Rio City, an urban design project said to represent the most comprehensive urban intervention programme implemented in Rio in decades. The project was initiated in late 1993 by Cesar Maia, Rio's Mayor at the time, with the help of his then Municipal Secretary of Urbanism and now current Mayor, Luiz Paolo Conde. In collaboration with the Institute of Planning of the City of Rio de Janeiro (IPLANRIO) and of the Institute of Architects of Brazil, intervention sites were chosen and a design competition was held to select architects who would work in teams on different neighbourhoods. According to official sources, the project affected fifteen neighbourhoods, with 60 per cent of the $227 million budget spent on infrastructure.[22]

The first phase of Rio Cidade focused on commercial districts of the city, many located in Rio's Zona Sul (South Zone) along the beaches, where most tourist attractions and accommodations are concentrated. According to official publications, the project sought to improve the image of these neighbourhoods and heighten their sense of identity by giving them a unique visual character. Much emphasis was placed on the improvement of aesthetics, security, circulation and parking. Focused interventions included the redesign of public spaces, the integration of different circulation systems, tree planting, landscaping, and the installation of new signage and urban furnishing. Rio Cidade also aimed to replace century-old sewers, fractured pavement, and street lights. The project gained widespread recognition abroad and was selected by the United Nations as part of its Best Practices Database for urban planning.[23]

As a response to the pressing demands of residents of other areas of the city for a similar level of public improvements in their neighbourhoods, and to address criticisms that the first phase was elitist, a second phase of Rio Cidade was initiated in March 1998. Its aim has been to improve twenty-seven additional districts located mainly in the city's lower-income, less glamorous West and North Zones.

Favela-Bairro

A second series of urban improvements was initiated by the administration of former Mayor Cesar Maia under the Favela-Bairro programme, which has sought generally to turn *favelas* (informal settlements) into *bairros* (formal neighbourhoods). The Favela-Bairro programme was implemented almost two years after the beginning of Rio Cidade, in an apparent attempt to appease social discontent in neighbourhoods which did not benefit from the first Rio Cidade programme (although this has been denied by representatives of the city government). One out of ten people in Rio lives in a *favela*, which are generally lacking in basic services and infrastructure such as access to running water, garbage collection, sewerage, mail distribution, and proper drainage. Residents of such neighbourhoods also lack the security of tenure enjoyed by the residents of formal neighbourhoods.

The idea behind the Favela-Bairro programme was to move away from previous attempts to eradicate *favelas* by finding new ways to upgrade informal settlements and integrate them into the larger urban community. Thus, in June 1995 a competition was launched to select design professionals who could develop strategies to improve the conditions of the *favelas*. Thirty-four teams of architects and urbanists contributed ideas, of whom fifteen signed contracts with the city to try out their proposed methodologies. According to official sources, in the following four years interventions would be extended to ninety *favelas*, in order to improve the conditions of 300,000 inhabitants, less than a third of Rio's *favelados*.[24]

Although conducted under the supervision of the city's housing

authorities, this programme has not, however, been concerned with housing provision. Rather, it has focused on integrating *favela* communities into the city through the provision of such infrastructure as street paving, electricity, sewerage, canalization of rivers, tree planting, and landscaping. It has brought such new services to the *favelas* as day-care centres, community centres, and sport and leisure facilities. The programme has also sought to improve the development of communities through participation in sanitation programmes, education, job training, and cultural and educational activities. Much has been done to remove the stigma of *favelas* as dangerous, marginal areas. It has also been claimed that 'officialization' of *favelas* would reduce crime, especially drug-trafficking.[25]

The first phase of Favela-Bairro was implemented at a cost of $300 million, 60 per cent of which came from a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Much of the work has been carried out through paid community work. In 1996 the IDB approved another $300 million loan to benefit ninety-two more *favelas* and 300,000 more residents. The programme has been widely publicized and is gaining international recognition, and the IDB recently approved a similar project in Argentina. The World Bank has also been studying the Favela-Bairro methodology for use in future projects.[26] Favela-Bairro has also appeared on the United Nations' Best Practices Database.[27]

Rio Incomparavel

In September 1998 the city government of Rio de Janeiro initiated a third programme, aimed at improving the image of the city on both a national and international level. Baptized Rio Incomparavel, or Rio Incomparable, this programme has combined public works with a major marketing campaign in the interests of making Rio more attractive and convenient to tourists. Rio is Brazil's primary tourist destination, attracting almost half the country's tourists, and the tourism industry represents one of Rio's most important sources of revenue.[28] Rio Incomparavel was expected to increase the annual number of national and international tourists visiting the city from 4.5 million to 7 million before the year 2000, which would represent a 55 per cent increase.[29]

The marketing aspects of Rio Incomparavel have built upon earlier marketing activities, including in 1996 a $3.3 million international advertising campaign initiated on the Cable News Network (CNN), which helped create a notable increase in foreign tourists.[30] Today, as Rio's image to foreign tourists has been recognized as a valuable asset in its development, city government has stressed development of a Cooperative Image Plan and a Marketing Working Plan for Rio, both aimed at promoting a 'Rio Product'.[31]

Meanwhile, under the name RioMar, the public-works portion of Rio Incomparavel has been designed to include major interventions along the waterfront in the Zona Sul, with new tourist attractions, restaurants, urban furniture, and street lighting. The project is to include a reinforcement of security along the waterfront, with the installation of one hundred video cameras and three police kiosks for the municipal guard and military police. Before the end of 1999 two new bus lines were also to have been implemented to serve the special needs of tourists, with more than forty stops at strategic tourist sites and major hotels. The city government has been preparing a new system of signalization in the city, one that indicates major tourist attractions and the best ways to reach them. The plan calls for these interventions to be financed mainly by the private sector, especially through the leasing of commercial concessions in newly developed leisure areas. Petrobras, the Brazilian national oil company, will also contribute $7.5 million for the right to build service stations in these areas.[32]

One portion of the Rio Incomparavel marketing campaign has been the distribution of propaganda material in hotels and airports of the city. Major advertising campaigns will also be carried out in five other Brazilian cities and in seventeen cities around the world. Eight international marketing offices will also be opened in such foreign centres as New York, Frankfurt, Madrid and Paris. This marketing campaign, which is to be extended through the year 2000, has been estimated to cost $36 million, with the hope of raising city tourism income from its present $1.18 billion to $2.65 billion. Rio's secretary of tourism has stated that one of the goals of the campaign is to make Rio the favourite city of South America for international tourism.[33] A special campaign will also be directed at Rio residents in the hope of stimulating civic pride. Toward this end, advertising on the backs of public buses already asks 'Aren't you lucky to live in a city where you'd love to spend your holidays?'[34]

Urban Image versus Social Reality

Although all three of the programmes described above have been received with much enthusiasm in a city which undeniably has a great need for physical improvement, the programmes have also been the object of severe criticism as being motivated less by commitment to civic improvement than by desire to serve particular social, political and economic interests. And while most criticisms have been aimed at Rio Cidade – the first phase of which has already been completed – many negative comments have also been directed to the other two programmes.

One of the most common concerns about the programmes has been that they have placed too much emphasis on aesthetics, serving as little more than beautification schemes. Although some observers have emphasized the

important role of aesthetic surroundings in promoting civic pride, public satisfaction, community self-esteem, and social well-being, many others have questioned the propriety of such superficial urban design interventions in the context of contemporary Brazil.[35] In particular, critics have denounced the decision to give priority to cosmetic interventions when many more pressing issues in the areas of employment, education, public transport, and health have been neglected.[36] For example, the first phase of Rio Cidade included the burying of more than 210 kilometres of phone and electric lines considered to be visually obtrusive in subterranean ducts when a large portion of the city's population did not even have access to such facilities. Critics have also denounced the fact that private interests have often been allowed to benefit from such public undertakings. For example, the powerful Global media network has taken advantage of Rio Cidade interventions to install cable television lines in the exclusive Zona Sul.

The projects have also been severely criticized for serving the needs and interests of only a small fraction of the local population. Thus, a great number of the neighbourhoods affected by the first phase of Rio Cidade were concentrated in the central district and in the Zona Sul, where the city's small middle and upper classes reside, and where the main tourist attractions and accommodations are found. Indeed, this has been a pattern for most of the twentieth century, as the Zona Sul has traditionally been one of the main beneficiaries of major public interventions.[37]

The decision of the Secretary of Tourism to privilege the Zona Sul in the interventions related to Rio Incomparavel, especially in terms of increased security, has also triggered bitter debate. Despite claims by the Commandant of the military police that efficient crime prevention requires an even level of police surveillance throughout the city, the Secretary maintained that since the Zona Sul attracted the most tourists and generated the most revenues, it deserved more security (figure 10.2).[38]

Extravagant spending and uneven resource allocation among different city neighbourhoods have also given rise to public debate. For example, the first phase of Rio Cidade clearly privileged chic Zona Sul neighbourhoods like Leblon, Ipanema and Copacabana. Here, urban furnishings were custom designed, and bus-stop shelters averaged more than $10,000 apiece, twice the cost of shelters in lower-income neighbourhoods such as Meier. Residents have been outraged to discover that their otherwise needy city now has some of the world's most expensive bus shelters – ones which have, additionally, been more successful at making a design statement than at actually sheltering people from sun and rain (figure 10.3).[39] Indeed, some of this expensive urban furniture has already been replaced, since it did not fulfil its intended function.

Furthermore, many critics have argued that Rio Cidade is a money pit because of the extremely high maintenance costs associated with many of
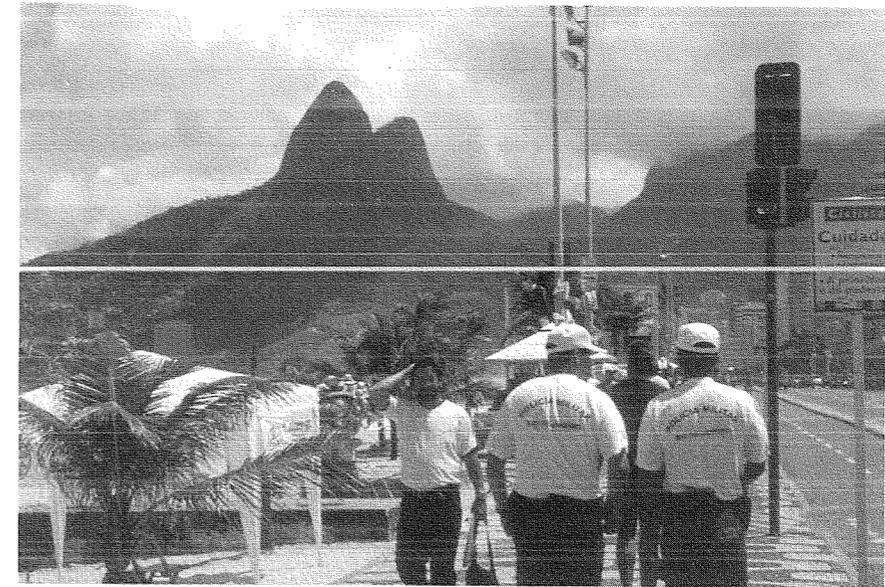
Figure 10.2. Pretense of security: casually dressed members of the *policia militar* walk along the affluent beaches of Ipanema and Leblon to reassure beachgoers and tourists who fear attacks from *pivetes* (street kids). Note in the upper left corner the sprawling Vidigal *favela* which looms over the Sheraton hotel. (Photo by author.)

Figure 10.3. City of contrasts: cart pullers walking down the street in the upscale neighbourhood of Leblon with its sleek bus stop. (Photo by author.)

its improvements. In fact, many of Rio Cidade's interventions have suffered from low quality and fast deterioration, due in part to the poor execution of sophisticated designs which did not take into account the limitations of local workmanship and construction technology. Moreover, the extreme diversity of urban furnishing – with each neighbourhood having its own custom-designed elements – has led to such difficulties as complicated inventories, costly storage of spare units, and over-dependence on certain suppliers.[40] In the second phase of Rio Cidade, which has concentrated on lower-income areas, efforts have been made to keep costs low and avoid some of these excesses for which the first phase is now notorious.

To add to these difficulties, popular discontent has been growing among groups who feel neglected by recent public-works campaigns, or who resent their lack of involvement in the transformation of their neighbourhoods. Many of these groups have come to despise interventions meant to 'restore their neighbourhood's identity', which have only resulted in attempts by urban designers to leave their personal architectural signatures on the city. Expressions of public dissatisfaction have ranged from open opposition, to derision, to vandalism. Protests have been particularly strong in Copacabana and Ipanema, where many of the design interventions have become the object of public ridicule. In Ipanema, residents objected to the construction of a landmark arched pedestrian overpass, which they considered not only wasteful but intrusive since it would block views and allow people to peer into nearby apartments. After the protests, the arch was built without the stairs that would have allowed it to function as an overpass, so it now fulfils only a visual role.

People have also derided the city's attempts to slow down traffic by painting the pavement at intersections with colourful patterns. In practice, no one pays attention, and the paint has already worn off as drivers continue to speed through red lights. New lamp posts in Ipanema have likewise become the object of ridicule because they lean at a curious angle toward the street. Local people have joked that they are drunken lamp posts – a characteristic they find quite fitting for Ipanema, a neighbourhood known for its bohemian culture. Many of these projects have also been the object of vandalism, since kids from the *favelas* have taken to destroying the new things, because their neighbourhoods have not received similar treatment.

The improvement programmes have also been denounced for the lack of fit between the image they project and the reality of everyday life in Rio. The Rio which is portrayed in promotional material and reinforced by recent design interventions has often had more to do with the aspirations of the ruling class than with the daily experiences of most of the city's residents. The image of easy living, prosperity and modern comfort, summarized as sea, sun and modernity, is embodied in the logo of the Rio Incomparavel campaign, where a wave, a high-rise building, and a sun spell out the letters R-I-O on a sandy background. But this symbolism does not reflect the extreme poverty in which the vast majority of Rio residents live. It rather constructs an image of the city where the poor and their informal activities clearly have no place.

Many observers have equated recent revitalization efforts in Rio with social cleansing, keeping certain elements of society at bay, out of sight of foreign visitors. One of the central goals of Rio Cidade, they have claimed, has been to prevent the informal sectors from infringing on Rio's public spaces. Thus, while sidewalks have been repaved with dynamic patterns said to represent the *joie de vivre* central to the city's identity, they have also been cleared of the informal activities that used to enliven them and provide an important source of income for the urban poor. One official publication even insisted that the uncontrolled growth of street vendors 'threatened the identity of Copacabana, symbol of the city of Rio for both locals and tourists.'[41]

But despite the absence of visual and verbal references to the *favelas* in the official tourism literature, foreign visitors often romanticize this aspect of Rio's urban life and deplore recent sanitizing efforts. The most popular tourist items sold at Rio's craft fairs depict life in the *favelas*, and a few private agencies have started to promote so-called exotic tours of Rio, taking tourists on safaris through some of the most famous *favelas*, like Rocinha, advertised as Latin America's largest squatter settlement.

All these recent urban interventions have raised questions about the constitution of citizenship in contemporary Rio. The rhetoric used by certain city officials has suggested a narrow vision of those considered as deserving and legitimate citizens of Rio. For example, some of the often-stated goals of Rio Cidade have been 'to recuperate strategic commercial areas of the city'; 'to take back the use of public spaces'; and 'to recuperate the city's image for its residents and for the international community.'[42] The repeated use of the verbs 'recuperate' and 'take back' has implied that these spaces were appropriated by people who did not have a legitimate right to do so. It has portrayed the poor, involved in informal activities often not by choice but by desperate need, as intruders who have threatened the comfort and security of the more deserving. As a result, street vendors, whose activities have been condemned as 'predatory privatization of the public realm', have been restricted to a few designated areas.[43] Ironically, some of these very 'predators' have been hired by the city to work as street sweepers to make sure the city's sidewalks remain clean and unencumbered.

Also notable in the justification for all three projects has been a strong rhetorical reference to issues of public order, rationality and modernity. Official documents have talked of 'urban rationalization' and 'regularization' as necessary measures to 'stop urban disorder' and 'reduce visual chaos'. Such clear references to notions of 'norms and forms' have not only been inspired by the modernist tradition which continues to be the

trademark of Brazilian urbanism, but they suggest attempts by the city's elites to impose their own conception of order on society. There has been a strong sense among the city's ruling class that it is their role to 'educate' people on 'urban values' – that is, to teach them how to comply with upper-class ideas about 'proper' urbanity.[44] This notion of 'civilizing' Rio has been a running theme in the city's history, with the upper classes attempting to control the activities, dress code, and behaviour of the masses to serve their interests.[45] Local elites have long fantasized about Rio being a First World city, and they have worked hard to maintain this illusion.

Official Favela-Bairro publications today illustrate how the ruling class has tried to impose its norms upon society. These documents state that *favelas* could be transformed into so-called 'real' or 'normal' working neighbour-hoods, and that their residents should be allowed to access the city, but in an orderly way.[46] Such statements suggest a notion of *favelas* as being patho-logical environments which need to be brought up to the norms of modern society.[47]

The programmes have also been criticized for resting on the belief that the city's problems can be solved through design. For example, Favela-Bairro – which claimed to be the first municipal programme to deal actively with the problems of Rio's *favelas*, rather than just ignoring or demolishing them (as was the common practice in the past) – was initiated by means of a design competition, and the teams in charge of implementing the programme were subsequently dominated by architects, with a minority of social workers. One result was that there was a near total absence of sociological studies prior to project implementation, and few of the teams reporting on their work in the *favelas* have ever mentioned the widespread social problems, such as drug-trafficking and alcoholism, that exist there. Rather, they have focused on infrastructural and landscaping inter-ventions.[48] One official Favela-Bairro publication has expressed its faith in the power of design in this rhetorical question: 'What better way to integrate informal settlements into the formal city than by giving them the same access to high quality architectural, landscape and urbanistic projects?'[49]

Some critics have suggested that the recent interventions only attempt to cure the symptoms, while they fail to address the real causes of the city's problems, which, especially in the case of Favela-Bairro, have less to do with design and infrastructure provision than with more complex social issues.[50] For example, many of the circulation problems Rio Cidade claimed to resolve – such as lack of respect for traffic lights, speed limits, and pedestrians – can be considered more problems of control, management, and rule enforcement than of urban design. The conviction with which design has been proposed as a solution to all urban problems has often been blamed on the fact that many city officials, including present Mayor Luiz Paolo Conde, are architects, and thus they overestimate the social power of architecture, or simply seek to reproduce their own profession.

They seem to forget that more than a century of Brazilian urbanism has not been able to change Brazil's reality as one of the world's most unequal societies.

Beyond such faith in simple environmental determinism, there has also been an obvious lack of real commitment on the part of the administration to resolving Rio's core problems. In many recent interventions, social-welfare concerns have appeared to be only rhetorical, while beautification efforts have been clearly motivated by a desire to serve the political and economic interests of the leading minority. For example, those *favelas* that were made eligible for Favela-Bairro interventions were those that were already in an advanced state of consolidation, with social structures well in place, and whose configuration prefigured a smooth implementation. As a result, rather than focusing on the poorest *favelas* and the most precarious sites, the programme concentrated on those requiring minimum intervention, but those which also ensured quick results and photo opportunities for upcoming elections.

Similarly, the bulk of Favela-Bairro interventions have taken place around entry points to the *favelas*, most visible to outsiders. According to a publication of the Inter-American Development Bank, the provision of public services and leisure spaces at the border between *favelas* and formal neighbourhoods – with urban furniture, sports facilities, and landscaping that could be enjoyed by residents of both sides – would not only promote social integration, but would also 'alleviate the visual shock of the transition between *favela* and better neighbourhoods.'[51] Such a statement suggests a concern not only with improving the living conditions of the *favelas*' residents but for concealing visual eyesores to please formal-sector residents (figure 10.4).
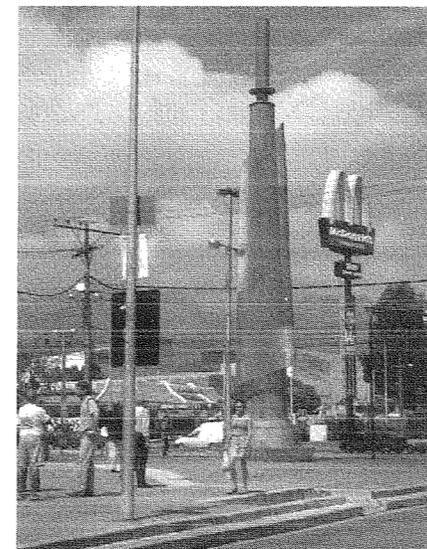

Figure 10.4. Tower of progress: this landmark tower stands at the heart of the new plaza built to mark the entrance of Fernando Cardim, one of the flagship projects of the programme Favela-Bairro. (Photo by author.)

Furthermore, the implementation of urban programmes such as Favela-Bairro and Rio Cidade has been highly politically motivated, and the projects have served as showcases for election campaigns (figure 10.5). Despite Brazil's electoral law which bars mayors from seeking instant re-election to higher office, the position of mayor is often used as a trampoline for access to higher positions in Brazilian politics. Most mayors therefore try to initiate as many projects as they can in a four-year mandate. And to insure succession to their allies, many of these projects are initiated at the end of their terms.[52] Some have even suggested that Rio Cidade and Favela-Bairro – both carried out near the end of Cesar Maia's term, during a political campaign, were used to blackmail the public into electing his candidate, Luiz Paulo Conde, so that the projects would be carried to completion.[53] As a result, many individual public works suffered from the short time span of campaign politics, and were built with a lack of concern for long-term maintenance.

Today Rio Cidade and Favela-Bairro have become so associated with ex-Mayor Cesar Maia that they have become key tools in his recent campaign for Governor of the State of Rio de Janeiro. They have also been the object of fierce attacks by his political opponents. Central to Mr. Maia's October 1998 campaign was a new project called Re-Cidade which follows the same lines as Rio Cidade to upgrade infrastructure and urban image in other large and medium-sized cities in the state.[54]

A final source of criticism has been the growing involvement of the private sector in public works due to limited public funds to support urban projects in Rio. With the increased use of urban furniture for commercial

Figure 10.5. Showcase project: a new community center created as part of Favela-Bairro interventions in São Sebastian is used as backdrop for political propaganda by Cesar Maia and his followers during the fall 1998 election campaign. (Photo by author.)

advertising, some now fear the corporatization of the city's public spaces. Corporate sponsors have already set the conditions under which some public spaces are used in Rio. For example, in Ipanema the Praça Nossa Senhora da Paz, a key public park, has recently been restored with funding from Citibank. The bank's corporate logo now appears at each entrance to the park, and free *tai chi chuan* classes are offered to local residents provided they purchase and wear a Citibank t-shirt for the activity.

Concluding Thoughts

Recent image-making efforts in Rio have exemplified the relationship between space, power, and social justice in a society inundated with free-market ideology and intensified social polarization. Today, as the public has been increasingly removed from the decision-making process, and as elites and large corporations have taken control of urban space and its representation, urban image construction has become a means of manipulating public opinion and controlling social behaviour to serve particular social, political or economic interests. Decision-makers have used the built environment to manipulate consciousness, and they have disguised this manipulation in order to reproduce their political ideology and naturalize their power. As the concretization of elite aspirations, the image of the city has become an essential tool in the consolidation of elite hegemony and the perpetuation of social inequality.

But the example of Rio de Janeiro also demonstrates how such attempts at social control and exclusion have not always gone unchallenged. People excluded from the dominant image have often resorted to diverse forms of popular reworking to express symbolically their resistance to this system of growing inequity. In their attempts to contest elite control of spatial use and meaning, they have used the built environment and everyday practices to subvert the agendas of dominant groups and derail their systems of representation through ridicule, appropriation, symbolic boycott, unintended use, and unruly activities such as graffiti and vandalism. The example of Rio also suggests that the current use of cosmetic solutions as a form of popular pacification is highly unsustainable, and may actually be counterproductive. By camouflaging the deep social problems of Brazilian society, and denying representation to certain population groups, such actions may in reality only exacerbate social instability and conflict, and ultimately tarnish Rio's international image.

Notes

1. For a survey of the literature related to city marketing and image making, see G.J. Ashworth and H. Voogd, *Selling The City: Marketing Approaches in Public Sector Urban Planning*, London, Belhaven Press, 1990; H. Madsen, 'Place Marketing in

Liverpool: A Review,' *Journal Of Urban And Regional Research*, vol. 16, 1992, pp. 633-640; P. Kotler *et al.*, *Marketing Places: Attracting Investment, Industry and Tourism to Cities, States and Nations*, New York, Free Press, 1993; G. Kearns and C. Philo, *Selling Places: The City as Cultural Capital, Past and Present*, Oxford, Pergamon, 1993; and B. Erickson and M. Roberts, 'Marketing Local Identity: The Importance of the Physical,' paper presented at the 17th International Making Cities Livable Conference, Freiburg, Germany, 1995; S.V. Ward, *Selling Places: The Marketing and Promotion of Towns and Cities 1850-2000*, London, E & FN Spon, 1998.

2. D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry Into The Origins of Cultural Change*, Cambridge, MA, Blackwell, 1989; H. Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace*, Paris, Editions Anthropos, 1986; M. Sorkin (ed.), *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, New York, Noonday Press, 1992; and J. Urry, *Consuming Places*, New York, Routledge, 1995.

3. M.C. Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1994; and S. Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991.

4. On tourism and its economic and spatial implications, see S. Page, *Urban Tourism*, New York, Routledge, 1995; R.E. Wood, 'Tourism and The State: Ethnic Options and Construction of Otherness,' in M. Picard and E. Wood (eds.), *Tourism, Ethnicity and the State in Asian and Pacific Societes*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1997, pp. 1-34; C.M. Law, *Urban Tourism: Attracting Visitors to Large Cities*, New York, Mansell, 1993; and R. Britton, 'The Image of the Third World in Tourism Marketing,' *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 6, 1991, pp. 318-329.

5. On the relationship between space and society, see J.A. Agnew and J.S. Duncan, *The Power of Place: Bringing Together Geographical and Sociological Imaginations*, Boston, Unwin Hyman, 1989; M. Gottdiener and A.P. Lagopoulos, *The City and the Sign: An Introduction to Urban Semiotics*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1986; A.D. King, *Re-presenting the City: Ethnicity, Capital, and Culture in the 21st-Century Metropolis*, New York, New York University Press, 1996; and Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace*.

6. For discussions of the role of the built environment in the formation of self- and collective identity, see K. Lynch, *The Image of the City*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1960; E.C. Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, London, Pion, 1976; and D.J. Walmsley, *Urban Living: The Individual and the City*, London, Longmans, 1988.

7. P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989; M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992; and D. Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1985.

8. Visitor's expectations are at times dissonant with local reality, and attempts at image construction to fit those expectations can be highly disruptive for local population groups. For more on the socio-cultural impacts of tourism development, see F. Ascher, *Tourism: Transnational Corporations and Cultural Identities*, Paris,

UNESCO Press, 1985; D. Hayden, *The Power of Place: Claiming Urban Landscapes as People's History*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1995; D. MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of The Leisure Class*, New York, Schocken Books, 1976; J.E. Turnbridge and G.J. Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past as a Resource in Conflict*, New York, J. Wiley, 1996; and G.J. Ashworth and A.G.J. Dietvorst, *Tourism and Spatial Transformations*, Wallingford, CAB International, 1995.

9. S. Sassen, 'Whose City is it? Globalization and the Formulation of New Claims,' *Public Culture*, vol. 8, 1996, pp. 205-223; S. Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities*, Cambridge, MA, and Oxford, Blackwell, 1995; S. Fainstein, I. Gordon, and I and M. Harloe, *Divided Cities*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1992; and Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory*.

10. Place-promoting, money-making activities such as World Exhibitions and Olympic Games often serve as a means of pacification by directing attention away from internal conflicts in a form of social control reminiscent of the 'bread-and-circus' tactics of the late Roman empire. See, for example, Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory*; Sorkin (ed.), *Variations on a Theme Park*; and Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*.

11. Erickson and Roberts, *Marketing Local Identity*; and Kearns and Philo, *Selling Places*.

12. J. Holston, *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989.

13. D. Underwood, 'Civilizing Rio de Janeiro: Four Centuries of Conquest through Architecture,' *Art Journal*, vol. 51, no. 4, 1992, pp. 48-57; and J.D. Needell, *A Tropical Belle Époque: Elite Culture and Society in Turn of The Century Rio de Janeiro*, New York, Cambridge Press, 1987.

14. C. Vainer and M.O. Smolka, 'Em tempos de liberalismo: Tendências e desafios do planejamento urbano no Brasil,' in R. Piquet and A.C.T. Ribeiro (eds.), *Brasil: Território da Desigualdade*, Rio de Janeiro, J. Zahar Ed., Fundação Universitária Jose Bonifacio, 1991.

15. A. Garotinho, *Violência e criminalidade no Estado do Rio de Janeiro: diagnóstico e propostas para uma política democrática de segurança pública*, Rio de Janeiro, Hama, 1998.

16. *Brazil in Figures*, Rio de Janeiro, Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatistica (IBGE), 1997.

17. M. Nichols, 'Unruly Rio Tidies up: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Hosts Earth Summit Conference,' *Maclean's*, June 15, 1992, p. 42.

18. 'Arruaça na Areia,' *Veija*, October 28, 1992, pp. 18-22.

19. IPLANRIO, *Strategic Plan for the City of Rio de Janeiro: Rio Forever Rio*, Rio de Janeiro, Iplanrio-Empresa Municipal de informatica e planjamento S.A., 1996.

20. V. del Rio, 'A requalificação urbana e a imagem da cidade o projeto Rio Cidade no Rio de Janeiro,' draft for publication in *ÓCULUM*, June 1998.

21. 'The City of God, or Someone,' *The Economist*, vol. 340, no. 7985, 1996, p. 56.

22. Prefeitura da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, *Riocidade: Linhas gerais do projeto urbanistico,* Rio de Janeiro, Iplanrio – Empresa Municipal de informatica e planjamento S.A., 1996; V. del Rio, 'Reconquistando A Imagem Urbana E O Espaço Dos Pedestres O Projeto Rio-Cidade No Centro Funcional Do Méier, Rio De Janeiro,' paper presented at the VIth Meeting of the National Association of Graduate Research in Urban Planning, University of Brasilia, May 1995; and V. del Rio, 'Restructuring Inner-City Areas in Rio de Janeiro: Urban Design for a Pluralistic Downtown,' *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research,* vol. 14, no. 1, 1997, pp. 20-34.

23. Organization of the United Nations, 'Rio Cidade (Urbanism back to the Streets),' *Best Practices Database,* <http://www.bestpractices.org>, 1998.

24. Prefeitura da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, *Favela Bairro: Integrating Slums in Rio de Janeiro,* Rio de Janeiro, Iplanrio – Empresa Municipal de informatica e planjamento S.A., 1997.

25. C.R. Duarte, O.L. Silva, and A. Brasileiro, *Favela, un bairro: Propostas metodologicas para intervençao publica em favelas do Rio de Janeiro,* São Paulo, Pro-Editores, 1996.

26. D. Magurian, 'Novo futuro para favelas do Rio,' *Bidextra* Supplement to *O BID,* publication of the Interamerican Bank of Development, 1997.

27. Organization of the United Nations, 'Favela-Bairro Program, Rio,' *Best Practices* database, <http://www.bestpractices.org>, 1998.

28. IBGE (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatistica), *Brazil in Figures,* Rio de Janeiro, 1997.

29. D. Matta and S. Schmidt, 'Que venham os turistas: Campanha pretende elevar em 55% o numero de visitantes do Rio até o ano 2000,' *O Globo,* August 28, 1998, p. 13.

30. A. Wiederhecker, 'Turismo do Rio gahou fôlego em 97,' *Jornal do Brasil,* March 5, 1998.

31. IPLANRIO, *Strategic Plan.*

32. *Rio Incomparavel,* Rio de Janeiro, Riotur (Rio de Janeiro Tourism Authority), 1998.

33. *Ibid.*

34. 'Sorte sua vider numa cidade em que vocé adoraria passar ferias,' (author's translation).

35. Professor D. Machado, interviewed in *Trabalho sobre Rio Cidade,* video edited by Roberto Dyer, Rio de Janeiro, Universidad Federal de Rio de Janeiro, 1997.

36. L.C. Ribeiro *et al., Observatorio de politicos urbanas e gestao municipal. Projeto plano de avaliação do programa Favela-Bairro,* Rio de Janeiro, IPPUR, 1997.

37. Underwood, 'Civilizing Rio de Janeiro'; and M. Abreu, *Evolução Urbana do Rio de Janeiro,* 3rd ed., Rio de Janeiro, Iplanrio, 1997.

38. Matta and Schmidt, 'Que venham os turistas,' p. 13.

39. 'Quanto mais longe, mais barato: Nos bairros da Zona Norte, obras custam

bem menos,' *Jornal Do Brasil,* May 18, 1996, p. 20. In the second phase of Rio Cidade, in which most projects have been located in lower-income areas far from tourist sites, efforts have been made to keep costs low and avoid some of the excesses for which the first phase of Rio Cidade has become notorious. Most designers have attempted to come up with original designs using urban furniture already in storage in the city's warehouses. See del Rio, 'A requalificação urbana.'

40. Professor W. Bittar, interviewed in *Trabalho sobre Rio Cidade,* video edited by Roberto Dyer, Rio de Janeiro, Universidad Federal de Rio de Janeiro, 1997.

41. Prefeitura da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, *Riocidade,* p. 19. Ironically, it is those same street vendors that Norma Evenson once identified as being at the heart of Copacabana's identity. See N. Evenson, *Two Brazilian Capitals: Architecture and Urbanism in Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia,* New Haven, Yale University Press, 1973.

42. Prefeitura da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, *Riocidade,* pp. 3-5.

43. *Ibid.,* p. 7.

44. This language was used by the architect from IPLANRIO who guided me and other visitors through a few of the Favela-Bairro projects, and it is also found in most of the literature put out by the prefectura on Favela-Bairro.

45. See, for example, S. Chalhoub, *Trabalho, lar e botequim: o cotidiano dos trabalhadores no Rio de Janeiro da Belle Epoque,* Sao Paulo, Brasiliense, 1986; T.A. Meade, *'Civilizing' Rio: Reform and Resistance in a Brazilian City 1889-1930,* University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997; and Underwood, 'Civilizing Rio de Janeiro.'

46. Prefeitura da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, *Favela Bairro.*

47. For an earlier but similar criticism of elite perceptions of the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro, see J.E. Perlman, *The Myth Of Marginality: Urban Poverty And Politics in Rio De Janeiro,* Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976.

48. Duarte, Silva, and Brasileiro, *Favela, un bairro.*

49. *Ibid.* (author's translation).

50. E. Bessa, 'Avaliação crítica de um programa municipal de urbanização de favelas na cidade do Rio de Janeiro,' paper presented at the meeting of the Latin American Studies Association in Guadalajara, Mexico, April 1997.

51. Magurian, 'Novo futuro para favelas do Rio.'

52. 'The City of God, or Someone,' p. 56.

53. Bittar, as interviewed in *Trabalho sobre Rio Cidade.*

54. M. Dias, 'Informe,' *Jornal Do Brasil,* June 7, 1998, p. 6.

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