

# **Mega Events: Neoliberalized Vehicle or Opportunity for Strategic Global Leadership**

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*Until recently, neoliberalization processes have framed the public policy outcomes accruable from mega events, limiting the opportunity for host cities and nations to accrue greater public value from these global events. There are intimations of change afoot as sanctioning bodies in partnership with governments move towards a model of social sustainability based on leveraging benefits beyond a narrow economic hegemony, using policy entrepreneurs to broker relationships between the public-private coalitions for the achievement of the common good. As new players enter the mega event circuit, there exists a great opportunity to re-evaluate the governing framework for mega events towards a greater good.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

In our recent text, *Event Policy: From Theory to Strategy* (Foley, McGillivray & McPherson, 2011), we argued that events are both political and politicized, offering policy makers and political operators a vehicle for regenerating their cities and nations. History tells us that mega-events are important signifiers in personal, community, national and global identity and are indisputably, of local, national and international importance. Many public good arguments are made for bidding, hosting and staging mega events and these are usually justified on the basis of a powerful economic narrative that reinforces neoliberal modes of governance. Although political leaders and economic advisers recognise that investment in bidding (and hosting) mega events requires the redistribution of public investment from other policy interventions, both national (or federal) and state governments across the world continue to position themselves in the global pecking order of the bidding war to secure the Olympic Games or soccer World Cup because they believe these events can transform the worldview of their nations and act as a catalyst for economic, social and cultural change. In addition, the sanctioning bodies that own the mega event properties also have their own strategic imperatives and bidders have to align with these in order to secure the rights to host their precious events. Add in the sports federations in each nation, commercial sponsors, media conglomerates and the public and you have a complex figuration influencing the public policy role of mega events. This article begins by discussing the emergence of sporting mega events as a neoliberalized public policy tool in nations around the world over the last half century. The discussion then continues with a focus on how new entrants to the mega event circuit in recent years have transformed the landscape, challenging the sanctioning bodies to reconsider the balance between capital,

technical expertise and emotion in determining who secures the right to host. In the final section, the authors consider the implications for leadership and accountability of mega events hosting and proposes a new framework in keeping with a shared-power world to ensure that the public value accruable from mega events is secured. Empirically, the article draws on the authors' observations over the last five years as they have proposed a model for the study of event policy. Case studies from recent and future mega events are embedded in the text and used to illustrate the primary conceptual and policy perspectives discussed.

## **MEGA EVENTS: AN EXPRESSION OF NEOLIBERALIZATION?**

Mega events have been written into history and have also been used by governments, corporations, terrorists and athletes to alter it. Take, for example, the 1968 Mexico Olympic Games Black Power salute by Tommy Smith and John Carlos. This image was shown on the front page of every newspaper worldwide and was seen as a silent gesture of protest by some, and of humanity, by the athletes. There was political pressure for the athletes to boycott the Games but instead they used their unique position on a global media stage to highlight an issue of inequality and humanity, thus serving a cause in a far more spectacular way than simply boycotting the Games. Although the philosophy of the Olympic Games is avidly apolitical, a cursory glance at historical records over the last half century demonstrates that mega events like these are inseparable from the politics and policy imperatives of the time and their ability to portray an image or message beyond the geographical borders of a nation is not lost on sanctioning bodies and host nations alike. The 1984 Los Angeles Olympics Games, dubbed the Commercial Games, changed the way mega events were bid for, funded and delivered forever (Andranovich, Burbank & Heying, 2001). Whereas before 1984 few nations were interested in hosting the tainted 'brand' of the Olympic Games due to boycotts, terrorist incidents and financial problems, after LA 1984, a fierce battleground developed to host the Olympic Games, fuelled by an increasingly neoliberalized mode of governance (Brenner & Theodore, 2005, p. 101) which viewed mega events as a means of leveraging additional economic return and re-positioning cities and nations. These changes were consistent with transformations taking place across the USA and, latterly, the UK towards post-industrial economic models based on the growth of the service sector, leisure and tourism. As Eick (2010) states, neoliberalizing processes result in the destruction of existing structures in a rolling back of the state (e.g. public housing, public space or redistribution of welfare) and a simultaneous construction of new structures and institutions (public-private consortia or new market-sympathetic legislation).

The outcome of neoliberalized developments was a re-fashioning of the (welfare-oriented) state and its replacement with a highly entrepreneurial coalition of public and private partners prepared to invest to incentivize a consumer-oriented urban landscape. This, it was argued, would attract mobile capital in the form of companies, affluent residents and visitors (Law, 2002), producing a better quality of life for the area (Short & Kim, 1999). The subsequent 'institutionalization of competitive logics and privatised management by state and non-state actors' (Eick, 2010, p. 282) has been accompanied by a shift whereby the nation state has been overtaken by the city as the principal economic agent involved in inter-urban competition. This is significant for mega events as a tool of public policy because the 'publics' involved are now wide and varied and rarely collaborate as cities compete internally (and externally) for the right to host mega events.

In public policy terms, the prioritisation of public-private alliances to foster entrepreneurial activity has led in the USA, for example, to a federal approach of investing in policies of consumption and entrepreneurialism in the aspiration that this would lead to their economic salvation (Shoval, 2002). This was a precursor to the introduction of neoliberalized structures and institutions (Eick, 2010), including arms length external agencies. These agencies were funded and developed with the sole aim of bidding for mega events as part of a wide local state public policy agenda and driven by the regenerative imperatives of city leaders. They operated to broker relationships between private sponsors and public agencies in a bid to stay ahead of their counterparts and keep their place as a player at the top table of the global mega event, whilst simultaneously brokering citizen acceptance of such bids by generating feel

good motives and feelings of civic unity (Waitt, 2001). Rather than events being used as one of many possible levers to produce public policy outcomes, the move to an entrepreneurial local state quickly placed events at the centre of public policy for many cities (Foley, *et al* 2011). Moreover, as Cornelissen (2004) suggests:

The hosting of sport mega-events has become an important feature of many countries' development and other aims, and increasingly such events are recognized and analysed for their use by political and economic/corporate agents to attain certain objectives (p. 42)

The decision to engage in inter-urban competition to host a mega event like the Olympic Games or the World Cup does not come without significant public policy challenges. In order to secure the much-vaunted economic, social, cultural and political returns, a complex figuration, or coalition, of public and private actors have to be brought on board. Decisions to bid for a mega event are made across the administrative boundaries of the national and local state, involving sporting federations, the private sector and, crucially, the all-powerful event sanctioning bodies themselves. To illustrate the sanctioning body influence, Eick (2010, p. 285) argues that FIFA, 'forces all applicants for hosting the World Cup (nation-states as well as respective host cities) to accept all branding conditions, commercialization interests and security demands...even before the applicants would know whether they will be allowed to host the World Cup'.

The increasingly stringent infrastructural requirements, venues, security and media facilities laid down by the sanctioning bodies mean that nations normally have to allocate national (or federal) resources alongside additional local resources to support the bid process alone. Further public policy complexity is added when questions of who should pay for such policy decisions arise. The responsibility for mega event bidding and delivery does not sit comfortably within one discrete policy terrain and, therefore, how decisions are made, implemented and by whom remains open to contestation. That said, mega events have certainly become important to the everyday realities of public policy in many nations and their impacts are penetrating a raft of other public functions. National legislation is now frequently subject to amendment in order to ensure the desired economic returns are achieved (for example by outlawing ambush marketing) and planning hurdles can be overcome in shorter timescales (Hall, 2006). The independence of event sanctioning bodies as international non-governmental organisations also provides uncertainty in public policy terms for those cities and nations vying for the rights to host a mega event. Both FIFA and the IOC exist independently of governments and have wider 'cultural, humanitarian and developmental aims' (Eisenberg, 2006, p. 61). Although officially not-for-profit organisations they are also, however, criticised for focusing on the profit motive, regulating the activities of state actors to ensure the commercial returns expected for the property rights they own.

Many commentators have criticised this approach to policy (Hall, 2006; Brenner & Theodore, 2005; Smith, 2010) arguing that private sector entrepreneurial needs are given precedence over public sector welfare reforms and that mega event hosting is used as a way of consoling the public that they will see benefits to their city as a result of 'trickle down' benefits from hosting a large scale event. Those commentators critical of the reliance on neoliberalizing processes were previously silenced, but there is evidence that this particular mode of governance as it affects mega events is being contested, not only in the academic world but also in the actions and activities of citizens protesting physically and virtually. For example, new media is now used effectively by a broad coalition of protesters to voice their dissent and resistance to the perceived extravagances and lack of democratic accountability associated with the Olympic Games, in particular. Issues that may have would have previously passed below the radar because space (physical and media) was completely controlled by the political-corporate-media complex, now find a cacophony of voices willing to activate beyond the reach of the usual power brokers. Moreover, within more traditional forms of protest and dissent, the Canadian city of Halifax ran a 'Halifax No Way' campaign in 2005/6 to show their discontent with their leaders' wish to host the XXth Commonwealth Games in 2014. Halifax eventually withdrew from the bidding race. These two brief examples highlight the imperfection of neoliberalization processes with reference to mega event bidding,

delivery and legacy. Continuing with this line of thought, the following discussion focuses on changing political and geographical landscape for mega events brought about by new entrants to the circuit and the implications for sanctioning bodies, national and local governments, thereafter.

## MEGA EVENTS: A DEVELOPMENT NARRATIVE

Roche (2000), whose book *Mega Events and Modernity* is a seminal text in this field, argued that from the nineteenth century onwards the Expos, World Fairs and, latterly, the Olympic Games became very 'public' events, used by political elites for instrumental reasons associated with social control and securing population consent. Invented public events created and supported by the state were embedded in the calendar for the benefit of the citizenry. During this period, marked by rapid industrialisation in the West, events like these, including national days were public celebrations of the nation or of specific national symbols. Whilst in many parts of the world the symbolic value of festivals and events continues to be of great value as a form of social glue for local and national purposes, events are increasingly bought-in by governments and quasi-governmental bodies to serve a similar purpose but often without the democratic ethos and sense of ownership which accompanied their predecessors. Events with very little historical connection with a locale, city or nation are now targeted for wholly instrumental reasons including the neoliberalizing mantra of place promotion and consumption (Miles & Miles, 2004). Peripatetic mega events like the Olympic Games or the World Cup present hosts with the opportunity to produce short and long-term economic benefits (Hiller, 2000), attract private sector investment, create employment and generate additional tourism visitation (Preuss, 2004). Since Rome 1960 the Olympic Games has been viewed as an unparalleled opportunity to produce regenerative returns for host cities (Gold & Gold, 2008).

As a result of the naturalisation of mega event-as-public-policy discourse globally, competition to host the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup has intensified in recent years (e.g. Baku, Azerbaijan has followed Qatar and Pyeongchang, Korea in bidding for the Olympic Games) as emerging cities and regions see an opportunity to put themselves on the map. The Beijing 2008 Olympics represents something of a watershed in this respect as it allowed China to successfully strengthen its position in the world order despite the initial controversy over the IOC's decision to award it the Games. Any pre-Games dissent over human rights, pollution and the blackout of athletes speaking to the press were put to the back of the media reporting in favour of the promotion of China delivering on the Olympic values such as friendship, excellence and harmony. As Nye (2004) comments, China's 'soft power' offensive saw the production of an Olympic Games that was both a sporting and political success. Beijing (2008) also represents a key point in time for mega event sanctioning bodies as it marked a change in policy from awarding their Games to nations *becoming* as opposed to those already *being* capable of hosting the event. The cultural, humanitarian and developmental aims that differentiate international non-governmental agencies seemed to have been revived in the IOC's decision, although the economic imperative of reaching into a huge market in China and other parts of Asia should not be ignored. Herein lies the contradictory nature of the role played by sanctioning bodies – on one level they are gatekeepers of higher order universal values whilst on the other they facilitate intense neoliberalization through tight business-oriented activity involving control over the state to extract profit in partnership with sporting and media multinational conglomerates.

In mega event policy terms, advanced liberal democracies (economically, politically and culturally) face a changing world order. It is no longer enough to demonstrate the technical capacity and advanced political and economic systems to guarantee success. Until the last decade the economic and political motives underlying bidding had given precedence to developed nations with the necessary infrastructure, political stability and track record (Cornelissen, 2004). That is now changing and it is possible for undemocratic nations to compete for the World Cup or Olympic Games on a level playing field with the UK or USA whose bids are (at least formally) made within the structures of a democratic process. Nations previously able to target only lower-tier mega events are now targeting those at the top tier because the field is more open than it has been for at least a decade. The political intent to secure a mega event shown

by leaders in the developed West is now shared widely across the world, from Asia to Africa. For example, Cornelissen (2004, p. 45) suggests that political leaders in post-Apartheid South Africa, have robustly attempted to position that country, 'in the international arena...actively engaging in the international mega-events 'market' has been a key aspect of this more outwardly focused foreign policy'. This political drive led to South Africa bidding and winning the right to host several second and third tier mega events in the 1990s and early 2000s, before successfully hosting the FIFA World Cup in 2010. South Africa provides an interesting case for this article because its bid for the 2006 World Cup) was focused on three main objectives. First, it was designed to consolidate 'both South Africa's international position and its domestic transformation' (Cornelissen, 2004, p. 44). So, albeit the political premise of bidding for a mega event is often externally focused, the South African government also appreciated the nation-building value of hosting the event, having experienced the wave of optimism that accompanied the 1995 Rugby World Cup. Second, the bid permitted South Africa to address a range of economic and development agendas, working on the neoliberalized argument that mega events help catalyse economic activity that would otherwise have been delayed, or not produced at all. The third goal was to 'enhance the country's international status by promoting the country's recent democratization' (Cornelissen, 2004, p. 45). Although ultimately unsuccessful in its bid for the 2006 World Cup, much of the rhetoric was maintained for its successful bid for the 2010 event. In particular, the themes of reconciliation and nation building remained in place and were actually extended to encompass the whole of the African continent - an objective that had failed for the 2006 bid. In addition, whilst in 2006, the emotional appeal of 'It's Africa's Turn' did not produce a successful candidacy, it did help bring about an appreciation within the sanctioning body (FIFA) that the World Cup should rotate around its confederations, leading to Africa having 'its turn' in 2010. This change of policy from FIFA is important because its rotation system now permits many more nations to join the circuit than would otherwise have been the case a decade ago. Sporting mega events are now a realistic and viable developmental instrument for a number of recently developed and developing countries.

Mega events are now a more realistic and viable proposition for emerging nations because the leadership of the sanctioning bodies has been forced, by significant levels of public criticism, to concentrate on the cultural, humanitarian and developmental aims that their organisations were created to promote through the vehicle of sport. However, this new policy direction contains its own contradictions and tensions that generate further criticism. Awarding South Africa the 2010 World Cup is defensible on the basis that it had been progressing the democratization process since the end of apartheid in the early 1990s and hosting a mega event would help to solidify its internal and external legitimacy. However, in the Middle East and parts of Asia and the Far East, the democratic principle has not been embraced and, yet, nations have been awarded a World Cup or Olympics recently. Moreover, China's failure to participate in the international political community, its problematic human rights record, poor environmental history and concerns over their treatment of political dissenters also makes the IOC's decision to award Beijing the 2008 Olympic Games difficult to defend on the basis of upholding universal values. This apparent inconsistency gives ammunition to those commentators arguing that the economic capital that China brought to the Olympic Games was an attractive offering to the IOC, producing an awe-inspiring spectacular unrivalled in previous Games.

Although the extent of human rights abuses and suppression of political dissent is less evident in the states of the Middle East and Gulf Region, the ruling power elites in a state like Qatar which was awarded the FIFA World Cup in 2011, also have complete autonomy to decide whether or not to bid for a mega-event. Like China, the oil-rich Gulf states have the financial strength to stage mega events, promising futuristic stadia, climate controlled environments for athletes and visitors and state of the art transport infrastructure. Qatar also provides an access route into new markets for the sanctioning bodies and fits the criteria of a becoming nation. However, Gulf states like Qatar have circumnavigated the democratic process and long term planning by simply buying in expertise as they need it and invested in an approach that is defiantly urban entrepreneurial, focused almost wholly on economic motives and global positioning. Qatar has followed a deliberate and intentional strategy to secure global sporting extravaganzas since 2001 (Foley, McGillivray & McPherson, 2012) and the visibility these events

promise is an important component of Qatar's global positioning, with support from its ruling family patronage. However, citizen involvement in policy formulation and implementation in Qatar is minimal, part of a social contract that trades citizen rights for affluence. For FIFA, it appears that the impressive financial resources that Qatar promised to invest outweighed the absence of well-developed social policies and questionable records on human rights and other universal values. This fits with Eick's (2010) view that FIFA is ultimately concerned with exploiting its higher order aims to reach into new markets, regulating the urban spaces it encounters, restricting state freedom and exploiting its property rights. As he goes on to argue:

the growing influence of FIFA can be described as a new mode of governance. The (contractual) relationships between all stakeholders involved are shaped by FIFA's ability to offer its monopolized product. It is for this reason that the networks created on a four-year basis are hierarchical, and the subjugation under FIFA's rules and regulations by the host nation and the respective cities is the precondition for hosting the games (Eick, 2010, p. 294)

The implication of this analysis is that although the most recent mega events have been awarded to nations with alternative governance systems including the BRIC nations (Brazil, 2016, 2020, Russia, 2014, India, 2010, China, 2008) and Qatar, 2022, the underlying strategic imperative for sanctioning bodies (and potential hosts) remains economic.

There is, however, more to the activities of the sanctioning bodies than an unashamedly neoliberal strategy to serve their own interests. As Brighenti, Clivaz, Deletroz, Favre & Chappelat (2005) have argued, emotion is now playing a greater role in bidding for mega events and this was certainly a significant part of South Africa's successful World Cup bid. South Africa's bid team essentially asked FIFA to 'complete the circle' of the globe by addressing the absence of Africa in hosting a mega event. Moreover, although FIFA and the IOC are often criticised for their suspect records on corruption and internal political machinations (Sugden & Tomlinson, 1998; Lenskyj, 2000; Shaw, 2008), over the last decade, emerging nations and regions have forced a shift in the power base for international sport and helped to reshape the map of mega event hosting. Prospective hosts continue to have to demonstrate their financial preparedness but it may well be that the sanctioning bodies are reemphasising their international non-governmental role and greater ethical principles in order to justify their entry to new markets in Asia, Africa and South America. This is, at least, generating useful discourse on the value and purpose of mega events and whether they are a force for good in the world catalysing economies, encouraging more progressive political systems and addressing unequal access to sport and culture. Even though the shadow of commerce looms large over the expansionist strategies of FIFA and the IOC it is hard to argue with the sentiment of opening up the opportunities to others and giving them a turn (Bob and Swart, 2009), especially given that for decades there were only a relatively few nations capable of bidding for and hosting the Olympic Games or the World Cup. However, with new bidders and hosts come new problems of leadership and accountability. The final section addresses this problematic and proposes solutions to enable the public value accruable from mega events to be shared more widely.

## **LEADERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN MEGA EVENTS**

Decisions about whether to bid for a mega event are about how public funds *should* be allocated, but they are also questions of *leadership* – how decisions are made and implemented, who assumes responsibility for these decisions and how representative the decision-making process is (Clark, 2008). Roche (2000) argues that, historically, decisions on bidding for the Olympic Games, World Cup or Expos were made by political leaders often on irrational or intangible claims. Emphasis was placed more on the short-term *bread and circuses* (Veyne, 1990) benefits associated with the ideological tools of spectacle, excitement and distraction rather than on what Roche (2000) calls the contextual (medium term) or macro-contextual (long term) perspective. Leaders viewed mega events as a means of securing popular

support, domestically, and enhanced profile and status, internationally. This emphasis on the short-term dramatic character of the mega event spectacle itself has, to some extent, been supplemented with a greater political and economic concern with the contextual and macro contextual perspectives - at least in the liberal democracies of the West where accountability to an electorate means that short term impacts do not provide a satisfactory return for significant levels of public investment (Hall, 2006). In most democratic nations there exists a much more complex figuration of political actors involved in deciding to bid, running a bid, securing a mega event, planning for delivery and then delivering. The outcomes of these decisions ultimately lead to public policy impacts and judgements on whether the event was a success or not (John, 1998).

In terms of leadership there are a number of competing claims for authority within the complex network of interactions and wide range of audiences involved in a mega event. First, you have the event sanctioning bodies (i.e. the IOC and FIFA), then national political leaders, local politicians, sports administrators (representatives of the governing bodies of sport), corporate sponsors and a series of other stakeholders from across the public and private sectors. Each of these stakeholder groups themselves contains leaders with strong claims to power and authority over their audiences and are, differentially, accountable to their public (s). Additionally, there exists a mixed economy of funding for most mega events, with resources normally underwritten by central government but with significant investment from local government, the host city (or cities) and sponsors. This mixed economy model creates its own leadership and accountability challenges, especially as some stakeholders are looking to the short-term spectacle (e.g. the Local Organising Committees and corporate sponsors) whilst others are concerned with a much longer set of economic, social, political and cultural impacts (national and local government). Herein lies the tension between delivering a media spectacle that will produce the sort of coverage and images necessary to attract new investment, visitors and a greater global profile (the neoliberalizing tendency described earlier) and being accountable politically on the basis of macro-contextual outcomes associated with the ability of these events to transform the very fabric of a nation and its people and produce meaningful public value.

The defining feature of mega event leadership since the early 1990s, at least, has been the prioritisation of commercial imperatives over wider social, cultural or environmental concerns. This is of no surprise given the earlier discussion of mega events as a vehicle for the intensification of neoliberalization. As Hall (2006), Waitt (2002) and Whitson & Horne (2006) have each asserted, the power relations evident within mega events are weighted towards the corporate-media nexus and the role of the national and local state is to facilitate entrepreneurial activity in order to deliver the mega event successfully according to neoliberalized logic. Both FIFA and the IOC have a monopoly over their event 'property' and have fixed the rules of the game to benefit their own interests to the detriment of host city (and national) objectives. FIFA, for example, requires host nations to concede elements of their sovereignty over legislation and public space which makes leaders impotent and, ultimately, unaccountable, 'the influx of FIFA on regulating the urban space as a market and commodity already raises concern about the democratic conditions of the commonweal before and during these four weeks of a mega-event' (Eick, 2010, p. 293). The lack of democratic accountability built into the whole bidding, planning and delivery process also requires some discussion here as it directly impacts upon leadership and accountability. In order to be able to compete with largely undemocratic and unaccountable competitors (e.g. Qatar or China), bidding cities (or nations) in the West have felt it necessary to free their bid committees from the same standards of democratic accountability expected of other organisations within the public realm. Public-private alliances are formed, given the status of quasi private sector entities and afforded the extensive autonomy to act in a corporate manner to secure their ultimate prize. These new institutions are the outcome of the competitive logics and privatised management mentioned in the opening discussion of neoliberalization and this continues on into the planning and delivery stages if the initial bid is successful. Once a local organising committee is formed, according to the logic of privatised management of the public sphere, they invariably need to 'free' this new entity from the 'restrictions' of state bureaucracy, enabling it to operate outside the strictures of normal planning regulations and responsible for delivering to the sanctioning body's Host City Contract (HCC). It is our

contention here that a democratic deficit exists between the local organising committee, the sanctioning bodies and the interests of publicly accountable bodies. Power is shared unequally as the delivery of the mega event itself overrides the interests of the professed beneficiaries. Framed by the tightly controlled HCC, those charged with the responsibility for delivery of the mega event are forced to focus on the short-term media spectacular over the course of two (the Olympics) or four (World Cup) weeks because that is what the sanctioning bodies and their sponsor families are, ultimately, interested in. However, the interests of FIFA and the IOC do not necessarily coalesce with those of the host nation and its populace which is much more likely to be interested in the contextual and macro contextual outcomes of the mega event. It is here that the unequal power relations that make up the mega event figuration are evident.

In recent years there have been calls for changes to be introduced to redistribute power from the sanctioning bodies (e.g. IOC or FIFA) towards those accountable public bodies with a responsibility for prosecuting wider public policy in their environs and achieving a common good from mega event investment (Lenskyj, 2000; Hall, 2006; Shaw, 2008). As international non-governmental organisations, FIFA and the IOC are largely unaccountable to the vagaries of national policy and are primarily accountable to their member associations and, perhaps to a greater extent, their commercial partners. Both bodies make significant profits from their media rights properties and their mega events, but both are constituted as not for profit organisations and, therefore exist for wider common good aims.

The question that hangs in the air is how to bring the sanctioning bodies, sponsors, national and local governments, sports associations and the public together to secure a common good or greater public value from the mega event phenomenon. At present there exists an unequal set of power relations which places the sanctioning body in a powerful position and relegates national and local governments to a secondary role even although they invest significant amounts of public finance to lever expected economic, social, cultural and environmental legacies. The work of Crosby & Bryson (2005) on the common good in a shared-power world can help to advance the discussion on the role of mega events in facilitating strategic global leadership, going beyond the narrowly channelled interests of neoliberalized governance.

Crosby & Bryson (2005) call for the greater use of the *policy entrepreneur* role, people with a systematic understanding of policy change processes to influence those involved in public policy decision making to secure greater public value for activities. Policy entrepreneurs would normally come from outside formal government positions to broker relationships between public and private partners to ensure that the common good is achieved. Fligstein (1997) suggest that this role requires people with autonomous reflexive behaviour and skilled social action alongside influential social positions. Others suggest that the policy entrepreneur needs to have the ability to secure cooperation, achieved through having sufficient authority and legitimacy to persuade those part of existing institutional arrangements that change is necessary and then to mobilise that action to produce the necessary alliances (Van der Steen & Groenewegen, 2009). That a version of the policy entrepreneur role is necessary in the public policy environment surrounding mega events is due to the complexities of ownership and outcomes that existing institutional arrangements create. For example, the sanctioning bodies are primarily concerned with ensuring their event is delivered successfully and the local organising committees are similarly under pressure to follow through on their bid commitments. There is no great incentive for these bodies to alter their practice primarily because a wider concept of the common good or public value has yet to be effectively articulated by host nations and their various publics. Crosby and Bryson suggest that the policy entrepreneur needs to understand the power relationships present with the key stakeholders and propose that an overarching institution (such as the local state) is the power source to coordinate these relationships. However, the danger always exists that the overarching institutions become the places where the 'mobilisation of bias' occurs (Crosby & Bryson, 2005, p. 168). It is the responsibility of the prospective host nation to consider how best to create governance structures that would permit the policy entrepreneur role to operate effectively. The role cannot be seen to simply reinforce the hegemonic neoliberalization agenda practiced by the sanctioning bodies and, to date, supported by the national and local state. It needs to be the product of a wider debate on the public value accruable from mega events – social, cultural, environmental and economic – which then creates the need for a policy entrepreneur to ensure these (often competing) values are delivered effectively, for the benefit of the common good and



not just the sanctioning bodies.

There are some signs that common good and wider public value agendas are penetrating the privileged world of mega events. In Canada, a nation with a chequered past in hosting mega events, there has been a push to develop wider social leveraging strategies to ensure that mega events do not only focus on economic return. The 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, for example, created an organization called *2010 Legacies Now* to act on a systematic social sustainability programme which ‘strategically invested in programs, organizations and communities, and through our networks, leveraged existing relationships and facilitated new partnerships to create self-sustaining community legacies’ (2010 Legacies Now). A policy entrepreneur who had worked across the private, public and third sectors and demonstrated a more strategic approach to the leadership around a mega event led it. Toronto is hosting the 2015 Pan American Games and has already initiated a Toronto 2015 vision that focuses on leveraging community inclusion and social capital (Misener & Mason, 2008). Again this serves as an indication of a trend, in North America at least, of common good thinking entering the lexicon of mega event literature. Each of these two examples illustrates a conception of legacy and impact beyond the narrow economic narratives of physical infrastructure, job creation and tourism visitation.

Evidence of the policy entrepreneurial approach in action also comes from Brazil’s successful bids for the two top tier mega events – the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games. Like South Africa, Brazil’s bid for the 2016 Olympic Games was unashamedly developmental, economic and emotional/political. Leadership for the bid was at the highest level and Brazil’s President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva made an impassioned plea in the last stages of voting to the South American and African IOC’s delegates to give their votes to Brazil for 2016. He said that ‘Brazil is the only great world economy never to have staged the Olympics...it would bring the games to the South American continent for the first time. This cannot be a privilege reserved for the rich nations’ (27 Sept, 2009, Gamesbid.com).

Rio de Janeiro, the second largest city in Brazil, had previously bid and lost to stage the summer Olympic Games. It had gained the experience in working with the sanctioning bodies, local and national government and the business community which enabled its leaders to adapt its approach, form new alliances and mobilise the right set of resources to succeed for their 2009 bid. They had also successfully delivered the 2007 Pan American Games which helped them build ‘a relationship -- we built an understanding with the public sector and delivered an excellent games...the result of that accomplishment, paved the way for the Olympic victory’ (Monterio, 2012). Osorio (Monterio, 2012) also emphasised that they differentiated themselves with the type of leadership arrangements they put in place. Other successful bids had installed key business figures as the spearhead but Brazil instead showcased their sportspeople. The choice of this leadership was crucial with sportspeople understanding the needs and language of other sportspeople at the top of the IOC. Although successful in winning the rights to host two mega events in quick succession, this does not necessarily translate into securing the desired public policy outcomes from these events. There have already been doubts expressed over the 2014 World Cup and its likely ‘beneficiaries’ which concur with the criticism of Eick’s (2010) criticism of FIFA as a non-profit making organisation with a strong profit motive, ‘*If FIFA is not put in its rightful place, FIFA will soon have more power than our president and the World Cup will be the way FIFA wants it and not the way we should do it...FIFA could earn a little bit less so that the Brazilians can take part*’ (Romario, 2012). Such commentaries from high profile athletes focus attention on the public value, or lack of, therein accruable for stakeholders other than the sanctioning bodies. With doubts being expressed over the ownership and leadership of the World Cup in 2014, the message that the Olympics will do more than bring forward infrastructure changes is vital to the leadership of the Brazilian Olympic Committee. The Head of the BOC has stressed that although physical legacy was very important to them, ‘more important is the big opportunity to leverage [social] programs that already exist, to foster integration within the society’ (Monteiro, 2012). Again, there exists an opportunity in Brazil to foster a policy entrepreneurial approach whereby the integration between government and business and investors to create Brand Brazil could lead to greater public value for the host nation.

## CONCLUSION

We have argued that mega sporting events are now a public policy tool used globally to lever economic, political and increasingly social returns for cities and nations. Events have historically represented good news stories for leaders in times of political, economic and social uncertainty, but their legitimacy is now open to greater critique as neoliberalized market models show signs of fatal failure. Furthermore, as the liberal democracies of the West face intense competition from emerging nations with alternative political systems and an emotional pull for sanctioning bodies, they have to adopt a policy approach that goes beyond the narrow confines of economic, political and regenerative gain to focus on social sustainability if they are to continue to secure the support of their citizens and funding agencies alike. Although the power to frame the terms of reference of the mega event debate continues to reside with international non-governmental organisations (FIFA and the IOC), there are intimations of change afoot that may help host cities and nations to capture greater public value from these global events.

In moving towards a model of social sustainability based on leveraging benefits beyond the narrow economic hegemony promulgated by the sanctioning bodies, sponsors and an entrepreneurial state apparatus, there is a role for the policy entrepreneur that can broker relationships between a set of public and private actors for the achievement of the common good. However, for models of social leverage, common good or public value to have greater influence in the future a marked shift in the governing framework for mega events is also required. Whilst the two principal strategic players (the IOC and FIFA) continue to set the rules that regulate host government activities and direct them towards a market orientation then the legitimation deficit between the organisers and intended beneficiaries will only widen. Without recognition that mega events leadership has to be more accountable and transparent and be subject to greater democratic accountability, we are likely to witness an increase in the number of protests being organised physically and virtually to complain about the overly commodified spectacle of mega events. Through exercising strategic leadership, policy makers have within their grasp the chance to demonstrate that mega events can fulfil their cultural, humanitarian and developmental aims and be the epitome of a shared power world in the way they are bid for, planned, delivered and handed over to the next host. This analysis is only the starting point on a debate in mega event policy and public leadership circles towards creating a more critical engagement on the future of events as a credible policy vehicle.

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