

ILLUSIONS OF UNITY: THE PARADOX BETWEEN MEGA-SPORTING EVENTS AND NATION BUILDING

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Abstract

This article presents an investigation into the use of "nation building" rhetoric as a motive to host mega-sporting events. Previous literature regarding mega-events presents the potential for such events to be used for uniting a nation. Moreover, nation building has been conceived in public relations research as consisting of two main components; national identity and national unity, both of which can be tied to image crafting. However, examining the 2010 World Cup in South Africa and the planning for the 2014 World Cup in Brazil demonstrates a paradox that exists between the concept of nation building and the actual hosting of mega-events. The theoretical underpinnings of nation building run contrary to the reality of mega-events where minority groups are often left marginalized and disenfranchised from the rest of the country. If anything, these events may serve to divide, rather than unite.

Key Words

FIFA, World Cup, sports diplomacy, Olympics, mega-events, globalization, development, economic impact, nation branding, collective consciousness, social responsibility

Introduction

Few events have the power to focus the attention of the world in one place like the Olympics or World Cup. The ability of these "mega-events" to create a collective consciousness is the unique result of the age of globalization. Both the Olympics and the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) Soccer World Cup are considered first tier mega-events. The use of athletic competition to draw in enormous amounts of attention, largely through global media coverage, creates a situation where the eyes of the world are truly on the host country or city. As globalization has progressed, the pressure of hosting has risen enormously; every moment is reported and every decision scrutinized. Increasingly, countries have begun to see hosting as an opportunity that provides intangible benefits, leading to a competition among countries to host mega-events. Bids are now regularly accompanied by rhetoric suggesting that the Olympics will "unify" a nation, or that the World Cup will provide a "spotlight" for the host city. Lost in these grandiose plans are domestic issues that affect society as a whole, with experience suggesting a darker truth for the real effects of hosting. The rationale that countries can use mega-events as a form of public relations to promote nation building or image crafting discounts the marginalization they often produce for the lowest levels of society.

This paper critically examines how hosting sporting mega-events has detrimental effects that run contrary to the ideas of nation building and image crafting. The resulting process of promoting a positive unified image to the world conceals the social exclusion of large swathes of the domestic populace, especially the lower-class citizenry.

The following section reviews existing literature on mega-events, first discussing what defines a mega-event and why nations compete to host them. Focus will then turn to the idea of mega-events as a public relations tool. Particular attention will be paid to literature that suggests mega-events can be facilitated for the purpose of nation building, a term that will represent two components: national identity and national unity. Within these concepts, the dimension of image crafting will be discussed, including historical examples of past attempts to use mega-events for image crafting. Following a review of the literature, the paper will consider two case studies. The first will examine the World Cup held in South Africa in 2010, specifically the rhetoric that surrounded the buildup to the event and the effects of the games themselves. The second case study will look at the buildup to the historic period the nation of Brazil will face in the near future. In 2014, the FIFA World Cup will be held in various cities around the nation, while in 2016, the Olympics will be held in Rio de Janeiro. Preparations for both mega-events are already in full swing and will be investigated to distinguish whether they fit into the paradigm that suggests mega-events can be used for nation building and image crafting. The paper concludes with a critical evaluation on the congruity between the actions undertaken by the state to facilitate the games and the foundations of nation building.

Literature Review

Mega-Events

In order to discuss mega-events, it is important to first understand what they are. Existing literature on mega-events provides many definitions but seem to generally share several characteristics: that they are large-scale, international, and have the ability to capture global media attention and focus it on a specific area.^{1,2,3} Roche's definition of mega-events as "large-scale cultural events, which have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance" reappears in various literature reviews and proves to be the eminent view.⁴ Recent focus on the commercialism of such events has focused on the tripartite model of sponsorship, exclusive broadcast rights and merchandizing that has led some to define mega-events as inherently capitalistic ventures.⁵ Mega-events are a product of 20th century globalization; as the world integrated, international events provided a venue through which this phenomenon could be expressed and internalized.

The spectacle of mega-events draws enormous attention to a specific city or nation, allowing it to gain the many perceived rewards. This, in turn, has led to a competitive bidding process to host the events and receive many tangible and intangible benefits. Much of the existing literature on mega-events post-1984 Los Angeles Olympics focuses on the monetary benefits that hosting international sporting competitions can provide. Los Angeles provided a financially successful model for hosting the Olympics and inspired a wave of cities to bid on hosting future events.⁶ Bid teams now regularly predict that landing the Games will provide a city with "medium-stimulus to its construction industry, a brief tourist boom, and a short-term boost in employment," all leading to economic growth.⁷ Matheson and Baade dictated that of all the compelling reasons to host the Olympics, an "economic windfall" was the true motivation.⁸ Some have placed the profit of hosting mega-events in the billions; however, there is some dispute as to how much economic benefit the events actually supply. Studies into mega-sporting events are increasingly finding that mega-events may not be the profit-producing machine some claim them to be.^{9,10} In light of this, Manzenreiter sees general discourse moving toward discussions of the abstract and intangible benefits of hosting mega-events.¹¹

¹ John Gold and Margaret Gold, "Olympic Cities: Regeneration, City Rebranding and Changing Urban Agendas," *Geography Compass* 2, (2008): 300-318.

² Wolfram Manzenreiter, "The Beijing Games in the Western Imagination of China: The Weak Power of Soft power." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 34 (2010): 29-48.

³ John Short, "Globalization, Cities and the Summer Olympics," *City* 12, (2008): 321-342.

⁴ Maurice Roche, *Mega-Events and Modernity*. London, England: Routledge. (2001): 1.

⁵ Manzenreiter, W. "Beijing Games"

⁶ Atsushi Tajima, "Amoral Universalism: Mediating and Staging Global and Local in the 1998 Nagano Olympic Winter Games," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 21 (2004): 241-260.

⁷ Gold & Gold, "Olympic Cities" p. 301

⁸ Victor Matheson and Robert Baade, "Mega-Sporting Events in Developing Nations: Playing the Way to Prosperity," *The South African Journal of Economics* 72, (2004): 1085

⁹ Helen Lenskyj, *The Best Olympics Ever?* Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2002

¹⁰ Matheson & Baade, "Mega-Sporting Events in Developing Nations"

¹¹ Manzenreiter "Beijing Games"

Mega-Events as Public Relations

The globalized nature of modern mega-events has led to such events becoming a target for both advertisers and public relations specialists. The ability to capture global attention has enticed brands such as Johnson & Johnson, Budweiser, Castrol, Continental Airlines, and McDonald's to become global sponsors to the upcoming 2014 World Cup.¹² Such partnerships are worth millions of dollars to mega-event organizers such as FIFA or the International Olympic Committee. The ability to draw sponsors from the international scene is just one aspect of the marketing power associated with mega-events. Kearns and Philo noted that new dimensions of global capital have allowed mega-events to become a form of "place marketing" that attracts development.¹³ Criticisms of mega-events have labeled the games as a "showcase" in which they are spectacles for either the elite and "hegemonic power[s]" or an attempt at public relations removed from realistic challenges.¹⁴ A bid by the South African city of Cape Town to host the 2004 Olympics provides an example of how public relations has become entwined with bids to host mega-events. In an attempt by elite sectors to convince the population that hosting would be beneficial to all of South Africa, a public relations campaign with the slogan "If Cape Town Wins We All Win" was run all over the city; an opinion poll would later find 80% of respondents to be in favor of the bid.¹⁵

Nation Building and Mega-Events

The ability to use mega-events as public relations tools has expanded beyond merely marketing products to more political uses, including nation building. Traditional nation building discourse is grounded in the field of political science but has increasingly been studied in other fields, including public relations. Nation building has been seen in various lights. Huntington used the term to discuss the creation and structuring of national institutions, while others have broken nation building into fragments including ideas of national identity and national unity.¹⁶ Taylor and Kent define national identity as "the conscious identification of a group of people with shared national goals," but also note that even within one person, many identities can exist.¹⁷ A nation can be composed of people of various races, religions, or beliefs, but a central national identity allows for society as a whole to have a common consciousness. Scott notes that a national identity will not disregard those other identities a person may have, but through the common consciousness, create loyalty.¹⁸

National unity works in conjunction with national identity and has been defined as "the common ground that facilitates cooperative efforts for the benefit of the state."¹⁹ It supplements national identity by creating the cultural events and institutions through which the national identity is established. An example would be a national holiday, such as the Fourth of July in the United States. Americans are typically the only people to celebrate the creation of the United States on July 4th, thus creating a common bond that helps forge national identity. National unity and identity are both fundamental elements of nation building that can be controlled through "strategic communications management," or more simply, public relations.²⁰

The ability of mega-events to affect change as public relations is expressly tied to the concepts of national identity and unity. The concept of national unity itself dictates that any sporting mega-event will probably become engrained in the collective memory of the nation and then become a part of identification. This can be especially true when a national tragedy occurs, such as the 1996 Centennial Olympic Park bombing in Atlanta or the 1972 Munich massacre of Israeli athletes.

Beyond tragedy, sports can also invoke "powerfully emotional shared experiences" that embed themselves within the memory of even the most casual sports fans.²¹ Sport's capacity to transcend generations to become cultural

memory is especially true when it comes to mega-sporting events. Americans still discuss the "Miracle on Ice" during the Lake Placid Winter Olympics thirty-two years later, while the black power salute at the 1968 Olympics by Tommie Smith and John Carlos is still remembered around the world. The ability of mega-events to generate memories based on their emotional significance plays a large role in forming both national identity and national unity.

Such ties between mega-events and nation building are not necessarily intended, and often come as a direct consequence of their spectacle. But some groups actively attempt to leverage the events as a force to instill national unity or identity. Hiller acknowledges that in South Africa, some groups sought to harness the Cape Town bid for "general civic and national interests in the fight" against the inequalities established by apartheid.

Unfortunately, not all groups seek to use mega-events for such commendable purposes.²² The government and elites in a nation can often use the glamour of sporting events to obscure the "perceived loss of the state's social responsibility" and hide the deficiencies of governance.²³ As Horne and Mazerieter note, states will use sporting mega-events for different reasons, often having little to do with sports, including nation building.²⁴ But the ability of mega-events to contribute to nation building goes beyond the creation of national identity and unity because of its ability to affect the image of a nation.

Image Crafting in Nation Building and Mega-Events

Communications research into how public relations theory can be used in nation building has suggested the importance of relationship building with international publics. A major aspect of this is the control of a nation's image. Boulding's claim that "the basic bond of any society, culture, subculture, or organization is a 'public image,'" supports the importance of image.²⁵ This ties expressly with the idea of national identification, but goes a step further to denote the importance of being recognized internationally in what Boulding refers to as a "universe of discourse."²⁶ This argument suggests that a nation only exists in as much as it is recognized to be a nation on the international stage. Even beyond recognition, however, is the importance of having a positive national image. A country interested in gaining international aid or development funds is more likely to receive monetary support if it is able to demonstrate a positive, unified, and stable image.²⁷ Thus, image control becomes paramount to any nation, but especially those that need international funding for development. Discourse that suggests that mega-events can affect image has thus made hosting such events an attractive proposition.

The capacity of mega-events to draw the eyes of the world has led many countries and cities to believe that mega-events are an opportunity to promote or change the host's image. Some countries, such as Japan and Germany, have used the Olympics as a way to seek "redemption" after their role in World War II.²⁸ Mega-events have often been used as "catalysts for image creation," enabling countries to craft new identities in the eyes of global audiences.²⁹ However, as Short and Manzenreiter state, this is notoriously difficult to achieve.^{30,31} The Olympic Games in Munich in 1972 and Atlanta in 1996 are both remembered for significant acts of terrorism; Mexico City in 1968 was the site of massive protests, while China's desire to be viewed as modern during the 2008 Summer Games may have been complicated by media attention on human rights abuses and its relationship with Tibet. Complexity also arises from attempts by the International Olympic Committee and FIFA to separate sports and politics. Rule 50 in the charter of the IOC attempts to prohibit political statements during the Games, but the success of this rule is highly debatable.³²

The difficulty in changing a nation's global identity lies in overcoming international stereotypes and misconceptions.³³ In spite of this, some nations continue to use abstract ideas to dictate why they deserve to host mega-events.

¹² Matt Cutler, "Johnson & Johnson completes 2014 World Cup sponsor line-up," Sport Business, Aug. 7, 2011, Accessed April 19, 2012 <http://www.sportbusiness.com/news/183928/johnson-johnson-completes-2014-world-cup-sponsor-line-up>

¹³ Gerard Kearns & Chris Philo, *Selling Places: the City as Cultural Capital, Past and Present*. (New York: Pergamon Press, 1993)

¹⁴ Harry Hiller, "Mega-Events, Urban Boosterism and Growth Strategies: An Analysis of the Objectives and Legitimations of the Cape Town 2004 Olympic Bid," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 24, no. 2 (2000): 440

¹⁵ Hiller, Mega-Events, Urban Boosterism and Growth Strategies"

¹⁶ Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968)

¹⁷ Maureen Taylor and Michael Kent, *Public Relations Theory and Practice in Nation Building*, ed. Carl Botan and Vincent Hazelton (New York: Routledge, 2009), 343.

¹⁸ Robert Scott, *Nation Building in Latin America*, ed. K.W. Deutsch and W.J. Foltz (Chicago: Atherton, 1966)

¹⁹ Taylor and Kent "PR Theory and Practice in Nation Building"

²⁰ Taylor and Kent "PR Theory and Practice in Nation Building"

²¹ David Black and Janis Van Der Westhuizen, "The Allure of Global Games for 'Semi-Peripheral' Politics and Spaces: A Research Agenda," *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 7 (2004)

²² <https://surface.syr.edu/exchange/vol3/iss1/2>

²² Hiller, "Mega-Events, Urban Boosterism and Growth Strategies"

²³ Black and Van Der Westhuizen, "The Allure of Global Games" p.1199

²⁴ John Horne and Wolfram Mazerieter, "Accounting for Mega-Events: Forecast and Actual Impacts of the 2002 Football World Cup Finals on the Host Countries Japan/Korea," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 39, (2004).

²⁵ Kenneth Boulding, *K.E. The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1956) 64

²⁶ Boulding "The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society"

²⁷ Cornelius Pratt, "The African Context," *Public Relations Journal* 41 (1985)

²⁸ Short, "Globalization, Cities and the Summer Olympics," p. 324

²⁹ Lenskyj, H. *The Best Olympics Ever?*

³⁰ Short, J., "Globalization, Cities and the Summer Olympics"

³¹ Manzenreiter, W. "Beijing Games"

³² Olympic Charter

³³ Manzenreiter, "Beijing Games"

South Africa, which will be examined later, widely used the ideas of "Africa's World Cup" and "Pan-Africanism" to obtain the 2010 World Cup.³⁴ One reason this rhetoric may continue is because of the belief that mega-events can unify nations or cities. It was hoped that by hosting the 2000 Olympics, the city of Sydney would be able to internally reimagine popular collective emotion, thus promoting unity and lessening disparities and dissension.^{35, 36} China desired to use the 2008 Olympic Games to promote centralized feelings of accomplishment and national unity.^{37, 38} Mega-events can use image to promote national identity and national unity, making them a seemingly attractive proposition for nation building if the nation can avoid the dangers of portraying a negative image.

Mega-events play a part in nation building because of the effects that such events can have on national identity, unity, and image. National identity and national unity can both be achieved separately or as a result of mega-events affecting national image. When a nation hosts a World Cup or Olympic games, the event enters into the collective consciousness of society to become a cultural memory that can then become part of national identity. The belief that mega-events can shift perceptions of a host city or nation has led to many countries using image-crafting rhetoric as a motivation to bid for sporting mega-events. Despite the fact that changing image is notoriously difficult to achieve, countries continue to compete to host the games, encouraged by beliefs that they can portray the event in a manner that will unify the nation. Through these processes, mega-events have gained a reputation as a tool of nation building. But, it must be questioned whether nation building can be achieved when the main premise of national identity and unity are being violated by the effects of hosting the events.

Why South Africa and Brazil?

The domestic costs that are associated with hosting mega-events are magnified when the host happens to be a developing nation. Developed nations have much of the infrastructure and sports-specific facilities in place to host massive international sporting competitions; whereas, developing nations often must spend large sums of money in order to construct the necessary structures.

To improve infrastructure and renovate stadiums for the 1994 World Cup, the United States spent about \$30 million; in 2002, when South Korea jointly hosted the World Cup with Japan, \$2 billion was spent, much of it on constructing ten new stadiums.³⁹ The opportunity costs of hosting games in developing nations may also have a much greater impact. Disparities in developing countries are generally higher than those in developed nations, making social welfare programs, which mega-events draw funds from, especially important. Hosting mega-events in developing nations, therefore, has a greater potential to harm the domestic populous. This brings us to the case of South Africa, a developing nation in Africa and host of the 2010 World Cup, and Brazil, host of the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympic games.

The cases of Brazil and South Africa both offer examples of how developing countries can host mega-events regardless of economic status. South Africa, while in many respects is more developed than much of Africa, is still a developing nation. Brazil, on the other hand, is considered one of the world's fastest growing economies and a future economic power. However, both countries still suffer from tremendous inequality. In South Africa, massive and widening disparity, the continuing racial divisions, and mass protests during the 2002 World Summit in Johannesburg all offered reasons to pass over South Africa as a host for a mega-event.⁴⁰ Despite all this, it was still awarded the 2010 World Cup. Similarly, Brazil, historically one of the most unequal countries in the world, is also facing its own issues of racial and class discrimination. In the South African case, it was the first time the World Cup had been hosted by an African nation, and it was seen as a chance to demonstrate that fifteen years after the end of apartheid, South Africa was free of segregation and fighting for social egalitarianism. Brazil's hosting of the 2016 Olympics will be a first for a South American country, and it has widely been seen as a chance for Brazil to promote its image and be recognized as a rising power.⁴¹

The buildup to the 2010 World Cup in South Africa was filled with dialogue that referenced image crafting as a motivating factor to host the games. As previously mentioned, assertions that this would be "Africa's World Cup," or that the games would lead to "Pan-Africanism" were widely espoused. When FIFA announced that South Africa would host the 2010 World Cup in 2004, the media almost immediately began the process of image crafting. The *Sunday Times* in South Africa published the reaction of several prominent figures following the announcement. South African President Thabo Mbeki and Egyptian Ambassador Hagar Islambouly both expressed sentiments of Pan-Africanism. Islambouly was particularly hopeful that the World Cup would be "the beginning of the real African renaissance."⁴² The belief that these games represented an opportunity was clearly evident from the many proclamations that South Africa's responsibility was really a chance for the country, if not the whole of Africa.

As planning began, the South African government worked tirelessly to promote and sell the games to their own people. Ngonyama notes that South Africa created a "development narrative" on the basis of the World Cup that would help achieve the Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations for 2015 and greatly benefit its citizens.⁴³ The South African media continued to create new identities for the World Cup; at times they were portrayed as nationally unifying while at others they were hailed as continentally unifying. Many discussed the potential benefits that the games would bring with improvements to infrastructure and tourism.

The N2 Gateway project is one example of how image crafting and the development narrative intertwined. Although originally conceived as a development initiative before the World Cup, the N2 Gateway project only garnered support when its beautification implications were realized.⁴⁴ The project was designed to eradicate the slums between Cape Town and the main airport, replacing them with beautiful housing units the government claimed would be low-rent. The purpose of this was two-fold: first, the government claimed it would help to solve the housing problem. Second, and arguably more important, it was a highly visible section of Cape Town to foreign visitors, and the replacement of slums with beautiful housing would demonstrate the "modern" image South Africa wished to promote. Unfortunately, however, only one of those goals was realized.

Like many projects associated with the 2010 World Cup, the N2 Gateway initiative was never able to fulfill its promise. The project began as planned, the slums were torn down in order to create more attractive housing; however, the units that replaced these slums were rented at a level that was far above what any of the previous inhabitants could afford. This led to a series of urban evictions that would fall primarily on an area that was already full of marginalized, black, lower-income families.⁴⁵ The goal to beautify the road between the airport and the city was accomplished, but at a price. Attempts to provide the population with better housing failed miserably. Many of the evicted groups were sent to the periphery of the city, where they were unable to find jobs, including those that were specifically created because of the World Cup. While the media covered urban evictions, they dealt with the issue mostly with human-interest articles. Sometimes minimal significance was placed on these events, as evidenced by the coverage of the urban evictions in Durban.

In November 2007, FIFA sent a delegation to Durban in preparation for the preliminary draw; it was regarded as a chance for South Africa to show FIFA the progress the country was making. Unfortunately for the street children of Durban, this meant hiding their presence due to the risk of arrest based on loitering charges, fines the youths would be unable to pay.⁴⁶ The homeless juveniles, including some adults with small children, were then sent to the already overcrowded Westville Prison, where they were exposed to "violent attacks, including rape and possible infection with HIV."⁴⁷ One would expect global media to jump on such a blatant disregard of citizens' rights; however, media coverage proved strangely absent. South African media glossed over the event when discussing the FIFA delegation's visit, giving it a cursory mention before the focus was changed to the increases in security and the readiness of South African stadiums. The events of Durban were inconvenient during a time that South Africa wished to demonstrate an image of how modern it had become.

³⁴ Percy Ngonyama, "The 2010 FIFA World Cup: Critical Voices From Below," *Soccer & Society* 11, no.1-2 (2010): 168-180.

³⁵ Gordon Waitt, "The Olympic Spirit and Civic Boosterism: The Sydney 2000 Olympics," *Tourism Geographies* 3, (2001): 249-278.

³⁶ Helen Wilson, "What is an Olympic city? Visions of Sydney 2000," *Media, Culture and Society* 18, (1996): 603-618.

³⁷ Manzenreiter, W. "Beijing Games"

³⁸ Judy Polunbaum, *Capturing the Flame: Aspiration and Representation of Beijing's 2008 Olympics*. ed. J. Li & C. Lee London, England: Routledge. (2003): 57-75

³⁹ Matheson & Baade, "Mega-Sporting Events in Developing Nations"

⁴⁰ Caroline Death, "Troubles at the Top: South African Protests and the 2002 Johannesburg Summit," *African Affairs* 109, (2010): 555-574.

⁴¹ Because Brazil has yet to host either the Olympics or World Cup; the preparations will be examined instead of the effects.

⁴² "Who said what about the World Cup," (2004, May 16). *Sunday Times*, p. 19.

⁴³ Ngonyama, "The 2010 FIFA World Cup"

⁴⁴ Caroline Newton, "The Reverse Side of the Medal: About the 2010 FIFA World Cup and the Beautification of the N2 in Cape Town," *Urban Forum* 20 (2009).

⁴⁵ Newton, "The Reverse Side of the Medal"

⁴⁶ Ngonyama, "The 2010 FIFA World Cup"

⁴⁷ Ngonyama, "The 2010 FIFA World Cup," p. 174

Estimates of how many South Africans were evicted as a result of the World Cup have put the number in the thousands. Blikkiesdorp, also known as the "Tin Can Town," was intended to be what the government referred to as a "temporary relocation area," but instead it became a default area to house those evicted by the World Cup activities. Originally designed to hold about 650 people, residents there told *The Guardian* that over 15,000 people were living in about 3,000 structures.⁴⁸ The government also attempted to evict over 10,000 people from the Joe Slovo area of Cape Town, a decision that was eventually overturned in 2011 by the country's constitutional court.⁴⁹ The South African government's desire to evict thousands of its own citizens demonstrates a decision to prioritize the World Cup over the people.⁵⁰

During the actual World Cup, the attention shifted primarily to the games; however, in the years since the World Cup ended, focus has turned to the legacy left in South Africa. When South Africa originally proposed the budget for the World Cup, they predicted costs of just over \$300 million to build and renovate stadiums and infrastructure; the actual figure is now close to \$2 billion.⁵¹ South Africa was expecting a large number of tourists for the event, and needed to renovate its transportation and hospitality infrastructure. However, according to Marthinus van Schalkwyk, South Africa's tourism minister, the country received nearly 150,000 fewer visitors than expected.⁵² Rising costs and less-than-expected revenue contributed to estimates that South Africa may have recouped less than a tenth of what it spent to host the World Cup. But even looking at these figures alone discounts the social legacy. Many people were evicted from their homes without warning, receiving little compensation. Furthermore, the construction of multi-million-dollar white elephant stadiums diverted social and public funding and will continue to do so for years to come in maintenance costs.

Case Study: Brazil and the Buildup to 2014 & 2016

By being chosen to host the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro and the 2014 World Cup, Brazil was afforded a rare opportunity to host two consecutive mega-events. While seen by many as a rising regional and global power, Brazil still faces many of the same issues as other countries in the developing world. Despite recent strides, Brazil continues to have a high Gini coefficient, a measure that represents the amount of inequality within a country.⁵³ Furthermore, Brazil still lags behind many developed countries when it comes to education and racial equality. But there can be no doubt that Brazil is rapidly becoming an economic force, recently passing the United Kingdom to become the world's sixth largest economy.⁵⁴ The upcoming sporting mega-events provide Brazil with the chance to not only show the world how far it has risen, but also develop its aging infrastructure in a fair manner. Thus far, however, Brazil has seemingly made the same mistakes as many other countries and cities that have hosted mega-events.

On June 12, 2012, FIFA ran an article on its website celebrating the two-year countdown to the start of the World Cup in Brazil. The website asked former Brazilian legends and organizers to give their thoughts about Brazil hosting the World Cup. The respondents included Cafu, a two-time winner of the competition as player and captain. He stated that it was a great chance for Brazil, "to show the world that it's not just a country where great football is played. It's the ideal place for organizing the biggest festival in world sport."⁵⁵ Other respondents also noted that this was a celebration for all Brazilians. Not only would this be a chance for national unity, but a chance to change Brazil's image. No one mentioned the costs, monetary or social, that the games have already begun to incur.

The buildup to the World Cup in Brazil is following a pattern similar to past sporting mega-events when it comes to urban evictions. The 2011 Amnesty International country report observed that "residents of the favela do Metro,

⁴⁸ David Smith "Life in 'Tin Can Town' for the South Africans evicted ahead of World Cup," *The Guardian*, Apr. 1, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/apr/01/south-africa-world-cup-blikkiesdorp>.

⁴⁹ "Stay of Eviction Victory for Residents," *Mail and Guardian*, Apr. 1, 2011, <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-04-01-stay-of-eviction-victory-for-residents/>

⁵⁰ In the course of research, I was unable to find any comprehensive reports on the exact number of people evicted because of the World Cup.

⁵¹ David Goldblatt "Footing South Africa," BBC News June 4, 2010 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8718696.stm>

⁵² Rupert Neate, "South Africa Recoups Just a Tenth of the £3bn Cost of Staging World Cup 2010," *Telegraph*, Dec. 10, 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/retailandconsumer/leisure/8192484/South-Africa-recoups-just-a-tenth-of-the-3bn-cost-of-staging-World-Cup-2010.html>

⁵³ "Brazil Overview," The World Bank <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/brazil/overview>

⁵⁴ Phillip Imman, "Brazil's economy Overtakes UK to Become World's Sixth Largest," *The Guardian*, March 6, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2012/mar/06/brazil-economy-worlds-sixth-largest>

⁵⁵ "Two Years to Go and Counting," FIFA.com, June 12, 2012, <http://www.fifa.com/worldcup/news/newsid=1648266/index.html>.

near Rio's Maracana stadium, were repeatedly threatened with eviction" before officials spray-painted the houses that were to be demolished without prior warning.⁵⁶ Residents were told that they would be moved to housing in Cosmos, on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, with no offer of compensation. The same report from 2012 noted preparation for the World Cup and Olympics has left "communities living in poverty at risk of intimidation and forced eviction."⁵⁷ Human rights violations have been recorded in cities across Brazil, including Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Curitiba, Porto Alegre, Recife, Natal, and Fortaleza. An article in the *Rio Times Online* noted that road works projects have been "blamed for the planned as well as already executed forced removal of partial or entire communities," with affected communities almost always in the "economic bottom rung of Rio society."⁵⁸ The urban eviction of citizens without warning and without compensation is a human rights abuse that targets the lowest levels of society because of their location, but also their inability to defend themselves. But evictions are just one form of marginalization that the poor are facing because of the mega-events.

With costs currently skyrocketing, the World Cup in Brazil may turn out to be one of the most expensive in modern history. Reports have put the construction and renovation of twelve stadiums at nearly three times the original budget, with public funding the primary source of financing rather than originally promised private enterprise.⁵⁹ Brazil's decision to use "cutting-edge" technology in the construction and renovation of the stadiums has seen a rise in costs to nearly \$4 billion, more than double what Germany spent in 2006 and South Africa in 2010.⁶⁰ Further amplifying the problem is the increasing suspicion that many of these stadiums will eventually become white elephants, structures that will never break even because of rising maintenance costs and little usage. Curitiba, "a city with little footballing tradition,"⁶¹ will spend nearly \$300 million on a stadium for four group games, while Manaus, a city in the Amazon, will spend the same amount even though "its best team is in the fourth division of the Brazilian Championship."⁶² Massive amounts of money are being diverted away from education, health care, and other social initiatives to pay for "one-use" stadiums that will then continue to drain public funds.

Urban evictions and overwhelming costs continue despite protests from many segments of the population. Christopher Gaffney, a professor at Fluminense Federal University in Rio de Janeiro, spoke out against the upcoming World Cup, stating: "These events were supposed to celebrate Brazil's accomplishments, but the opposite is happening. We're seeing an insidious pattern of trampling on the rights of the poor and cost overruns that are a nightmare."⁶³ In one of the settlements proposed to be demolished, a schoolteacher, Vila Autódromo, regards the community as "victims of an event we don't want," while still holding out hope that the government will learn to respect the rights of its citizens.⁶⁴ There has also been disbelief at the costs incurred by stadium construction, with people questioning why Brazilian stadiums are so expensive when there are examples of similar stadiums built around the world for half the price.⁶⁵ Around Brazil, outrage is growing at the true costs of hosting a mega-event.

The Validity of Nation Building Rhetoric

The theoretical underpinnings of using mega-events as a tool for nation building runs contrary to how such events are hosted. A fundamental basis for nation building relies on national unity, but it is not possible to unify a nation when governments are subjecting their own citizenry to human rights abuses. National unity is grounded in the belief that common cultural experiences will lead to cooperation that benefits the state, but that cannot happen when the experiences throughout a nation are drastically different. When mega-events are hosted, the ability to go to the actual events is limited to elite segments of society that are able to afford tickets. This contrasts heavily with

⁵⁶ "Brazil," Amnesty International Annual Report 2011 (London: Amnesty International Ltd., 2011).

⁵⁷ "Brazil," Amnesty International Annual Report 2012 (London: Amnesty International Ltd., 2012).

⁵⁸ Samuel E. Novachich, "Favelas Moved for World Cup and Olympics" *Rio Times* May 10, 2011 <http://riotimesonline.com/brazil-news/rio-politics/favelas-moved-for-world-cup-and-olympics/>

⁵⁹ Andrew Downie, "Soccer-Brazil World Cup Stadiums on Track, but Costs Soar" Reuters April 3, 2012 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/03/soccer-world-brazil-idUSL2E8F2GG820120403>

⁶⁰ "How Much Will the 2014 World Cup cost?," Brazil FIFA Cup, Feb. 19, 2012 <http://www.brazilfifacup.com/brazil-2014-news/how-much-will-the-2014-world-cup-cost/>

⁶¹ Downie, "Soccer-Brazil World Cup"

⁶² Downie, "Soccer-Brazil World Cup"

⁶³ Simon Romero, "Slum Dwellers Are Defying Brazil's Grand Design for Olympics," *New York Times*, March 4, 2012 http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/05/world/americas/brazil-faces-obstacles-in-preparations-for-rio-olympics.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all.

⁶⁴ Romero, "Slum Dwellers"

⁶⁵ Downie, "Soccer-Brazil World Cup"

those that have no interaction with the games other than being forced out of their houses. How can a member of the community in Durban, who was sent to prison, share a common experience with a fellow South African who was able to go to the games, or even one who avoided being subjected to evictions? It's impossible to create unity in a nation on the foundation of a game that is rooted in social exclusion. The lack of national unity caused by different experiences is more likely to harm national identity than reinforce commonality. For example, the evictions taking place in Brazil may strengthen the differences between class identities as those evicted realize that it is only the "lowest economic rung" of society that is being targeted.

Taylor and Kent's definition of national identity discussed in the literature review notes the importance of a group of people sharing "national goals," but this is impossible in the current system of mega-event hosting.⁶⁶ The N2 Gateway project in South Africa demonstrates how a single project can be the victim of different goals. The project only gained support when proponents suggested the possibilities for image crafting. Although motivated in part by its promise to help low-income families, the primary incentive of beautification eventually led to a situation where the poor were once again left ostracized and without support. If national identity is based on shared goals, those goals must be shared by everyone for the same reasons. If two groups support the same initiative with different motivations, there is every chance that the result will reflect the power structure rather than the intentions of each group. Whether it is through the bidding or planning process, mega-events exemplify elitism in the gentrification resulting from beautification, rising rent prices, and facility conversion.^{67, 68, 69} With mega-events the property of the elites, it's hard to imagine how "shared national goals" and thus, national identity, can arise.

The Fallacy in Mega-Event Image Crafting

Mega-events have the capacity to create and manipulate the image of a country, but as noted in the literature, controlling this process is notoriously difficult. Any misstep by government will cause the media's focus to become politically magnified. It's a lesson Ukraine discovered after a number of European politicians boycotted the 2012 European Football Championship, which Ukraine co-hosted, over the jailing of a Ukrainian opposition leader.⁷⁰ Brazil is already under pressure by human rights groups over treatment of its citizens in the buildup to the World Cup and Olympics. A recent debate by *The New York Times* asked whether "the Olympics [are] more trouble than they're worth" on the basis of how expensive they are, in monetary and social costs.⁷¹ Another *New York Times* article noted that residents of communities being threatened with eviction are taking their fight to the Internet and social media, with Brazilian journalists also noting instances of corruption tied to the upcoming mega-events.⁷² If Manzenreiter is correct in stating that the difficulty in changing a nation's identity is in overcoming stereotypes, then Brazil is fighting a losing battle.⁷³

A further problem that besets nations that wish to use mega-events as a tool to shape national image domestically is the fear that the truth will be told. In South Africa, media sources focused on what the World Cup could mean to South Africa rather than reporting the darker aspects of hosting the games. But what if a country is wracked by a series of stories that discuss how the government is ignoring the rights of its own citizens? Perhaps China was only able to use the 2008 Olympics to promote national unity because of state-controlled media that could ignore the 1.5 million people displaced by the games. Boulding's assertion that public image is a basic bond of society becomes tested when the image is suddenly tarnished.⁷⁴ If the people begin to question the images that they hold—that hosting a mega-event is good—then suddenly a situation arises where not only is national identity, unity, and image challenged, but the desire to host the events also comes into question.

⁶⁶ Taylor and Kent "PR Theory and Practice in Nation Building"

⁶⁷ Stephen Essex and Brian Chalkley, "Mega-Sporting Events in Urban and Regional Policy: A History of the Winter Olympic," *Planning Perspectives* 19, (2004): 201-232.

⁶⁸ Lenskyj, H. *The Best Olympics Ever?*

⁶⁹ Short, "Globalization, Cities and the Summer Olympics"

⁷⁰ Olzhas Auyezov, "Ukraine Shrugs Off Political Boycott of Euros," Reuters, June 12, 2012, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/06/12/uk-euro-ukraine-boycott-idUKBRE85B0ZC20120612>.

⁷¹ "Are the Olympics More Trouble Than They're Worth?," *New York Times*, April 2, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/04/02/are-the-olympics-more-trouble-than-theyre-worth>.

⁷² Romero, "Slum Dwellers"

⁷³ Manzenreiter, "Beijing Games"

⁷⁴ Boulding, "The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society"

Conclusion

The World Cup and the Olympic games are both based on the premise of bringing the world together in a celebration of diversity, but also unity. However, the actions of host nations have repeatedly challenged the spirit of these mega-events. Discourse has suggested that the Olympics or World Cup can be used as a tool for nation building, but the effects of the games contradict these assertions. Marginalizing and excluding citizens does not breed national unity, while removing people from their homes without warning will not improve national image. It's estimated that in the previous twenty Olympics, over twenty million people have been displaced, with that number set to rise again with Brazil in 2016.⁷⁵ It's a worrying sign that despite the strides the world has made in human rights, such abuses can still be overlooked. In response to *The New York Times* query on hosting the World Cup, the executive director of a Brazilian watchdog for favelas stated that Rio had a chance to create a model for the rest of the world to follow. But unless something drastically changes, the only model Rio will create is another version of past mistakes.

⁷⁵ Short, "Globalization, Cities and the Summer Olympics"

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