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‘Selling the creative city’: Wellington tourism film in the neoliberal era

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ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of the Twentieth Century tourism films have constituted a significant part of New Zealand film production. In fact, films made and/or used for tourism promotion have been released for domestic and overseas circulation by both government-led and private film production companies. Over the last 10 years the institutions in charge of Wellington tourism marketing have been increasingly relying on social media platforms such as Youtube and Facebook to globally circulate images of New Zealand’s capital city. Indeed, since 2007, 20 tourism marketing campaigns conceived for social media circulation featured in WellingtonNZ Youtube channel. This article will focus on three of these campaigns: the *Vampire’s Guide to Vellington* (2014); the *It’s Never Just a Weekend When It’s in Wellington* series (2014) and the *LookSee* series (2017). Through the analysis of these case studies, this article argues that contemporary Wellington tourism film production is a complex and multilayered process characterised by the cross-collaboration between local political stakeholders, local creatives and local businesses. Moreover, it highlights how the representation of Wellington as a cinematic and creative city, home of a globalised creative class has been informed by the neoliberal paradigm and by the persistence of a deeply-rooted settler gaze.

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Introduction

Contemporary discourses about urban space have been informed by the concept of ‘Creative City’, a notion developed in 1988 by Australian academic David Yencken to describe new urban planning paradigms that foster creativity and emotionally satisfying experiences among its citizens. The concept of the ‘creative city’ was further popularised in the twenty-first century by the publication of influential texts such as John Howkins’ *The Creative Economy* (2001) and Richard Florida’s *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002). Florida, in particular, claimed that a city’s economic development is largely driven by its infrastructure, its entertainment offerings and the lifestyle factors (i.e. tolerance and diversity) that characterise it. Florida opened one of his subsequent books, *The Flight of the Creative Class* (2005), with a case study of Wellington (NZ) which he enthusiastically defined as a quintessential ‘creative city’. In his book, Florida celebrated the crucial role that the production of The Lord

of the Rings (*LOTR*) trilogy in the early 2000s played in enabling Wellington's transformation into one of the world's most sophisticated filmmaking complexes. According to Florida, *LOTR*'s director and producer, Peter Jackson, was able to both attract a wide array of international talent and build large permanent infrastructures which in turn drove widespread cultural and economic change in his native city, Wellington.

Although Florida's theories have been criticised for 'work[ing] quietly with the grain of extant "neoliberal" development agendas, framed around interurban competition, gentrification, middle-class consumption and place-marketing' (Peck 2005), many local stakeholders and policy-makers have continued to embrace the notion of Wellington as a 'Creative Capital'. The narrative of Wellington as a neoliberal 'creative city' has dominated local tourism marketing and it has been particularly apparent in the promotional videos released on WellingtonNZ YouTube channel by Positively Wellington Tourism (PWT) and Wellington Regional Economic Development Agency (WREDA) (Bonelli 2018).

This article examines the representation of Wellington in three different series of promotional videos released in the WellingtonNZ Youtube channel: the *LookSee* series (2017), the *It's never just ...* (2014) series and the *Vampire's Guide to Vellington* (2014). The analysis of the representation of Wellington in these three case studies will reveal the way in which local authorities and stakeholders have attempted to articulate a consistent depiction of New Zealand's 'Creative Capital' as both a national and international hub of cinematic production and post-production, a place for creative and affective investments and a thriving and vibrant cultural centre characterised by an advanced economic tertiary sector. The examination of the representation of the city will be complemented by the analysis of the institutional relationships that underpinned the production of the three promotional series. The method deployed here combines textual and institutional analysis as well as interviews with key players involved in the campaigns. The production history of the three case studies reveals the complex institutional fabric of Wellington as a 'creative city', a fabric characterised by the direct and indirect cooperation between film production companies, private marketing firms and local political institutions.

Defining tourism film

The three case studies examined in this article share one common goal – the promotion of Wellington as a destination for prospective tourists and migrants – and for the purposes of this study will be defined as 'tourism films'. Bonelli (2018) defined tourism film as an audiovisual media form that features one or more geographical locations, is often the result of cross-institutional collaborations and has an explicit or implicit promotional goal, inviting viewers to virtually or physically experience the location depicted.

While the phrase 'tourism *film*' evokes a celluloid-based material support, we use the term to refer to a variety of technologies and platforms for distribution. We chose the term 'tourism film' as it connects current forms of tourism promotion to a long history of film-based texts which can take on multiple forms including, as we will discuss in this article, adaptation and imitation of multiple genres and forms of cinema such as experimental cinema, documentary, paratextual material and narratives and iconography drawn from generic conventions.

The representation of place in tourism film is framed by a 'tourist gaze', that is a socially organised, systematised and constructed way to look at the land, shaped around certain

pre-existing representations (paintings, photographs, other media texts) and expectations about the landscape (Urry and Larsen 2011). In turn, tourism films create a set of expectations that will contribute to shape the viewer's tourist gaze and might invite his/her physical or virtual visitation of the location depicted.

In the New Zealand context, the production of tourism films displaying and promoting New Zealand best-known locations has been constant since the early decades of the twentieth century. Even before the spread of cinematic projection, the use of photography and film as a means of tourism promotion was widespread. From the 1920s onwards, as a consequence of the establishment of government-led organisations such as the Government Publicity Office (GPO) in 1923 and the National Film Unit (NFU) in 1941, film increasingly became, as demonstrated by the large number of tourism films produced in New Zealand, the most important medium to promote the country both nationwide and globally. Sowry (1984) retraces the origins of government travel movies in the scenics made by photographers working for the Ministry of Agriculture before the establishment of the GPO in 1921. There is a lasting interconnection between the establishment of a film industry in New Zealand and the production of tourism films both for national and international circulation (Leotta 2011; Hillyer 1997). In the 1920s and 1930s, there was a significant number of publicity films, over 200 in total (Sowry 2011, 83). The production of tourism films reached its peak in the 1960s and 1970s. Hugh Macdonald's *This is New Zealand* (1970) is the most widely circulated example from that period. The film, which featured a number of formally experimental elements, was conceived in order to promote the country at the 1970 Osaka World Expo, where, according to Lawrence McDonald (2011, 156), 'an estimated 2.1 million people viewed it'.

From the 1970s onwards, film and tourist promotion became increasingly intertwined. From the mid-1960s however, the NFU started to systematically target TV as its preferred distribution platform. It adapted for TV circulation tourism films originally made for the big screen and produced tourism ads specifically for TV circulation. In fact, TV continued to play a very important role until recently. The past three decades have been characterised by turning points such as the closure, in 1990, of the NFU, responsible for the majority of tourism film realised in New Zealand from 1941 to 1990, by the spread of the Internet in the mid-late 1990s and YouTube in the last decade. Youtube became an essential tourism promotional platform as Avraham and Ketter (2012) and Egger and Maurer (2015) point out. The growth of YouTube as a distribution platform for tourism film has been particularly evident in New Zealand, where a number of tourism channels, promoting and marketing a wide range of New Zealand locations, have proliferated over the last decade (Bonelli 2018).

A very important role in linking film production to tourism promotion has also been played, from the second half of the 1970s, by the New Zealand Film Commission (NZFC). One of the NZFC's goals – as Shelton (2005) highlights – was to put NZ on the map as a tourism destination. However, only with the start of the new millennium was local film production more systematically used as a means to promote the country within the global tourism market (Jones and Smith 2005; Leotta 2011).

Tourism film in the creative city

Recent tourism films about Wellington have tended to reflect the economic, social and cultural changes that have characterised the New Zealand capital city over the last three

decades. In turn, the development of the city's advanced tertiary sector of the economy, Wellington's transformation into a hub of cinematic production and a film-tourism destination, and the role and importance of city-branding in the creation of local tourism marketing campaigns, can only be understood by taking into account the transformation of New Zealand into a neoliberal system and Wellington into a creative city.

The neoliberal era that began in New Zealand in 1984, was characterised, by a large and systematic programme of liberalisation and privatisation of government assets and services, by the sale of state-owned enterprises and by a quick shift from a paternalistic and well-rooted welfare system to a competition state (Larner 1997; Larner and Craig 2005; Harvey 2005; Curtis 2016). This new economic, political and social context in Boston's definition was marked by 'a more market and less state ethos' (1999, 129). Within this context, Wellington, city of ministries, government departments and state-owned enterprises, was severely affected by job losses and population decrease.

The 1987 stock-market crash caused further economic transformation which neoliberal reforms sought to remedy. According to McIntyre, part of Wellington's workforce quickly shifted in the late 1980s towards private initiatives. In his words,

a lot of people were changing careers. People were moving out of Government and looking for opportunities to set up business. At the same time Wellington City Council had positive regulations in terms of people being able to open new places. That kicked off the product development and we saw an explosion of cafés. (Wellington Gets a Life, November 26, 2001)

Between the 1980s and the 1990s Wellington had to rethink and replan its economic structure and redefine its urban identity. Brabazon observes that in Wellington 'in the post-manufacturing age, with population haemorrhaging and economic growth stagnant at best, a new rationale and reason for both economic and social development had to be found' (2013, 242). According to Lawn and Beatty (2004), this leads to Wellington's recent shift towards tertiary education, cultural industries, entertainment and tourism marketing.

If the spread of cafés and a related café culture in the late 1980s/early 1990s can be symbolically considered a starting point in the gradual process of transformation of Wellington's socio-economic structure and identity, a set of different and intertwined elements also played an important role in this respect throughout the 1990s and 2000s. The shift towards an economic system shaped around a network of private companies in the tertiary advanced sector of the economy that has characterised Wellington in the last 25 years was possible, according to Morrison (2011), thanks to the reorganisation of the public sector following the introduction of neoliberal policies, to the rise of the local film industry, to the growth of a Wellington-based creative class and to the place-branding strategies adopted by local governments and mayors.

The recent emphasis on Wellington as a creative capital and a hub of cinematic production alongside its branding and related tourism marketing strategies can similarly be understood only if framed in a contemporary New Zealand neoliberal paradigm. Neoliberalism tends to create a market where it did not previously exist; the integration of culture and creativity into market-driven strategies produced as a consequence their marketing and their competition within the free market (Harvey 2005). Muñoz Larroa (2015) and Prince (2010) stress how, although certain policies relating to creative and cultural industries originated in the UK, they were transferred and translated into the New Zealand context, becoming important to local economic policy discourses. The adoption of such neoliberal policies directly affected

New Zealand media industries. This was apparent in 2010, during the pre-production of Peter Jackson's second trilogy, *The Hobbit* (2012–2014). Under Warner Bros and Peter Jackson's threat to move the film production to countries able to offer cheaper labour, the National government led by John Key changed the New Zealand Employment Relations Act, passing, in Leotta's (2016) words 'an amendment bill under urgency on 21 October 2010. The amendment made film industry workers independent contractors by default, and created a hurdle for workers willing to enter into employment agreements' (77–78).

Within this ideological frame, cities themselves become branded products that compete on the national and international markets (Brabazon 2013; Leotta and O'Regan 2014). The debate on the recent commodification of culture and creativity and city-branding had its supporters and detractors. On the one hand, Florida (2005) provided an enthusiastic account and analysis of Wellington's urban transformations throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, with particular reference to the growth of creative industries and the related spread of a local creative class. On the other, Volkerling (2006) and Brabazon (2013) took a more critical approach towards Florida's theories. Volkerling stressed how 'Florida made little attempt to account for the origin of the qualities of Wellington's current urban culture' (296), observing how Florida's theories 'have done little other than to redescribe characteristics of the city that were already apparent and are grounded in historical circumstances' (299). Brabazon further questioned the inclusion of the knowledge economy in the domain of the market. She wrote:

Florida's work offers methods to codify and map the transformation from Fordism to post-Fordism and the new manufacturing economy to a new knowledge economy. But there is a cost when activating this vocabulary. Consumption becomes not only a method of acquisition, but a way of being. (2013, 251)

Over the last two decades, in a national tourism context – as Pearce (2007) noted – traditionally shaped around the promotion of nature, landscape and wildlife attractions – Wellington was particularly active in tourism marketing.

The LookSee YouTube series: how 'to get people into the shop'

As Goldson (2006), Bell and Lyall (1995) and Taylor (1998) argued, throughout the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century the production and circulation of images of New Zealand through painting, photography and film was informed by the necessity to showcase and promote local natural attractions overseas and, at the same time, to stimulate and increase migration flows to the country. Through the lens of the settler culture and gaze, images depicting colonial landscapes became – according to Gibbons (2002) 'as important as words' (9). Such images were characterised, according to Pratt (1992), by a multilayered complexity and a density of meaning

In fact, such conflation between tourism and settler culture has been a recurring trend in Wellington tourism films since the early twentieth century. Appealing images of the city's tourist attractions are often matched by the visual celebration of suburban areas, urban/suburban lifestyle and modern facilities; the presence of these promotional elements in tourism film was initially linked in the first half of the century to a colonial settler project, mostly addressed to labourers and conducted in order to boost population growth in an under-populated country (Bonelli 2018). Today, in a deeply transformed

socio-economic context, tourism films distributed on Wellington's YouTube tourist channel target tech and IT professionals. The *LookSee* YouTube series is meant to advertise the *LookSee* programme described by the WellingtonNZ website in the following manner: 'Wellington is the South Pacific's tech and innovation capital, bubbling with innovative tech companies developing leading edge solutions and exporting them to the world. Our tech industry is flying along and we need more people' (*LookSee Wellington is Now Underway n.d.*). *LookSee*'s target audience – professionals aiming to work in innovative tech companies – reflects and embodies Wellington's current identity as a hub of the advanced tertiary sector. The presence of this promotional material demonstrates the current conflation between tourism marketing and migration policies according to WREDA's marketing manager David Perks. For him, tourism marketing is a bait used to attract students, business, skilled migrants and investments. In order to be successful a 'single story' has to be manufactured and told to the audience:

Tourism marketing is a shop window to a place (...). People will always see that tourism imagery, the words, the videos, whatever (...), so if you get the tourism marketing right, you can get people into the shop and (...) they will come here to live here, study here, invest here, make film here, do business here. (D. Perks, personal communication, May 29, 2017)

The *LookSee* programme was a campaign designed in 2017 to attract 100 IT overseas professionals to come to and see Wellington (colloquially a 'looksee'), all expenses paid, with the specific goal of promoting Wellington as the destination for a life-changing career trip. The short videos combine traditional aspects of tourism films and a social and professional pitch. Wellington is simultaneously depicted as an ideal place to visit, work and live in. In most of these videos, foreign tech professionals who recently moved to Wellington talk to the camera describing their life in Wellington. The only exceptions are *LookSee Wellington–The Ultimate Career Trip* (2017) and *LookSee–Employer* (2017), that feature Wellington's mayor Justin Lester; his role is both to give the *LookSee* programme institutional legitimacy and to make the pitch, a genre well-known to the intended audience. According to Mayor Lester, the programme's goal is to attract 'tech talents from all over the world for what we think is one of the greatest tech and innovation hubs on the planet'. To stress the validity of the claim, Lester adds: 'we don't want just anyone, we want the best'. Six additional videos show interviews with six professionals who have settled in Wellington. The focus is on Wellington's job market, and work culture and lifestyle. The six professionals conclude the description of their life in Wellington by encouraging viewers to 'come have a look', that is, paraphrasing WREDA's vision and David Perks' words, to 'come into the shop' first as visitors/tourists. The slogan repeated by local IT expatriates, celebrate the culture of everyday life in Wellington and the balance between life and work. Some key themes emerge in the videos.

First of all, the work culture in New Zealand is described as relaxed and informal compared to the rest of the world. In *LookSee Wellington – Sarah Young* (2017), a young British professional highlights the flexibility of New Zealand's working hours. Furthermore, Wellington's size and urban structure easily allow movement from workplaces, that are mostly located in the Central Business District (CBD), Te Aro or Miramar, to the waterfront or urban and suburban beaches. According to Scottish developer Stuart Whitehead in *LookSee Wellington–Stuart Whitehead* (2017), Wellington's morphology

allows easy enjoyment of the waterfront, the Town Belt with its sporting options and the city centre with its coffee and beer scene. Scottish IT specialist Fiona Duffy in *LookSee Wellington – Fiona Duffy* (2017) highlights how Wellington's good weather makes a difference. Lance Lones, an American employed at WETA, in *LookSee Wellington–Lance Lones* (2017), describes all the activities it is possible to do during weekends and lunch-breaks in Wellington. Steven McDonald from Xero, in *LookSee Wellington–Steven McDonald* (2017) describes Wellington as a family-oriented city that provides families with a large number of leisure options, a city in which 'every day feels a little bit like a weekend'. This 'little city with a small village vibe', as Sarah Young describes it, is interestingly often compared to London, which still seems to embody and symbolise, as in the 1950 NFU's docudrama *Journey for Three*, the hectic and problematic Western metropolis from which to escape and the mostly Western European focus of this migration drive. Wellington is described as the ideal blend of urban vibes, symbolised by local coffee, craft beer culture and nightlife, small-town atmospheres, embodied by its safe, slow-paced, outdoor, lifestyle and by the quality of its human relationships, and by its natural attractions, represented by its urban and suburban beaches, its harbour and its green town belt. These are the qualities associated with the discourses of creative cities and the assumption that they attract young IT professionals, at least those interested to escape the 'rat race'.

The visual depiction of Wellington in the *LookSee* series includes some of the cornerstones of Wellington's previous tourism representation such as the celebration of the vertical city and the suburban beaches. Echoing earlier tourism promotions of Wellington, the interviews/promotions are shot on location in different parts of the city stressing the interaction between humans, the landscape and cityscape of Wellington. The 'vertical city', a recurring motif in the depiction Wellington since the 1950s, inscribes the urban development in the larger context of the visual, social, and economic culture of modernity. Because of the topography of Wellington, a harbour city surrounded by hills with little flat areas, the relatively tall buildings of its CBD rise directly from the sea as a shining/glassy wall positioned between the waterfront and the surrounding green hills. The vertical architecture is, contrary to earlier tourism promotion, no longer shot directly from the streets and no longer conveys an intimidating sense of dehumanised abstraction. On the contrary, the *LookSee's* visual treatment of the skyline stresses the integration of architecture, landscape and human activity. In *LookSee Wellington – Sarah Young* and *LookSee Wellington – Ben Amor* (2017), moving aerial shots from the hills to the waterfront celebrate Wellington's compact urban structure and its peculiar and appealing merging of urban modernity and landscape.

Similarly, the celebration of the urban and suburban beaches as Wellingtonians' preferred playgrounds still plays a role in Wellington's promotion. Crowded Scorching Bay Beach, Lyall Bay Beach and Oriental Bay Beach are displayed either through moving aerial shots or wide shots: in *LookSee–Steven McDonald* and *LookSee–Lance Lones* they are portrayed as ideal places for leisure, socialisation and sport and as an integral part of the city. Images of suburbs and suburban sprawl, common in earlier tourism films, have disappeared; only images of Wellington's suburban beaches remain. The city centre, the videos collectively suggest, has become home to this highly-skilled creative class. The highly-skilled workforce, the target of this pitch, are to be urban rather than suburban. Locations, institutions and buildings that in the late 1990s symbolically

represented and embodied Wellington's urban renewal in the neoliberal age – Te Papa, the waterfront, Civic Square – are now depicted as the background and the 'playground' for the interrelation between work, networking, socialisation and outdoor activities. The visual economy of the promotions involves a blend of static mid-shots of the individuals featured in each of the videos combined with tracking and drone shots of Wellington's recreational opportunities and attractions. The juxtaposition of individual testimony and pitch with active shots reinforce the intended conflation of every day experience with the tourist gaze.

This campaign highlights Wellington tourism marketing (and tourism film) public/private partnership in the cooperation between Wellington's political institutions, embodied by the Wellington mayor's presence and the private sector, with professionals from companies such as ANZ, Weta, Xero, Loyalty New Zealand, and Orange Umbrella. With the persistence of a settler culture and a settler gaze (condensed in the word Looksee), the boundary between tourism marketing and the desire to attract new migrants is blurred in contemporary Wellington place-branding. The emphasis on symbolic city centre locations reinforces the link between the new creative class and Wellington's central area.

Wellington's image as it emerges from the *Looksee* series seems to reflect and match Turner's description of New Zealand's identity in the neoliberal era. In his words, New Zealand's identity is 'driven by (...) the idea that New Zealand is a business, a corporation, a corporate body (...) corporatised, media-driven and government sponsored' (2007, 91). The main goal of this series is to present and promote Wellington as the headquarters of a number of self-proclaimed world-class and globally-known companies to an international audience of skilled migrants. Wellington promises to be the destination of a life-changing trip, both for the city's lifestyle and attractions and for its career opportunities. Therefore, to become a Wellingtonian means to acquire a privileged, prestigious status.

According to WellingtonNZ website the campaign proved overall successful: LookSee Wellington could benefit from an intensive international media coverage, 1,934,699 people visited its website and 48,703 people from 29 different countries completed applications. As of June 2017 – one month after the end of the campaign – the organisers aimed for 'an eventual conversion of between 20 and 40 placements within six-months with more to come'; however, in their words 'some broader benefits of its reputational boost may not even be felt, or properly understood, for several years yet'. (*Looking at LookSee Wellington*, June 16, 2017).

Creative city and affective economy: the Robert Sarkies' 'It's Never Just a Weekend' series

It's Never Just a Weekend When It's in Wellington, a 2014 tourism film by New Zealand film director Robert Sarkies (whose credits include feature films such as *Scarfies*, 1999 and *Out of the Blue*, 2006), appears as a one-minute montage of an early-thirties couple spending a romantic weekend in Wellington. This video launched a series of thematically-linked promotions of different lengths on WellingtonNZ YouTube between March 2015 and April 2016: *It's Never Just a Walk When It's in Wellington* (2015); *It's Never Just Coffee When It's in Wellington* (2015); *It's Never Just a Night Out When It's in Wellington* (2015); *It's Never Just Winter When It's in Wellington* (2016).

Neoliberalism, that Harvey (2007) described as a globally widespread ‘hegemonic discourse with pervasive effects on ways of thought and political-economic practices’ (22), has been informing tourism narratives and tourism marketing campaigns over the last three decades.

The neoliberal tourist gaze that informs Robert Sarkies’ series mostly revolves around the visual celebration of Wellington’s lifestyle and urban sophistication. While promoting the tourist consumption of cultural commodities and local food, wine and coffee culture and high-profile shopping options, it reflects international thematic and stylistic tendencies that – in turn – encapsulate a neoliberal *zeitgeist*. In a tourism context characterised by the recent global growth of urban tourism, the commodification and branding of cities have become a characteristic feature of the last 25 years, and a direct reflection of neoliberal policies (Bonelli 2018). Both earlier and later tourism films like *Tourism Victoria* (2004), *Visit Brisbane, Queensland, Australia* (2016) and *The City’s Got Love* (2018), produced in Australia and Ireland within a similar neoliberal socio-cultural frame and respectively conceived for Melbourne, Brisbane and Dublin tourism marketing campaigns, share with the *It’s Never Just a Weekend* series – in their highly commodified representation of urban tourist experience – a nearly identical visual, thematic and ideological approach.

All of the short videos of Robert Sarkies’ series feature the same couple together or moving away and coming back to each other, in more or less the same Wellington places (cultural, consumer and leisure locations), and with the same rapid-editing combining shots in slow, regular and fast motions, with deep-focus and shallow focus cinematography. The series targets and projects an image of young and hip adults settled in their relationship, their sense of identity and their openness to playful and ubiquitous consumerism.

In *It’s Never Just a Weekend When It’s in Wellington – 60 seconds* (2014), the tourist couple takes in a wide range of activities during the day. After waking up in a luxury hotel bedroom, they go for a walk on the waterfront, have a coffee at a trendy café and have lunch on Cuba Street; they then briefly separate for some shopping in Lambton Quay/Willis Street area to conclude their afternoon together, visiting the City Gallery, taking the Cable Car, going to the Mount Victoria Lookout and to Te Papa Museum. Night time is about enjoying local nightlife; the young couple goes out for dinner, enjoys clubs and live music, goes to the movies at the Embassy Theatre and then for a final walk on Oriental Bay Beach against the picturesque backdrop of illuminated CBD skyscrapers. The video displays all the activities tourists can do in central Wellington on a weekend, but fictionally condensed in a 24 hours, dawn-to-dusk narrative frame. It emphasises the individual’s capacity to express themselves through their affective mapping on the city.

Following a trend established in the 1990s, the emphasis on central Wellington and its iconic locations aims to convey images of the city’s exciting urban lifestyle. From the mid-2000s, Wellington tourism film features sophisticated couples and targets an audience that specifically looks for purely urban attractions: café culture, craft beer culture, live music, ethnic restaurants, art exhibitions. Wellington, in this and other similar tourism films, is a thriving urban centre that suits sophisticated, well-educated visitors and migrants perfectly. Sarkies represents Wellington as an urban playground filled with multiple,

culturally-engaging leisure options. As Sarkies states, he tried to convey to the audience Wellington's peculiar, specific 'vibes' through this campaign:

My aim with that ad was to evoke something of the experience of landing in Wellington for the first time: its café, craft beer, music scene, to build something that really bottled an experience (...), something evocative with a huge amount of energy in it. (R. Sarkies, personal communication, May 26, 2017)

Wellington's reality had to be embellished and glamourised. In this instance, Sarkies seems to rely on the generic convention from romantic comedies when the newly-formed couple's often improbable emotional entanglements and excitements are represented in a montage sequence of a day in the life of the new couple. The montage sequence is often accompanied by a well-known song. Examples of such sequences include a scene in *Endless Love* (2014) with 'Pumping Blood' by Nonono. For Sarkies' tourism film, the Eversons, a Wellington indie pop band with energetic guitar provided a soundtrack which both gives a local tone and credence to Wellington creative culture and accompany the fast-paced editing.

It's Never Just a Weekend When It's in Wellington-60 seconds employs a narrative device already used in the 2005 TV tourist ad *Have a Love Affair with Wellington* and in 2008 *Spoil Yourself in Wellington*, featuring a young and attractive tourist couple whose day in Wellington is displayed from morning to night. All of these tourism films start in medias res and offer a snippet of the featured couple's life and romantic connection which overlap with their affective transactions and connections with the city and its attractions. All of these videos function as games of seduction where the space of the city reflects, enhances and legitimises the emotional connection between the characters and the world they inhabit. The videos work as cinematic quotations from romantic comedies specifically in their use of montage sequences. They also underline the affective space of the creative city where cultural, social and consumer activities provide both a sense of individuality (the wandering through the streets of the city as a subjective mapping) and the acceptance and facilitation of an urban and communal validation of forms of subjectivity.

The familiarity with the cinematic premise of romantic adventures and bonding through the streets of their city equates the discovery of the city with the thrills of actual or vicarious falling in love for the first time or again. According to Sarkies, tourism marketing is meant to tell a story that not only potential tourists but also Wellingtonians will have to believe. Through tourism marketing campaigns like his, Sarkies argues, 'you end up incrementally building a new truth because the people who live there start (...) to buy into the idea of Wellington actually being a creative place' (R. Sarkies, personal communication, May 26, 2017). Sarkies' words echo Braun, Kavaratzis and Zenker (2013) and Jeuring and Haartsen's (2017) emphasis on the importance of local people in enhancing the reputation of a tourism destination. Similarly, Aitken and Campelo (2011) and Saraniemi and Ahonen (2008) note that the effectiveness of a place-branding campaign is directly related to the successful involvement of the local population.

The making of this series was characterised by a triangular relationship between a client, PWT, an advertising agency, Assignment Group, and Sarkies himself. As he explains, 'the production company I am associated with, Capital City Films, was hired by the agency to produce the spots with me directing'. Sarkies defines this professional experience as 'creativity within defined parameters' (R. Sarkies, personal communication,

June 21, 2017). More specifically, during his creative process Sarkies had to constantly interact with both PWT and Assignment Group, in a triangular contractual relationship. His role was to write and present a treatment shaped around Assignment Group's indications. Although his professional relationship with the advertising agency and the client was formal and defined, Sarkies asserts that creativity could take shape within the briefs: 'I tend to present things like casting and locations carefully in pre-production and gain the trust of agency and client so that I have plenty of freedom during shooting'. The articulated relationship between creative talents such as actors, directors and PR managers, advertisement agencies and political institutions (namely PWT and W.R.E.D.A.) is one of the characteristic features of contemporary Wellington's tourism film production.

This series was conceived and made for YouTube in an era in which this social media had already become a frequently targeted tourism marketing platform. Moreover, this series was specifically and openly inspired by another social medium, Instagram, which was Sarkies' main stylistic source of inspiration. To create and convey the impression and feeling of a visually engaging succession of pictures taken on an exciting Wellington weekend, Sarkies had to carefully focus on the editing of his videos.

Sarkies' stylistic choices are reminiscent of what Darley defines as a distinctive feature of digital video production, that is 'the intensification and augmentation of image combination or montage' (2000, 103) and the tendency to borrow and refer to other visual texts, Instagram photographs as explicitly mentioned by Sarkies and, implicitly, the montage sequence in romantic comedies. Although narratively and thematically consistent with the 'single story about Wellington' described by Perks, this series displays stylistic and formal innovations that speak of the coexistence and intertwining of cinematic culture, social media and digital culture.

While the film does not directly make a pitch about Wellington's virtues in the mode of the *Looksee* series nor draw from its cinematic culture and industry as we will discuss in the next case study, it draws from conventions of the romantic comedy genre, the instantaneity and interconnectedness of social media, and foregrounds the alignment of creative cities, creative industries and affective economies.

Welcome to the Vampire city. film-driven tourism promotion and film-induced tourism in Wellington

Film-induced destination marketing is one of the most relevant phenomena of contemporary New Zealand tourism. Tourism New Zealand had attempted to capitalise on non-conventional publicity tools, particularly film-tourism since the launch of the '100% Pure New Zealand' campaign in the late 1990s (Leotta 2011). In 2001, increasingly aware of tourist interest in film locations, the national tourism board used an image inspired by Jane Campion's *The Piano* (1993) in its international campaign. As Glenn Croy suggests, 'this image building and promotion processes effectively utilise TNZ's (Tourism New Zealand) limited financial resources by using other groups' resources to provide the images and then creating association to New Zealand' (Glen Croy 2010, 7). The release of the first instalment of the *LOTR* trilogy in late 2001 provided New Zealand with further, and more significant, levels of international media exposure, which in turn led to serendipitous opportunities for the local economy in the form of film-induced tourism. Several studies have shown how since the release of the *LOTR*

trilogy, New Zealand has become one of the most popular film-tourism destinations in the world (Leotta 2011; Leotta 2016). Interest in Middle Earth film locations was reignited in the early 2010s following the release of Jackson's *The Hobbit* trilogy. As the home of Peter Jackson's Weta empire and the location of many scenes of the Middle Earth trilogies, Wellington became, alongside Hobbiton/Matamata, the main gateway to New Zealand film-tourism. Wellington Airport, renamed as 'The Middle of Middle Earth', hosted several large statues inspired by some of the characters featured in Jackson's trilogies. Similarly, the Weta Cave (Weta's merchandising shop) and the Weta Workshop tour have become some of the major tourist attractions of the city. The impact of the Middle Earth film franchise was particularly apparent in the GLAM sector with Te Papa hosting several exhibitions inspired by the Tolkien saga and Jackson himself being involved in discussions concerning the development of a film museum on the Wellington waterfront (Leotta 2016).

The profound impact of *LOTR* on New Zealand tourism generated increasing awareness of movies' ability to generate tourist interest in film locations. Following the success of the *LOTR* tourist spin-off, several national and regional tourism stakeholders attempted to use films shot in New Zealand such as *The Last Samurai* (2003) and *Whale Rider* (2002) to market certain tourism destinations. The making and circulation of the *Vampire's Guide to Vellington*, a two-minute promotional video inspired by Taika Waititi and Jemaine Clement mockumentary/horror comedy *What We Do in the Shadows* (2014), has to be understood as part of these new trends in New Zealand tourism marketing. The video, directed by Waititi and Clement themselves, was posted on the *WellingtonNZ* 11 days before the actual New Zealand release of the film, which focuses on the everyday life of a community of vampires flatting in the Wellington suburb of Miramar. As well as epitomising the synergy between the local film and tourism industries, the *Vampire's Guide to Vellington* produces a representation of New Zealand's capital which is in line with its reputation as a 'creative city'.

Vampire's Guide to Vellington plays on the contrast between the typical Gothic horror conventions and expressionist atmospheres associated with the vampire characters and the mundane, well-known and easily recognisable Wellington urban locations. In the video, Viago Von Biltzenberg, one of the main movie characters, a pale-faced vampire with a strong German accent, dressed in an eighteenth-century costume and played by Taika Waititi, presents to the audience a number of Wellington's attractions. The vampire's accent – 'Vellington' is how he pronounces the city's name –, his look and his overall tone make this tourism video an amusing piece of place-marketing. In the first part of the video, consistently with its vampire-nature, Viago is interviewed at night, holding a glass of red wine/blood, sitting on an armchair in an old-fashioned living room illuminated by the feeble light of a table lamp. The second part of the video features Viago and two of his fellow vampires during a night stroll around some of Wellington's most renowned nightlife locations. Although the three vampires walk through the city at night, there is nothing dreadful in their activities – a pedal-boat ride in the harbour and a relaxing stroll – and in what they see – street artists, shops, bars, restaurants, cinemas. The city itself is a reassuring, welcoming place.

As in the previous examples, the representation (and promotion) of Wellington is exclusively limited to its city centre and, more specifically, to its nightlife/entertainment precinct. The association of fictional movie characters to a specific location and their

direct involvement in tourism promotion is a narrative device that had already been used in the Middle Earth-themed Air New Zealand safety videos released between 2012 and 2014. Overall, the *Vampire's Guide to Vellington* alternates and intertwines the realms of fantasy and reality: fictional characters list a number of tourist and more specifically nightlife attractions in the CBD area. This *Vampire's Guide to Vellington* aims to convey the portrait of a vibrant, non-conformist and sophisticated urban centre which is in line with Wellington's reputation as a creative city.

The *Vampire Guide to Vellington*, that as of mid-November 2019 reached almost 243,000 YouTube views, was part of a broader and acclaimed viral marketing campaign described as 'a masterclass in viral marketing' that won in 2015 the Best Independent Marketing Campaign Award awarded by the New Zealand Motion Picture Industry Council (*My Secret Wellington: Anna Dean*, July, 03, 2015). This campaign was specifically aimed at promoting *What We Do in the Shadows*, that became 2014 highest grossing New Zealand film. The campaign proved very popular and was characterised – in its creator Anna Dean's words, by

a brilliant use of transmedia (...). Whether on Facebook Twitter, TradeMe, Instagram or FindSomeone, *What We Do in the Shadows* offers an experience that is genuinely entertaining, funny and situated entirely within the storyworld of the film. Audiences have responded by participating, sharing and, most importantly, by showing up to cinemas to see the film. (In Search of the Audience, June 26, 2014)

The production history of the making of the video is useful to reveal some of the institutional connections that shape Wellington as a creative city. Its creator was Anna Dean, a Wellington-based public relations and marketing professional, who was directly hired and paid by the film's producers, Taika Waititi and Chelsea Winstanley. According to Dean, in order to promote this horror comedy, the producers had access to an advertising budget provided by the New Zealand Film Commission. (A. Dean, personal communication, June 21, 2017). Dean decided to shoot *The Vampire's Guide to Vellington* right after an interview Taika Waititi had with the 20/20 TV show in Wellington. During this interview, Waititi impersonated his character Viago Von Biltzenberg.

As previously mentioned, this video was part of a broader campaign that lasted six weeks. Dean stressed how the availability of extra material from the original film shooting turned out to be essential in planning the promotional campaign. However, what Dean specifically highlighted is the role played by a number of Wellington's stakeholders in the making of the campaign. Local tourism marketing institutions, local businesses and companies cooperated in order to boost a local film production made with local resources and directed and played by Wellingtonians. Dean argues that one of the campaign's turning points was the relationship she was able to create with PWT in order to take advantage of *What We Do in the Shadows*' tourist potential; more specifically, the idea of actively involving Wellington Airport in the promotion of the film proved to be eventually effective. Dean's plan was to temporarily change the original 'wind-blown' Wellington sign erected in 2012 on a Miramar hillside into 'Vellington', where the blood-red capital V was supposed to be a homage to the soon-to-be-released vampire movie. After contacting PWT, which immediately agreed with Dean's idea, Dean got in touch with Wellington Airport and negotiated for them to pay for the sign to change to 'Vellington'. (A. Dean, personal communication, June 6, 2017). The collaboration with Wellington

Airport initially raised an emblematic issue related to the sign change. According to Dean, the airport management strongly leaned towards ‘Wellywood’, considering this conflation between Wellington and Hollywood a more effective way to promote both the city and the local film industry, however the idea of the ‘Vellington’ sign eventually succeeded. The success of this marketing campaign and the active participation of different city institutions helped, according to Dean, to raise attention on Wellington as a centre of independent film production that goes beyond Jackson’s empire,

The way I convinced them was saying: ‘this is a way to show your support for independent Wellington cinema, independent Wellington film, not the big studio Miramar machine, but the independent speakers (...) so this would be a way to show your support to a wider Wellington film community’. (A. Dean, personal communication, June 6, 2017)

As she also pointed out, PWT website’s front page changed its name in Absolutely Positively Vellington for the occasion, promoting a tour that included most of the locations in which the film was shot; hotels were also encouraged to change their booking form including a ‘vampire night’ specifically designed to promote the film; finally, a variety of local actors from businesses such as Tuatara Brewing to sport teams such as the Hurricanes rugby franchise, were involved in this film-induced destination marketing campaign.

The businesses, as she also notes, did not receive any type of entitlement for their cooperation. More broadly, the nature of the professional relationships established during this marketing campaign was mostly extemporaneous and informal, made of immediate decisions. Wellington’s small size and population, its being a tight-knit community and Wellingtonians’ good will and converging interests played a fundamental role in defining the spontaneous nature and rapid completion of this campaign. According to Dean’s description,

No contracts existed. Wellington is a small town and everyone knows everyone so verbal agreements hold. It also all came together very quickly (...). It was largely based on the personal work connections that I had (...) combined with the star power and great work of Taika and Jemaine that everyone wanted to feel part of and support (A. Dean, personal communication, June 21, 2017).

This film-driven tourism marketing campaign was characterised by the direct involvement of Wellington’s political, productive and social fabric; moreover, the cooperation between creative personalities, in this case Waititi and Clement, PR professionals (Anna Dean) and political institutions (PWT), embodies and reflects typical contemporary tourism film production patterns. Indeed, on the one hand, the animated graphics which conclude the *Vampire’s Guide to Vellington* highlight the direct participation of PWT in the making of this video. On the other, YouTube videos such as *Behind the Lid – Vellington Sign* (2014) on Wellington Airport’s channel and *Viago feat Hurricanes – Poi E* (2014) on the Hurricanes’ channel reveal the association of private Wellington enterprises with a local film production, further reinforcing the intertwining, cooperation and partnership between the public and the private sectors in Wellington tourism marketing.

Conclusion

The three case studies analysed all relied on a coherent neoliberal narrative that depicted the capital city of New Zealand as a thriving and sophisticated cultural and creative urban

centre, headquarter of world-class IT and tech companies, the hub of cinematic production and home of an international and globalised creative class. Wellington tourism film's themes and narratives have been, without exception, a direct expression of the dominant neoliberal ideology. Wellington tourism marketing and tourism film production have very often been an integral part of broader advertising and publicity strategies. More specifically, they have become part of a governing vision within which settler culture and the settler gaze have survived as fundamental ideological and socio-economic forces that underpin Wellington's representation still playing a very important role, albeit with different characteristics. In the case studies analysed in this article, Wellington played the role of a symbolic shop window where landscape, tourist attractions, lifestyle, job opportunities seem to be within easy reach for the potential tourist/settler. Moreover, in the neoliberal age, the Wellington (and New Zealand) lifestyle has become branded and subjected to forms of exchange. Cultural, national and local identities have turned, in Turner's words, into 'something that is consumed or consumable, like any other kind of goods' (2007, 91). In order to 'get people into the shop' a single narrative was manufactured and used as a promotional tool in the context of neoliberal New Zealand, an age characterised by the spread of the private initiative, by the marketing and 'commodification' of culture and creativity, by place-branding as core tourism marketing strategies and by the increasing involvement of the private sector in national and local tourism industries. The audience targeted by this 'single story' has dramatically expanded thanks to the Internet and to the recent spread of social media.

Moreover, this article revealed how Wellington tourism film's production patterns are complex, multilayered processes characterised by the direct involvement and intertwining of the city's political, productive and social fabric and the cooperation between creative personalities, PR professionals and political institutions. Finally, it highlighted the flexibility of contemporary local tourism marketing, that conceived and employed media texts of different nature such as recruitment and movie-themed videos as vehicles of place-promotion and place-branding.

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