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Walking Methodologies, Digital Platforms and the Interrogation of Olympic Spaces: The '#RioZones-Approach'

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Abstract

Mega-sport events (MSEs) target, sequestrate and territorialise a 'host' (city – or nation) to exist, sustain themselves, survive and deliver on organisational objectives. Yet, little systematic and empirical evidence examines such urban processes, specifically in real-time during 'live staging' periods, including related implications for host community inclusion (and exclusion). In this article, we present the *#RioZones* project; a series of physical-embodied and digitally enabled primary data collection methods focused around embodied walking and participatory digital methods aimed at: i) providing a deeper – and disruptive - interrogation of the spatial, social and economic implications of MSE organisation, ii) developing creative ways to share empirical insights via microblogging, vlogging, media and public engagement platforms, and iii) bringing together academic, industry, and policy stakeholders to debate and influence change. Embedded physically and digitally (albeit temporarily) into Rio's Olympic city, we refer to this strategically planned amalgam of methods as the *'#RioZones-Approach'*. Our findings reveal that utilising a set of post-positivist methods and approaches can be highly effective for creating new lines of (disruptive) inquiry and qualitative knowledge insights, currently latent in this field of analysis, and in related critical tourism and event studies). Additionally, we illustrate how projects with a longitudinal ethos present a unique opportunity to maintain longer-term scrutiny on spatial-urban processes and involve key stakeholders to critique contested MSE legacies. Our article provides a detailed, but single snapshot into the life of an ever evolving, live and stakeholder engaged research project. In terms of significance and contribution, we argue that *#RioZones* – and the *#RioZones-Approach* - presents an ideal platform to bring together new, existing, creative and disruptive research projects striving to offer a deeper level of analysis and interrogation toward the study and intersection of events, urban space, and host community inclusion and exclusion.

Key words: Walking methodology, Digital platforms, Spatial-urban processes, Host community inclusion, #RioZones-Approach, Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

Introduction

MSEs, in order to exist, sustain themselves, survive and deliver on organisational objectives, *must* depend on a 'host' city – or even whole nation - abundant in both physical-infrastructural and symbolic-cultural resources. Territorialising urban space is deemed necessary to (re)shape and (re)configure existing geographies to temporarily stage official elite sport, cultural and commercial activity. The most visible aspects of spatial territorialisation are witnessed in the build-up to and live, physical staging of MSEs. Yet, while there is an abundance of critical studies focusing on the social and economic-geographic consequences of pre-Games planning (i.e. displacement) and post-Games outcomes (i.e. gentrification) (Giulianotti et al, 2015, Armstrong et al, 2017; Broudehoux and Sanchex, 2015; Coaffee (2015); Smith, 2016;

Duignan, Pappalepore & Everett, 2019; Vlachos, 2016), fewer studies interrogate the way MSEs effectively sequestrate, territorialise and takeover public space to make way for live staging. As a result, McGillivray & Frew (2015) have called for a deeper interrogation of such spatial-urban processes, and the broader relationship between MSE demands, urban space and public-civic spaces turned into private commercial enclaves – and who is included and excluded from these spaces (Duignan et al, 2019) before, during and after live staging periods. This is of importance as MSEs continue to extend their reach into both core and peripheral urban and rural geographies of their host cities. Examples of this spatial creep include the creation of non-sports, commercial and festive zones across the host city (Osborn & Smith, 2016; Giulianotti et al, 2015) and occupying public spaces like parks and squares in the process – often referred to as 'Live Sites' (McGillivray & Frew, 2015).

Throughout this article, we respond to McGillivray & Frew's (2015) call by making the case for a deeper interrogation of such spatial processes, how this can be achieved methodologically, and why this remains important for the field of critical event and tourism studies. We argue this is an increasingly pertinent issue as MSEs continually find themselves subject to significant scholarly, policy and public critique for their exclusionary tendencies, including locking-out local interests, while securing exclusive access for 'official' partners like the 'Olympic family' of sponsors, supporters and suppliers (Weber-Neuth, 2016). Most critical commentary to date has focused on the wider-exclusionary socio-economic conditions residing at the heart of the host city and/or nation with stakeholders often targeted for event-led regeneration or (re)development policy (Coaffee, 2015). By focusing on touristic-event spaces, places and environments our study served to unpack spatial imperatives, arrangements and organisational phenomena (re)shaping geographical contours, everyday public space, and the temporary inclusion and exclusions that simultaneously enable access to some and preclude access to others. There is a need for researchers studying MSEs to make use of real-time, embodied research methods to more effectively capture local nuances and idiosyncrasies relating to each host context. It is with these factors in mind that we purposively draw on an amalgam of embodied walking methodologies (i.e. real-time walking observation, photo and video diaries) and participatory digital methods (i.e. utilising vlogging and micro-blogging sites like Twitter) that come together to comprise the *'RioZones-Approach'*. In response to the aforementioned challenges, and opportunities surrounding novel methods utilised and presented across the *RioZones-Approach*, our study was guided by the following research questions:

1) In what way can an amalgam of both embodied and digital practices be utilised by researchers to better understand, and more deeply interrogate, the spatial arrangements and impacts of MSE spaces?

2) How can these practices serve to disseminate findings, foster collaboration, and stimulate debate between academic and non-academic audiences?

3) Beyond the event itself, what are the benefits of both physical and digital platforms for scrutinising (highly contested) legacies?

Structurally, we begin by justifying the need to interrogate the organisational and spatial implications of MSEs, through examining how and why MSEs sequestrate, territorialise and privatise public-civic space. Second, we identify a number of creative and post-positivist methodological practices that can enable deeper and more disruptive insight(s) into the spatial measures and implications rarely identified in the context of MSE impact analysis (Pappalepore and Duignan, 2016). Third, we introduce the *#RioZones-Approach*: focusing on the benefits for researchers in applying mobile methods (embodied and digital) to examine the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. Throughout, we illustrate how a strategic and creative amalgam of physical and digital methods has the power to disrupt linear, sometimes entrenched, approaches to generating knowledge – producing new insights, sharing them more effectively (with academic and non-academic actors) and providing guidance for how others might make use of these techniques in pursuing critical tourism and event studies.

Interrogating [Mega] Event Spaces: Situating the Study

As highlighted in the introduction, MSEs require a 'host' to support the organisational requirements of official sports, cultural and commercial activities. Large, complex organisational projects like the Olympics require experienced personnel to execute project objectives at both the *national* and *local* level. Successful project planning and delivery is highly dependent on the availability of both internal *and* external resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). This is because the Olympics is one of the world's most complex organisational projects, requiring significant financial and human resources in order to fuel and sustain itself. Following a successful bid, the Olympics influences (some would argue, determines) urban planning and development in the host city, requiring the reconfiguration of public and private space to enable the event project to be delivered, on time and to the specification of the Host City Contract (HCC) signed with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) (e.g. Müller, 2015). In the process, urban public spaces, including parks, squares, streets, rivers and beaches are opened up to commodification processes, offered to external agents as 'assets' to be exploited for extrinsic gain (Osborn & Smith, 2016; McGillivray & Frew, 2015; Gogishvili, 2018). This involves real estate grabs (Gaffney, 2015), the creation of exclusive commercial enclaves (Broudehoux & Sanchez, 2015) and the development of complex and sophisticated human and non-human security and policing operations (Coaffee, 2015; Pauschinger, 2018). Legislative exceptions are passed (Broudehoux & Sanchez, 2015), new (temporary) advertising and trading regulations introduced, and existing business activity restricted (Pappalepore & Duignan, 2016) to comply with the contractual obligations of the HCC. As devices to reimagine cities-as-destinations, MSEs enable the local entrepreneurial state to engineer an urban facelift, prioritising developments that spearhead highly aestheticized images and narratives (by and large) for external consumption (Steinbrink, 2013; McGillivray, 2018).

An emergent group of scholars in the tourism, (critical) events and urban geography fields focus on examining the complex spatial arrangements influenced and demanded by hosting MSEs (Hagemann, 2010; Klauser, 2011; Smith, 2013, 2016; Frew & McGillivray, 2008; Broudehoux & Sanchez, 2015; Pappalepore & Duignan, 2016; McGillivray & Frew, 2015; Weber-Neuth, 2016; Pavoni, 2017). This list is not exhaustive, but illustrative of an international grouping of scholars who have a common interest in exploring the relationship between events, urban space, and multivariate effects on both internal and external MSE actors (including residents, businesses, and sponsors). Increasingly, there has been a focus on how the reconfiguration of public and private spaces across host cities foregrounds some interests while marginalising others, often on the basis of possession of social and economic capital (Raco and Tunney, 2010). Various studies have shown how MSE planning and delivery arrangements have the power to alienate host communities and local stakeholders (both residents and small businesses) across the Olympic (project) lifecycle - before, during and after the event itself (OECD, 2008; Work Foundation, 2010; House of Lords, 2013; McGillivray & Frew, 2015; Smith, 2016).

Crucially, these scholars have also adopted methods of inquiry that are at odds with conventional thinking in respect of understanding MSE impacts. In the 1990s and early 2000s, the study of MSEs was dominated by economic analyses, quantifying the return on investment host cities could expect from hosting. Adhering to positivist paradigms, scholars relied on quantitative measures of 'success' that could be presented to policy makers and potential event hosts to justify event bids (MacRury & Poynter, 2009). Additionally, non-economic MSE outcomes like sports participation, health improvement, and infrastructural enhancements were also translated into key performance indicators and played a significant role in ex-ante projections and ex-post event analysis and evaluation (Getz, 2018). Yet, such entrenched epistemological, methodological and evaluative approaches offered limited qualitative insight into the highly situational and contextual factors that influence the spatial impacts on the host city, and within its communities.

Post-Positivism and MSE Academic-Activism

Though occupying diverse fields and disciplines, scholars examining the complex spatial arrangements of MSEs are increasingly drawing on post-positivist epistemological positions. By doing so, they are foregrounding lines of inquiry that seek to avoid reductionism: accepting complexity, contestation, and even contradiction (e.g. Müller, 2017) as they seek to observe and document power relations present in the planning and delivery of MSEs. Rather than assess whether MSEs are an 'efficient' or 'effective' means of delivering on a set of prescribed performance indicators, critical scholars are interested in what these mega spectacles afford, for whom and with what short and longer-term consequences – especially for those parts of the host population constituted as 'beneficiaries'. We too adhere to the notion that the mode of inquiry needs to be able to capture how, recalling Foucault, 'individuals constantly escape, evade, and subvert the functioning of discipline' (Miller, 1987: 196) and how local resistances, 'fragile relays' and 'contested locales' (Rose, 1999: 51) are present in MSE governance arrangements, defined by 'subtleties and micro negotiations

of relations of power' (Petersen, 1997: 203). Reviewing official pronouncements, documenting policy and legislative actions, observing changes in the physical urban environment and working alongside local activists and social movements affected by MSE developments are just some of the ways that scholars can describe, make visible and, ultimately, disrupt conventional thinking. Many of these values, attributes and foci serve as the foundation for our *#RioZones-Approach*.

In keeping with a focus on disruption and using research to initiate change there is some evidence that action-focused methodological approaches are also being utilized, revealing deeper insights, and acting to subvert or disrupt aspects of MSE planning and delivery. For example, scholars like Gaffney (2015) and Boykoff (2012; 2015) have been making use of immersive, ethnographic, activist-academic methods of inquiry to draw attention to the worst excesses of the MSE 'takeover' (Müller, 2015), particularly on the most vulnerable segments of host city populations. Gaffney (2015) moved to Rio in 2009 and spent the years up to, and including, the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, documenting the changes taking place across the city. This included the passing of exceptional legislation, enabling the displacement of residents from favelas and the creation of spatial exclusions as new housing developments and official venues were erected. Boykoff (2015) has also been a very 'public' activist-academic, drawing attention to the intense militarised securitisation that accompanies MSEs, and translating his research enquiries into public pronouncements that seek to mobilise change within awarding bodies (i.e. the IOC and FIFA), sporting federations and host governments alike. As indicated in the latter sections of this article, we attempted to use similar communicative techniques to politicise similar organisational and spatial challenges identified across *#RioZones*.

More recently, Talbot & Carter (2018) conducted a year-long ethnography of the activities of activist groups in Rio before the Olympic Games, focused on housing evictions and human rights issues. Like Boykoff and Gaffney, by making use of a more 'involved' form of research inquiry, they sought to access deeper insights into complex phenomena, involving attendance at public meetings, observing resident protests, documenting housing demolitions and working closely with activist groups in a translation and journalistic capacity (Talbot & Carter, 2018). Foregrounding activists' local resistances, and contested locales, these authors are more effectively able to uncover the practices of organisers and their external partners (IOC and sponsors) as well as those who are most affected by urban developmental strategies.

We are encouraged by the increasing quantity and quality of research being conducted into the spatial effects of MSEs and the greater emphasis towards (participatory) action research (Reason & Bradbury, 2013; Chevalier & Buckles, 2013) is also to be welcomed. Specifically, researchers' adoption and application of these methods enable them to access deeper insights related to the localised impacts of MSE planning and delivery, for often marginalised or silenced voices (Duignan et al, 2017). In generating new understandings, participatory approaches give greater value to the knowledge, capabilities and experiences of all those

involved in or affected by a situation. As a result, these approaches represent powerful means of exposing power relations, and offering pathways to enact positive change for marginalised groups – whether they be residents of an MSE host destination or small businesses that feel sidelined by the trading regulations imposed upon them. The work of Gaffney, Boykoff, and Talbot & Carter is intended to be disruptive, challenging conventional discourses about MSEs (as economic and social panaceas), and adopting modes of inquiry that are unapologetically participatory and action-focused, working *with* research participants to initiate change. Their 'findings' are presented for public consumption, using traditional and new media platforms to extend reach to audiences other than academic contemporaries.

However, there remains a need for more MSE-focused research that utilises other embedded or involved methodological techniques, extending analysis to - and beyond - the event delivery phase itself. Physically immersive, sensory, and affective methods of knowing the urban environment, married to digital methods for capturing, documenting and communicating can be used effectively to access 'what' and 'how' particular spatial arrangements are produced when hosting MSEs. These tools of knowledge generation can also be useful in bridging the gap between the academic and non-academic actors involved in – and affected by – MSE planning and delivery arrangements. Our attempt to develop a method that integrates the physical and the digital is the *#RioZones-Approach*. This approach was designed to produce deeper insights and interrogations into the relations between MSEs and urban space, centred on the Rio 2016 Olympic Games during the pre-event and live staging period. The *#RioZones* project involved fieldwork conducted over three distinct time phases:

Phase 1: immediately before and during 'live staging' – between the 31 July – 8 August 2016;
Phase 2: immediately after 'live staging' – 25 August – 30 September 2016;
Phase 3: 2 years on legacy analysis between 5 March – 31 August 2018.

For the purpose of this article, our focus is on Phases 1 and 2, though we will briefly mention the importance of creating and sustaining a (digital) network and returning to the MSE host environment to assess (spatial and urban) event legacy outcomes. Phase 1 consisted of two overarching approaches: i) 'the physical' – a walking methodology, and ii) 'the digital' – an official Twitter hashtag (*#RioZones*) for microblogging, official vlog (riozones.wordpress.com) and a number of other media and public engagement activities (see Table 1 for details of the methods used across #RioZones). We will now attend to each approach in order.

Physical	Observational data gathered through walking planned routes;
	Geotagged photos (over 2000 photos generated);
	Auditory techniques (hours of audio narration of spaces under investigation recorded);

	Geotagged video capture (over 400 videos captured);
	Analysis of archival and media reports – before, during and after Rio 2016 (e.g. event sites, official Rio 2016 publications);
	Interviews (Phase 1 and Phase 2).
Digital	Official RioZones Vlog RioZones.wordpress.com;
	Microblogging Twitter hashtag: #RioZones
	Dissemination of findings via special interest groups (e.g. Tri-Net, and JISC lists);
	International media (e.g. Australian news interview on network 'ABC', through to 'Yahoo News');
	National media (e.g. public engagement piece via 'The Conversation');
	Regional media (e.g. BBC Radio interview by author live from Copacabana).

Table 1 – Physical and digital methods and tools.

Embodied Walking and Journeying Through the MSE City

Walking methodologies have become popularised in recent years across a variety of disciplines and fields, including anthropology, human geography, sociology, and tourism studies (Edensor, 1998; Fletcher & Platt, 2016; Ingold & Vergunst, 2008). Ingold and Vergunst emphasise that walking can provide access to the entangled relationships that exist between humans, non-humans, natural and social environments. One significant strand of this work has been a turn towards walking as means of "theorising the world through consideration of the everyday pedestrian practices of others" (Bates & Rhys-Taylor 2017). Walking as a method of inquiry enables observation, experience and sense-making of various phenomena. Urban environments are amenable to such methods as they afford an opportunity to experience physical change through walking, and other associated practices like riding bikes, travelling in the back of a taxi, or modes of public transport. In the social sciences, and other fields, the turn to mobilities has also reinforced the value of walking and other mobile methods. Encountering the contemporary city through walking "induces a mobile, grounded perspective and foregrounds corporeal, sensual and affective matters", enabling the researcher to "observe issues unfolding at street level, if only for a short time" (Bates & Rhys-Taylor 2017, p4). There are always limitations to research methods relating to the length of time spent immersed in the subject context and the vagaries of urban life that change so frequently and with varying effects on those inhabiting - or visiting – the city. Yet, when aligned with other methods of 'documentation', the experience of walking can be a powerful embodied method – complementary with other data sets like those presented and triangulated across the *#RioZones-Approach*.

Our *#RioZones* walking method represents a hybrid research mobilities approach, balancing the act of walking-as-observation with photographic, auditory and video capture techniques. This approach adheres to Springgay & Truman's (2017) contention that walking can be "merged with various other methods like

photography and video, drawing, sensory methods, different mapping techniques, including GPS (Global Positioning System), and performance" [online] (also see Springgay & Truman (2018)). We sought to follow the prescribed routes and paths mapped out by MSE organisers before and during Rio 2016, experiencing the flows and circulations of visitors and residents alike. The walking method also enabled us to experience waymarking, barriers, security checks, and the use of sounds and senses to attract visitors to fixed spaces (whether entry was restricted by barriers or not). Including the sensory dimension is important as the city is increasingly viewed as a place where heightened collective sensory experiences are managed and curated (Gandy, 2017). Our approach sought to include soundscapes (music), smells (street traders and official vendors) and collective gatherings (atmosphere) because "urban space is a stage that can be modified at will through light, sound, or other stimuli" (p365). We wanted to explore how the Olympic city was modified and atmospheres curated to produce the desired outcomes for organisers - and to what extent these might be resisted or negotiated. In order to ensure we were able to experience the 'right' spaces we undertook significant pre-event planning. Prior to arriving in Rio, the authors' examined official event publications (e.g. maps, visitor brochures) to familiarise themselves with the host city context, and more importantly: the locality, character and pre-event uses of the public spaces temporarily (re)engineered and used as a platform for Olympic sports, cultural and commercial activities.

For *#RioZones* we utilised a number of techniques to document our walking observations. We used photography, video, and audio descriptions to document the spatial transformations taking place in Rio before and during the early part of the Olympic Games. We imposed some structure on these observations by capturing or recording information related to criteria developed in response to the study's principal research questions. These themes were split down into:

i) What kind of public spaces were sequestrated and territorialised - and why;
ii) How were these urban spaces spatially organised and zoned, and what human (e.g. security personnel, Games volunteers) and non-human actors (e.g. signage, barriers) actors were responsible for organising and affording such conditions;
iii) What were the associated spatial impacts on visitor flow, circulations and the creation of festival atmospheres across the Olympic city;
iv) To what extent did event spaces emerge as a platform for protestation, contestation and/or resistance efforts.

Across the 10-day observational period of *#RioZones* we walked to, from and within as many of the main host event zones and official venues as possible. These included: the i) Olympic Stadium, ii) Maracanã Stadium, iii) Copacabana's temporary Beach Volleyball stadium and, iv) the Live Site at Porto Maravilha officially referred to as the 'Olympic Boulevard' (OB). The OB played host to live public screenings of ceremonies and sports activity, inclusive of the majority of Rio 2016 cultural programming and official sponsors, suppliers and supporters, and a series of local-regional retail and hospitality small enterprises.

Attempting to mimic the visitor 'journey' and 'gaze' - and to facilitate immersion in the urban context - one of the authors' stayed within the main event zone of Copacabana and pre-booked tickets to experience Olympic sports, culture and commercial activity. Immersive in nature, our methodology was designed to bring the research as close as possible to the phenomena – and context – under investigation and expose it to a multi-dimensional and multi-sensory experience of event environments (Adams & Guy, 2007). Identifying, first-hand, the spatial dynamics of the MSE urban context was central to the effectiveness of our methodology, helping to unpack "the systematic description of events, behaviours, and artefacts in the social setting chosen for study" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989: 79).

The walking methodology provided a way into understanding more about the dynamics of temporary Olympic enclaves as they interacted and replaced existing uses of public space. Experiencing Last Mile spaces, Live Sites and the spaces in-between further enabled the authors to observe how people subverted these spatial arrangements, exhibiting localised micro resistances that contested official doctrine. These included micro entrepreneurs selling products close to, or outside, official Games venues, infringing on the trading regulations in place for the Games (see Figure 6). Or, unofficial sponsors participating in ambush marketing activity within regulated advertising-free zones. The interactive nature of the walking approach, aligned with the documentation and capture of visual evidence of spatial change, produced powerful imagery that disrupts official narratives produced by MSE organisers. Over the duration of the fieldwork, over 400 videos and 2000 photos were generated. Below, we present a short slideshow of the kind of visual evidence collected, related to the criteria and key themes for analysis.

[Insert Figure 1 (left)]. Illustrating the way in which physical barriers, security and official Games Makers play a role in zoning public space.

[Insert Figure 2 (middle)]. Illustrating how, once zoned, wayfinding signage is installed to influence economic and socio-spatial relations, visitor flows and circulations.

[Insert Figure 3 (right)]. The installation of airport style security on Copacabana beach, illustrating the line between public-civic space and newly privatised-commercial enclaves.

[Insert Figure 4 (left)]. Illustrating the types of extraordinary militarised ways – and actors used – to create secure, 'safe' spaces and control visitor flows and circulations.

[Insert Figure 5 (middle)]. Illustrating the kinds of micro-level attempts by locals to engage in entrepreneurial leveraging of (usually inaccessible) Olympic visitor economies, an example of resisting determined, private-commercial enclaves installed by Rio 2016.

[Insert Figure 6 (right)]. One of many examples illustrating the way newly zoned public spaces become commodified and subject to corporatisation effects – usually leading to the exclusion of non-official product offerings (Authors own Figures 1 – 6.)

From our walking methodology, we were able to document and capture the relationship between the event, urban space, and visitor interactions. Figure 7 illustrates how, within an 'existing territory' the Olympics temporarily takes over via the imposition of a 'project territory' afforded by the strategic deployment of temporary – often contingent – actors (Dansero & Mela, 2015). The aim of the (temporary overlaid) project territory is to reconfigure public space in a way to afford easy access for visitors to engage with – and consume within - official Olympic event zones. Existing travel and transport arrangements are reconfigured to suit the needs of external actors (the IOC VIPs and corporate sponsors, for example). New transitory zones are created to funnel Olympic audiences from existing transport hubs to official Olympic enclaves. One good example is the 'Last Mile' transit spaces to and from venues required as part of the HCC. These Last Mile spaces represent the final stretch of the visitor's journey before going through airport style security, and ticketed entrance points to access the official venues. Referred to as "liminal and liminoidal transit zones" (Duignan & O'Brien, 2017) the Last Mile is an under-researched but vitally important and interesting spatial phenomenon in and of itself – for several reasons.

[Insert Figure 7 – Conceptual overview of spatial territorialisation, economic and socio-spatial dynamics (Authors own.)]

However, the recording and documenting of spatial changes is unsatisfactory unless a wider audience – particularly those who can influence and effect change – is engaged. If not, whilst walking observations can provide a window into localised effects, it may not – by itself – produce the necessary, disruptive change required to achieve more inclusive economic and socio-spatial outcomes. We now discuss the next central aspect of this article: the value of using participatory digital techniques to extend the reach and engagement with *#RioZones* and bring in influential stakeholders of whom may help support change during live staging and beyond the event itself.

Participatory Digital Methods: Extending Reach and Effects

Over recent years we have witnessed a (digital) ethnographic turn (Lupton, 2015, Pink et al, 2015) whereby the ethnographic ethos has been adapted to fit the affordances of digital culture. When studying MSEs, or any other touristic context, it is no longer satisfactory to deal in the binaries of offline and online, virtual and real. Instead, as Pink et al (2015) suggest, "we live and act in a context that is, today, almost always co-constituted and entangled with digital technologies, content, presence and communication" (p2). MSEs are open to (digital) forms of research because the changes they bring about to urban locations, over time, are amenable to observation and documentation. MSEs are also, increasingly, digitally-mediated events

which generate significant media content that can also be the source of valuable data. Instead of a reliance on text, digital (ethnography) differs from its analogue variant in its use of "video, photography or blogging' (Pink et al, 2015, p3).

In utilising digital methods, knowledge can be captured and documented via online field notes, the production of microblogs and vlogs (public or private), and the use of social media as a data generation tool and dissemination technique. Lupton (2015) states that researchers can use digital tools to network and build conversations, help develop professional practice and, enable their research to reach a wider public. Linked to this idea of professional practice is the idea of openness, where "digital sharing and collaboration become ways of being and relating to others" (Pink et al, 2015, p11) – this includes other academics, but also beyond to key industry and policy stakeholders. Digitally-mediated research is undertaken with others, including those posting online, sharing videos, writing blogs and filtering photographs. Here, capturing and sharing photographs can be considered a knowledge making practice – though open to adaptation through editing techniques and creative reimagining (filtering) – they also evoke feelings, emotions and perceptions of everyday publics on their urban locale.

How research is disseminated is also an important consideration. Websites, blogs, social media and press releases can be viewed as tools to broadcast research 'findings' in a manner that can often reinforce power relations between the researcher and the 'researched'. However, adopting a more open and collaborative process, the same 'platforms' can be used to invite participation in the research process. Yet, the devil (or the beauty) is in the detail: *How can this be afforded? And, does the researcher have the confidence and the ability to invite key stakeholders into knowledge production, dissemination and application?*

Despite the temptation to foreground the 'digital' in research, Pink et al (2015) suggest that it is important not to be overly digital-centric. In the context of studying MSEs, there is value in understanding the changing dynamics of urban space, observing changes in the physical environment by being located in the city for an extended period of time, as described in our walking methodology. These methods need not be solely digital. However, there is also value in capturing those changes using the new tools that the digital environment provides. Geo-tagging the photographs taken by others in the Olympic city and using the meta-data to produce a chronology of changes can add to physical observations. Crowd-sourcing video footage using the medium of social media platforms can help the researcher extend their data gathering process with the help of non-academic actors. In sum, it is important for researchers to be reflective about how central digital methods might be to their work and identify when digital forms of data collection and/or dissemination can be most complementary or supplementary for achieving research aims.

In the *#RioZones* project, we integrated digital (blogging and social media) methods as knowledge creating and sharing practices. Complementing walking observation and sensory experiences, our digital methods

extended the research to include stories generated by others and alternative voices (academic and resident). Prior to arriving in Rio, we set-up and disseminated information to academic and industry networks (like the Tourism Research Information Network (Tri-net), and JISC lists to promote the *#RioZones* project and encouraging – when live tweeting and vlogging started – debate, discussion and wider dissemination. The *#RioZones* Twitter and WordPress accounts served two key purposes. First, Twitter served as a medium for real-time dissemination of on-the-ground insights and enabled others living or visiting Rio to share their own representations using the hashtag. Second, the *#RioZones* vlog (see Figure 8) served as a platform for consolidating emerging findings and analysis generated every day from the walking methods and digital documentation. At the end of each day, the authors reflected on their observations of the Olympic city, recording a vlog, and sharing that with a wider audience of international academics and industry stakeholders. Conversations via Twitter were archived, representing another data set for analysis.

[Insert Figure 8 – Front page of *#RioZones* vlog].

If using digital methods, it is important to assess reach and potential effects. In total, by June 2018, the *#RioZones* vlog had received over 800 unique visitors, and over 3500 views with a range of prominent authors in the MSE field contributing to the spatial foci of the *#RioZones* project. One of the significant (and lasting) benefits of creating a digital space like *#RioZones* for ongoing research enquiries into MSEs is that it can be used to maintain a level of scrutiny of legacy outcomes (i.e. spatial transformations post-Games) beyond singular event cases. This is particularly critical due to the inherent deficiencies in 'event case study' approaches (see Yin, 2013) that predominantly serve to capture a 'moment in time' and space across what are very complex project lifecycles.

Beyond microblogging and vlogging activities, in a bid to increase research exposure, the authors co-wrote a series of short, but widely disseminated special-interest articles for "The Conversation" (www.theconversation.com/uk). These were written for an official dedicated section on the Rio 2016 Olympic Games [references withheld for anonymity]. These articles were read approximately 24000 times, cited and/or reposted verbatim by a number of other international platforms like "Yahoo! News". Furthermore (and partially as a result of these articles) the authors aimed to include a public engagement component to the *#RioZones-Approach* by leveraging physical and digital data findings and channels to generate international, national and regional media attention. As a result, the authors conducted media interviews via the BBC during the Games live from Copacabana [references withheld for anonymity] and after the Games for both regional and international media outlets like Australian national station: ABC [references withheld for anonymity]. These served as an ideal platform to share critical insights beyond traditional communicative routes. Media appearances included regional, national and international level radio and TV broadcasts – and a mixture of both pre-recorded and live segments. Yet, whilst such lines of dissemination do not constitute specific change and research impact, our efforts afforded a public window

(which may help to increase public knowledge and shape public opinion) into detailed analytical insights and phenomena, alongside situational, contextual challenges that would rarely be reported across mainstream media channels. It is important to note that all of the findings discussed in this section were disseminated in English – a limitation we acknowledge and will return to in the conclusion.

Limitations, Reflections and Future Considerations

It is important to not only view walking methodologies as simply a 'new' method for extracting already-existing data or to capture and record an environment like a neighbourhood or a defined urban space. Rather, as Springgay & Truman (2017) suggest, walking approaches to research methodology need to be about "activating problems and concepts in the midst of the event" [online]. In this sense, reflecting on the limitations of our own practice, it is important to go beyond using walking as just another observational technique within which the researcher is armed with technology like smartphones or video cameras to record events. Instead, to be meaningfully disruptive, it is more important that walking approaches to research methodology generate new dialogue and bring about critical responses and actions. For example, in the context of MSE spatial dynamics, walking methodologies could be utilised to work with neighbourhoods affected by change, inviting residents to participate in reclaiming their environment in line with their identified needs. Additionally, if researchers are to prolong the life of the research and actively produce change, a strategic approach into industry and policy network formation is crucial. Although examining and describing the spatial organisation and ordering practices provides a unique insight and window into the phenomenon, to be truly disruptive, researchers need to identify agents for change within the wider international, national, regional and host city situation and context. As part of the ongoing project lifecycle of *#RioZones*, we explicitly targeted influential gatekeepers and key informants to comment on the key emergent themes of the project. We suggest that although MSEs are delivered in different social, economic political environments and cultural contexts, incorporating such stakeholders into MSE analyses can be achieved fairly easily due to the relative stability of individual and organisations who play a primary and secondary role in planning, developing and delivering the project.

Although we appreciate the logistical and access challenges of incorporating sometime conflictual perspectives into a case study analysis, the stable occurrence of all these units represents an opportunity for researchers to interact, research and share findings with those outside of the academy. By triangulating data and bolstering evidence bases – we argue that creative-disruptive methods, as outlined by the *#RioZones-Approach*, may help support greater internal and external validity of results to other host city contexts. Yet, adding to these internal and external complexities, we too need to be aware of our individual positionality across planning and collecting data, and throughout the analysis stages outlined above. Indeed, we could devote an entire research article to this endeavour and the multifaceted ways the prism of our (for example, and not exhaustive list of characteristics) Western, white, middle-class, non-local, non-Portuguese speaking language proficiency directly and indirectly, consciously and unconsciously determined the decisions made

across the lifecycle of *#RioZones*. Yet, for now, we reflect on and acknowledge the influence of three key factors.

First, we identify *'limited temporal engagement'* as a factor limiting the longitudinal perspective achievable from our study. We attempted to overcome this limitation by remaining highly engaged with the case study context after we had left the research field, using digital methods and through planning the next stages of primary data collection working with key stakeholders located in the city. Second, we identify *'cultural awareness'* as a limiting factor because we are acutely aware that our involvement in Rio 2016 provided a relatively superficial understanding of the deeper cultural and institutional political, social and cultural context of the city. We attempted to address this limitation by utilising a series of secondary resources to familiarise ourselves with the environment and, as discussed above, included 17 in-depth interviews with key stakeholders located in Rio in the second phase of the research to provide greater local insights which complemented our own physical and digital approaches. Third, *'non-local perspectives'* was also a limitation of the study, linked to deficits in (local) cultural understanding, which affected how we planned and gathered data across the case study setting. Research decisions were largely informed by official Olympic documentation outlining how, where, and when event spaces and transit zones across residential and commercial districts were to be transformed. Such influences impacted, for example, on the date of our arrival, departure, and the spaces we walked, observed and analysed at different time intervals throughout the project. We suggest that researchers, in order to potentially overcome these biases and cultural limitations, may wish to partner with either fellow researchers and/or residents within the case study context to help navigate the host city from the perspective of different population groups. Adopting the technique of supported 'localised walk' may help generate greater, deeper understanding of local settings, culture and the nuances therein that can be often smoothed out and/or ignored in MSE analyses. This practice may well have a key utility value – enabling researchers to access specific places and spaces they may not venture alone without safe and de-risked, and/or without eased passage. Indeed, this factor raises an important issue about the inclusivity and accessibility of our analysis and communication more broadly. Namely, we emphasise the need to work collaboratively with those of native tongue to translate research findings so as to ensure that both domestic and international audiences can engage with research insights generated.

Conclusion

Using the Rio 2016 Olympic Games as a vehicle for empirical analysis, the *#RioZones* project - and specific *#RioZones-Approach* – illustrates the multifaceted, creative ways researchers can interrogate the organisational and spatial arrangements and effects of MSEs. The approaches detailed in this article can be leveraged to disrupt the linear, sometimes entrenched epistemological approaches to generating knowledge about MSEs. We sought not to simply subvert conventional methodological approaches but seek to

creatively synthesise new and existing approaches by integrating an amalgam of physical and digital methods together under the umbrella of an on-going case study.

Primarily, the *#RioZones-Approach* involved brought together embodied walking and participatory digital methods to document, capture and build a picture of the spatial organisation, arrangements, dynamics and ordering across the Rio 2016 Olympic city. Specifically, our methods generated insights into how civic public spaces are (temporarily) altered by capturing and documenting 'real time' changes as they occurred in an MSE host city. Real-time observational, photographic, video, and narrated analysis combined to provide the authors with an opportunity to share online microblogging analysis (i.e. via Twitter hashtag: *#RioZones*) with academic and non-academic stakeholders. Digital platforms like Twitter (microblogging) enabled the project, in a timely manner, to share on-the-ground live insights to disseminate initial findings and raw data (i.e. descriptive analysis, visual footage like photos and videos). If used effectively, these digital methods can democratise and extend access to knowledge beyond academia.

Leveraging alternative digital platforms for research enquiry, analysis and dissemination is an important contribution of this research. As a scholar, being receptive and open to opportunities to engage with non-traditional outlets is an additional learning point. By doing so, going outside the 'normal' lines of inquiry and debate, researchers can be disruptive and involve a whole set of stakeholders that they may not always invite for comment and/or for collaboration. Extending the research scope in this way produces an additional primary data set, the opportunity to critique and validate the researchers own descriptions and interpretations of the research setting, and a potentially powerful tool for dissemination and means of influencing both policy and practice within an Olympic host city, or other event and tourism setting. If implemented effectively researchers can bridge the void between physical and digital research activity to extend the reach of their work, invite wider critical commentary and reflection, and strategically align with influential stakeholders who may be able to initiate, and bring about, change.

Scholars of tourism and critical event studies may wish to apply the *#RioZones-Approach* to disrupt – or at least attempt to influence – how and why MSEs are bid for, planned and executed. This is particularly so as the approach goes part-way toward foregrounding the less-visible, often overlooked impacts of MSEs on the local spaces, dwellers and communities affected. Yet, thinking back to our earlier reflections and limitations of the study, there are immediate steps we can take to reconfigure the framework to either strengthen future analysis and/or mould to new case study settings both MSE and non-MSE related. We believe that opening up such insights – both the opportunities and challenges bestowed on host cities and communities - may have the potential to lead to greater democratic accountability and governance arrangements that promote fairer, more egalitarian MSE projects. For example, at the bid stage, utilising the networked publics enabled by digital platforms can lead to initial plans coming into the public domain more quickly, enabling affected groups and organisations to mobilise themselves at a faster rate.

Additionally, competing claims to 'truth' (about why the bid will be beneficial) can be aired and debated (and analysed by researchers), and researchers can work with activists and social movements to fact check, informing the debates as they develop. For example, in recent years, bid books have now become public documents, partly because of increasing lobby groups highlighted earlier and leaks on social media.

Beyond the live, spectacular elements of event production, the *#RioZones* project illustrates the very specific ways researchers may maintain a level of examination and scrutiny past the Closing Ceremony. It is here, that the article touches on a central-critical point: the need to examine access to opportunity across the entirety of the Olympic (project) lifecycle – to examine, amplify and tackle inevitable urban struggles and exclusion so prevalent in the construction, lead up, live staging and legacy periods of MSEs. Leveraging digital platforms, projects like *#RioZones* can outlive the brief snapshot in time and duration of the 'event case study' itself. We suggest that whilst our research provides a much-needed window into such matters, academic and non-academic debate, and a method for engaging with influential event, industry stakeholders and policy makers we urge scholars to consider embedding themselves in host city contexts for more significant time-scales to access deeper interrogations. We believe this is of importance to critical studies more broadly (i.e. critical organisational and management studies), and more specifically in terms of sector studies like critical events and critical tourism studies too – wishing to breakdown structural barriers leading to the marginalisation or subjugation of side-lined social groups at the heart of Olympic cities.

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