

Sporting mega- events and development: benefits, but for whom?



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Introduction

Tightly linked with globalisation and neoliberalisation, sporting mega-events have become banal. Their existence is rarely questioned and they are generally celebrated as part of the norm within a globalised world (Muñoz, 2015). Seen by the majority of the public as positive events, sporting mega-events such as the Olympics and FIFA World Cup can strongly influence host destinations. This essay will explore the topic of urban development in relation to sporting mega-events; highlighting the key relationships between globalisation and neoliberalisation and these types of events. It will examine the impacts of the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics on urban development in Brazil. Recognizing that development is always uneven, this essay will critique what is meant by development and question if the term can accurately be applied to the case of Brazil. To set the context, a brief history of the World Cup and the Olympics will be provided. Next, definitions of globalisation and neoliberalism will be supplied in relation to sporting mega-events. Finally, a brief background history of Brazil will lead into a critical discussion of urban development with a particular focus on Rio de Janeiro.

Sporting Mega-events, Globalisation, and Neoliberalism: Roles and Impacts

Over the last 150 years, sporting mega-events have risen in prominence and become global affairs. With the organization of regional and global tournaments, sport has grown into more than just matches, and plays a strong role economically and culturally. Across a variety of types of sporting events such as the FIFA World Cup, UEFA Champions League, the Olympics,

and Six Nations Rugby, it is clear that these events are more than simply games. The focus of this paper will be on the 2014 FIFA World Cup hosted by Brazil and the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, therefore, those are the sporting mega-events that will be examined in this section.

Located in Switzerland, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) hosts a world tournament of 32 teams from all regions around the world (Pielke Jr. 2013). Available for live viewing in the host nation and broadcast around the world, this tournament is viewed by billions of people, making it one of the most watched and highest grossing income mega-events in the world (Stanfill & Valdivia, 2017). Nevertheless, since its formation in 1904, FIFA has always fallen into the category of non-profit International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO); drawing its legitimacy from 'shared values' and its status as a non-profit organization for 'governing and regulating sport', FIFA has no strong accountability mechanisms outside of itself to examine the role it plays in establishing sporting mega-events (Pielke Jr., 2013). As such, FIFA is able to lay out how the tournament should be organized and what its requirements are for potential host countries. Due to the bidding process, which happens a minimum of 7 years ahead of the World Cup, this particular INGO's control over the course that mega-event takes is long standing. Though there is an ethics code in place within FIFA (Pielke Jr., 2013), there is no direct external method of accountability by which to hold FIFA responsible for any infractions against the code. As such, there is not any immediate means available to examine and reject the criteria that FIFA mandates for hosting the World Cup.

There are many similarities between FIFA and the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Also located in Switzerland, the IOC goes through a process of soliciting bids amongst potential host cities, with the winning host city being chosen approximately 7 years prior to hosting the mega-event. However, there are some key differences between the IOC and FIFA; after the corruption scandal in 1999 the IOC began to put additional mechanisms into place surrounding accountability. Beginning in 2000, the IOC began developing internal and external methods of ensuring accountability. Progress has been made in creating bodies of accountability, such as involving a variety of stakeholders, from athletes to national Olympic committees, to creating the IOC Ethics Commission for internal review. These are key mechanisms of accountability that still allow the IOC to maintain its autonomy (Chappelet, 2011). Though these mechanisms exist to hold it responsible, the IOC, like FIFA, still holds enormous sway over the bidding process for hosting the Olympics. Countries bidding for the right to host this sporting mega-event must meet criteria outlined by the committee to be accepted into the bidding process and to compete against other countries, who are also bidding to win the opportunity to host the event. Furthermore, these events create a relationship between the international organizing body and the host destination. These globalised sporting mega-events are inherently tied to politics, economics, and important socio-cultural aspects that are influenced both by the narratives of these international sporting organizations and those set forth by the national governments of the host countries.

Globalisation, neo-liberalism, and sporting mega-events are inextricably linked with one another. As an overarching theme connecting both neoliberalism and sporting mega-events, globalisation is a result of processes that have been occurring for centuries. Global interconnectedness is not a new phenomenon; however, the “ increasing acceleration ... in global interdependence” is a feature of what is considered to be modern globalisation (Robertson, 1992. pg. 8). To use Robertson’s definition globalisation is “ both the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (1992. pg. 8). This is to say that increased interconnectedness resulting from international interaction between state and non-state actors has resulted in an awareness of one another and dependence amongst actors. Sklair argues that this type of globalisation, ‘ generic globali[s]ation’, is characterized by two phenomena: (1) the ‘ electronic revolution’, which sees an expansion of mass media and material infrastructure, and (2) the growth of cosmopolitanism through the creation of ‘ transnational social spaces’ (2005). Both of these phenomena affect the contraction of the international sphere, bringing actors closer together by developing easy access flows of information and creating networks between actors. The result of these effects is the growth of globalised capitalism, it becomes more widespread through increased promotion of consumerism. However, Sklair states that globalisation is an ongoing project where neoliberal capitalism continues to clash with other variants of globalisation, such as culture and politics, which remain significant factors to consider when studying the impacts of globalization (2005).

Though there are many crucial factors to consider when looking at relationships within a framework of globalisation, neoliberalism is one of the most talked about influences in recent work on the topic. The spread of capitalism, particularly following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1989, has largely influenced evolving structures within the international sphere. The neoliberal version of capitalism traces its roots back to the 17th and 18th centuries; the focus of liberalism during this time period is on the emancipation of the individual through the separation of the public (the state) and private (the individual) spheres. This separation was for the creation of individual rights to allow for self-determination under the principle that all individuals are rational and, therefore, capable of making decisions for themselves that were in their own best interests. Nonetheless, these principles were adapted and took form as neoliberalism in the 20th century. Taking a 'neo-corporatist' approach (accelerated by globalisation) consumerism, the reduction of the welfare state and state regulations, and the opening up of the market are now key features of modern neoliberalism (Gilmartin, Powerpoint Slides, February 13, 2019.). These features are based on the underlying belief that the market, as driven by consumers, should determine the goods and services available for purchase by individuals. In relation to globalisation, the spread of neoliberal capitalism provides increased opportunities to participate in the market because increased involvement by a larger number of actors equals more opportunities for interaction between actors. Thus, it creates a reciprocal relationship between globalisation and neoliberal capitalism where neoliberalism reinforces globalisation and vice versa creating specific narratives around globalisation,

neoliberalism and, in turn, sporting mega-events. The global reach of neoliberal capitalism and sporting mega-events is a result of the speeding up of the transmission of information and increased interaction around these events creates the international integration of political, cultural, and economic values and an “ increasingly corporate nature of sports mega-events” (Hayes & Karamichas, 2012a. pg. 3). The majority of sporting mega-events promote a specific model of neoliberalization and accumulation of capital (Hayes & Karamichas, 2012b. pg. 250), thus it is usually framed in terms of opportunity within these discourses.

The IOC and FIFA use mega-events to disseminate specific discourses while, simultaneously, host nations also exploit the events for their own agendas. Sporting mega-events provide a unique opportunity for the development of these narratives because they are both global and local. Therefore, these events can incorporate discourses from proponents of globalisation and neoliberalism while also appealing to their local populations. The legitimization of mega-events both globally and domestically comes from their banality (Muñoz, 2015), the appeal to emotion and sentiment (Preuss, 2007; Schausteck et Al., 2015), the promotion of universal values (Maiello & Pasquinelli, 2015; de Miranda, 2015; Poynter & Viehoff, 2015), and the discourse around the opportunity for a legacy of urban and economic development (Poynter & Viehoff, 2015; Muñoz, 2015; Schausteck et Al., 2012; Schausteck et Al., 2015; Preuss, 2007; Broudehoux & Sánchez, 2015).

As stated above, when Muñoz refers to banality it is the embeddedness of these sporting mega-events in everyday life (2015). Though seen as special, celebratory events around which people gather, both the FIFA World Cup and <https://assignbuster.com/sporting-mega-events-and-development-benefits-but-for-whom/>

the Olympics are taken for granted as normal occurrences that happen every four years. They are ingrained in our globalised societies as a means to come together, through sports and competition, and interact on the world stage. In turn, they play on the emotions of individuals and nations encouraging a sense of belonging and national identity. This is done through the recognition of unique identities while concurrently promoting the acceptance of universal values like peace, justice, and mutual respect (Maiello & Pasquinelli, 2015). Furthermore, all of these are used to create a narrative of development involving discourses on urban transformation and image-building domestically and abroad to create a brand for both the location of the event and the event itself.

Mega-events are used as a opportunity to ' catalyze change', they are a means of transforming cities (Poynter & Viehoff, 2015). Utilizing a master narrative from both the international sports organizations and domestic governments, sporting mega-events communicate achievements such as rapid urbanisation (Maiello & Pasquinelli, 2015), growing economic and tourism sectors, and stability. Hosting mega-events is seen as a qualifier for achieving status as a " developed" country (Schausteck et Al., 2014; Spalding, 2016). The term " developed" has a particular meaning in these narratives; it is used to promote a particular kind of growth in a specific direction. Some scholars argue that the neoliberal capitalist version of globalisation tied to these sporting events raises questions of cultural hegemony and the imposition of western liberal models of political and economic governance (Hayes & Karamichas, 2012a), and that this can be seen in the types of development deemed necessary to host these events.

Host countries must adhere to the mandates legislated to them by the event organizing bodies; as such, they must meet the requirements first during the bidding process and then in the lead up to the event itself. Of these requirements, urbanisation and increased infrastructure allowing a city or country to host all the activities that come with sporting mega-events, are some of the most important improvements considered necessary by both the IOC and FIFA. Moreover, urbanisation must follow a specified recipe (Muñoz, 2015), to achieve the desired event outcomes of the international sporting organizations. Only upon meeting these outcomes will the host country gain approval and support from these event organizations and receive recognition of the international stage for these “ achievements”.

Branding is becoming more common as a result of globalisation (Maiello & Pasquinelli, 2015), therefore, as an internationally recognized brand the Olympic brand is extremely influential both economically and culturally. This brand uses the power of the Olympic myth to create an idealized version of the world that attracts sponsorship and normalizes neoliberal ideologies within its brand (de Miranda, 2015). FIFA uses similar techniques through advertising during the World Cup by selecting certain brands that fit its image and pay significant amounts of money for the right to advertise during the event. In relation to these international brands, host destinations must brand themselves in a way that will attract viewers and tourists, which still complying with the event brand. The “ brandification” of host cities and countries to improve their image and perception is typically done through urbanisation to create a modern image of the host location (Muñoz, 2015). This process is closely associated with the sporting mega-event to continue

to support the reasons for awarding the event to the host city/country.

Branding is an important but costly tool used during mega-events. It requires huge resource investment and risks political prestige, but when done properly, branding provides the opportunity for a big pay out through “increased trade, [foreign] investments, and economic growth” (Braathen et Al., 2015). Nevertheless, outside of the impacts of the narratives themselves, actions taken as a result of hosting sporting mega-events through urbanisation and development have significant effects.

Legacy is often used as a legitimizer for the hosting of mega-event, however, there is a scholarly lack of agreement over what is considered to be legacy, and furthermore, what can constitute as legacy in relation to mega-events. Implying that there is inherent value resulting from mega-events, legacy, as proposed by elites (political, economic, corporate, etc.) is thought to be self-evident (Preuss, 2007). Typically legacy is only discussed in positive terms by both international sporting organizations and host destinations; however, as Preuss illustrates there are many ways in which legacy can be both negative and positive, and each dimension of legacy are both dependent on one another and independent of each other at the same time (2007). That is to say, whether or not a dimension of legacy depends on another dimension of the legacy is entirely up to the context in which they are viewed and their relationship within this context. Nevertheless, the legacies of sporting mega-events, positive or negative, can be viewed as impacts, that in part or whole, result from the events themselves. Using the case study of Brazil, the following sections will explore the impacts/legacies emerging from hosting

the FIFA World Cup in 2014 and the Summer Olympics in 2016, with particular attention paid to the city of Rio de Janeiro.

Case Study: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

As the site for both the Olympics and a host city for matches during the FIFA World Cup, Rio de Janeiro (Rio) will be the focus of this section; however, first, a broad understanding of the Brazilian context must be taken into account. Gaining independence from Portugal in 1822, Brazil is a federated republic with the current constitution dating back to 1988 following a transition from military dictatorship to democratic governance. The capital city is Brasilia, with Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro as the largest cities in Brazil (Schausteck et Al., 2014). As of 2015, Brazil has been categorized as an “emerging power” and rising economy both within the ‘global south’ and the world with the 8th largest GDP (Schausteck et Al., 2015. pg. 268; Stanfill & Valdivia, 2015). Nevertheless, as in most other countries around the world, economic and material resources are not evenly distributed within Brazil. Since the 1960s Rio suffered a number of hardships. From the de-industrialization of Rio as industry moved to Sao Paulo, to being hit hardest by the economic crises of the 1980s, it took Rio some time to find its feet (Richmond, 2015). Shifting political systems in the 1980s (from dictatorship to democracy), was followed by shifting structures of municipal governance in Rio in the 1990s. The focus became on new liberal models of governance to try to encourage foreign business and tourism more aggressively in the city. This specifically changed the relationship between the public and private sectors of the economy, reactivating relationships between real

estate and public officials while also encouraging privatization (Broudehoux & Sánchez, 2015; Richmond, 2015). Legacies of colonialism and de-industrialization exacerbate uneven development and inequality, the result has been enormous socio-economic stratification in Rio. The huge disparity in wealth is one of the factors that makes Rio one of the cities of the greatest inequalities in the world (Braathen et Al., 2015).

Brazil bid for the Olympics three separate times before its bid to host the 2016 Summer Olympics was accepted and Rio was later awarded the opportunity to be the host city (Schausteck et Al., 2014). The Pan American Games 2007 is often cited as one of the major catalysts for the increasing number of mega-events hosted in Brazil generally, and Rio more specifically (Maiello & Pasquinelli, 2015; Broudehoux & Sánchez, 2015). In order to sell the hosting of sporting mega-events domestically and abroad, host countries must provide a rationale for why it would be beneficial for the event to take place in their location. Schausteck and colleagues argue that rationales given for hosting events are organized into rhetoric around hosting these events in order to get stakeholder and the general public on board with hosting sporting mega-events (2015). Hosting both the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympics sees the use of rhetoric to encourage the acceptance of the sporting mega-events. Globalized events such as these bring in capital and tourist flows (Braathen et Al., 2015; Hayes & Karamichas, 2012a), project particular images of the host destination (Richmond, 2015; Schausteck et Al., 2014; Broudehoux & Sánchez, 2015), and justify a narrative of development (Broudehoux & Sánchez, 2015; Richmond, 2015; Schausteck et Al., 2012; Hayes & Karamichas, 2012). Furthermore, all of

these components are interlinked to create the broad concept of legacy as a result of hosting global sporting mega-events. Legacy is often used to justify enormous expenditures on these sporting mega-events. In the case of the rhetoric surrounding the legacy of the events hosted by Rio, all of the aspects listed above were encompassed in the language used to promote Rio as an ideal host.

The rhetoric used to rationalize the course of action taken for the implementation of legislation and “development” initiatives had significant impacts on the city of Rio and its citizens. ‘Neo-development’ through simultaneous state intervention and privatization aimed to rework the economy to allow for development projects (Schausteck et Al., 2012). This was possible because of the city’s governance shifts in the 1990s promoting neoliberal models of privatization in combination with government intervention. Discourses around event urgency and ‘city of exception’ (Richmond, 2015; Broudehoux & Sánchez, 2015), were also part of the ‘neo-development’ framework of the discourse for reshaping Rio through improved infrastructure and event facilities. The ‘city of exception’ narrative in particular allowed the municipal government to circumvent standard procedure in favour of pushing for accelerated processes due to the urgent nature of hosting such crucial sporting mega-events. Legislation was specifically put in place to create a framework for organizing both the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup (Muller & Gaffney, 2018). This avoidance of standard operating procedures meant that only certain groups had a voice, and as such, the majority of the benefits went to those with a say in the

matter, whereas, most of the negative impacts were felt by those not involved in the process at all.

Even through the promotion of the neoliberal agenda and privatization, the majority of funding for the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics came from public spending (Muller & Gaffney, 2018; Schausteck et Al., 2015, Schausteck et Al., 2014). This was incredibly impactful because Brazil was already dealing with inflation and debt from social spending, as well as a considerable economic slowdown after 2011 (Maiello & Pasquinelli, 2015). One of the big complaints in the 2013-2014 protests, including transit price hikes, was how expensive hosting sporting mega-events is and the overspending involved (Spalding, 2016; Braathen et Al., 2015). Nevertheless, preparation for the events went forward as infrastructure and facilities for the World Cup and the Olympics were developed; however, the improvement of Rio came at more than simply monetary cost. Richmond discusses the improvement planned for Rio as a whole in terms of the 'City Project' (2015, pg. 249). Though intended for the "development" of the city in its entirety, this project also specifically targeted Favela or informal, under-developed neighbourhoods in Rio. Programs of pacification through constant police presence to limit drug and gang activity were intended to lead to the development and integration of social services (Richmond, 2015). Priority was given to particular areas close to the locations of the facilities for the sporting mega-events. Neighbourhoods directly within the zone of the facilities were either gentrified or demolished and reconstructed, whereas favelas outside of facility zones saw little in the way of services (Muller & Gaffney, 2018; Richmond, 2015). This so called improvement saw the

displacement of large portions of the populations in these areas. The sporting mega-events in Brazil saw the most displacement of the local population of any sporting mega-event between 2010 and 2016 (Muller & Gaffney, 2018). Therefore, while a rhetoric of development may have been used to justify hosting these two events, one has to question development for whom?

Conclusion

It is clear when development in a generic sense occurs, it is progressive change that benefits an individual or group. However what constitutes meaningful integration and development (Richmond, 2015), and how do we determine that the benefit outweighs the cost? This essay has explored the connections between globalization, neoliberalism, and sporting mega-events to illustrate that international organizations planning these events play a critical role in shaping a discourse of development around neoliberal ideology and the acceptance of this discourse is necessary to be able to host such events. For example, FIFA demanded that Brazil pass a set of laws that would protect FIFA's revenues in order to maintain their hosting capabilities (Piekle Jr., 2012). This is on top of the laws that are already prerequisites for hosting, regarding things like brand protection, marketing rights, and security and labour laws (Muller & Gaffney, 2018). The narratives put forth by the IOC and FIFA may encourage universal values such as peace and development, but the reality of the impacts of these sporting mega-events is significantly different from the rhetoric used to promote them. In cases like Brazil, critical lenses can be used to question the appropriateness of these

narratives and truly question the supposedly progressive nature of development in relation to sporting mega-events.

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