

For the Benefit of All?

Developing a Critical Perspective in Mega-event Leverage

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to bring to light the need for developing a critical leveraging perspective on mega-events and propose a research agenda that extends the focus of the leverage concept towards this direction. Current research on leverage focuses on the attainment and magnification of mega-event outcomes. A critical lens of inquiry however is needed to move forward and take into account the influence of power structures and social ordering processes on developing and implementing strategic leveraging programmes. Such a perspective can help examine if and how the benefits of mega-events are fairly delivered to host communities, equally distributed among stakeholders and then sustained, while negative impacts are minimised. Ten research themes are brought forward to help build a robust ground for a critical mega-event leveraging perspective.

Keywords: Power, critical perspective, cross-leverage, social order

Introduction

The concept of event leverage entails an analytic focus on crafting strategies and tactics around an event pursuant to the attainment and magnification of specific ends (Chalip, 2004). From this perspective, events are not viewed as interventions per se but instead as resources providing a set of opportunities that can be leveraged to optimise intended benefits. While this new perspective marked a shift from merely evaluating the impacts of events (*ex post*) to understanding how host communities can strategically create positive outcomes and legacies from events (*ex ante*), a critical issue remains rather overlooked within the emerging event leverage literature: Do any stakeholders receive most of the magnified benefits obtained from leverage at the expense of others? In other words, the current literature has spelled out leveraging strategies dictating how event benefits will be optimised but there is limited engagement with how benefits will be equally distributed among stakeholders and sustained in the long-term.

One could say that the distribution of benefits is not an immediate part of leverage. That would be however a narrow understanding and operationalisation of the leveraging perspective. As it is argued in this research note, the crafting of strategies requires from the beginning inclusive participation and establishment of mechanisms that will ensure and monitor the equal distribution of obtained benefits. We know yet little on how to achieve that (apart from general knowledge) when leveraging is applied. Within a leveraging context, every event is unique and can be levered to address different issues (e.g., regeneration, tourism, social integration, quality of life, etc.) based on a host community's needs and assets. Therefore, research on event leveraging needs to extend its focus on distributing benefits if it is to enable the equity and sustainability of leveraging programmes and initiatives,

which are embedded within social structures. This clearly requires a critical lens bringing to the fore issues of power, inequality and resistance especially within the context of mega-events where the magnitude and scale of interests create conditions for antagonism as powerful stakeholders curtail to control the event and its benefits or elites exploit it to maintain their hegemonic status (Burbank, Andranovich, Heying, 2001; Hiller, 2000; Rojek, 2013; Sack & Johnson, 1996; Whitson & Macintosh, 1996).

In fact, critical concerns have already been expressed. Smith (2014) has identified the danger that leverage initiatives may be adopted and publicised merely for public relations reasons to fend off criticism against event projects and thereby justify public spending. Minnaert (2012) showed that the Olympic Games generally bring few benefits for socially excluded groups, although these benefits are often important legitimations in the bidding stage. More broadly, in his critique of global event management, Rojek (2014) argued that the professional and academic discourse on event management is uncritical and based in principles of neo-liberalism and communitarianism with the result of overlooking the relationship between events, manipulation, corruption and social control. In response, the underlying purpose of this article is to highlight the need for developing a critical leveraging perspective on mega-events and suggest a research agenda that extends the focus of the leverage concept towards this direction.

Delivering Benefits to Stakeholders and Host Communities: Moving towards Equity and Sustainability?

The principle of equity in distribution of benefits remains blurred within the event leverage paradigm. Thus, the argument for equal distribution, while tantalising as an

abstract moralism, needs to be conceptually demarcated. According to economic theory, equity in event leverage can be understood and portrayed as one of Pareto optimality (Cirillo, 1979): Are some stakeholders made better off while none is worse off? It can certainly be suggested that mega-events are fundamentally income transfers from some of the population to others, especially from working classes to economic elites (Mules, 1998; Putsis, 1998). That is not Pareto optimal. But this does not mean that some sectors or stakeholders cannot benefit more than others if none is worse off. In other words, a pragmatic approach to equity means that some groups of stakeholders do not benefit at the expense of others and receive the benefits that match their level of involvement and input.

In terms of sustainability, the perspective of event leverage has recognised the interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of economic development, social development, and environmental protection, widely known as the triple bottom line. O'Brien and Chalip (2008) pushed towards the triple bottom line by highlighting the common ground and strategies between the economic and social leveraging of sport events. This suggests the potential to develop a joint strategic framework for leveraging multiple economic, social or environmental benefits, thereby enabling the sustainability of events in terms of the longevity of their outcomes and scope while encompassing the pillars of social equity, economic efficiency and environmental integrity.

However, in the case of mega-events what is not yet highlighted by the event leverage perspective is that the sustainability of these events is inherently limited because of their temporal nature and subsequent transience of their outcomes. Especially, in the case of one-off mega-events such as the Olympics and the World Football Cup, their incompatibility with sustainability is ostensible: how can the

massive investment in a one-off event and opportunity cost be compensated for by the temporally-limited outcomes and consequently ephemeral benefits obtained? Indeed, one of the major challenges to sustainability (and positive versus negative) effects of mega-events is that they often stimulate development investments that then compress a decade or more of planning and development into a few years. This causes a boom and bust cycle in some industries, especially construction, which can have very negative effects. This was clearly the case for the Atlanta or Athens Olympics, and arguably the case elsewhere.

In addressing this problem, the discourse has moved towards creating event outcomes and leveraging positive legacies (Preuss, 2007) in pursuit of sustainability (Gibson et al. 2014; Girginov & Hills, 2008; Grix, 2014; VanWynsberghe, Derom, & Maurer, 2012). Moreover, the argument that small-scale events comply with sustainability because they operate in existing infrastructures by capitalising on local capacities and serving their needs is increasingly gaining acceptance (Gibson, Kaplanidou, & Kang, 2012; Higham, 1999; Taks, 2013). Consequently, Getz (2009) argued that a paradigm shift is needed towards institutionalising sustainability in event policy. In response, Dredge and Whitford (2010) suggested the need for a more nuanced understanding of the complex processes and interdependencies involved in order to account for, and accommodate, the intricacies of events and resultant event policy.

These viewpoints coincide with a comprehensive mega-event leveraging approach aimed at serving multiple purposes and the needs of all stakeholders involved. Thus, there is a need for a broader framework that critically assesses the benefits and costs of mega-events and encompasses the small-scale events in leveraging programmes in order to simultaneously meet the needs of multiple

stakeholders and thereby satisfy the different pillars of sustainability. In other words, the matter for leverage is not only to optimise event outcomes but also to impartially deliver sustainable benefits to stakeholders and the host community. However, operationally this brings forward the issues of how to prioritise goals, allocate resources, distribute benefits equally, and coordinate the implementation of strategies and tactics among a large number of stakeholders.

Of course, the application of leverage is not a simple endeavour and avowedly presents significant challenges that constrain its effectiveness. The range of main challenges includes the lack of skills, resources and strategic management/marketing capabilities, the limited involvement of non-event entities, the monitoring of outcomes and evaluation, and the inducement of collaboration in leverage initiatives (Taks, Misener, Chalip, & Green, 2013). For example, it has been shown that small business managers often lack the inclination, the information, or the skills to engage in event leveraging (Chalip & Leyns, 2002). In addition, willingness of local stakeholders to participate in leverage may fade depending on perceptions of aversion effects or limited identification of leveraging opportunities. The handling of these challenges requires a process-oriented approach to leverage that aims to increase awareness, engage the local community, build its capacity for implementing effectively event leverage and balance the planning of leveraging initiatives around their social-cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions and outcomes. To this end, a balancing mechanism among the different dimensions is necessary to be established within the core of leveraging programmes and initiatives.

In this regard, the leverage of mega-events can be conceived of as an iterative bottom-up endeavour being essentially a social construction process that enables local communities to innovate, learn, and change (Mog, 2004). This entails a continuous

capacity-building process of social learning and negotiation towards achieving a set of defined goals that serve the needs of the host community. Therefore, the leverage of mega-events needs to be situated in, and fed by, locally meaningful contexts and power structures that frame the social order seeking to balance antithetical values and interests by encompassing a set of processes that reflect collective and contested goals. Within this context, the leveraging of mega-events entails the efficient exploitation of their interrelationships and interdependencies with the product mix and overall assets of the host community. A bottom-up planning process can integrate the divergent forces for change and thus deliver sustainable benefits to the host community contesting inherent or emergent inequalities.

This bears an important implication for making a bottom-up planning process work: Leveraging needs not to be the task of the event organizing committee as it is a temporary establishment and mainly focused on the successful organisation of the event without having often the necessary resources or linkages with other sectors to achieve effective leverage (Chalip, 2014). Instead, leveraging should be the responsibility of a non-event community entity or coalition that embraces all the sectors and stakeholder groups securing wide support from residents and deploying local resources for implementing strategic interventions to obtain long-term outcomes. Consequently, leveraging departs from the legacy planning framework adopting a more wide community-driven approach capable of including, engaging and empowering non-event stakeholder groups to participate in the planning and implementation of strategic actions and hence obtain benefits.

From Contested Legacies to Sustainable Benefits

The lack of leverage in mega-events can partly explain the failure of such events to deliver benefits that outweigh their cost and prevent or mitigate their negative impacts (Ritchie, 1999; Weed, 2008; Ziakas, 2013). Of course, presumably leveraging should improve the benefit-to-cost ratio from events, but that is undemonstrated, as leveraging is not likely to be cost-free. Furthermore, standard input-output models of economic impact are formulated in ways that make positive results more likely than if more rigorous analyses are performed. This is amply demonstrated by Taks et al. (2011), who found that positive input-output impacts became negative when cost-benefit analysis was undertaken.

Accordingly, the public subsidies for sport events are many times justified on feelings of civic boosterism (Hiller, 2000) and on expectations for generating economic impact (Burbank et al. 2001; Gold & Gold, 2011; Preuss, 2004), which often however is not accomplished, and hence, leads host nations to realise retrospectively the exaggerated benefits and underestimated costs of a mega-event (Horne, 2007; Whitson & Horne, 2006). A core reason for this happenstance is that economic claims are usually nothing more than legitimising political rhetoric to promote the status of local elites (Sack & Johnson, 1996; Whitson & Macintosh, 1996). Thus, it is common the impacts of mega-events to be unevenly distributed (Hiller, 1998) either because of power manipulation and social control, which is exerted to weaker social groups (Rojek, 2013) or because several stakeholders lack the capacity to capitalise on events' opportunities (Chalip & Leyns, 2002; Putsis, 1998; Spilling, 1996). As such, the hosting of mega-events may cause negative impacts such as environmental degradation (Prasad, 1999), house displacement (Olds, 1998), and opportunity costs (Hall & Hodges, 1996; Searle, 2002; Ziakas & Boukas,

2012), which eventually contribute to the reinforcement of existing inequalities in the cities that stage them (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006; Roche, 2000; Rojek, 2013).

Nevertheless, there is a knowledge gap how the application of leverage to mega-events can systematically redress the above problems through the formulation and implementation of strategies that have at their core the principles of equity and sustainability. In fact, the ongoing critique of sustainability poses the question whether a convergence of sustainable mega-events leveraging is realistic (Hall, 2012). From a tourism development standpoint, Sharpley (2009) proposed a more pragmatic approach to sustainability, which provides a framework for optimising benefits within locally determined environmental parameters. According to this approach, the productive assets of any destination are based on their capitals: socio-cultural, human, environmental, financial, political, and technological. The most important task for a destination is not to consider each capital in-depth, but to identify their nature and inter-connectedness as a basis for appreciating the potential to generate a flow of benefits to both tourists and tourism producers.

In short, Sharpley's destination capitals approach is a logical process of need identification followed by an analysis of destination resources or capitals which, when related to market opportunities and external forces, provides a basis for tourism development plans. Thus, sustainability is inherent in the process of assessing the potential contribution of destination capitals to generating a flow of benefits to the destination according to the desired outcomes of tourism development. Similarly, the employment of strategic mega-event planning can devise strategies that leverage those resources and assets, which have the potential to optimise the returns to the destination. This approach hence coincides with the tactical focus on leveraging events in line with other synergistic or complementary assets aimed at attaining,

magnifying, and sustaining their outcomes. In this context, leveraging initiatives can be implemented to create and harness sustainable mega-event legacies.

It seems therefore that the most effective way of leveraging mega-events and contributing to the sustainability of the host city is by linking all the event stakeholders with the pertinent actors related to economic, social, and environmental development, based on the carrying capacity and efficient deployment of local resources. In doing so, mega-event leveraging strategies should be inclusive. They must ensure the active and equal participation of all stakeholders and facilitate their reaching a consensus through negotiating trade-offs for the efficient distribution of event benefits that will satisfy environmental, social, and economic concerns (Ziakas & Boukas, 2012). There are still problems with the ties of social networks being fostered through and within a mega-event and the resulting social capital development (Ziakas, In Press). Little is known how to foster 'bridging' diversity in network development, how to transfer social capital to civic settings, and how to mitigate the negative effects of social capital.

Another critique of mega-events (and their 'suspicious' affair with the leverage paradigm and sustainable development) is that they are vehicles of the neo-liberal doctrine deliberately mandated to serve the interests of elites and corporations through acceleration of globalisation and accumulation of capital (Grix, 2013; Horne & Whannel, 2012; Sugden & Tomlinson, 2012). This ideological driver has intensified the use of mega-events as spectacles and commodities (Debord, 1967) in a global scale reproducing inequalities and marginalisation of weaker groups while also exacerbating the problem of mega-events' pseudo-authenticity due to the prevalence of political interests, over-commercialisation and inexorable modernisation pressures (Boorstin, 1961). Accordingly, developed countries may promote their own

developmental model to developing countries, as it happens with the expansion of mega-events in emerging markets such as Brazil or South Africa and thus control their growth. For example, the case of Brazil exposed the ways that economic elites have used the World-Cup and the Olympics in Rio to enable significant capital gains on insider property investments at the expense of the working and under classes through imposing a neo-liberal ‘shock doctrine’ that installed temporary regimes of governance aimed to enforce socio-spatial discipline (Gaffney, 2010; Freeman, 2012).

Undoubtedly, there are no simple solutions to the above problems since these are rooted on macro processes of social ordering and diachronic power arrangements that find expression through ideological vehicles. Leveraging as a micro process is shaped by wider environmental conditions and forces, which can be beneficent or corrupt. It should be emphasised that fundamentally, leverage is a particular application of strategy to the use of events in the host destination’s overall product and service mix. Since nearly all the work on leverage has taken place in liberal democracies, there is an overly positive tone to the work, which needs to be more critically addressed. What is overlooked within the emerging event leverage literature is the fact that strategy is double-edged. It can be used for both positive and negative purposes. Consequently, strategic leveraging of mega-events can be aligned with beneficial, benign, or downright unscrupulous purposes.

The task is therefore to find the means to protect leverage from corrupting forces. As such, there is some room for self-protection if the leveraging of mega-events is localised. Specifically, as Beesley and Chalip (2011) argue, the application of leveraging is an exercise in innovation that necessitates knowledge transfer from previous mega-event experiences. This knowledge must first be localised and then undertaken iteratively by exploring its relevance and how it might be applied to a

given context. The effective transfer of knowledge can build local community capacity in event management and leveraging based on the host community's needs and keep thus control of its growth. In doing so, localised leveraging can lead to the generation of new knowledge that will perhaps enable developing nations to exploit mega-events and not be instead exploited by those corporate networks of developed countries that control them.

This nonetheless does not solve the problem of inherent inequalities and rigid power structures that exist within local communities. What could be a possible antidote is the incorporation of the cultural revitalisation paradigm into the leveraging perspective. Di Giovine (2009) in supporting the value of a deliberate effort by local people to construct a more satisfying culture, contended that the cultural revitalisation paradigm entails a more totalising set of processes, since it accounts for environmental, religious, psychological, and biological pressures stemming from extra-cultural challenges. As Di Giovine argued, in contrast to the development paradigm that posits a universal evolutionary trajectory of all people towards capitalistic 'modernisation,' the paradigm of revitalisation posits a cyclical movement of renewal that calls upon individuated notions of shared 'heritage' to resolve current problems through ritually refreshing the nodes of shared meaning and social networks in local life. Thus, while mega-events are the intervention of outsiders, the local people should be enabled to interpret various pressures and shape the regeneration of their community by reinventing their past and thereby shape the way for a more sustainable future. Therefore, the convergence of mega-event leveraging and cultural revitalisation includes processes in which various stakeholder groups are mutually incorporated by participating in multifarious contestation and negotiation that drives

their socio-cultural transformation by interpreting how they perceive themselves fitting into it.

Arguably, mega-event leveraging should be applied in innovative ways as it is understood by local people in their own terms. This means that strategies should empower and enable locals to interpret, contest, and express the conditions and influences that make their lives. From this standpoint, the range of leveraging programmes and activities built around a mega-event should aim to express different viewpoints that altogether synthesise a dynamic cosmology. In this light, mega-event leveraging can facilitate a polytopia of perspectives to emerge, find dialectical expression in the public discourse and build alternative social constructions that integrate different or even antithetical perspectives. Polytopia has been conceptualised as the emergent synergy of ideas, thoughts, dreams, sensations, ambitions, views, interests and agendas, evolving and synthesised within an inclusive events network as a result of stakeholders' cooperative interactions and exchanges (Ziakas, In Press). Within a polytopian context, sustainability is both a state of mindset and an elusive ideal towards which the primary task is the building of a host community's capacity to develop its own approach and design pertinent strategies to leverage its own events (Ziakas, 2013), thereby delivering sustainable benefits to event stakeholders and host communities.

The Imperative for Cross-leverage

From a leverage standpoint, events are analysed with reference to the host community's product and service mix (Chalip, 2004, 2006). This entails bundling events with the host destination (Chalip & McGuirty, 2004) and incorporating events with the destination's brand (Chalip & Costa, 2005). Consequently, the perspective of

event leverage entails a focus on relationships (among different events or between event managers and community planners) and bringing together different event stakeholders. The purpose is to cross-leverage events with one another in the host community's portfolio as well as with its overall product mix in order to attain multiple ends and maximise their overall outcomes (Ziakas, 2013). To do so, it is essential to know how events complement each other and, in turn, how they can be complemented by the attractions, amenities, products, and services of a host community. In other words, cross-leverage is about understanding interrelationships, fostering synergies, and enhancing complementarities (Ziakas, 2010). This constitutes an integrated mindset for formulating and implementing strategies that ultimately can help build community capacity to leverage mega-events.

The development of a broader leveraging framework for mega-events can guide the formulation and implementation of cross-leveraging strategies to attain and magnify event outcomes. To do so, it is imperative to find the means for cross-leveraging mega-events with periodic small-scale events. This entails the identification of joint strategies and tactics that enhance synergies among different events in order to serve multiple purposes and generate intended outcomes. Cross-leveraging can take place within the context of an event portfolio (Chalip, 2004; Ziakas, 2013; Ziakas & Costa, 2011) wherein the roles of events can be viewed in concert as tools contributing to sustainable development.

According to Ziakas (2013), event portfolio cross-leveraging may be divided into three types: (1) Cross-leveraging the different recurring events of the portfolio; (2) Cross-leveraging the whole portfolio with one-off mega- or large-scale events, and with their legacies; and (3) Cross-leveraging the portfolio of recurring events and/or one-off events with the host community's product and service mix. The overarching

goal of all types of cross-leveraging is to enable the development of synergistic means to attain, magnify and sustain the benefits and planned legacies of events. Cross-leverage can also be applied by cross-leveraging the portfolio with the legacy of mega-events and with the overall product mix of a host community. However, little is known about how to cross-leverage mega-events with an event portfolio.

What is known is that host communities need to establish appropriate support mechanisms for the coordination of all leveraging activities (Chalip & Leyns, 2002; O'Brien, 2006). The appointment of a coordinating community organisation, independent from the mega-event organising committee's interests, is a decisive step toward cross-leveraging broader economic, social and environmental benefits as well as establishing connections among different stakeholders. Also, the resulting legacy of mega-events represents itself a valuable leverageable resource, which can magnify and sustain the benefits of a mega-event. To do so, it is essential to draw attention toward leveraging the legacies of mega-events in the long-term. For instance, Boukas, Ziakas and Boustras (2013), in examining the Olympic heritage of Athens, stressed the need for developing a post-event leveraging framework to enable the leverage of Olympic-related tourism in the post-Games period. From this standpoint, the cultivation of the Olympic heritage and the subsequent development of cultural heritage tourism are viewed as an opportunity that needs to be cross-leveraged in synergy with the sport-related structures and elements of the Olympics. This form of leverage focuses on the post-event period where the leverageable resource is not the event itself but its legacy. Therefore, post-event leverage involves the cross-leveraging of sport, heritage, culture and tourism assets, which can be cultivated in other events of the host city's portfolio in order to magnify and sustain the benefits of the Olympics in the post-Games period.

Such an interdisciplinary approach may facilitate the development of a range of cross-leveraging initiatives that were not previously seen or did not receive sufficient support to be implemented. In this context, the array of a portfolio's events needs to be cross-leveraged with a mega-event's legacy, engendering a range of sustainable economic and social outcomes in the post-event period (Ziakas, 2014). Overall, the relationship between mega-events and event portfolios can be mutually beneficial providing that synergies are established to cross-leverage a mega-event with the host community's portfolio (Ziakas, 2013). To do so, it is imperative to find the means for cross-leveraging in the pre-, during- and post-event periods. In the context of the Olympic Games, their legacy can be built on the host city's event portfolio assets and resources. In turn, the investment in Olympic projects and infrastructure can substantially enhance the host city's event portfolio. For example, the legacy of the Olympics can be associated with, and transferred to, the host city's portfolio, thus fostering post-Games tourism (Boukas et al., 2013). This brings forth the need to extend our focus on post-Games leveraging of the Olympics, and in general, on post-event leverage, in order to enhance and sustain the legacies of mega-events.

Final Thoughts and Critical Research Directions

Event leveraging is a new art. There is a lot to be learned regarding the effective leveraging of mega-events. However, as research grows in this area it would be prudent to establish a critical lens of analysis so that it can be examined if and how optimal benefits of mega-events are delivered to host communities and negative impacts are minimised. This research note suggests that there is a need to develop a critical leveraging perspective for mega-events. Critical inquiry may be premised

upon an approach that addresses the instrumental rationality of leveraging, the contextual dynamics that influence the formulation and implementation of strategies and tactics as well as the possibilities for creating outcomes that contribute to the sustainable development of host communities.

The underpinnings of a critical leveraging perspective can be profitably informed by Foucault's (1977) thesis that multiple forms and techniques of governance operate simultaneously to preserve power structures by creating discursive regimes that discipline social relations and reproduce inequalities (Foley, 1990). Arguably, mega-events constitute governable spaces wherein a constellation of different interests, exigencies of capital and power arrangements takes place. Following Roche (2000), if mega-events are understood as social spatio-temporal hubs that channel, mix, and re-route global flows imposing socio-spatial structures, then it is revealed that they discursively produce, promote and establish social control techniques of governance, which have enduring effects on the (re)shaping of social order and contestation of power. From this standpoint, leveraging needs to be viewed and applied essentially as a means to enable positive social change, rectify power imbalances and decrease inequalities.

As Roche (2000) suggests, developing critical perspectives on mega-events provides insight into structure, change and agency in society. Silk (2011) highlights the need to understand and intervene in the various forms of inequality and socio-economic polarisations that are endemic to the mega-event spectacle. Likewise Waitt (2000) stressed the importance of exploring the silences, alternative stories, and readings inherent in the mega-event spectacle in order to understand the diverse ways in which impacts on different people and groups. Within the leveraging context, this requires a variety of methodological approaches ranging from ethnography and action

research to social network analysis, quantitative and mixed methods in order for developing critical insight into the ways in which leveraging is conceived, initiated and implemented within different locales. Specifically, it is important to examine if (and which) social groups benefit more or at the expense of others, if (and which) stakeholder groups are excluded, and what potential exists for enabling social change. Therefore, similar to Silk's (2011) call for a sociological analysis of the mega-event spectacle, a critical mega-event leveraging perspective can allow scholars to investigate how strategies are being (re)shaped and challenged by the socio-spatial practices of various stakeholder groups and individuals. Overall, Table 1 pinpoints ten research themes to help build a robust ground for this perspective.

[Insert Table 1]

Placing at the core of mega-event leveraging programmes the principles of equity and sustainability can help devise strategies and tactics that aim the equal Pareto optimal distribution of benefits and set goals for meeting the triple bottom line and sustaining the longevity of positive outcomes. Thus, there is a need to develop knowledge on how to establish mechanisms and find the best means to do that. Likewise, it must be understood that the development of social capital through mega-events is not a panacea and appropriate mechanisms should be placed to bridge diverse social networks. This means that strategies for leveraging social capital generated in mega-events should aim to foster diversity in network development, transfer social capital to civic settings and mitigate its negative effects. The bridging of social networks can create opportunities for developing a polytopia of meanings within the mega-event settings and surpass barriers that inhibit a feeling of transnationalism. This requires the development of strategies that facilitate a synthesis of different or contrasting viewpoints and a transcendence of national, socio-

economic and/or political divisions through leveraging the interpretive function of mega-events for understanding the conditions that make up the world order and the public sphere. Little is known on how these ambitious possibilities can be achieved.

Nonetheless, transnationalism does not mean predominance of some nations (and their elites) over others through the globalisation of capital and the deployment of mega-events as vehicles to control and exploit local resources around the world. For this reason, the localisation of leverage is imperative by creating leveraging programmes local in scope, and led by residents, who may come up with innovative strategies in response to local contexts. As such, a focus should be on capacity-building of local communities to develop the skills, know-how and collaborative inter-organisational linkages necessary to effectively coordinate the implementation of mega-event leveraging actions. This requires an approach of inclusiveness and co-creation enabling participative planning and the engagement of publics in the development and implementation of leveraging programmes. Within this context, the power lies to local people for fostering the authenticity of mega-event leveraging programmes and projected community characteristics that (re)create their identities. More should be known how the introduction of strategy can enable host cities to safeguard themselves and their event-related interventions from the corrupting influence of politics, over-commercialisation and exorbitant modernisation evident in mega-events. The fostering of authenticity is also related to the cultural revitalisation paradigm that can be infused in leveraging programmes and initiatives. From this standpoint, it is essential to identify the means for empowering local communities to interpret outside forces that exist in mega-events and devise their own leveraging plans.

Finally, the implementation of mega-event leveraging requires build knowledge on what accountability, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be established. Little is known how to develop tailored sustainability indicators based on local contexts in order to facilitate the holistic assessment of formal leveraging plans and monitor their implementation. Similarly, there is scant knowledge and understanding of what would constitute a holistic strategy and its dimensions within the context of mega-events. To do so, there is a need to envision and develop a broader cross-leveraging framework encompassing event portfolios in its scope. In this regard, the role of ideology in shaping power structures and driving processes of social ordering should not be overlooked as it may reproduce inequalities, exclusion and marginalisation of weaker groups through mega-events. Future research should examine the ideological forces and wider dynamics that affect mega-event leveraging strategies and reinforce marginalisation if it is to instill fairness and equality in leverage, thereby delivering benefits to all stakeholders.

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Table 1. Ten Critical Research Themes in Mega-Event Leveraging.

Research Theme	Research Focus
1. Equity and Sustainability	Equal Pareto optimal distribution of benefits. Triple bottom line and longevity of outcomes.
2. Social Capital and Diversity	Fostering bridging diversity in network development. Transfer of social capital to civic settings. Mitigation of the negative effects of social capital.
3. Polytopia of Meanings and Transnationalism	Synthesis of viewpoints. Transcendence of divisions.
4. Localisation of Leverage and Capacity-Building	Local scope and strategy innovation. Development of local capacity, collaboration and coordination.
5. Inclusiveness and Co-creation	Participative planning and engagement of publics.
6. Authenticity	Safeguarding from politics, over-commercialisation and exorbitant modernisation.
7. Cultural Revitalisation	Empowerment of local communities to interpret outside forces and devise their own leveraging plans.
8. Accountability and Evaluation	Holistic assessment of formal leveraging plans and monitoring of their implementation.
9. Holistic Strategy Development	Development of a broader cross-leveraging framework encompassing event portfolios.
10. Ideology and Marginalisation	Examination of the ideological forces and wider conditions that affect mega-event leveraging strategies and reinforce marginalisation.