KAPITTEL 6

The Politics of Innocence: Empathy, Indifference and the 2016 Rio Olympics

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Abstract: As Rio de Janeiro prepared to host the 2016 Olympics, international news media covered the associated urban transformations widely. Evictions from poor neighbourhoods and the adaptation of urban spaces to the interests and tastes of local and global elites turned out to be integral to these preparations. Empathy with evicted and resisting residents was mainly expressed in international news outlets and less so in Brazilian mainstream media. This article analyses this lopsided attention through the lens of Miriam Ticktin's work on innocence as a political concept. While normally thought of as an ethico-moral concept, Ticktin argues that innocence also structures politics in significant ways. Notions of innocence as embodied in specific figures such as the child, the refugee or other 'innocent victims' have come to occupy our political imagination as a contrast to others who are not considered innocent, and therefore not worthy of care or assistance. Ticktin's analysis provides a novel angle for exploring how empathy and indifference about social injustice travels across societies. The empathy expressed in Europe about human rights violations in Brazil occurred against the background of a refugee crisis that many Europeans conceptualised as a crisis for the receiving European communities rather than for the refugees themselves. Exploring the lopsided media coverage of Olympic evictions in Rio in this context, provides a deeper understanding of the power dynamics involved in producing empathy and indifference to human suffering.

Keywords: Brazil, evictions, innocence, Olympics, Rio de Janeiro, social injustice

Citation: Ystanes, M. (2022). The Politics of Innocence: Empathy, Indifference and the 2016 Rio Olympics. In H. V. Kleive, J. G. Lillebø & K.-W. Sæther (Red.), *Møter og mangfold: Religion og kultur i historie, samtid og skole* (Kap. 6, pp. 129–147). Cappelen Damm Akademisk. https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.156.ch6
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Introduction

'When *The New York Times* did a story on us, the Brazilian media did a story on the story, but not on us', explained an activist who is part of Coletivo Papo Reto, a group working to denounce and reduce police violence in Rio de Janeiro's favelas.[1] This contrast between the relative ease with which Rio's activists could get the attention of international media while the city prepared to host the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympics, and the silence of the local media, is the topic of this chapter. Specifically, this chapter explores how residents in Vila Autódromo, a neighbourhood targeted by evictions as Rio prepared to host the Olympics, struggled to get local media attention on their situation. By exploring how the concept of innocence works politically, Ticktin (2017) shows how it creates hierarchies by distinguishing between the innocent and the non-innocent. Building on Ticktin's work, I argue that the case analysed here illustrates how empathy about social injustice in faraway places is more easily established than empathy about injustices that expose our own complicity in human suffering.

The notion of innocence helps us explore empathy and indifference to the suffering of people who were being evicted as Rio prepared for the Olympics. Essentially, in international media, the resisting residents of Vila Autódromo figured as the underdogs in a 'David and Goliath' story, where victims of a meaningless favela removal suffered at the hands of powerful actors such as the IOC, construction companies such as Odebrecht[2] and a corrupt local political elite. Why did this narrative take hold overseas, but not in the Brazilian mainstream media? On the other hand, as a northern European researcher, it was notable to me that these events took place at a time when European media narratives also reflected decreasing empathy for the refugees arriving in Europe as a result of the war in Syria. This invites questions of how innocence structures public

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1 The New York Times article in question is Shaer (2015).

2 The Brazilian construction company Odebrecht was at the centre of the *Lava Jato* corruption scandal, which was uncovered as Rio was preparing to host the Olympics. Known in English as 'Operation Car Wash', this investigation uncovered widespread corruption associated with construction projects across the world (BBC News, 2019).

narratives about who deserves attention and empathy. And what are the political consequences of this?

Background

During Rio de Janeiro's preparations to host the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympics, the city underwent large-scale transformations. As is often the case with mega-sporting events (see, e.g., Cornelissen, 2012; Gaffney, 2010), some of these urban interventions were controversial and contested by the affected residents. So-called 'urban upgrades' in different areas forced people out of their neighbourhoods, either through evictions or rent inflation (Gaffney, 2010, 2016; Magalhães, 2019). Across Rio, the city government evicted over 22 000 families from their homes during this period (Comitê Popular da Copa e Olimpíadas do Rio de Janeiro, 2015).

To be evicted in this context refers to being forced to leave one's home for any of the reasons applied to justify the practice of *remoção de favelas* (literally, favela removal). Favela removal is a mode of urban development with a long history in Rio. It implies the displacement of poor neighbourhoods located in central, attractive or strategically important areas of the city. The reasons applied for this practice are diverse and have included elitist concerns related to public health and security, urban aesthetics and development, as well as the preservation of racialised social hierarchies deriving from the colonial era (Anthony, 2013; Chalhoub, 1993; Garmany & Richmond, 2019; Magalhães, 2019; Perlman, 2010; Ystanes, 2018a; Ystanes & Magalhães, 2020). The displacement of poor residents from centrally located neighbourhoods is a common feature of urban upgrades globally (see, e.g., Fullilove, 2004). In its contemporary configuration, this practice emerges from economic models that incentivise the use of land for profit-making rather than affordable housing (Rolnik, 2015).

The term *favela* is often translated into 'slum' in English, but this obscures the diversity of communities and residents who live in favelas. The common features that characterise favelas are mainly that they are self-built, affordable neighbourhoods that are underserved by public authorities. Residents' legal titles to their properties varies, as do their

economic situations and their access to public services such as health and education. However, despite this diversity, Rio's upper and middle classes have, historically as well as today, considered favelas to be territories of poverty, crime and other social ills (see, e.g., Garmany & Richmond, 2019).

One of the neighbourhoods affected by evictions in the build-up to the Rio Olympics was Vila Autódromo. This self-built community takes its name from the Formula 1 racetrack, or *autódromo*, that was once located on the adjacent plot of land. In 2012, the city government demolished the racetrack to make the area available for the construction of the Olympic Park. The event infrastructure was financed through a public-private partnership that involved the transfer of the public land where the Olympic Park was to be located to the consortium of real-estate developers constructing it. The official design for the Olympic Park did not involve removing Vila Autódromo, but rather, incorporating it into a projected post-event neighbourhood (Rio 2016.com, 2011).

Nevertheless, then-Mayor Eduardo Paes issued a decree that allowed for evicting residents and demolishing their houses. The legal counsel for the residents pointed out that the decree was unlawful (Huidobro Goya & Ystanes, 2017). The reason for this is that it was based on outdated legislation. Furthermore, a legal scholar I interviewed claimed that the decree did not convincingly justify the appropriation of land from residents, who had a concession from the State of Rio de Janeiro to live there. The residents' legal counsel challenged the demolition of individual houses through the court system. However, the judges were under significant pressure to allow the demolitions to move forward (Huidobro Goya & Ystanes, 2017). Under varying degrees of coercion, some residents accepted replacement flats in a public housing project and some received monetary compensation, while others resisted removal until the demolition of their homes forced them out. Gradually, the Olympic Park construction site encroached on the community's land and appropriated it bit by bit. When the Olympics were inaugurated in August 2016, only a few families remained. The city government had demolished their original homes and replaced them with twenty new, small, identical, white houses organised in a single street. One researcher commented that the

city took the favela out of Vila Autódromo and replaced it with standardised houses that were more palatable to the middle-class sensibilities of their neighbours (Talbot, 2016b).

Rio's city administration characterised their favela removal practice before the Olympics as an effort to lift poor people into middle-class standards of living (Rio Prefeitura, 2015). However, the residents who resisted eviction in Vila Autódromo described the eviction process as marked by psychological terror and violence, and as destructive to their relationships and sense of belonging (Huidobro Goya & Ystanes, 2017; Ystanes, 2018a; Ystanes & Magalhães, 2020). One resident explained: 'We are like a family here. Nobody wants to leave this place'. However, the evictions ruptured many relationships as residents responded in different ways to the city administration's pressure. The housing projects where some of the residents received replacement flats were of poor quality and provided an unwelcoming physical environment (Rio on Watch, 2016). The housing projects were also dominated by paramilitary militias, which significantly curtailed the residents' social, economic and political freedoms (Ystanes, 2018a). In addition, corruption allegations surrounded the creation of the main housing projects that received residents displaced from Vila Autódromo (Barbassa, 2015). In short, the displacement of people from Vila Autódromo was permeated by accusations of illegitimacy and produced lingering trauma for many residents.[3]

In 2015 and 2016, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in which I followed the eviction process in Vila Autódromo and the resisting residents' efforts to stay in the community. During this fieldwork, several international journalists were present, but very few representatives of the Brazilian media covered the existential struggle unfolding in the area. Numerous local academics, activists and journalists from alternative, community-based or left-wing media documented the unlawful eviction of the residents.[4] However, the Brazilian mass media showed little interest. Resisting residents were aware of this imbalance, and frequently

3 See psychiatrist Mindy Fullilove (2004) for details of how forced displacement affects people's mental and physical health, their relationships and sense of community.

4 For details on the role of social and alternative media in this process, see Ystanes (2018b).

brought it up in conversation. They talked about how they were able to work with foreign correspondents but found it difficult to get the attention of local journalists. This situation must be understood against the backdrop of media history in Brazil, where the right-leaning conglomerate *O Globo* owns the vast majority of both print and broadcast media, producing both news and entertainment such as soap operas. During the military dictatorship that ruled Brazil between 1964 and 1985, *O Globo* supported the regime. Today, the conglomerate continues to promote the perspectives of the political elite and the middle class, while the experiences and realities of marginalised Brazilians are mostly overlooked (Ystanes, 2018b).

Innocence as a political concept

Innocence, writes Miriam Ticktin (2017, p. 578), signifies a state of moral and epistemic purity, freedom from sin, guilt or moral wrong, as well as from cunning or artifice. As a legal concept, innocence leaves room for doubt, but as an ethico-moral concept, which is Ticktin's concern, it is less flexible and speaks of identities rather than of acts. In Judeo-Christian cultures, innocence is nevertheless unstable and overdetermined by the Biblical story of the Garden of Eden: a mythical state, inevitably to be toppled by humanity (Joanne Faulkner, cited in Ticktin, 2017, p. 579). Ticktin argues that innocence produces and regulates ontologies of human kinds. While the child is the archetypical figure of innocence, many children are excluded from the category because of their non-innocence. In the United States, for example, the notion of childhood has been racialised as white since the middle of the nineteenth century, established in contrast to the black child, who was constructed as a 'Pickaninny' – a juvenile worker (Robin Bernstein, cited in Ticktin, 2017, p. 580). Similarly, migrant children arriving at the US border from Central America are referred to as minors, not children, and child soldiers are often labelled youths or teens. Ideas about innocence regulate the notion of childhood, and non-innocent children are expelled from the category through their proximity to exploitative labour conditions, war, conflict and violence. In this way, innocence in children is not simply defined by age or a specific

period in their lives, but by their positionalities, histories and experiences, and the way these are defined by gender, race and class backgrounds (Ticktin, 2017, pp. 579–580).

This conceptualisation of innocence as tied to identities is an active component of Euro-American approaches to politics and humanitarianism. Ticktin argues that 'the suffering victim is best and most easily recognized by humanitarians when considered innocent – pure, outside politics, outside history, indeed, outside time and place altogether' (2017, p. 581). As the resources available to humanitarians are finite, they usually prioritise those they consider to be most vulnerable and most in danger. Such status is granted only to those who are assumed to be completely innocent victims, who have no part or stake in the unfolding conflict or crisis. This logic also permeates immigration policies, where the possibilities for being granted asylum on humanitarian grounds hinge on the applicants' ability to establish themselves as innocent, unknowing victims of circumstances beyond their control. By way of illustration, in human trafficking cases, there is no space for applicants to have any complicity in their situation, for example, through wanting better opportunities for providing for their families. European public discourse distinguishes between 'refugees' and 'illegal economic migrants,' thus establishing asylum as a moral rather than a legal matter and introducing a division between the deserving and undeserving (Ticktin 2017).

Ticktin argues that this construct of the innocent victim is both gendered and racialised, and the figure Chandra Mohanty has called the 'Third World Woman' (Mohanty, cited in Ticktin, 2017) is its quintessential personification as the stereotypical suffering victim of oppressive, patriarchal cultures. This notion of innocence as devoid of agency and knowledge creates both a class of people who need rescue and a class of saviours. The latter are assured of their power and knowledge through their care for the innocent and, hence, human hierarchies are established or reinforced. However, operating in a space of purity allows the saviours to ignore the political and historical circumstances that have created the victims they care for – they are able to capture innocence and thereby purify or absolve themselves (Ticktin, 2017, pp. 582–584). In sum, innocence inserts hierarchies into the concept of suffering and limits

our understanding of and empathy towards diverse human experiences. Innocence is fragile and elusive, usually disrupted by the complications of ordinary people's lives. However, the opposite of innocence as an ethico-moral concept is not guilt, but impurity. Ticktin therefore suggests an approach to suffering that embraces the complexities of human lives and circumstances as a means of transforming the exclusionary and hierarchical political orders centred on the notion of innocence (Ticktin, 2017, pp. 587–588).

Turning to pre-Olympic Rio de Janeiro, Ticktin's analysis of innocence provides a useful framework for thinking about the ways local and the international publics perceived the human suffering created by the evictions from Vila Autódromo. In the context of Brazil and Rio, the stereotypical figure of the favela resident is so intimately associated with violent crime and drug trafficking that establishing a publicly accepted narrative of favela residents as innocent victims of state violence is virtually impossible. In the Euro-American context, however, favela residents are more easily constructed as a class of people in need of rescue. Here, narratives that establish the far-away audience as witnesses to the suffering of innocent victims allow for empathy with the evicted without attending to our own complicity in the global inequalities that produce their suffering.

The favela and the city: displacement and appropriation

The history of urban development in Rio de Janeiro is marked by elite concerns regarding the reproduction of the middle and upper classes' socio-economic privileges, from the colonial slave society until the present. Portugal colonised Brazil from 1500 until its independence in 1822. Slavery was a fundamental part of the colonial economy, which centred on commodities such as sugar, coffee and gold. Millions of captive Africans were brought to Brazil as part of an enslaved labour force during this period. In the independent era, Brazil's rulers continued to practise slavery for several decades. The country finally abolished slavery in 1888, as the last country in the western hemisphere. One legacy of this past is

the continued racialisation of systemic inequalities. Today, Brazil is one of the most unequal countries in Latin America and the world (World Inequality Database, 2020).

Urban development processes have historically, as well as recently, contributed to reproducing inequities through continuous displacement and dispossession of poor residents in centrally located neighbourhoods. The motivations behind such displacements are complex and include making space for urban infrastructure projects, disease control and other interventions aimed at adapting the city to middle-class sensibilities and interests with regard to urban aesthetics, security, morality and economic development.[5] Numerous waves of favela removals have contributed to reconfiguring Rio along socio-economic and racial divides throughout history, most recently during the military dictatorship that ruled Brazil between 1964 and 1985. Today, the multifaceted entanglement between skin colour, class and social status emerging from the colonial era is spatially expressed in the city through the distinction between *favela* and *bairro*, or self-built and formalised neighbourhoods. This does not mean that everyone who lives in a favela is poor and of African descent, but rather, that this is the stereotypical idea about favela residents. In the middle-class social imaginary, favelas are also associated with drug trafficking and violent crime, and therefore, many non-favela residents fear favelas and those who live there (see, e.g., Brasil, 2015).

It is worth noting that in Rio, locals often refer to the spatial boundary between *favela* and *bairro* as a division between *favela* and *asfalto* (asphalt). This description of formal neighbourhoods as 'asphalt' euphemises how the favela/*bairro* distinction not only delineates economic inequalities, but also inequities with regard to the residents' access to public services and legal rights (see, e.g., Fischer, 2008), and their spatial and socio-economic mobility (Larkins, 2015). Thus, urban development processes in Rio continue to reproduce racialised and historically established inequalities along spatial, social, economic and legal dimensions.

5 For more on this, see, for example, Chalhoub (1993), Garmany & Richmond (2019), Magalhães (2019), Perlman (2010), Valladares (2000) and Ystanes & Magalhães (2020).

Mega-event evictions

In 2007, Rio de Janeiro was selected to host the 2014 FIFA World Cup and then, two years later, the city also won the hosting rights to the 2016 Olympics. The preparations for these events ushered in a new wave of evictions. In 2010, after heavy rainfall that caused landslides and devastated many favela homes on Rio's hillsides, Mayor Eduardo Paes announced that the city would remove entire neighbourhoods considered to be at risk (Anthony, 2013). However, the surge of evictions that followed was not limited to locations at risk of landslides, but rather extended to areas of strategic importance for the mega-events.

Between 2010 and 2015, while Rio prepared for the World Cup and the Olympics, more than 22 000 families were evicted from their homes. While official explanations for these evictions are often misleading or unclear, at least 4 000 of these cases have been directly linked to the city's Olympic preparations (Comitê Popular da Copa e Olimpíadas do Rio de Janeiro, 2015, p. 20). These evictions followed a pattern in which favela residents were uprooted from central and attractive zones in the city and relocated to more peripheral areas (Rolnik, 2015). In sum, the transformations implemented as part of the preparations for the Olympics have created what historian Bruno Carvalho has called 'unprecedented segregation' (Carvalho, 2016, p. 26).

One of the neighbourhoods that was decimated during this recent wave of evictions was Vila Autódromo. This community consisted of approximately 600 families and was located on the plot of land adjacent to the racetrack slated to be transformed into Rio's Olympic Park. Vila Autódromo was originally founded as a fishing village in the 1960s, at the shore of the Jacarepaguá Lagoon. At the time, this location was on the rural outskirts of Rio. However, in the decades that have passed since then, the city has expanded, and Barra da Tijuca, the area surrounding the Jacarepaguá Lagoon, is now a densely populated area. Many of Rio's middle and upper-class residents have found relief there from the exorbitant prices and high crime rates of the city's central areas. When the region was urbanised, Vila Autódromo developed into an urban neighbourhood, as workers hired for the construction of the racetrack and condominiums settled there with their families.

Barra da Tijuca stretches north along more than 15 kilometres of beach and is characterised by an urban design adapted to middle-class lifestyles: gated communities, shopping centres and car-based mobility. In this new and emergent context, local politicians came to see Vila Autódromo, with its self-built architecture, as an eyesore that hindered development in the region. In 1993, the city administration initiated a legal process against the community, accusing the residents of aesthetic and environmental damage on the Jacarepaguá Lagoon and surrounding areas (Associação de Moradores e Pescadores da Vila Autódromo, 2016). The outcome of this process was that the residents secured their right to remain in the area. However, as Rio prepared to host the 2016 Olympics and the Olympic Park was constructed on the adjacent plot of land, ordinary political processes were undermined by urgency (Huidobro Goya & Ystanes, 2017). Despite many residents' unwavering resistance, by the time the Olympics were inaugurated in August 2016, the original community was decimated and almost all the residents displaced.

Media coverage and communication

The eviction of Vila Autódromo was widely covered in European and US news media, such as *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *Time Magazine*, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* (see, e.g., Golshan, 2016; Gregory, 2015; Jenkins, 2016; Maciel, 2016; Phillips, 2016; Romero, 2012; Talbot, 2016a; Watts, 2015). In contrast, Brazilian mass media mostly ignored the plight of those who were evicted from Vila Autódromo. A few articles on this topic were published around 8 March 2016, when the city administration demolished the house of activist Maria da Penha on International Women's Day – and the same day that she received an award from Rio's Legislative Assembly for her activism (see, e.g., Vettorazzo, 2016). However, in one of these articles (Boeckel, 2016), the perspective of Mayor Eduardo Paes dominates the narrative. The story ends with his unquestioned claim that 531 out of 549 families had left the community not because they had to, but that they had asked to leave because 'they saw no prospects for a life there' (Boeckel, 2016). This is illustrative of how Brazilian mass media mostly communicates

elite perspectives, while providing little representation for underserved communities.

In contrast, international media covered the perspectives of resisting residents. For example, in June 2015, *The Guardian* reported on a violent eviction in the community, citing several residents about what took place. One gave the following statement about the evictions: 'We have the right to live here, but they want to take it by force. It's not right. The mayor is using our lives, our homes, as a way to pay back the loans from the big construction companies that financed his campaign. But it's our lives, our homes' (Watts, 2015). A 2016 article in *Vox* details how the homes of resisting residents are locations of belonging and memories. Describing Maria da Penha's home, the journalist writes: 'Just past the gate, there's a small entryway that doubled as the community chapel for nearly a decade, where she and her husband once exchanged wedding vows. Claudio shows me a picture of their wedding day. It's been a long time since they have had any peace' (Golshan, 2016). These articles both present the resisting residents' perspective on the evictions as rooted in corruption and property speculation, and also write about them in a way that inspires empathy and recognition in the reader – across cultures and circumstances, people can relate to the idea of home as a significant place in our lives, filled with memories and meaning – whether that be a house or a community.[6]

To circumvent this local negligence towards their predicament, the resisting residents applied several strategies. In addition to attending to journalists – mostly international – as well as researchers and filmmakers, they organised cultural protest events such as film screenings, book launches and festivals to attract people to their community. These events were announced on social media and usually attracted young middle-class activists, students, researchers and alternative media journalists, locals as well as foreigners. During such events, but also at all other times, graffiti and banners on the walls of the remaining buildings communicated the resisting residents' analysis of why they were evicted:

6 See Ystanes (2018a) for more on how attachment to home and community motivated resistance to evictions in Vila Autódromo.

property speculation, corrupt politicians and a corrupt legal system, social cleansing and the Olympics as the mechanism making their displacement possible. In this way, the residents referenced Rio's historical disregard for citizens like themselves and enduring inequalities based on class, race and social status.

The purpose of displaying these messages around the community was to 'let the walls speak for us', as some of the residents put it. One reason for this was that journalists might arrive at times when no residents were present to receive them. On such occasions, the perspective of the resisting residents would be visible throughout the community regardless. Another, equally important reason was the lack of local media coverage of the evictions. One resident explained that they hoped people from the nearby gated communities would see their messages when driving past Vila Autódromo and become more cognisant of the injustices unfolding there. This sentiment illustrates the degree to which the residents of self-built and formalised neighbourhoods are segregated and occupy different realities, socially as well as legally.

The politics of empathy and indifference

The question of why the Brazilian news media had so little coverage of the evictions from Vila Autódromo, while this was a major news story circulating about the Rio Olympics internationally, is complex. It is not my intention to fully answer this question here, but rather, to address one aspect of it that emerges from Ticktin's (2017) work on innocence. Ticktin argues that in Judeo-Christian cultures, innocence as an ethico-moral concept is overdetermined by the Biblical story of the Garden of Eden. This story problematises human agency, which ultimately leads Adam and Eve to be expelled from paradise. The suffering that follows is of their own making, so to speak, caused by their lack of obedience. In Ticktin's analysis, the allegory about the Garden of Eden makes for an understanding of innocence as tied to identities that are 'pure', outside of history and politics, and beyond time and place (2017, p. 581). In political terms, this means that in cultures influenced by Judeo-Christian ideas, we are more inclined to see innocence in suffering persons when our complicity in

their hardship is not visible to us. In contrast, we are less likely to recognise as 'innocent victims,' worthy of attention and assistance, those whose suffering is explicitly tied in with social processes that benefit us somehow. Instead, we often consider such persons to have a stake in the situation that produces their suffering and, as such, at least partially, to have brought hardship upon themselves. In the Norwegian context, the deportation of persons accused of not complying with all the regulations of the asylum process, without much concern for how this affects their lives and their families, exemplify how this manifests politically (see, e.g., Kolsrud, 2019).

The Norwegian public discussion about refugees arriving because of the war in Syria is another example. Initially, this discussion centred on the situation of the refugees and, to a large degree, empathised with their situation and recognised their legitimate need to flee. However, as refugees started to arrive in larger numbers, the narrative shifted. Rather than refugees, they were now frequently described as migrants, a term that connotes agency and people in search of a better life, rather than innocent victims of circumstances beyond their control. Furthermore, the refugees arriving were often described as constituting a 'surge' (*strøm*) (see, e.g., Torgersen & Slettholm, 2016), thus giving the impression that the country was being flooded by people with a questionable need for protection. In this way, the so-called 'refugee crisis' was reinscribed in the public discourse as a crisis for the receiving communities, shifting the focus away from the refugees' situation. Thinking along the lines of Ticktin, it would appear that when refugees were situated in concrete places within Norwegian borders, with a stake in their applications to remain, they also became the focus of political debates about how to 'stop the surge' (Torgersen & Slettholm, 2016). In other words, the refugees were no longer legible as 'innocent victims', outside history and politics, and beyond time and place. It was as if this shift desensitised the public to the suffering of refugees stuck in camps on Europe's borders.

It is good to keep this backdrop in mind when thinking about why so many Brazilians of the middle and upper classes were unwilling to 'see' or attend to the suffering of those who were displaced from their homes

and communities before the Olympics. Much bereavement follows in the wake of forced displacements: the loss of home, community, health and belonging, economic losses, long commutes or loss of employment and frequently, the loss of easy access to public services and commerce (see, e.g., Fullilove, 2004; Perlman, 2010; Perry, 2004). Just as the empathy for the suffering of the refugees subsided in Norway as it became clear that residents' unwillingness to include refugees in local communities contributed to their hardships, the interests of Rio's middle and upper-class residents were also implicated in the displacement of favela residents.

The historical processes outlined above have established the idea that the urban poor are a population which threatens the safety, interests and aesthetic sensibilities of more privileged citizens. The development of Rio into a city adapted to the interests, tastes and needs of its more privileged residents has historically been achieved against the gradual expulsions of the urban poor, further and further towards its periphery. In Brazilian public spheres of deliberation, which are dominated by the perspectives of the middle and upper classes, the experiences of favela residents are not frequently featured. Instead, police killings of young black men in favelas are routinely justified by Brazilian media outlets, which often publish law enforcement's official version of events unquestioned (see, e.g., Timerman, 2014). The innocence of these men is not legible to the middle and upper-class public, who have been socialised to see them as threatening by virtue of their appearance and their place of residence and are thereby desensitised to their struggles. Consequently, by reverse logic, victims of police violence are commonly accused of being criminals because they have been murdered by the police.

Differences in how the Olympic evictions were chronicled in Brazilian and Euro-American mass media must be understood against this background. The audiences served by these outlets were differently positioned in relation to their implication in the suffering the evictions produced. The privileged sectors of Brazilian society, whose implication in this suffering was a historically established dimension of urban inequality, would struggle to see displaced favela residents as innocent victims of circumstances beyond their control. On the other hand, the Euro-American public could empathise with the struggle of those threatened by eviction

from a position that, for many, obscures the political and historical circumstances that have created postcolonial inequalities. Consequently, for these observers, seeing favela residents as 'innocent victims' of corrupt Brazilian politicians, judges and developers, or as the heroic underdog in a 'David vs. Goliath' story, does not destabilise their own position in geopolitical hierarchies. Ticktin's work suggests that as members of societies marked by Judeo-Christian ideas, we are more willing to see innocence in others when we can do so without also recognising our implication in their struggles. The different readings of Rio's Olympic evictions support Ticktin's suggestion that to undo hierarchical political orders, we must embrace the complexities of human lives and circumstances, rather than premising empathy on innocence. In so doing, we will make it possible to open up wider and more constructive debates about how the status quo reproduces inequality and suffering.

Conclusion

This chapter explores how empathy with the large-scale evictions of favela residents from their homes prior to the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro was more frequently articulated in Euro-American than in Brazilian news media. Ticktin (2017) argues that in Judeo-Christian cultures, innocence as an ethico-moral concept is overdetermined by the Biblical story of the Garden of Eden, which problematises human agency and contrasts it with a state of innocence. The political consequence of this conceptualisation is the hierarchisation of human suffering according to whether those experiencing hardships can be categorised as 'innocent victims'. Such categorisation obscures the observer's implication in the social and political processes producing the suffering and, therefore, when the adversity of others lays such complicity bare, they are less likely to be considered 'innocent victims'. Rio's Olympic evictions exemplify this dynamic, as they were executed against a background of historically established modes of urban development based on the displacement of favela residents to make space for the interests of the middle and upper-classes. The implication of the public mainly served by Brazilian mainstream media outlets in the suffering this recent surge of evictions produced,

may explain why coverage of these evictions was more frequent in Euro-American media. However, these news stories emerged in Europe against the backdrop of a refugee crisis that many Europeans conceptualised as a crisis for receiving European communities, thus shifting the focus away from the refugees' situation. Exploring how conceptualisations of innocence and the observers' implication in the suffering of others have structured politically dominant notions of victimhood and responsibility (Ticktin, 2017), may provide a deeper understanding of this contradictory and ambiguous situation.

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