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Back the bid: the 2012 summer games and the governance of London.

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'BACK THE BID': THE 2012 SUMMER OLYMPICS AND THE GOVERNANCE OF LONDON.

Abstract: The Olympic Park being developed in east London for the 2012 Games is one large urban renewal project among many in the city. The impact of the Games on urban development may be of less significance than the impact on city politics. Bidding for and delivering the Games has contributed to a reassessment of the recent experiment with mayoral government. The paper examines these changing representations of the structures of London government that are now seen as a success. Much of the literature on Olympic cities is highly critical of the impact of the games, but the (current) substantial support for London2012 also needs to be explained. We examine how London has created opportunities for support, and moments and spaces for celebration when political leaders and Londoners can come together around particular representations of themselves and the city.

INTRODUCTION

Once the decision was taken in May 2003 to compete for the 2012 Summer Games the slogan 'Back the Bid' filled billboards, posters on the sides of buses and was woven into the fabric of seats on the tube. Opinion polls suggested consistent support for the campaign running at about 70%, and by May 2005 1.2m Londoners had signed up online to 'Back the Bid' and 10,000 had already volunteered to be helpers at the Games (The Londoner, May 2005). Experience from other recent Olympic cities and of other mega-events suggests tensions and conflicts to come as deadlines approach (Lenskyj 2002, Gursoy & Kendall 2006). Our focus in this paper is not on the delivery of the facilities for the Games or squabbles over the 'legacy' promoted by the London bid team but rather on the impacts of the decision to bid and the winning of the 2012 Games on the politics of the city. The government of London can be seen as a 'recurrent experiment' (Pimlott & Rao, 2002). National government may abolish the institutions of city government (as in 1986) or create new institutions (as in 1965 and most recently in 2000). The frequency of change suggests that national government sees the government of London as provisional. The most recent 'experiment' is the establishment of mayoral government and the working out of new relationships between tiers of government and between government and Londoners. The decision to bid for the Games came just three years into the new system of mayoral government and, currently, relations between tiers of government are under review. What were initially frosty relations between mayor and central government are changing and there has been a radical shift of opinion about the effectiveness of the government system. The mayoral experiment is seen as a success and winning the Games gives a further boost to political leadership. Whilst urban studies have given some attention to the role of leadership in city politics there is less understanding of moments when political leaders and followers can come together around

shared representations of the city. We examine how competing for the Olympic Games creates for moments for celebration and how the city creates spaces and opportunities for Londoners to show their support for the Olympic project and for the image of themselves represented in a global arena. Both mayor and Prime Minister present an image of an Olympic London characterised by a harmonious racial and cultural diversity.

Following success in Olympic competition on 6th July 2005 and the London bombings on 7th July the dominant image of London as host for the 2012 Games is as a city, 'diverse and unafraid' (GOL, 2006). We argue that bidding for and winning the 2012 Games has helped define the new system of London government and that through such moments different representations of city politics are (if only temporarily) clarified. We start by locating the Olympic project in the context of large scale urban renewal in London. In part two we move on to the governance of London looking firstly at institutional relationships and then at the dominant images of the city presented in the Olympic bid and at relationships between political leaders and Londoners. The final part draws out significant issues for understanding the impacts of the Olympic Games on city politics.

BIG PROJECTS IN THE TWICE OLYMPIC CITY

For cities of the size of Barcelona or Atlanta the Olympics may have greater economic importance than for a large metropolitan area that is already a double Olympic city (1908, 1948). Whilst large events are claimed to have image and tourism impacts the promotional agency *VisitLondon* estimates that London is already the most visited city globally. The large numbers of visitors expected to attend the 2012 Games will replace other tourists who will avoid London during this period. The city is also used to big sporting occasions. Half a million spectators watch the annual London marathon, the city is home to 6 Premier League football clubs, all with recently upgraded stadiums including the new 60,000 seat Arsenal stadium opened in July 2006. London hosts international rugby matches at Twickenham and international cricket at Lords and the Oval. The city is used to managing big sports events and celebrations – victory parades after the rugby world cup win in 2003 and the cricket series against Australia in 2005. Whilst the 2012 Olympic Park presents a large infrastructure and development challenge this must also be viewed in the context of many other substantial projects taking shape in the city over the next 10-20 years. There are large urban renewal projects underway in the central area at Paddington (23,000 jobs, 3,000 apartments, plus retail space and a hospital) in a new master plan for Victoria, at Kings Cross (2,000 apartments, 25,000 office jobs), at Wembley (4,000 apartments, 6,000 office jobs, the national football stadium and a casino hotel) and adjacent to the proposed Olympic park at Stratford City (4,500 apartments and 33,000 jobs in 5m sq ft of commercial space with a

2,000 bed hotel). The Olympic Park is not the only large project and London, like New York (Fainstein, 2005), seems to have rediscovered a taste for large scale urban renewal. An Olympic Park is just another project. On the other hand such prestige projects have presented London with substantial problems in the recent past. The proposed Picketts Lock athletics stadium was abandoned and London withdrew its bid for the 2005 World Athletics Championships. The Millennium Dome was not ready on time and has since been an expensive white elephant. Wembley Stadium is currently running about 2 years late (interestingly construction workers at the stadium were reported to have made money in betting against the project being ready on schedule (Butt, 2006)). We might expect similar contractual issues around the delivery of Olympic facilities and around essential infrastructure. In March 2006 the House of Commons Transport Committee (HOC, 2006) expressed concern about the 'pace' of transport planning and found inconsistencies between the Interim Olympic Development Authority's claim that the new shuttle trains would deliver 25,000 passengers an hour and the railway companies' own estimate of 12-14000.

The Olympic Park is one urban renewal project among many underway in London over the next 10 or so years. The early stages of planning for the Games reflect familiar approaches to big projects in London. The large 'destination Wembley' project underway in the west of the city passed through similar phases. The mayor lobbied powerful external players – the national Football Association, the government's Department of Culture - to locate a new national football stadium at Wembley. Once the decision to build was taken the local borough council negotiated with the FA and landowners over the local development gains and facilities that could be extracted the project. For the proposed Olympic Park in the Lower Lea Valley in east London, once the Prime Minister has been persuaded by the mayor and others to authorise the bid the master plan was managed by a borough-led planning team. The Olympic Development Authority established in March 2006 is a type of development corporation familiar in the East End through the redevelopment of London docklands. This planning process has much in common with other London projects and is not the totally new approach to urban development politics seen in Athens and some other Olympic cities (Delladetsima 2004,86).

The 2012 The Olympic Park in the Lower Lea Valley.

The main Olympic venues are to be located in an Olympic Park and neighbouring areas largely in the borough of Newham in east London. These parts of the city were identified as prospective Olympic sites in late 1970s when a bid for the 1988 Games was being considered. The mayor's London Plan favours the east of the city over the west, encouraging new development to follow new public transport investment (GLA, 2004a). The Borough of

Newham is the third most deprived borough in London, where life expectancy is the lowest. 30% of the population defined itself as 'white British' in the 2001 census (Newham 2012 Unit). The Olympic bid was located in a discourse of regeneration and renewal of the East End with substantial claims in the bid documents about the legacy of jobs, homes, a new urban park and community facilities for this part of London (London2012, 2004a). The mayor does not want an 'iconic' stadium and after the games the main stadium will be reduced in scale to become a permanent athletics track. Other performance spaces will either be dismantled or handed on to other users. The network of walkways to and from transport and between facilities will be demolished and green space produced. The Olympic bid 'liberates' the space of the Lower Lea Valley from its industrial present and after the Games a new green landscape will emerge.

Initial planning of the main Olympic sites in east London was undertaken by the Boroughs through a Joint Planning Authorities Team (JPAT) and the mayor's economic development agency. The boroughs organised extensive public consultation. Between August and December 2003 they held over 70 events to discuss urban regeneration plans (all of which assumed the Games would go ahead). The JPAT won a Royal Town Planning Institute award in 2005 for their exemplary, participatory planning process. Newham set up a new department to manage the negotiation of community benefits. Other London boroughs have appointed staff briefed to exploit opportunities arising from the Games. We might expect the branding of many local projects with an (unofficial) Olympic label exploiting the unaccustomed media focus on east London (LBWT, 2004). In February 2006 the Borough of Newham ran 'The Big Sunday' event that drew about 35,000 people to look over plans.

Following success at the IOC meeting in Singapore the *2006 London Olympic Games and Paralympic Games Act* set up the Olympic Development Authority with a leadership appointed by government (OPSI, 2006). At the start of 2006 the master plan for the main Olympic site was revised. The aim of the revision was to achieve better integration with the adjoining Stratford City Development, a large development located around the Stratford Eurostar station. Part of the competitors' accommodation and the Media Centre would be included in SCD. Subsequently, further revisions moved the Media Centre to land nearby. The revisions to the initial plans aimed reduce the land take of the Olympic project and displace fewer of the existing business on the sites (Interim Olympic Delivery Authority, 2006). Closer integration with SCD offered planning benefits but relations between the IODA and SCD have not been smooth with the mayor blaming SCD shareholders for delays that could jeopardise the Olympic project (Muir, 2006). On the up side the reduced land take cut by 95 the number of potential business objectors to the IODA's compulsory purchase orders (CPO) on

land needed for the park. The public inquiry into the CPOs opened in May 2006 with government expected to confirm the orders by the end of the year (LDA, 2006).

Displaced businesses, other displaced leisure users and environmental groups have been among the voices objecting to the bid and subsequent Olympic project in east London (LDA 2006). Critics of Olympic projects (see Lenskyj (2004, 137) on the Sydney experience,) suggest inevitable concerns about the diversion of public money, affordable housing not delivered, and the tax burden. But in London these voices have been relatively low key. Some leisure uses have been displaced and not yet been offered acceptable alternative accommodation. Environmental opposition has been mute. The Lower Lea Valley consists of a network of rivers, open spaces, industrial uses and overhead power cables. One debate on environmental impacts concluded that the valley was by no means picturesque and habitats not worth special protection (BBC, 2005). Some opposition has been voiced to the cost of the Games and in particular the cost to London property taxpayers who began paying £625m from April 2006. For example, taxpayers in the borough of Barnet in north London will pay more than the 'Olympic' borough of Newham but receive no new sports facilities. For some therefore the Games are seen as 'the east London Olympics' (This is Local London, 2006). As in many other Olympic cities (Lenskyj, 2004) taxpayers raise the issue of opportunity costs and current under provision of local sports facilities will not be made up by the facilities built for the Games (Self, 2006). But by far the loudest and most consistent opposition has come from displaced businesses. 350 businesses – from scrap metal to concrete recycling – are located along Marshgate Lane which runs through the proposed Olympic Park. The mayor's LDA proposed compensation or relocation packages. Those who refused offers were labelled by the mayor as a 'handful of greedy businessmen' (Evening Standard, 2005).

Criticism has been relatively mute and where critical questions have been raised they have been rebutted quickly. For example, an article drawing on the experience of the Manchester Commonwealth Games in 2002 to criticise claims about the legacy for local communities was rebutted within days by the leader of Manchester City Council (Leese, 2005). The ODA, the Mayor and Government have been quick to dissociate the Olympic project from the failure of project management at Wembley. Indeed the mayor's dispute with SCD centred on contracts between the Stratford developers and Multiplex, the builders of the delayed Wembley stadium.

THE CHANGING GOVERNANCE OF LONDON

The Olympic Games of the past thirty years are located in debates about globalisation, about competition between nations, ideologies and cities, about place promotion and city image

building, about the imposition of IOC rules and militarisation of city spaces during the games, about local sports development and a global 'sport-media-tourism complex', and about opportunity costs (not least of taxation) and the lack of proper evaluation of costs and benefits, about the centralisation of decision making and a relaxation of planning processes – with reduced openness, accountability and participation, and the betrayal of the aspirations of those local communities upon which the location of the games has greatest impact (see for example, Baade & Matheson, 2001, Bale & Christensen, 2004, Burbank, Andranovitch, and Heyning, 2001, Lenskyj, 2002, 2004, Maguire 2005b, Nauright, 2004, Preuss, 2000, Roche, 2000, Short, 2004, Young and Wamsley, 2005). Critics argue that the demands of the IOC dominate city politics and that local benefits are only gained through local activism.

Studies of particular cities locate such broad themes in local political cultures but tend to emphasise the influence of business in pro-growth politics (for example in Los Angeles and Salt Lake City, Andranovitch et al 2001) and community impacts (for example in Sydney, Lenskyj, 2002). We need to take a broader view of London government and politics. Olympic planning represents the government of London in particular ways. The Games have an important impact at a time when the institutions of government are being reassessed and reconfigured. Initially in this part of the paper we review current institutional reforms and then go on to examine political leadership and how leaders represent Londoners in the Olympic debate. In Olympic planning we can see the new institution of the mayor in action and a distinctive style of city governance emerging.

The history of London government is one of changing institutions (Innwood, 2005, Travers, 2004) and 'recurrent experiment' (Pimlott & Rao, 2002). In recent years experiment has been characterised by the effects of a fragmentation of responsibilities (among London Boroughs, government sponsored neighbourhood renewal initiatives, local business and public-private sector lobbies) and of the controlling hand of central government (Newman and Thornley, 1997). In 2000 the Greater London Authority and directly elected city-wide mayor were added to an already complex institutional landscape of governance. In the 'new' government of London the London Boroughs created in the 1960s retain their comprehensive service delivery and planning functions. Private sector lobbies that have developed over the past twenty years remain influential. And despite creating a mayor, central government retained the office of Minister for London. Initially the new London government was regarded as a 'weak mayor' model (Newman, 2000, Pimlott & Rao, 2002, Travers, 2004). However, just a few years on from the reform of 2000, the role of the mayor is changing again and we can see this as another reworking of the 'recurrent experiment'. The current readjustment of London governance needs to be seen in the context of the management of the Games. Bidding for the Games is a choice for national elites. Once the decision is made the city has

to accept the Olympic package – delivery of facilities, control of the brand. In the centralised British state the decision to bid was taken by central government, after substantial encouragement from the mayor of London. But the mayor in his own right is a signatory of the Olympic contract and this act implies readjustment of relationships. The Games give the mayor a world stage to promote the city and his own personal role in governing the city. Prime Minister and mayor share leadership roles.

In defining 'London's Challenge' moving towards 2012 the government says of local government

'The Mayor and Assembly have provided a highly successful model of city governance.' (GOL, 2006,45)

and,

'The boroughs will remain pivotal for the many local public services that matter to people. They provide strong local leadership...' (46)

Government presents a positive image of the formal structures of government. But these views are very different from the perspective on London government expressed by the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit two years earlier,

(London) 'has a complex system of governance that does not easily enable the city to focus on its strategic needs' (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit 2004).

At that time the business lobby London First also focused on leadership and strategy making in asking, 'Who is Responsible for London?' (London First, 2004). But representing the governance of London positively has become important for the Olympic project both for the bidding process and subsequently for relationships with the agencies that will deliver the Olympics facilities and infrastructure. We need to see this Olympic imperative alongside other important factors creating new views of London government.

A government review of the powers of the mayor was launched in 2005 (ODPM,2005). In the 2000 election Ken Livingstone stood as an independent candidate against the Labour Party. The popularity of the mayor during his first term led to his being encouraged to rejoin the Labour Party. Livingstone was welcomed back in January 2004 with the Prime Minister arguing that it was 'very, very important' that they work together in particular on the Olympic bid (Guardian, 2004). After his re-election in 2004, now as a Labour Party candidate, the mayor negotiated enhanced powers. The government review consequently proposed new relationships both between the mayor and central government and the mayor and borough

councils with the mayor's powers increasing across a range of functions including strategic planning. Coincident with this shift in intergovernmental relations the Olympic bid required the active involvement of the mayor's economic development agency (the London Development Agency, LDA) to begin the process of planning and acquiring land for the Olympic Park. Once the 2012 games were awarded to London the Olympic Games Act recognised the importance of the mayor's obligations under the Host City Contract in allocating powers to the ODA and other agencies (OPSI, 2006). The 'weak' mayor identified in 2000 whose power resided largely in 'influence' (Travers, 2004) now has substantial authority over large scale urban renewal and a powerful relationship in relation to the providers of infrastructure needed for the games. The GLA and mayor move from being relatively weak institutions towards something like the 'Government as Promoter' that characterised a period of government-led planning in New York in which the power of development agencies expanded around a narrow policy consensus (Kantor, 2002). In addition to his positional power the mayor could also express strong (not to say offensive) personal views about a 'handful of greedy businessmen' in the way of the Olympic Park and about partners in the Stratford City Development who should, 'go back to Iran and try their luck with the ayatollahs' (quoted in Muir, 2006). The realignment of powers, the new perspective on 'highly successful' mayoral government and leadership of the Olympic development and East End regeneration project offer opportunities to a populist mayor.

Whilst businesses located around the Olympic park may establish new relationships (for better or worse) with the mayor, the process of bidding for the Games continues well-worn roles for 'big business' in the government of London. Regional utilities, airlines and hotel chains were drawn, with encouragement of government, into the boosterist London First organisation in the early 1990s (Newman & Thornley, 1997). This corporate involvement in London government continued through the 1990s and London-wide business interests established regular contact with the new mayor in 2000 (Newman & Thornley, 2005, 142-143). Business with London-wide interests – the utility companies, EDF Energy and BT, the airlines, British Airways and Virgin Atlantic, and the management consultants, Accenture - became 'Premier Partners' of the Olympic Bid Committee (London2012, 2004b). Construction companies represented through the British Property Federation lobbied the ODA for a 'legacy strategy' that would secure the infrastructure for development around the Olympic Park after the Games (Planning, 2006).

Relationships between government and business follow lines developed in the early 1990s. However, planning of the Games reconfigures relationships between the tiers of government. Government and mayor share leadership of the Olympic project, and the mayor's role in

relation to other tiers of government has been enhanced. In the next section we examine how Londoners respond to the new government of the city.

Popular support for the Games

Political leaders relate to their followers through persuasion, offering inducements, anticipating responses, and making emotional appeals. Most important in this relationship is for leaders to gratify the motives of followers (Stone, 1995, reviewing Burns, 1978). The Olympic bidding process offers political leaders at least a medium term horizon and an international arena in which to represent the aspirations, motivations, and qualities of the public. Throughout the bidding period there was substantial support for the London Games. Critics of the Olympics tend to see such support as illusory,

'The Olympic industry has the power to suppress local dissent and to promote the illusion of unequivocal support on the part of host cities and countries;' (Lenskyj, 2004, 152).

It may be a mistake to dismiss the 'illusion of support'. At the end of Wamlsey's critical review of the notion of Olympism the author says,

'But people love it, participants, coaches, parents and spectators alike, now more than ever' (2004, 240).

At some future time supporters of London2012 may recant, but for the present it is this support rather than limited opposition that needs to be explained. Support for large public events can be underplayed as was the case with the Millennium Dome in east London where political and media criticism drowned out the consistent evidence of public enjoyment of the Dome as a temporary visitor attraction (McGuigan, 2003). The London Olympic bid committee consistently claimed high levels of support and the crowds gathered in Trafalgar Square on 6th July 2006 to hear the decision on which city would win the 2012 Games gave voice to this support. Whilst the leadership side of leader-follower relationships is relatively well understood (for example, Mollenkopf, 1992, Stone, 1995, Judd, 2000, Le Galès, 2002), there has been much less consideration of followers and of how the city creates opportunities for leader-follower relationships to be consummated. To better understand such moments of popular support we draw on some insights from the sociology of events and sport.

The Games can be seen as a great public ritual that has importance and meaning for political leaders and public alike. According to Roche (2000) elites connect with liberal visions of multiculturalism and environmentalism and project these periodically in mass festivals. For political

leaders such events help display both a mission and global destiny (2000,10). They have an external audience but also an internal one through the provision of extra-ordinary events that give meaning to spaces in cities and help define the roles of citizens. The Olympic events offer, 'major medium-term political, cultural and economic projects for cities and nations', and for individuals, 'dramatic lived experiences' (Roche, 2000,13). Linking individual experience to mega-projects suggests a way of understanding support for the London bid and how that support connects with political leaders' interpretations of the value of the Games.

The timetable of bidding for and winning the Games offers moments for celebration. London offers places suitable for such celebrations. Drawing on Elias' (1997) notion of the 'civilising process', Maguire (2005a) points out that organised games were an important feature of imperial history and he uses the idea of 'zones of prestige' to signify places where, 'culturally impressive activities are produced, displayed and consumed' (2005a, 16). Over the years withdrawal from empire and defeat in competition undermines prestige, but London still retains some 'culturally impressive' institutions and spaces. In the centre of the city Trafalgar Square has developed over two centuries as a place of public gathering, national celebrations (and popular uprisings). The mayor of London has overseen a £25m package of physical improvements of Trafalgar Square. The square is animated with almost continuous festivals and is an important feature in the mayor's cultural strategy (GLA,2004b). The square accommodates moments of celebration and shared cultural experience and links an imperial past to the contemporary city. The use of public celebrations and festivals to 'imagineer' spaces for visitors (Hughes, 1999) is well documented but cities also offer special places and special moments in which residents can see history made before their eyes and where cultural values can be reproduced. According to the mayor's opinion polls, 80% of Londoners support the organisation of, 'events that celebrate London and its diverse communities' (Livingstone, 2006a). On 6th July 2005 the 2012 Games were awarded to London and 11,000 people celebrated in Trafalgar Square in front of 2 giant television screens. The message of 'patriotism and pop' (Guardian 2005a) promoted a particular vision of national and urban qualities that were simultaneously being presented to the IOC in Singapore. The event was,

'Brilliant for modern London as a whole, for which the Olympics will provide a thrilling validation and climax to its 21st-century re-emergence as an open, multiracial and dynamic world city' (Guardian, 2005b).

The core message was repeated in Tony Blair's address to the crowd,

"London is an open, multi-racial, multi-religious, multicultural city and rather proud of it. People of all races and nationalities mix in with each other and mix in with each other well."
(Guardian, 2005c)

Such celebratory moments offer an opportunity for 'national reassessment' of 'Britain's sense of itself and of its relation to the world' (Philips, 2004, 107). This particular image of London's qualities and of the motivations of Londoners is important in contemporary debate about the East End of London. In their review of the impacts of public policy in east London Dench et al (2005) identify a rediscovery of imperial 'tolerance' in the middle class cosmopolitanism that underpins government's approach to managing this part of the city. In the East End the state has used a new cosmopolitan ideology to, 'govern a diverse population' (2005,226) and to define a national sense of a new place in the world (2005,226). Multiculturalism, 'now serves as Britain's distinctive rationale in the current world order, and in many respects can be considered a success' (2005, 226). What links political leaders and public in Trafalgar Square and in wider support for the London Olympics is a particular idea of London's place in the world. We can see in the Olympic project an approach to governing the city in tune with contemporary political ideology. For Londoners the games offer, 'special opportunities to participate in collective projects' (Roche, 2000, 222) and in the revalorised Trafalgar Square 'zone of prestige' individuals can connect with political leaders and connect success in international competition with national ideology.

This moment of affirmation between Londoners and political leaders may of course be short-lived. Research on mega events suggests that support may wane after the games as residents realise that, in particular, economic gains are less than expected (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006). Ideological claims may be contested. For example, political leaders interpreted the French victory in the 1998 World Cup as evidence of a racially integrated France whereas others saw the 'black, blanc, beur' football team as barely concealing the racism endemic in public policy (Burgel, 2006, 145).

The multiculturalism of the London bid was challenged on the day after the celebration of winning the games. In Singapore the mayor had stressed security – picking two of his three adjectives -

'I know that what you want from me is to take whatever measures are necessary to deliver a safe, secure and superb Games.' (Livingstone 2005)

After the London bombings on 7th July, Tony Blair, reflecting on his presentation to the IOC in Singapore, said,

'that was a story of a city that was comfortable with the future, open, actually believed its diversity was a source of richness and strength, and was kind of confident and unafraid.' (Blair, 2006).

This response to fear comes as a new motivation for Londoners adding to the belief in diversity. Mayor Livingstone found support for this view in his survey of attitudes six months after the bombings,

'After those terrible events, what the poll showed was that Londoners were more confident about their city, more happy with the diversity of their city, and also less fearful of crime on our streets. In every measure people were more confident.' (Livingstone, 2006b).

Londoners are 'confident' and 'happy with diversity'. In Singapore it was not sport but this emphasis on multiculturalism that swung votes (Livingstone, 2006b). This 'banal cosmopolitanism' (Beck, 2006), taking children from the East End to present the London bid in Singapore and getting Nelson Mandela to endorse the bid, ties in with the wider ideology identified in the government of a multi-cultural city (Dench et al., 2005).

We should not overstate the political significance of such celebratory moments. However, for the losers on 6th July 2005 equally fundamental issues of political culture seemed to be at stake. London's celebration in Trafalgar Square was watched on giant screens by a matching group of Olympic hopefuls gathered outside the Hotel de Ville (zone of prestige) in Paris. In the French press defeat was, 'a triumph of British "dynamism" over an "unattractive" French model, and a country struggling with its identity in the face of globalisation' (BBC news online, 2005). The *Parisien* newspaper summed up the opposition,

'This Britain, which is in disgustingly good economic health, which advocates economic liberalism and plays the globalisation and competition game all the way, is more attractive than a France which looks back nostalgically to its past grandeur.' (BBC news online, 2005).

The French media interpreted the result in Singapore as symptomatic of an old city, a damaged zone of prestige. The British bid leader said as much, 'No one doubted that Paris could put on a good Games, but many of the (IOC) voters had seen it all before' (Coe, 2005). The riots in Paris suburbs in November 2005 became included in an interpretation of the failure of the 'French model' in a national political commentary about social malaise and a 'fearful' middle class (Donzelot, 2005). The French bid, unlike that for the 2008 Games, was also seen to have done little to reach into the (deprived) wider region as London had done in the East End. The Olympic failure was one factor among many seen to be contributing to social division.

Such moments are clearly important for city politics. In London the changing institutions of this phase of the 'recurrent experiment' of government create a role for political leaders to represent the city and the Olympic Games timetable offers moments at which leaders can connect with followers. In victory the idea of a multicultural London elicits a positive response, but in Paris all urban policy seems to be undermined by some fundamental cultural malaise. In fact the causes of riots in suburban France may owe more to inept policy decisions than cultural failure (Pinson, 2006). And the reason for success and failure in Olympic competition may be readily explained by the IOC's obscure voting system, or, as the mayor of Paris claimed, by the British not sticking to the rules (Glover, 2005). After the decision in Singapore it was widely reported that some members of the IOC didn't know how they had voted and the vote could have gone any of several ways. But however the decision about winning and losing was arrived at, the interpretation of success and failure is important for the ability of political leaders to define relationships with their followers.

London is represented as a diverse and unafraid city. Londoners for the time being remain enthusiastic. There are,

'70,000 volunteers from all sorts of different walks of life, and the sense of unity for the city that gives is something quite remarkable.' (Blair, 2006).

As the Games approach Londoners may become more concerned with the issues raised in other cities – rising costs, conflict over corporate branding, the inconvenience of Olympic security and disruption to transport and struggles over the legacy and who gets what (Lenskyj, 2002). For the present political leaders claim consensus and represent Londoners in particular ways that link the approach to urban renewal in the East End to a sense of national mission and sense that Londoners have of being 'confident' and 'happy with diversity'. In the 'recurrent experiment' of London government the Olympic Games offer the new leadership the opportunity to present and have confirmed its view of the city.

LONDON 2012: BUILDING ON SUCCESS

For most Olympic cities bidding and planning involves national governments. Nowhere more so that in the centralised British state where the decision to bid rested with the Prime Minister and where government defines the legislation governing the Games, appointment of the leaders of delivery agencies and determines the transport infrastructure budget. But the mayor is also a powerful player as the governance of the city is represented in new ways. The perception of the institutions of government is important and new political leadership offers particular representations of London as an Olympic city.

Political leadership and city image have been important factors in other Olympic cities. City mayors, Maragall in Barcelona, Drapeau in Montreal, saw the potential role for the Olympics in redefining local identity (Marshall, 2000, Whitson, 2004) and a role for the Games in the longer term transformation of their cities. The mayor of London takes a similar view. In the Barcelona case in particular we might also see the importance of popular support in sustaining the mayor's vision (McNeill, 1999).

Urban renewal in London has always involved a mix of national and local programmes and agencies. In recent years substantial national investment in London docklands has been accompanied by numerous government-funded neighbourhood renewal initiatives. The new mayor prioritised the East End in his strategic plan (GLA, 2004a), lobbying government for essential transport investment. For both mayor and central government an East End Olympics that brings wider regeneration potential reinforces established policy priorities. The reshaping of the East End is not just a process of physical renewal but is important in the racial politics of the city. The Olympic borough of Newham has a majority non-white population. British public policy has accommodated new populations over four decades through a politics of 'multiculturalism' and 'tolerance' (Dench et al., 2005). Not surprisingly it is this image of London that political leaders represent in the Olympic bid and reinforce in the victory celebration in Trafalgar Square. The 11,000 Londoners in Trafalgar Square and the wider audience reached by the media responded positively to the image of themselves as 'open, multiracial and dynamic'. The Olympic Borough of Newham's surveys (Newham 2012, 2005) suggest continuing local support especially with the prospect of enhanced local facilities and other planning gains. Whether East Enders would go to the Games is another question. As is who they might support in Olympic competitions. British Asians are more likely to support the England football team than they are the cricket team (Burdsey, 2006), and for the most popular sport in London surveys suggest that football loyalties have more to do with club than with country (King, 2005). If East Enders were to go to the Olympic Games it may be to support many different national teams.

The ideology of multiculturalism and tolerance was tested by the London bombings in July 2005, but according to the mayor's surveys of opinion, 'diversity' and 'confidence' remain defining qualities of the population (Livingstone, 2006b). Such celebratory occasions for the city as that in Trafalgar Square offer more than a 'feel good' factor and we can see them as 'dramatic lived experiences' shaping identities and reproducing the zones of prestige of the city. The mayor's investment in Trafalgar Square pays off at such moments when political leaders can connect with their followers. In London, bidding for and planning for the Olympics comes at a time when the institutions of government were under review. The need

to represent London to an international audience brought about a revision of opinions on London government held just two year's earlier. From a city unable to focus on 'its strategic needs', government is now 'highly successful'. The path to 2012 is presented as an opportunity to 'build on success' (GOL, 2006). As we have seen, political relationships between mayor and central government have been changing. The mayor demanded a stronger role in strategic decision making. At the same time the mayor became an essential player in delivering the Olympic Games. The mayor is seen as a leader of the Olympic project and as a popular leader representing the public interest against 'greedy businessmen'. Institutional reform and the Olympic bidding and planning process enhance the personal power of the mayor. Mayor Livingstone and the Prime Minister share the Olympic stage and opportunities to represent Londoners to the world with a vision of city governance and politics aimed to last for 6 years.

The Olympic park is one of many large projects in London. The scale and pace of urban renewal in east London is estimated to be driving up construction costs, and the final Olympic bill may well exceed estimates. But more significant than the physical impact of the Games are the distinctive impacts on institutions of governance. Bidding for the Olympic Games is well understood in terms of urban strategies that favour economic development, consumption and image (Burbank et al., 2001). In some cities it may be question of business as usual for pro-growth regimes. For London, where the Olympic Park is one project among many, tracing the politics of development politics may tell us less about the significance of the Olympics for the city. What seems more important is the wider political impact and the need to understand how political leaders claim support and Londoners 'back the bid'. Explaining support for the Games has had less attention in the Olympic literature than understanding opposition. The sociology of sport and events offers useful insights into the role of public rituals and celebrations in making sense of competing for the Games for both political leaders and the public. Cities such as London provide zones of prestige where through dramatic experiences such interaction can be developed, political messages transmitted and relationships between political leaders and Londoners confirmed (if only temporarily).

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