Global Sport Events/Local Impact: Reconstituting and Securing Urban Space

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The Urban Context

UN2010: For the first time in human history over half the world’s population is urban.

By 2050: 70% of humanity will live in cities.
Projecting an Urban Image

Cities compete for recognition, prestige, and status. Placement on the global urban hierarchy...
Global Sport Events and Urban Reputations

Beijing

As friendly...
Global Sport Events and Urban Reputations

Sydney

As clean....
As traffic congested...
Global Sport Events and Urban Reputations

Montreal

As financially burdened...
Place Connections are Powerful

A city’s name can become shorthand for the event that occurred there, stigmatizing the city for years to come.
Local elites go to extraordinary efforts to manipulate *and protect* the image of the city to outsiders. Sports mega-events serve these purposes.
Connecting “city-as-a-whole” to Development

Urban elites appeal to notions of pride (national and urban) and concepts such as “community” and “city-as-a-whole” benefits when trying to get support for urban development projects.
There is no "city-as-a-whole"

Sport infrastructure development does not provide real benefits for the city-as-a-whole. While some groups in the city benefit, others are burdened.
Traditional Legacy Rationales

Economic Impact
Urban Infrastructure
Tourism Destination
Employment
Sport Development
Social Cohesion

- Opportunities
  - Possible social and economic opportunities from hosting 2010 World Cup identified

- Readiness
  - Work already started on readying Johannesburg to host key matches without problems

- Legacy
  - Planning started on infrastructure investments that will support games and leave lasting legacy
Legacies: Material Dimensions

A reconstitution of urban space for the purpose of infrastructure development and mega-projects.
The symbolic benefits of hosting a sports mega-event are said to include enhanced city status and increased “quality of life” for urban residents.
Linkages between….

...transnational capital and sports mega-events provides the basis for partnerships between local and transnational interests.

(Hall, 2006, p. 62-63)
We should remember one fundamental relation between capital and cities/communities; it is that capital is mobile, cities are not.
“...the ‘bubble’ in which the new business and culture industry elite spend most of their lives is...a community free zone..., and escape from community, ...from the ‘natives’ tied fast to the ground.”

(Bauman, 2001: 57, cited in Smith & Ingham, 2002: 260)
Mega-Events and Displacements

In 2004 over 20% of global forced evictions were caused by mega-events (of all types).

From Seoul 1988 to Beijing 2008: Documented patterns of forced evictions preceding every Olympic Games.

(Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, 2007)
Cohre.org
Reconstituting Urban Space

“Accumulation by dispossession” (Harvey, 2005).
Unprotected Populations

Populations who are longer economically productive or possess “no positive cultural capital or social role are increasingly viewed as an unwarranted burden to neoliberal society and left unprotected.”

(Giroux, 2006, p. 27)
Securing Urban Space

*Profitable* urban spaces are defended by measures that solidify the relationships with capital, making them secure for capital investments.
Urban spaces in which major sports are held are being transformed from “civil to militarized environments” (Warren 2004, p. 216) and major sport structures/events are being used to intensify and accelerate that transformation.
Legacies: Security Dimensions

“Sports mega-events have entered a new phase of development and growth and the securitization is the most striking illustration of that transformation.”

(Guiulianotti & Klaser, 2011, p 58).
Stadium developments, as ever, symbolizing a city’s urban status a late-capitalist regeneration “success,” are now positioned as “terrorist targets.” The urban spaces in which they are located are increasingly viewed as terrain on which military tactics and weaponry are necessary (Schimmel, 2006).
Part Safe Space-Part Spectacle

Highways, bridges, etc. between the city’s “good” and “bad” parts (and people?). Atrium malls, “no go” zones, and stadiums provide enclosures against the sordid aspects of local urban life.
Focus: Intersections between the National Football League’s (NFL) security practices and the US Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) counter-terrorism agenda.

(Schimmel, in press, *Urban Studies*; in press, *IRSS*)
Forging Linkages/Expanding Powers

The security strategies of the US government and those of the NFL protect the League’s profitability and help create consensus for the DHS’ “war on terror.” (Schimmel, In press, Urban Studies; IRSS)
Urban Resilience Post-9/11

“Ring of Steel”- inadequate

“...security is becoming more civic, urban, and personal” (Coaffee, 2009, p. 9)
Sport Mega-Events & the Global South
“[A] First World ‘city’ was built parallel to the ‘normal’ Rio de Janerio. People who had enough money could pass through the walls guarded by the National Force patrols…and enter a completely different world” (Curi, Knijnik, Mascarenhas, *IRSS*, 2011, p. 147).
New Fields for Critical Investigation

* Specific perceived security risks in these cities
* International security-related knowledge transfers, North<>South
* Detailed comparative analysis of security issues in North<>South

(Giulianotti & Klauser, 2011, p. 50-51)
Democratic Party Fundraiser in NYC

“Who’s against the Olympics? What’s up with that?!”

President Barack Obama, October 20, 2009.

(Huffingtonpost.com)
CHICAGO MAY FACE OLYMPIC-SIZED BILL

How much will you pay?

Aldermen are told that insurance firms, private investors would be on the hook for $500 million before city taxpayers are asked to pony up

STORIES, PAGES 2, 3
Natives say No to 2010 Olympics

See It Film It Change It

Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions

Tin Town: The unaccountable cost of the 2010 World Cup

Witness
Strategies

Scholarship
» Debate
» Document
» Decode
» Develop Push-Back

Action & Alliances
» Journalists
» NGOs
» Grassroots Orgs
» Progressive Politicians
Sport Matters

Sport is meaningful at interpersonal levels and can contribute positively to city initiatives, but a city is not a unitary entity that benefits uniformly from development policy.
Politics Matters

Such a powerful symbol of common interest often obscures other urban concerns.
Barack Obama

Hope for a Change
Paulo Freire

Praxis-

Informed action, social change
Thank you for your kind attention.
References


