

## **Abstract**

This dissertation studies the political consequences of Rio de Janeiro's hosting of sports mega-events through the lens of citizenship. The backdrop for the dissertation is Rio's ambitious double-take of arranging both the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games within a timeframe of two years. I have two focal points for my research. The first regards what sports mega-events do to the social and political geography of host cities. Urban political and economic elites behind bids on such events portray them as opportunities for international investments, growth, and development. Others, however, view the hosting of mega-events as an excuse to push forward an opportunistic neoliberal development agenda with high social costs.

Critical scholars and concerned citizens have contended that Rio's mega-event preparations legitimized forced evictions of poor urban dwellers, increased militarization of security politics, and criminalization of social protests – accentuating and intensifying deeply rooted structures of exclusion and segregation. The making of Rio into an 'Olympic City' therefore spurred a growing politicization of urban questions, which is the second and main focal point for my research. I examine how the contested process of mega-event driven, neoliberal urban transformation was met with multifaceted forms of contestation and resistance, whereby popular actors pursued their demands for more inclusive urban development and citizenship both through engagement with the state and through more autonomous forms of activism.

The dissertation is based on longitudinal fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro and one favela (Rocinha) and employs perspectives from citizenship theory, critical urban and neoliberalization theory, scholarship on social movements and contentious politics, post-foundational, political theory and gender/masculinities theory. It consists of five papers that approach the overarching research focus on the social and political consequences of Rio's mega-events from different angles. A common denominator is that they place the analytical focus on the forms and places of

encounter of favela residents, public authorities, and third parties that engaged in contentions over the mega-event driven urban developments and their implications for urban citizenship.

The main conclusion drawn is that Rio's mega-events were used as a leverage for a neoliberal reconfiguration of the city in a way that was de-politicizing - as the urgency and exceptionality of the mega-events opened up for suspending legal norms and bypassing political contestation - yet, did not render the city 'post-political'. In contrast, it triggered popular politics and protests that challenged de-politicized urban development and politicized urban citizenship. As this politicization was messy and multifaceted, the dissertation argues for the necessity of a contextual and grounded analysis that places analytical focus on dynamics of contention between different actors that engaged with the mega-event developments, following such contentions over time. This way, the dissertation studies the contentious politics of urban citizenship in pre-Olympic Rio de Janeiro.