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## WHICH IMAGE? OF WHICH COUNTRY? UNDER WHICH SPOTLIGHT? POWER, VISIBILITY, AND THE IMAGE OF BRAZIL

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**Abstract:** From the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century until the protests that preceded the 2014 World Cup, a common idea raised by academics, journalists, and commentators interested in Brazil was the alleged "rise" or "emergence" of the country as a global power in the international arena. A significant feature of these discussions is how positive or not the image that Brazil manages to project to the world is. In most cases, it is argued that Brazil needs to construct and project such images to successfully entice tourists, attract investment, and increase exports, as well as to consolidate its global political aspirations. This article will contribute to the debate about Brazil's supposed need to design and manage a particular image. More specifically, it examines some of the assumptions underpinning the alleged need to create public images; the type of nation constructed and projected; as well as the characteristics of the foreign gaze that presumably observes Brazil. The examination of these issues is relevant in highlighting some overlooked structural inequalities and asymmetric power relations involved in the construction and projection of the national image.

**Keywords:** Brazil. Image. Nation. Visibility. Power.

### THE IMAGE OF AN "EMERGING" BRAZIL

Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century until the protests that preceded the 2014 World Cup, a common idea raised by academics, journalists, and commentators interested in Brazil was the alleged "rise" or "emergence" of the country as a global power in the international arena. The nation went through a remarkable period of political stability and economic growth in the mid-1990s. Nonetheless, ideas about its "rise" gained strength only after the investment banking firm Goldman Sachs proposed the acronym BRICS to tag Brazil, Russia, India, China, and later South Africa, as the economies that would presumably dominate the 21<sup>st</sup> century (ANTUNES, 2014; BUARQUE, 2013; ROHTER, 2012). The term BRICS recognised

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and stressed this idea of "emergence" especially after the group of countries started gaining concrete form with its first summit in 2009.

There was a reinforcement of such optimistic views in 2007 and 2009, respectively, when Brazil successfully bid to host the FIFA World Cup, in 2014, and the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro two years later. The hosting of both events was a confirmation of the "arrival" of Brazil as a global power or a change "from the periphery to the core" (GRIX; BRANNAGAN; HOULIHAN, 2015, p. 474). National and international commentators discussed the rise of a "new" Brazil, claiming that "the land of the future" – a term famously coined by Austrian writer Stefan Zweig (1942) – had finally become "the land of the present" (BUARQUE, 2013). Indeed, several academic and non-academic books published in the last decade – with titles such as *The New Brazil* (ROETT, 2010), *Brazil on the Rise: The Story of a Country Transformed* (ROHTER, 2012) or *Brazil: Reversal of Fortune* (MONTERO, 2014) – looked at the country's economic success and political and social challenges from a moderately optimistic viewpoint.

A significant feature in these discussions is how positive or not the image that Brazil manages to project to the world is. "Image," in this context, does not refer to visual representations, but rather to matters of reputation or perception. More concretely, debates about the image of the nation have often focused on the construction and projection of a particular version of national identity targeted at not only nationals but also (and mostly) foreigners, aiming at achieving political, cultural, and economic objectives.<sup>1</sup> This issue, of course, affects not only Brazil but also other countries. Studies centred on subjects such as nation branding, public diplomacy, or Soft Power have observed how, all over the world, states have become increasingly concerned with the development and management of images of the nations they claim to represent (ARONCZYK, 2013; FEHIMOVIC; OGDEN, 2018a; HAYDEN, 2012; KANEVA, 2012; SUROWIEC, 2017).

In the case of Brazil, successive governments have historically engaged in various attempts to create a version of national identity that is appealing to foreigners. During the 1960s, the military dictatorship launched a series of tourism campaigns emphasising the beauty of the beaches and the sensuality of Brazilian women to divert attention away from human rights abuses (ROSA, 2013). Efforts to create a positive image of Brazil were boosted in the late 2000s during the second presidential term of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (NOGUEIRA; BURITY, 2014). Indeed, at that time, Brazilian authorities understood the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games as predominantly communicative platforms that could project and manage Brazil's image as an open, politically relevant, and market-friendly nation (ROCHA, 2014; CASTRO, 2013).

More recently, episodes such as the series of protests that stormed Brazil in 2013 and 2015, the impeachment of former president Dilma Rousseff in 2016, and the economic crisis that currently affects the country have toned down the most optimistic voices. Nonetheless,

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1 - For further discussion, see also Anholt (2013), Kunczik (2002), and Surowiec (2017).

debates about the image of Brazil persist. In May 2017, a seminar about this topic took place at the Brazilian embassy in London. Likewise, there are still several academic papers focusing on the subject published.<sup>2</sup>

In most of these debates, the construction and projection of a positive image of Brazil appears as a necessity for the country to successfully entice tourists, attract investment, increase exports as well as consolidate the country's global political aspirations. Indeed, discussions by academics, commentators, and journalists during and after the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games centred mostly on two issues. Firstly, whether or not the country was taking advantage of these mega sporting events when it came to projecting a positive national image to the world. Secondly, how "accurate" or "distorted" foreign media representations were in comparison to an alleged "real" Brazil (ARRAES, 2016; BUARQUE, 2015; PLATONOW, 2016). With few exceptions, there has been minimal questioning about the assumptions and implications underpinning the supposed need to craft national images; on the type of nation constructed and the individuals and organizations involved in this process; as well as on the inequalities sustaining the idea that Brazil should be seen by specific "others" in the international arena (CONDE; JAZEEL, 2013; FEHIMOVIĆ; OGDEN, 2018b; NICOLAU NETTO, 2017). Hence, the aforementioned discussions have often overlooked power relations and structural inequalities.

This article outlines sketch some ideas that could assist in the debate about Brazil's supposed need to create and manage a particular image. More specifically, it seeks to unpack issues concerning power relations, especially about what this national image means, what the constructed and projected version of Brazil is and who are the supposed receivers or observers of such image. Given that the construction and projection of images of the nation increasingly take place in and through the media, this article will focus mostly on these processes from that perspective. National and foreign media, mainstream and alternative, are prime platforms from which we show "our" nation, see distant nations, and how others see "us" (FROSH; WOLFSFELD, 2007; KUNCZIK, 2002; ORGAD, 2012; SUROWIEC, 2017). Indeed, in the Brazilian context, the image that other countries see is often the one covered by international media organizations.<sup>3</sup> However, there are also non-mediated activities and sources that are relevant to this topic.<sup>4</sup>

With its obvious limitations, this article will pose more questions than answers. We hope, however, that this article will broaden the discussion prompted by this special issue of *Trama Interdisciplinar*. The article has four sections: the first argues that the concept of visibility – particularly understood as mediated visibility – is useful to highlight power relations involved in the construction and projection of national images. The second one examines how the

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2 - See Bry (2017), Chatin (2016), Marsh (2016).

3 - See Amancio (2000), Buarque (2015), Dalpiaz (2013).

4 - See, for instance, Moor (2007), Zubrzycki (2017).

image of the nation is relative, multifaceted, and in a continuous struggle. Hence, it is perhaps more appropriate to discuss national images. The third section observes that discussions about the image of Brazil often adopt essentialist approaches, which neglect the contested nature of the nation. Rather than focusing on what Brazil is, this article suggests that a more productive viewpoint is examining the role of (and the uses given to) the image of Brazil. Finally, this article critically examines who the "others" looking at Brazil are. In doing so, the analysis sheds light on how the foreign gaze is underpinned by global structural asymmetries, which attempt to discipline nations to make their citizens and authorities adopt particular behaviours.

## **VISIBILITY: POWER, RECOGNITION, AND CONTROL**

Elsewhere (JIMENEZ-MARTINEZ, 2017), the author of this article suggested using the concept of visibility to critically examine the construction, projection, and contestation of images of the country in and through the media. As stated before, approaching this phenomenon through the prism of visibility means looking not only at what can be seen, that is, special promotional campaigns, news reports or other cultural artefacts involved in the symbolic crafting of the nation. Instead, visibility is useful in shedding light on the purposes, operationalization, and audiences – that is the what, the how and for whom – constituting the efforts involved in the construction, projection, and contestation of national images (JIMENEZ-MARTINEZ, 2017).

Although, for many years, scholars that write about nation branding, public diplomacy, and Soft Power often employed the word "visibility,"<sup>5</sup> they rarely theorised this term. Nonetheless, in the last two decades, researchers and theorists from fields such as gender studies, celebrity studies, as well as sociology, have critically examined what visibility is and what its implications are.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, according to sociologist Andrea Brighenti, visibility goes beyond the merely visual. It is an essential component of social relations, at the crossroads of the sensorial and the symbolic, which encompasses "perceptual forms of noticing, managing attention and determining the significance of events and subjects" (BRIGHENTI, 2010a, p. 52).

Brighenti (2010b) argues that visibility has three main interrelated features, all of which can be useful to shed light on questions of power. First, it is relational, requiring at least two parties – the observer and the observed – between whom there is friction. The relationship between these parties is often asymmetric. Indeed, "distortions of visibility are the norm, vis-à-vis the exception of perfect intervisibility" (BRIGHENTI, 2007, p. 326). Second, the

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5 - See, for example, Fehimović; Ogden (2018b), Volcic; Andrejevic (2011).

6 - See Banet-Weiser (2015), Kaneva (2015), Thompson (2005), Turner (2014).

asymmetries between these different parties make visibility competitive and strategic. Individuals employ visibility to reach specific aims, such as synchronising attention, reinforcing hierarchies, coordinating acts of resistance, as well as drawing boundaries on what, according to them, is possible and proper to be seen. Third, it is processual, because the desired effects of visibility cannot be determined in advance. Relatedly, Thompson (2005) observes that nowadays, in what he calls the age of "new visibility," all contents that circulate in the media became fragile because no party can completely control them. Other actors can vandalise, re-appropriate or contest them.<sup>7</sup>

Various authors have observed how visibility gained greater significance in contemporary societies. Indeed, political and social struggles are nowadays articulated mostly through visibility (BRIGHENTI, 2010b; DAYAN, 2013; THOMPSON, 2005; VOIROL, 2005). The literature on identity politics has stressed visibility as a desirable end for minority groups to achieve recognition and advance their political agendas.<sup>8</sup> There is a common understanding that visibility, and most specifically mediated visibility, is a path to gain political recognition and representation. Failing to reach it can be perceived as "a kind of death by neglect" (THOMPSON, 2005, p. 49). Similar assumptions underpin the interest of different parties in crafting and managing specific images of the nation: not being seen is equal to ceasing to exist.

However, visibility can also be a means to exercise discipline and control. As Michel Foucault (1979, p. 200) famously states, "visibility is a trap." Therefore, a focus on visibility highlights the ambivalence at play. The search for recognition and the risk of being controlled are not necessarily in opposition to each other and may indeed overlap. For example, the crafting and projection of images of the nation seek to enhance awareness of a specific version of national identity, but, at the same time, aim to discipline the nation into particular behaviours deemed appropriate or desirable (ARONCZYK, 2013; BROWNING, 2015; KANTOLA, 2010). Visibility should then be understood as a double edged-sword, a dialectical relational field that moves in a continuum between recognition and control (BRIGHENTI, 2010b; GORDON, 2002; MATHIESEN, 1997; THOMPSON, 2005). As Brighenti (2010b, p. 58) holds, "a way of seeing is a way of recognising and, at the same time, controlling."

## **IMAGES OF THE NATION: RELATIONAL, MULTIFACETED, AND IN CONTINUOUS STRUGGLE**

As stated earlier, the literature on nation branding, public diplomacy, and Soft Power often employs the term "image of the nation" to denote reputation or foreign perceptions. Quite

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7 - See Dayan (2013), Khatib (2013).

8 - See Bittencourt (2014), Cammaerts; Mattoni; Mccurdy (2013), Kaneva (2015).

often, communication strategists, journalists, and some academics describe images as if they were objects that non-problematically circulate the globe.<sup>9</sup> Although images have a material component – such as photographs, videos, news reports, movies, public relations or branding campaigns and so on –, they are relational in essence (BRIGHENTI, 2017). Images come into existence only when there is an “other” looking. Visual, textual or audio fragments may constitute them. However, at their core, images are formed in and through the relationship with a specific other in a particular context (FROSH; WOLFSFELD, 2007; SILVERSTONE, 2007; URRY, 2001).

The relational character of visibility sheds light on the various actors taking part in the construction of images of the nation. Studies about national images, particularly in the case of Brazil, often emphasize what governments or official agencies do, including communication campaigns developed by tourism or investment boards, such as Embratur or Apex-Brasil.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, national images do not simply emerge from what governments do through nation branding or public diplomacy efforts. Actors from inside and outside the state, and from inside and outside national boundaries, also contribute to shaping the image of the nation (LATHAM, 2009; ORGAD, 2012; SAUNDERS, 2015). That has been the case, for instance, with Brazilian telenovelas, local movies such as *City of God* or *The Elite Squad*, American films like *Rio*, *Fast Five* or *The Incredible Hulk*, as well as the infamous episode in which *The Simpsons* travel to Brazil and encounter crime everywhere, highly sexualised children's television and kidnappers (AMANCIO, 2000; ANTUNES, 2014; BUARQUE, 2013; FREY, 2014; REGO, 2014; SHAW; DENNISON, 2007).

Following the literature on visibility, the elements constituting images of the nation are often engaged in continuous struggles with each other, trying to capture the audience's scarce attention (BRIGHENTI, 2010b; DAVENPORT; BECK, 2001; SHOHAT; STAM, 1996; THOMPSON, 2005). Hence, the image of the nation is continuously created and re-created, often in ways that try to reinforce, respond to or reshape previous images. This is also the case of Brazil. At the time of the 2014 World Cup, the Brazilian government sponsored communication campaigns such as “Brazil is calling you,” “Celebrate life here” and “The world meets in Brazil.” These and other marketing campaigns constructed and projected a version of Brazil as a harmonious nation, in which people from different backgrounds coexisted happily and peacefully. Significantly, these campaigns were partly a response to previous stereotypical conceptions – or images – of Brazil as a country of exoticism, eroticism, and violence (SILVA; ZIVIANI; MADEIRA, 2014; NIESING, 2013).

However, at the time of the demonstrations that accompanied the FIFA Confederations Cup in 2013, some protesters, claiming to act on behalf of the nation, explicitly challenged

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9 - See Almeida (2004), Anholt (2007), Dinnie (2008), Olins (2002).

10 - See Chatin (2016), Rosa (2013), Marsh (2016), Niesing (2013).

the image of Brazil put forward by the authorities and proposed alternative portrayals (SOUSA, 2017; KÜHN, 2014; MISCHÉ, 2013). That was the case of "No, I'm not going to the World Cup," a YouTube video directed by Brazilian filmmaker Carla Dauden which went viral during those demonstrations. As she states in her video, "we do not need Brazil to look better for the world, we need our people to have food and health" (NO, I'M NOT..., 2013). News media organizations from Brazil and abroad took part in this struggle, proposing their versions of what Brazil was at that time. Generally speaking, the national media portrayed protestors as vandals, whilst foreign journalists praised demonstrators for making visible the "authentic" Brazil, which had been hidden under years of official propaganda (CAMMAERTS; JIMÉNEZ-MARTÍNEZ, 2014; TELLES, 2013). These various individuals and organizations do not always have the explicit intention of constructing and projecting a particular image of Brazil. Yet, their efforts contribute to form a collage of "cumulative pictures of the social totality" through which the nation is shown (FROSH; WOLFSFELD, 2007, p. 126). Hence, rather than speaking about the image of Brazil, it is more appropriate discuss multifaceted images of Brazil.

## NATIONS AS SITES OF CONTESTATION AND CONTROL

The individuals and organizations taking part in the construction, projection, and contestation of images of the nation often claim to be showing the "real" Brazil. That is also the case for studies that criticise the supposed "inaccuracy" of foreign media coverage in comparison with an "authentic" Brazil (BRASIL, 2012; DALPIAZ, 2013; GOBBI; FLORA; GERES; GLUCHOWSKI, 2006; PAGANOTTI, 2009). Claims about the "real" image of the nation are, of course, not exclusive to the Brazilian context.<sup>11</sup> One of the particularities of Brazil is that the different actors involved in producing images of the nation coincide in responding what are, in their view, "fake," "wrong" or "distorted" images. So-called fake images are often those portraying Brazil as a land of carnival, sexy women, beaches, soccer, favelas, and violence (ALMEIDA, 2004; BRASIL, 2012; BUARQUE, 2013; DOTA, 2010; PAGANOTTI, 2007).

As studies of media and gender have observed, calls for "genuine" images "won't solve the problem because reality is more complex [...] than any 'corrective' image can hope to account for" (RICHARDSON; WEARING, 2014, p. 21). Hence, essentialist positions underpin statements claiming to show the "authentic" Brazil, as well as those disputing that a particular image does not correspond to the "real" nation. They neglect the contested nature of the nation, its possible transformations over time, as well as the inherent fragility of the images circulating in and through the media. In other words, while these different actors may agree that Brazil is not only a land of beaches, samba, and soccer, they tend to disagree on what the supposed

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11 - See, for instance, the cases of China and France studied by Latham (2009) and Orgad (2012).



"real" Brazil that they claim to show, actually, is. Is it the one proposed by authorities, which stresses tourist destinations, as well as business and investment opportunities through marketing campaigns? Or is it the one put forward by activists, which highlights poverty, inequality, as well as corruption among the political class?

Such essentialist viewpoints overlook the fact that, due to its vastness and multi-ethnic population, efforts carried out by authorities or intellectuals to summarise and project Brazil as a single nation have historically proved difficult (LESSA, 2008; SENTO-SÉ, 2007). Historians and sociologists have largely wriggled about to find features that supposedly unite the millions of people who live in the vast territory of Brazil. As Sento-Sé (2007, p. 221) observes, in the Brazilian case, "the nation, subject to thorough scrutiny, was typically approached as a problem and characterised by lack." Hence, rather than focussing on what Brazil is, a more productive approach is examine what (the image of) Brazil is used for. As Craig Calhoun (1997, 2007) argues, nationalism is a discursive formation that helps people to structure and imagine the world, as well as a legitimation principle used to justify the quest for power and its exercise. Nations are essentially abstract and, as such, they are sites of continuous contestation. Individuals and organizations rely on discourses about the nation and nationalism to advance and justify opposite positions (CALHOUN, 1997, 2007; GARCÍA CANCLINI, 2001; MIHELJ, 2011), such as attracting tourists to Brazil or denouncing deficiencies in public health and education. In other words, which agendas are these different actors trying to make visible through a specific image of Brazil?

Approaching nations only as discourses may, however, neglect the concrete social, political, and economic conditions under which the nation is built and shown (MIHELJ, 2011). As discussed earlier, asymmetry characterises relations of visibility. Not all actors taking part in the construction, projection, and contestation of images of the nation possess the same resources. Those asymmetries make visibility strategic, with the various actors seeking ways to exercise control over what the nation is. For instance, in the last two decades, the Brazilian authorities have spent heavily on the use of communications consultants to help them craft a particular version of Brazil to be shown abroad (NOGUEIRA; BURITY, 2014).

These official efforts have depicted Brazil as a production unit of goods – including planes, soccer players, and landscapes –, as well as an attractive geographical destination for tourists and investors. While similar accounts of Brazil can be found in the mid-twentieth century (HOBSBAWM, 1995), in the last few decades there has been an increasing tendency globally to articulate nationhood in market-oriented ways (ARONCZYK, 2013; CASTELLÓ; MIHELJ, 2017; LEKAKIS, 2018; MIHELJ, 2011; ROOSVALL; SALOVAARA-MORING, 2010). This phenomenon, called "commercial nationalism" or "economic nationalism," refers to the primacy of economic practices as markers of nationhood, as well as the adoption of an economic viewpoint to evaluate the legitimacy of any national institution.

The emphasis on economic features is in line with what Banet-Weiser (2015) has described as a shift from the politics of visibility towards the economies of visibility. Whilst the politics

of visibility focus on how particular groups employ visibility as a means to produce further political change, the economies of visibility understand visibility as an end in itself. Hence, the construction and projection of images of the nation become a clear objective, a supposed necessity to respond to the requirements of the global market. Any questioning or criticism are shut down to focus on the task of depicting an orderly nation. Yet, as mentioned above, visibility is processual, given that contents circulating in the media are always subject to fragility. That was the case just before the 2014 World Cup, when official portrayals of Brazil came under severe questioning, with activists, foreign journalists and academics criticizing the official image of Brazil, as well as proposing alternative portrayals of the nation.<sup>12</sup>

## THE FOREIGN GAZE: DISCIPLINARIAN ASYMMETRIES OF VISIBILITY

The final point addressed by this article is the international gaze, namely, those observing Brazil. Quite often, discussions about the "rise" or "emergence" of Brazil stress how this nation, particularly at the time of the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games, was in the spotlight or watched by the eyes of the world. There has rarely been a critical assessment of who constitute the "others" looking at Brazil and, most relevantly, what they stand for. This is a significant omission. It neglects to analyse the wider power structures that position Brazil as the observed and particular others as the observers. Advocates of nation branding, public diplomacy and other similar activities (ANHOLT, 2007) claim that the construction and management of images of the nation are compulsory for small and medium-sized countries, especially those devoid of traditional Hard Power resources, such as Brazil. According to this viewpoint, a positive image allows these nations to punch "above their weight" (MARKLUND, 2016, p. 625). These claims are misleading. Structural asymmetries of visibility mean that the crafting, management and even the contestation of images of the nation very rarely challenge power relations at an international and global level.

Historically, the United States and Western Europe have been Brazil's "significant others", that is, the gazes that, while viewed with suspicion, provide recognition or sanction (BRIGHENTI, 2010b). Brazilian political, economic, and intellectual elites have historically tried to maintain friendly ties with big international powers, notably Britain and the United States. Reasons have included feelings of insecurity or isolation within South America, the relevance that Brazil has had for the commercial interests of these big powers, as well as claims made by Brazilian intellectuals that their nation is culturally and politically closer to the United States or Europe than to the rest of South America (ALBUQUERQUE, 2016; MONTERO, 2014; SMITH; VINHOSA, 2002).

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12 - See Dauden (2013), Nicolau Netto (2017), Phillips (2013).

The relevance of these significant others is still patent, for instance, when looking at communication strategies devised by successive Brazilian governments to create and project a specific image of Brazil abroad. They are traditionally pitched primarily at organizations and individuals from the United States and Western Europe (NIESING, 2013; OCKE, 2013). Indeed, when statements such as "the foreign gaze" or "the foreign media" are employed, they often mean only a specific set of media organizations, such as *The New York Times*, *The Economist*, BBC or CNN. This is true for media monitoring reports such as *I See Brazil*, published by Brazilian communications agency Imagem Corporativa, which equals the "foreign media" with organizations from mostly the United States and Western Europe (I SEE BRAZIL, 2016). The relevance of this particular foreign gaze can also be found beyond official circles. Foreign rankings such as the Nation Brand Index (NBI) or the Country Brand Index (CBI), which allegedly measure how "well" or how "poorly" the image of a nation – such as Brazil – is doing, place much weight on interviews with individuals predominantly based in Western nations. Likewise, researching the June 2013 protests, the author discovered that both Brazilian journalists, and activists equated being seen by the world with being covered by practically the same American and European media organizations that were considered relevant by the government.

This foreign gaze is far from neutral. It evaluates nations and situates them in particular positions in the global order. It praises or criticises the actions of their inhabitants and authorities, and disciplines them, offering suggestions according to supposed global values (KANTOLA, 2010). That is the role of international rankings, such as the NBI and CBI mentioned earlier, which situate nations upwards or downwards depending on how much they fit with supposed universal behaviour parameters, such as their capacity to attract investment, entice tourists or boost their exports. Significantly, market performance underpins most of the features that measure how "well" or "poorly" a nation is doing.

Likewise, British newspaper *The Economist* praised Brazil when it was "doing things well" in 2009 (PRIDEAUX, 2009), yet four years later, the same newspaper posed the question, "Has Brazil blown it?" (JOYCE, 2013). The famous front pages produced in this and subsequent editions of *The Economist*, with illustrations of the statue of Christ, the Redeemer either taking off or falling downhill, have been cited extensively by Brazilian journalists and commentators. Again, some of these commentators have debated the supposed accuracy or distortion of these descriptions.<sup>13</sup> However, an exclusive focus on the supposed truthfulness of Western media organizations neglects debates about wider power structures, as well as, following Quijano (2000), "relations of domination" that are at play.

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13 - See "Brasil nas capas da britânica 'The Economist'" (2016) and Joel (2013).

Indeed, when looking at the creation, projection, and contestation of images of the nation at a global level, these practices often reinforce the belief that the world is divided into core and peripheral nations (WALLERSTEIN, 2004), or what Quijano (2000) has called the "coloniality of power." Peripheral nations, such as Brazil, are depicted as incomplete expressions of modernity. As such, they should emulate or reject models of how things are done elsewhere and should seek the recognition of core nations (FOSTER, 2002; LARRAIN, 2000; QUIJANO, 2000; WALLERSTEIN, 2004). In turn, these core nations have the task of evaluating those peripheral nations according to supposedly universal behaviours and values (GUIBERNAU, 2001; KANTOLA, 2010; KUNCZIK, 2002). Rather than a natural, egalitarian place, the world is "a construct, a social imaginary that confers legitimacy on certain common practices and thoughts and embeds them in a normative scheme" (ORGAD, 2012, p. 134). Hence, being seen by the world also means being controlled by the foreign gaze. This gaze is continuously evaluating Brazil, through rankings or headlines in American or European newspapers, rewarding or punishing this nation, depending on how well it adjusts to alleged global parameters.

## CONCLUSION

This article attempted to sketch some ideas that may encourage a debate on Brazil's supposed need to create and manage a particular image for foreigners. The author, through the concept of visibility, tried to problematize the assumption that Brazil has one image that is seen by the world, a statement that is seen by advocates of nation branding, public diplomacy, and Soft Power as a necessity in the current international area. However, by looking at the different actors involved in these processes and the power inequalities amongst them, this article pointed out the multifaceted character of national images, the contested nature of the nation, and the relations of domination underpinning the foreign gaze. The significance of that examination is not to make visible a more "authentic" or "accurate" image of Brazil. Rather, to provoke a debate on whether or not "relations of domination" (QUIJANO, 2000), on a national, international and global level, are being perpetuated or challenged.

A critical examination of the supposed need to create and project images of the nation is especially relevant when taking into account that visibility is increasingly seen as an end in itself rather than as a means to achieve political change (BANET-WEISER, 2015). When visibility becomes an aim, questions about its purposes, audiences, and implications are often overlooked. Hence, rather than talking about the image of Brazil as a natural imperative, a series of questions could be posed: What image of the nation is being discussed? Are there other images at play? What is concealed by those images? What are the characteristics of

Brazil portrayed in those images? Which "world" is looking at Brazil? And for what does that world stand? These questions should only be seen as a starting point. Without the self-imposed pressures of a foreign gaze looking at Brazil during the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games, Brazil may have an opportunity to engage in debates focussed on future political, economic, and cultural models that, hopefully, may fit with the aspirations of the majority of its inhabitants.

## Qual imagem? De qual país? Com que foco? Poder, visibilidade e imagem do Brasil

**Resumo:** Desde o início do século 21 até os protestos que antecederam a Copa do Mundo de 2014, havia uma ideia comum, levantada por acadêmicos, jornalistas e comentaristas interessados no Brasil sobre uma suposta "ascensão" ou "emergência" do país como potência global na arena internacional. Uma característica importante nessas discussões, é quão positiva ou não, é a imagem que o Brasil consegue projetar para o mundo. Na maioria dos casos, o Brasil precisa construir e projetar essas imagens para atrair turistas, investimentos, aumentar as exportações, além de consolidar suas aspirações políticas globais. Este artigo esboça algumas ideias úteis para o debate sobre a suposta necessidade do Brasil de projetar e gerenciar uma determinada imagem. Mais especificamente, examina algumas das hipóteses subjacentes à alegada necessidade de criar uma imagem pública, o tipo de nação construída e projetada, assim como os supostos "outros" que presumivelmente observam o Brasil. O exame dessas questões é relevante ao destacar algumas desigualdades estruturais negligenciadas e relações de poder assimétricas envolvidas na construção e projeção da imagem nacional.

**Palavras-chave:** Brasil. Imagem. Nação. Visibilidade. Poder.

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