



INTRODUCTION

BRAZIL IN AND OUT OF THE INTERNATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

The idea for this bilingual special issue on the image of Brazil abroad emerged after a workshop I delivered at Mackenzie Presbyterian University in São Paulo in July 2017 entitled "Identidade brasileira sob um olhar estrangeiro" (Brazilian identity in foreign eyes). The two-day workshop, which was well attended and generated considerable discussion, was delivered as part of a Visiting Professorship which I held at Mackenzie in July/August 2017, thanks to the invitation of Jane de Almeida and her dynamic team of early career researchers at LabCine, and with generous support from Mackpesquisa.¹ My follow-up invitation to guest edit this special issue of Mackenzie's in-house interdisciplinary periodical *Trama* is a demonstration of the commitment to the burgeoning international partnership between the University of Leeds (UK) and Mackenzie, which includes a soon-to-be-signed cooperation agreement for the exchange of students. Furthermore, what this present collection of articles does is illustrate cooperation, perhaps for the first time, between researchers in the UK and Brazil working on the interdisciplinary research area of Brazil's image, from the perspectives of Film History, International Relations, Design, Cultural Studies, Nation Branding, History of Science and Journalism.

As a *Brazilianist*, an academic who is professionally (and personally) curious about Brazil and who therefore examines on a daily basis Brazilian cultural, social and political life and shares her thoughts with students in England, Brazil for me has never been out of the spotlight since I first spent time there in my teens as an exchange student in 1985. But there can be no denying that, particularly as a result of two successful bids to host the world's largest and most high-profile sporting events within two years of each other, the hailing of the country as a new economic powerhouse, as it overtook the UK's economy to become the 6th largest (INMAN, 2012), and and the country's subsequent rapid descent into economic and political turmoil, Brazil has been very firmly in the British and international media spotlight over the course of the last 10 years. But as César Jiménez-Martínez argues in this

1 - The focus of the workshop at Mackenzie was inspired in part by my ongoing research on soft power: I am principal investigator on a UK Arts and Humanities Research Council international research network entitled Soft Power, Cinema and the BRICS. I thus also acknowledge the support of the AHRC in the production of this special issue.

special issue in his article on Nation Branding, the recognition of a need to craft and manage a particular image of Brazil for an international audience pre-dates the spate of newsworthy stories it has produced this decade. Articles by Lisa Shaw/ Maite Conde and Stephanie Dennison also look to before the current media interest in Brazil and base their discussions of Brazil's image abroad on the nation's portrayal by foreign filmmakers: the former authors discuss at length the development of the audio-visual idea of Brazil as tropical land of plenty at the hands of technicolor Hollywood of the days of the Good Neighbour policy of the 1930 and 40s, while Dennison takes as her point of departure Lúcia Murat's film *Olhar estrangeiro* which itself examines foreign films with a distorted image of Brazil from the 1960s onwards. Still on the subject of film, Alexandre Sonogo and André Olzon present an interdisciplinary analysis of Kleber Mendonça Filho's *Aquarius*, taking into account the film's musical foundations but also cultural-diplomatic issues surrounding the release of the film, along with its relationship to Brazil's current political and economic crises.

It is surely no coincidence that a good number of articles in the present volume reflect upon two issues: the success or otherwise of Brazil's recent foray into hosting mega-events, and in particular the staging of the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, and the related issue of Brazil's place in soft power rankings. Through his examination of seven different means of assessing the soft power capacity of a given nation, such as the UK's *Portland Soft Power 30 Index* and the Brazilian *I See Brazil* survey, and readings of the international press reaction to both the hosting of the Summer Olympics and the political and economic crisis post-2013, Daniel Buarque charts the reasons for the nosedive that Brazil's image has experienced in the last couple of years. Likewise Gabriel Leão (with Stephanie Dennison) examines the reaction in the American *New York Times* and the British *Guardian* to the very public arrest of Carlos Nuzman, head of the Brazilian Olympic Committee and the man behind the staging of Rio's Summer Olympics, on charges of corruption. And still on the subject of the Summer Olympics, but shifting the focus to the Olympic logo, Regina Mello and Rafael Compoy describe the creative process behind the design of the logo and its significance for Brazil's image abroad. Design also features as the focal point of the work of Ana Paula Moreno and Antonio Adami, whose article examines the impact, both in Rio during the hosting of the Olympic Games, and in Milan during the Salone del Mobile of 2017, of the collaboration between Brazil's internationally renowned designers the Campana brothers and a collective of embroiderers in the Northeast of the country.

In the final article in this collection Simone Elias, Decio Martins and Ildeu Moreira respond to the second part of the remit of our call for papers, in that they discuss a key "story" that has not made the spotlight, or least has been overlooked by scholars over the years. In their article they map out the impact of Brazilian scientists on Portuguese and by extension European thought in the 18th century. In doing so they adjust the focus of the flow of enlightenment ideas within the Portuguese empire, which tends to be ascribed exclusively to

Brazilians bringing ideas home to Brazil after studying in Portugal. They thus provide us with a timely reminder that Brazil and Brazilians have been making an impact on the international scene since before Independence, and that this impact goes way beyond the facile popular cultural tropes of beaches, samba and carnival.

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REFERENCES

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