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## Parasitic events and host destination resource dependence: Evidence from the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games

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### ABSTRACT

Major events possess limited resources relative to those they must seize, extract and control from a host destination. All sport events, to varying degrees, are parasitic as they are highly dependent on external host destination resource environments to deliver complex operational and strategic event objectives. This dynamic poses a management challenge as the event's existence, sustenance and survival is principally determined by: 1) the host's munificence (the host destination's willingness to offer up local resources), and 2) the event's ability to secure the resources required for an extended period of time. This article investigates these complex resourcing relationships through an in-depth case study of the 2018 Commonwealth Games held on the Gold Coast, Australia, a well-developed tourist destination. Methodologically, we draw on interviews with representatives from the government, event managers and host community networks. Alongside the interviews, we analyse policy and planning documentation, and review in-person, observational evidence gathered before and during the 2018 Commonwealth Games. We apply, and extend, resource dependency theory and associated concepts to explain the event-host destination resourcing relationship. We detail how and why major events deploy constraint absorption (hard power) and co-optation (soft power) tactics to render a host destination's resource under internal control, reflecting on the parasitic nature of the event-host relationship. We conclude that the transfer of resource to external agents, justified as a means of reducing organisational uncertainty and operational failure, actually leads to deleterious outcomes for local stakeholders and the host destination, undermining the event's own social sustainability and inclusivity objectives.

### 1. Introduction

A significant and growing body of research has sought to examine the ways in which staging major sport events at well-developed tourist destinations require the territorialisation of tourist- and local-civic infrastructure to physically deliver the events (Smith, 2020). Over the past two decades, numerous empirical studies have been conducted that look specifically at the way events spatially takeover a host destination, from access to swathes of local land and transport infrastructure, through to dominant use of real-estate to service the event's complex operational requirements (Giulianotti et al., 2015; McGillivray & Frew, 2015; Smith, 2014). Access to local resource is particularly important in the periods leading immediately up to, during and after the event, when the destination is used as a place for hosting live sports, commercial and cultural activities. Land, infrastructure and real estate resources can

include public parks (Smith, 2014, 2018), urban streets and boulevards (Hall, 2006), beaches and transportation networks (Giulianotti et al., 2015), and even entire UNESCO World Heritage Sites (Duignan et al., 2019). McGillivray's (2019) work on the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games' production of the 'live city' usefully illustrates the takeover of urban tourist spaces and provides a useful background to our study.

While our focus in this article is on the more immediate resource needs, major sport events commence their dependence on destination resources decades before the event is delivered (Smith and McGillivray, 2020) and the dependency persists for years afterwards (see the Montreal Olympics' four-decades-long debt as an extreme example). Sport events are peripatetic, moving from one host destination to another, possessing little (internal) resource relative to that which they must extract (or be given) from the external resource environment to be delivered successfully. This is not uncommon as no organisation,

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whether a corporation or an event management entity, thrives and survives solely based on the internal resources it controls (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Major sport events are temporary happenings that arrive and leave within a few weeks and, yet, they generate significant long-term, persistent, urban effects (Raco & Tunney, 2010). This creates both urban policy and strategic management challenges as hosts must be willing to cede to the demands of awarding bodies to provide the conditions for the event to be staged in their cities, whatever the consequences might be locally. To a lesser extent, this challenge applies to smaller events too (Finkel and Platt, 2020), whether an urban food festival or a Formula E track requiring the takeover of a public park (Smith, 2019). However, peripatetic sport events can be particularly resource-heavy over a short period of time because they are one-off and provide few of the place-specific benefits of recurring festivals and events (Gold and Gold 2020).

In this article, we address the problems associated with resource dependency in the context of major sport events through an in-depth case study of the 2018 Commonwealth Games held on the Gold Coast, Australia. We draw on resource dependency theory (RDT) (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978) to illustrate how and why event owners, and their host destination partners, deploy and oscillate between soft and hard constraint absorption and co-optation power play tactics to seize, extract and control resources at the host destination. We argue that major events, like parasites, only survive by extracting resources from others using specific techniques. In earlier studies, various theoretical lenses have been used to examine event-host resourcing relationships, for example, Deleuze and Guattari's notion of smooth and striated space (McGillivray & Frew, 2015), and event-led urban zoning (McGillivray and Duignan, 2021), but RDT has never been applied to the context of a major sport event. The associated concepts and basic assumptions of RDT provide an ideal framework to examine, and explain, the complex resourcing relationships at major sports events. This is particularly so for major events like the Commonwealth Games as competition for local resources is often fiercely contested given, first, the scale required to deliver the event's operational requirements, and, second, the various stakeholders that attempt to retain, or control, the desired resources. The fierce contestation is significant for event managers as "*organisational survival hinges on the ability to procure critical resources from the external environment. To reduce uncertainty in the flow of needed resources, organisations will try to restructure their dependencies with a variety of tactics*" (Casciaro & Piskorski, 2005, p. 168). In this article we unpack the resource-power game played between major sport event owners, managers, and the host destination to help us refute a central proposition of RDT — that resource ownership and control is not necessary as the basis of power (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978).

Our article is guided by the following research questions.

- 1) What resources do major sport events require from a host city?
- 2) How do awarding bodies and their partners deploy soft and hard constraint absorption and co-optation tactics to seize, extract and/or control host resource?
- 3) Why are soft and hard constraint absorption and co-optation tactics necessary for reducing organisational uncertainty and the risk of operational failure?

To address these research questions, we begin by outlining our theoretical frame — resource dependency theory. We then apply this lens to the context of major sport events and their tourism effects before detailing the methodology that underpins the study of RDT in the context of the 2018 Commonwealth Games. Next, we outline findings from interviews, document analysis and observation before, finally, drawing conclusions and recommendations for the field of study.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Resource dependency theory (RDT)

Organisations cannot, and do not, thrive or survive solely based on the internal resources they control. Major sport events are no exception. In fact, these events must secure external resources to ensure their successful delivery. RDT seeks to examine the relationship between one or more organisations' dependence with respect to external environments (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; Davis & Cobb, 2010). As an Open Systems Theory, RDT posits that organisational behaviour is heavily influenced by forces located across external environments, particularly those related to securing resources (Bryant & Davis, 2012). The external environment, where resource dependence functions, is referred to as the resource environment (Hillman et al., 2009). Resource environments possess several features that affect resource dependence. First, they are where the *concentration of resources* are held, reflecting who has *munificence*, that is, the willingness for actors who own or control desired resources to 'give up' and 'cede access' to the event. Second, resource environments consist of interconnected organisations (involved in the supply and demand of resources) that not only determine the importance of the resources but the abundance too; resources that are vital for operationalising logistical requirements and achieving broader organisational objectives (Pfeffer, 1972). This is particularly relevant to major sport events that are operationally and strategically complex, particularly as ambitions have proliferated in the past decades to include flagship urban regeneration and Games-related infrastructure projects (Raco & Tunney, 2010). In the major sport event terrain, there are key players with responsibility to deploy strategic tactics to secure resource, as external environments invariably contain other organisations and/or stakeholders who own, control and/or use a particular resource (Reitz, 1979).

Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) outline some key assumptions of RDT: i) organisations depend on resources; ii) resources ultimately originate from an organisation's environment; iii) the environment contains other organisations; iv) resources one organisation needs are, therefore, often in the hand of other organisation(s); v) resources are a basis of power; vi) legally independent organisations depend on each other; vii) power and resource dependence are directly linked (i.e. host 'A' has power over event awarding body 'B', which is equal to B's dependence on A's resources); and viii) power is relational and situational. An over-reliance on external resource environments typically leads to organisational uncertainty as resources are not directly under the ownership or control of the organisation (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). RDT not only explains how vital particular resources are and who owns them but looks at how organisations can minimise dependence on external resource and, instead, bring the required resource into an organisation's internal environment. This, in turn, helps to reduce uncertainty and risk of failure (Street and Cameron, 2007). As we demonstrate in this article, major event awarding bodies including the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), and the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) constantly seek to internalise external resource (e.g. at the host destination) by requiring laws to be passed and contracts to be signed that ensure the host destination provides the conditions for their events to be staged profitably.

Casciaro and Piskorski (2005) suggest that organisations must deploy tactics to secure resources external to them. These tactics can be split into two main types: soft and hard. Soft tactics seek to enable access to alternative resources and/or form coalitions with those who own and/or control the resources to enable access. However, sometimes softer tactics are insufficient, necessitating the adoption of harder tactics. For example, an organisation may impose unilateral relationships to bypass constraining factors or directly force owners, and/or controllers, to unwillingly give up and cede resources (Ulrich & Barney, 1984). Power plays are also a central feature of resource seizure, extraction

and/or control. The moderating variable of power is at the heart of RDT and the resource environments in question (Neinhuser, 2008). The organisation of the Commonwealth Games provides an ideal and highly contested resourcing context through which to illustrate soft and hard power plays in practice. This is significant, as Mitchell et al. (1997) suggest that power is a tricky concept to define but easier to recognise in practice as “[it is] the ability of those who possess power to bring about the outcomes they desire” (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1974: 3) — a phenomenon particularly visible across major sport event contexts.

Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) outline two overarching ways that organisations deploy soft and hard power play tactics. First, they employ ‘constraint absorption’, described by Casciaro and Piskorski (2005) as the “only tactic that gives the dependent organisation [i.e. organisers of events] direct control over valued resources” (2005: 167). Traditionally, this is achieved through mergers and acquisitions (e.g. Pfeffer, 1972) and/or long-term contracts like joint ventures (Pfeffer and Leong, 1977). However, event owners deploy constraint absorption using harder, legal and regulatory seizures, extractions and/or control measures. Marrero-Guillamón (2012) calls these highly circumscribed environments, ‘states of exceptionality’. The second power play tactic is co-optation, which is the ability of powerful yet dependent organisations and individual stakeholders to embed themselves in the everyday internal governance networks of the host’s resource environment (Hillman et al., 2009). In the context of major sport events, co-optation involves the creation of entirely new organisations, including local organising committees to ensure that the external organisational and strategic ambitions are realised. Awarding bodies, including the IOC, FIFA and the CGF, are able to exert influence over the host government by defining how the local organising committee should be structured and by monitoring adherence to the Host City Contract signed when the rights to host the event are granted. In contrast to the softer constraint absorption tactics, co-optation seeks to infiltrate a host destination and, therefore, any political and/or organisational decisions made from within. In so doing, co-optation helps to facilitate the seizure, extraction, and/or control of host resources (Nye, 2012); it is a subtle, yet powerful, tactic. We build on Casciaro and Piskorski’s (2005) argument that soft and hard power plays help to decrease uncertainty and reduce the risk of operational failures. This is particularly so for major events that not only have complex resourcing requirements but that start with little internal resource relative to the quantity they must secure externally at the host destination.

## 2.2. Parasitic events: applying RDT to major sport events

We describe events as parasitic due to the ways in which they extract resources from their host destinations to survive and be sustained. Most hard power plays, and the outcome of softer power plays are visible in the immediate periods before, during and after the live staging of major sport events. Pavoni (2015) refers to the physical impacts wrought by major sport event hosting as ‘telluric shocks’ - with physical impacts on both natural, physical spaces and built environments. Either unopposed or undetected, telluric shocks can be considered examples of constraint absorption and co-optation tactics enabling swathes of resources across the host destination to become sequestered for staging live events. Cultural resources (including entertainment districts, cultural quarters, tourist destinations, hot spots and attractions) and natural resources (including parks, high streets, beach fronts and entire town centres) become territorialised by the event (McGillivray & Frew, 2015). The host destination becomes one big brandscape as static billboards, road signs, shop frontages, bus stops and train interiors and exteriors are plastered with sponsors’ logos and regalia. Persistently, we see how events force host destination resource environments to be split into leverageable and marketable resources, acting as a driver of urban commodification (Lefebvre, 2000) as host countries, cities and visitor economies become privatised playgrounds to stage events (Smith, 2020). Barney Ronay, writing in The Guardian, perfectly describes the

parasitic character of major sport events, suggesting that ‘these four-yearly events circle the globe like mobile city states clearing the fields, raiding the public stores, favouring the local Maharajahs with their magic dust’ (2020: [online]).

Host destination resource environments are typically rendered *tabula rasa* (Raco & Tunney, 2010): a blank slate ready to be sequestered, territorialised and reconfigured in a way that helps deliver upon the event’s operational objectives (Giulianotti et al., 2015). Dansero and Mela (2016) conceptualise these processes as the over-riding of ‘context territory’ [existing social-economic activity] by ‘project territory’ [the event’s temporary socio-economic activity], which often leads to contestations by those disaffected by the process and outcome. Rojek (2014) critically describes this as “event appropriation” (...) the seizure, by external or contingent interests” (2014: 41), to meet the event’s operational requirements and broader strategic, and developmental, objectives (e.g. urban regeneration, social development) (Smith, 2012). Muller (2017) refers to the notion of event takeover to describe how the event skews development priorities in the host environment.

Resource intensive major sport events also require resource rich host environments. Typically, the host destinations chosen to stage these events are established or emerging economies and globally recognised tourist destinations. These include Barcelona for the 1992 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Russia for the 2014 FIFA World Cup, and the Gold Coast for the 2018 Commonwealth Games. Central districts and suburban neighbourhoods are primarily chosen as the host destination resource environment for planning and staging the operational requirements of the event, and longer-term social and economic development too. Urban regeneration scheme, the creation of new cultural quarters and place reimagining campaigns are prime examples (Chalip, 2017). Choosing resource-rich host resource environments is a key strategic management decision by the event owners and host destinations present a banquet of resources to feed the events’ complex and intense resourcing and operational requirements.

Event owners, and their host destination partners, must navigate the complex political question of how they, and the event, will bring external resources under internal control. Critical commentators often use terms like ‘power plays’ by ‘vested’ and ‘elite’ actors to illustrate how events seize, extract and/or control host resources (Talbot & Carter, 2018; Raco & Tunney, 2010; Foley et al., 2011), and how these processes in effect disempower and marginalise local populations, depoliticise resistance and quash dissent (Duignan et al., 2019). Sinclair (2012) argues that opponents of major sport events are left, for the most part, powerless, disconnected from the event’s decision-making processes and unable to influence planning and delivery (Cashman, 2002). Duignan (2021) notes how, in the context of the London, 2012 Olympics, even the voices of local authorities (who often play a meso-level role, stitching together macro- and micro-level demands) were reduced to serving notices on behalf of the event rather than generating any meaningful two-way dialogue between the event and host community. In general, apart from low-key consultation exercises with stakeholders across a potential host destination, most people are oblivious to a national bid to stage the Olympics and unaware of the complex operational requirements that such an event would incur at the local community level. This concern was reflected during London, 2012, “... the thing with mega-events is that they occur to you, not really with you (...) where in the run up to the Games that macro agenda is forced upon [locals]” (...) ‘at that stage [planning and delivery] business and residents, to an extent, are way down the pecking order in terms of how they feel they are in engaged in what is no longer, really, a democratic process.” (Duignan et al., 2020: 145). Both the initial bid and the planning intent often lie dormant, waiting to be activated, then mobilised, to strike when the time’s right. This illustrates how those with information to withhold use the strategic timing of the release of that information as a key power play; essentially, as a *fait accompli* that curbs the ability for local residents, businesses and pressure groups to oppose event plans, leaving them with little option but to accept. Invisibilising and sidelining

dissent continues to be a common theme of hosting too. For example, imposed by the IOC specifically for [Tokyo 2020 \(2020\)](#), legal mandates now preclude all forms of protest by pressure groups across official event spaces (The Guardian, 2020c). Those who do resist are quickly labelled as against the national interest according to [Sinclair \(2012\)](#), where one's attempt to undermine a costly, publicly-funded project risks leading one to become persona non-grata.

Yet, one question persists: How do major sport events, particularly those organised in democratic states, enable these kinds of apparently autocratic processes and environments? The answer lies partly in the constraint absorption strategies deployed by the event owners. When a city secures the right to host, they are required to sign a Host City Contract (HCC). The HCC includes a set of operational policies, practices, principles, rules and regulations that the event owner requires the successful host to follow. The HCC is a legally binding document and irreversible contractual commitment between the event owner and the host government, with significant penalties attached ([Siddons, 2012](#)). As a result, after signing, host governments are responsible for passing exceptional legislation into national law to ensure the requirements of the HCC are met (e.g. [London, 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games Act, 2006](#)). Games-related legislation reconfigures existing legal and regulatory systems to ensure contractual obligations and operational requirements are adhered to. Legal theorists refer to this as a type of 'special' or 'temporary' law that helps to fast-track policies and practices that would otherwise require significant governmental and public scrutiny ([UK Government, 2012](#)). For example, the UK government passed the [London, 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games Act \(2006\)](#) to cede sovereignty and enact special-temporary laws to push through urban regeneration schemes, including the forceful removal of Carpenters Lane residential estate and Fish Island's 200 small enterprises to make way for the Queen Elizabeth II Olympic Park ([Raco & Tunney, 2010](#)). Problematising places to legitimise intervention, usually by juxtaposing a host destination's dystopic past and present against a potential utopian future with the event pitched as the panacea, is a key tactic used. For London, 2012, East London was depicted as dysfunctional and destitute, suffering from a post-industrial hangover complete with "discarded shopping trolleys, dirty canals, polluted soil and broken buildings" (DCMS, 2012: 3). Rio 2016 sought to pacify favelas and [Tokyo 2020 \(2020\)](#) (dubbed The Recovery Games) sought to rebuild regions and revive place-image disaffected by the Fukushima nuclear disaster ([Japan Times, 2019](#)).

Forcing hosts to cede national sovereignty is another good example of constraint absorption: a tactic that gives the dependent organisation (i.e. the event owner and those responsible for organising the event on their behalf) control over valued resources across the host's destination resource environment ([Casciaro & Piskorski, 2005](#)). However, the new legal and regulatory environments created can lead to negative effects for social and economic activity locally. For example, street vendors may have their trading licences revoked, as was the case at the South Korea Winter Games 1988 where 2000 market stalls were removed ([House of Lords, 2012](#)). Areas inside stadia or in public spaces adjacent to sports venues, are zoned off for exclusive use by official sponsors and suppliers. While these exemptions are signed off by host governments and are designed to maximise revenue generation for those paying generously for the privilege, they have the effect of precluding local businesses from supplying to local events and from optimising the potential rewards associated with event visitor economies. Instead, host destination resource environments are reconfigured in such a way as to exclude local business access as 'unofficial' interests are pitted as being in direct competition to 'official' interests ([Boykoff, 2013](#)). Evidence suggests that local businesses often find themselves caught in a vice being directly unable to operate, unable to affiliate with the Olympic brand, spatially locked out of the event visitor economy, and faced with an increased threat of new market entrants like official sponsors and suppliers. The urban conditions created around these events in effect reduce the likelihood that visitors will venture outside of orchestrated sites of official

Games-time consumption ([McGillivray & Turner, 2018](#)). Furthermore, these issues are exacerbated when the regular flow of visitors is disrupted as the event produces tourist displacement effects ([Gallego and Fourie, 2010](#)) and aversion markets (when locals decide to avoid busy event zones for fear of congestion and overcrowding) ([Hall, 2006](#)). Disruptions intensify immediately before and during the live staging periods ([Carlini et al., 2020](#)).

Host destinations are also organised to control the way visitors move around and engage with the city, facilitated by the exceptional legislation passed to protect the interests of event owners and their partners. These tactics are deployed to channel the visitor's gaze and spending toward official sites of Games-related consumption ([McGillivray & Frew, 2015](#)). Host destination resources are used to service the interests of event owners. For example, the Olympics require a temporary 'Olympic Route Network' to be created across the host destination as an exclusive road lane for Games participants [with penalties for improper use]. Temporarily reconfiguring transport resources and mobility networks across the city emerges as a tactic utilised by organisers, whether at the Olympic Games (e.g. [Kirby et al., 2018](#)) or other major sport event contexts like the Commonwealth Games (e.g. [Carlini et al., 2020](#)). However, the effects of these temporary measures extend beyond the Games-time, into strengthened securitisation and 'derelict' land acquisition, highlighting why external resource transfers also benefit some interests across the host destination.

To summarise, for event owners, staging the Olympics, FIFA World Cup and Commonwealth Games requires leveraging a host destination's natural and cultural resources, using a range of hard (e.g. contractual) and soft (e.g. political) tactics. Drawing on a resource dependency theory perspective, it is important to recognise that the takeover of host resources goes beyond just physical changes – the event requires the incorporation of a highly complex series of local resources to be delivered. We now demonstrate this, conceptually and empirically, by drawing on an in-depth event case study.

### 3. Methodology

To address the three guiding research questions, we adopted a qualitative, single case study design ([Yin, 2013](#)) focusing on the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games 2018 (GC 2018). The GC2018 offers a rich source of knowledge as little is known, generally, about what resources are gained for use by Games organisers, and how this occurs from a host community perspective. The single-case focus allowed our study to stay close to the data in this context, and to explore complex and subtle behaviours that may have been obscured in a cross-comparative case ([Flyvbjerg, 2006](#)).

To understand the resource dependency phenomenon, we drew on three data collection points: semi-structured face-to-face interviews, documentary analysis and observational work. Following a purposive sampling approach ([Patton, 2002](#)), interview respondents were selected from local businesses in the Gold Coast area in and around where Games venues and ancillary events were being held. This focus was chosen so that we could access views on the effect of host destination's resources being transferred to external agents. The sample included hospitality, retail and auxiliary services, businesses and industries likely to be affected by GC2018 hosting. With respect to the business community, we spoke with businesses and organisations within or near event zones. One of the authors had a long-held relationship with local tourism industry groups, which helped to maximise participation. This author was a long term resident of the Gold Coast and had formed relations with the business community participating in other projects and city initiatives.

Data was gathered over a three-month period (October 2018 to December 2018) and included 15 interviews averaging 45 min in length (see [Table 1](#)). The semi-structured interview protocol guided by [Patton \(2002\)](#) included behavioural, opinion, knowledge, demographic and a range of probing and background questions focused on resources and the perceived benefits derived by businesses from GC 2018. Interviews

**Table 1**  
Interviewee list.

Interviewee	Position	Organisation
#1	CEO	Large sporting entertainment and leisure facility
#2	CEO/founder	Private training provider
#3	Founder/director	Peak body representing small business
#4	Senior academic	Business strategy
#5	Managing Director	B2B supplier of hospitality appliances
#6	Founder/Owner	Independent art and culture media
#7	General Manager	Marine retailer
#8	Director of Sales and Marketing	International Hotel
#9	CEO/founder	National communications solutions specialist
#10	Director	B2B Hospitality industry supplier
#11	Founder & Principal	Town planning advisor
#12	Founder/Owner	Hospitality venue
#13	Director Business Development	Education training provider
#14	Senior policy advisor	Peak tourism industry body
#15	Executive GM	International tourism attraction

ceased when data saturation was reached and no new information was gained. To help narrow down who constituted the host-community, we recruited participants involved in industry associations, advisors (such as academics), and small to medium sized businesses geographically positioned across the Gold Coast’s officially designated event zones, from Coomera to Coolangatta (North Gold Coast to South Gold Coast), 57 km in total (see Fig. 1). With respect to the Commonwealth Games organisation’s validated secondary data, in the form of news reports, official ministerial statements and agency reports, these were gathered and analysed to situate its policy frameworks and underlying strategy. This approach allowed for contextual clarity, in which the importance of each data source contributed to our understanding and provided a triangulation of data (Patton, 2002).

Observations made by one of the authors living in the host city were recorded as field notes. Observations included attendance at: i) business-focused events in the lead up to GC 2018, e.g., Chamber of Commerce meetings; ii) Office of The Commonwealth Games planning events, e.g., launch of Get Set business planning support; iii) sporting and entertainment events during the Games, e.g., Cycling events; and iv) visits to local business precincts, e.g., attending 2018 Festival events in Surfers

Paradise and Broadbeach. Notes taken during these events provided insights into interactions and changes within the host destination (Mulhall, 2003).

A documentary analysis was conducted on publicly available government documents, media articles, video material, websites, brochures, and photographic imagery (Table 2). According to Neumann (2003, p. 219) “content analysis is a technique for gathering and analysing the content of text. The content refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes or nay messages that can be communicated”. NVivo software was used to analyse the data and verify the conclusions drawn. Computer software packages (such as Nvivo) offer significant value in qualitative analysis and any subsequent theory building (Richards, 2002).

After multiple readings to improve familiarisation with the data, each author (independently) thematically analysed the interview data. They then met to discuss and compare code definitions, and analysed the field notes and other materials. An inductive approach was used to develop initial codes directly from the data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). To illustrate the coding process, one author developed a theme titled *securing assets*, and another author developed a similar code titled *restricting access*. When the authors convened to discuss the results, it was decided that these two, similar codes could be best described as *extending territorial presence*. The coding logic is further elaborated in Fig. 2. Once the code tree was finalised, codes were grouped using an abductive approach (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014) based on the resource dependency literature and discussed further in the section below.

**4. Findings**

The study findings demonstrate how GC2018 extracted resources from the Gold Coast before and during the live staging period and provide explanations as to why this was necessary for the successful delivery of the event. Specifically, we look at how and why the event and its key actors seized, extracted and/or controlled the host destination’s resources. We structure the findings by outlining the pre-event legal and regulatory contexts before illustrating the intensification of these

**Table 2**  
Documents analysed.

Pre-Games documents	Post-Games documents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Get Set’ for the Games information for local businesses,</li> <li>• Gold Coast city candidate city file (City of Gold Coast, 2011)</li> <li>• Major Events (Gold Coast Commonwealth Games) Regulation 2017 (Queensland Government, 2017)</li> <li>• Forward procurement plan for the Gold Coast, 2018 Commonwealth Games™ (Queensland Government, 2014)</li> <li>• Safety and security information for visitors to Queensland (Queensland Police, ND)</li> <li>• Ahead of the Games: Evaluation report for the Gold Coast, 2018 Commonwealth Games legacy program (Queensland Government, 2017)</li> <li>• Approach to Human Rights Gold Coast, 2018 Commonwealth Games (Gold Coast, 2018 Commonwealth Games, NDb)</li> <li>• The economic impacts of the Gold Coast, 2018 Commonwealth Games (Pham et al., 2017)</li> <li>• Sustainable Sourcing Code (GOLDCO, 2016)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The economic impacts of the Gold Coast, 2018 Commonwealth Games: 2018 Post-Games Report’ (Pham et al., 2018),</li> <li>• ;Trade 2018: Gold Cost 2018 Commonwealth Games Trade and Investment Program: Evaluation Report’ (Office of the Commonwealth Games, 2018b),</li> <li>• ;Gold Coast, 2018 Commonwealth Games Post Game Report (Office of the Commonwealth Games, 2018a),</li> <li>• GC2018 Visitor Study: Gold Coast, 2018 Commonwealth Games Evaluation Report (Office of the Commonwealth Games, 2018)</li> <li>• ‘GC2018 benefits’ (City of Gold Coast, 2018).</li> </ul>



**Fig. 1.** GC2018 venues map (get set for the Games, 2017).

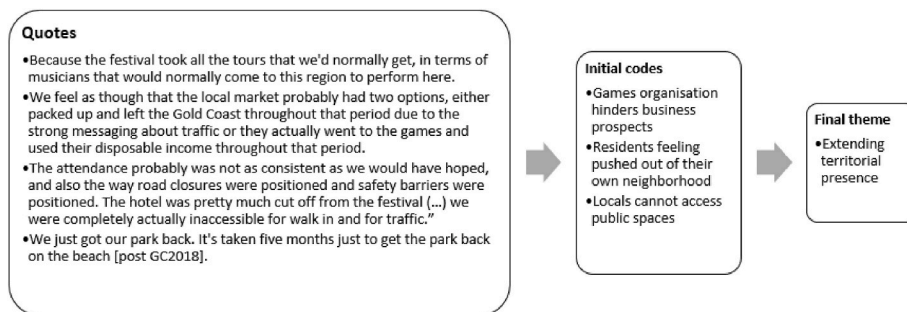


Fig. 2. Coding example.

processes during the live staging period, with a focus on the effects of GC2018 on local businesses.

Exceptional event legislation and constraint absorption.

In the Introduction, we highlighted how legal and regulatory enforcements deployed after winning the rights to host major sport events act as constraint absorption tactics to seize, control and/or extract local resources. GC2018 was a good case study for this tactic. On November 11, 2011, the Australian Commonwealth Games Association (ACGA) in partnership with the Queensland Government and the City of GoldCoast (CGC) was granted the right to host the 2018 Commonwealth Games. The Gold Coast Commonwealth Games Corporation (GOLDOC) was established on January 1, 2012 under the Commonwealth Games Arrangements Act 2011. The functions of GOLDOC were to undertake and facilitate the organisation, conduct, promotion, commercial and financial management of the Commonwealth Games, generally governing and monitoring all risks associated with the delivery of GC 2018. GOLDOC had an extensive suite of compliance obligations to the CGF, as part of the Games' delivery, which were mandated by the Host City Contract, the CGF Games manuals and the Gold Coast City Candidature File (the Bid Book). All contractual obligations were operationalised by the Candidate City Manual, which served as the key instrument enabling constraint absorption of host destination resource (Commonwealth Games Federation, 2011). For GC 2018, the Major Events (Gold Coast Commonwealth Games) Regulation 2017 was also passed, setting the boundary for the event hosting and establishing the legislative framework to legitimise the event and authorise the use of public resources for the Games (and removal of the use of public resources by the public). This regulation defined the parameters of GC2018 and classified it as a major event. It also clearly outlined the legislative powers of GOLDOC over the host environment, including what was not permissible during the period of the Games. For example, in Part 4, matters prescribed for Part 5 of the Act, it states:

Displaying posters prohibited in major event area. For section 20(6) (h) of the Act, a person must not display a poster on a property inside a major event area for the Commonwealth Games, including on the outside of a building or structure on the property.

Major event lanes. For section 38(2) of the Act, a marked lane of a road identified as a proposed major event lane in the Commonwealth Games traffic and transport management plan is declared to be a major event lane for the Commonwealth Games for the period stated for the lane in the plan.

Crucially, for the use of host destination resources, the 2017 Regulation set out a clear schedule of major event area provisions, including zones around 'competition venues' (mainly sport facilities) and 'non competition venues' (which extended to celebration sites in ancillary event spaces). The list of venues (competition and non competition) (see Fig. 3) was extensive and went some way to explain why businesses, both near and far from major sporting venues, talked of being impacted significantly by the provisions accompanying hosting the Games. Relevant to RDT was the requirement for the Queensland Government and the City of Gold Coast (CGC) to pass the necessary legislation to permit



Fig. 3. A security man guarding and restricting access to non competition venues (Author own).

competition and non-competition venues to be awarded exceptional status, meaning that zones could be created around them to prevent specific activities from taking place. Security threats, either as a result of social unrest, protest or terrorism, were used as the reason why event zones and adjacent areas were reconfigured, but the reconfiguring was also about securing the external actors' assets and revenue generating activities. This was an example of both a soft and hard power play by the event owner to legitimately (and legally) takeover host resource environments. It was a soft tactic because the event and its supporters required increased policing powers, and hard because this translated into highly visible police and military presence. This was enabled by the Police Powers and Responsibilities (Commonwealth Games) Amendment Act 2017, which extended police powers specifically for GC 2018, in alignment with the Major Events Act 2014 that facilitated all major events held in Queensland. Creating and securing special event zones also acted as a means to extend the territorial presence of the Games overlay on the host destination, transferring ownership and the ability to exploit local resources for a limited (yet often quite extensive) period of time.

Extending territorial presence.

Elsewhere, Duignan (2021) have shown how the creation of host event zones leads to a (temporary) transfer of ownership and use of urban public space to external actors in the months leading up to, and during, major events. At GC 2018, the Major Events (Gold Coast Commonwealth Games) Regulation 2017 clearly illustrated the exclusive zones created for the event, including graphs of the main areas subject to Games-time provisions. Figs. 4 and 5 illustrate these zones.

In the Broadwater Parkland major event area, the blue circle indicates the pool venue and the Gold Coast highway was closed in that section. This is the main road that runs the length of the Gold Coast. Also, an existing café (that services Broadwater patrons) was forced to shut down due to its proximity to these exclusive zones. The creation of a

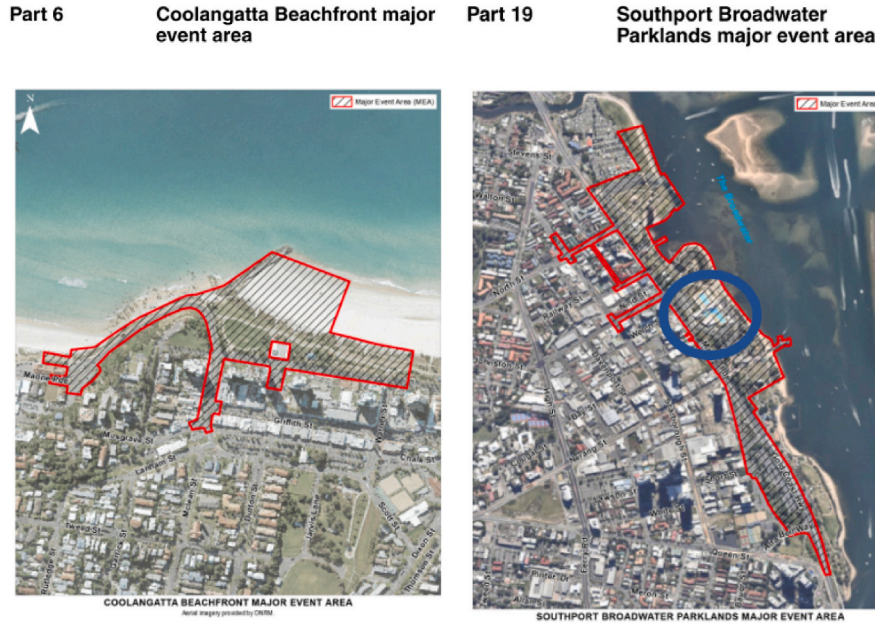


Fig. 4. (Left): Coolangatta Beachfront major event area; and Fig. 5 (right): Broadwater Parklands major event area. Source: Major Events Gold Coast Commonwealth Games Regulation, 2017.



Fig. 5. Local business advertising board during the Games.

legislative environment to transfer temporary ownership of land and spatial assets to the event owner (via GOLDOC) helped to extend the event’s territorial presence, resulting in an intensification of event takeover in the months leading up to the live staging period. In addition to the creation of exceptional event zones, other dimensions of the cityscape were also offered up as resource assets for external exploitation when major events were hosted. So, in the weeks preceding commencement of GC 2018, the city was dressed with branded regalia. Advertising space was offered up for exclusive event use, not just in the form of billboards or signs, but also extending to footpaths and urban furniture. As one business remarked:

all the footpaths had markings all over them. Someone’s done it. I don’t know who’s done it. Whether it’s council or state government or both. There’s no conversation. There’s no, “yes, it’s coming past your front door ... It’s happening in 12 months’ time or 18 months’ time” - there’s just nothing. There’s just coloured markings everywhere ... We don’t know if we’re losing footpaths, parking etc. (#5).

Interviewees expressed little knowledge of what was to come and

why they were ceding control over resources to an autonomous entity with little ability to influence plans. As the live staging period drew closer, fences, barriers, larger signage and wayfindings for Games’ zones and venues were erected as the look and feel of the host community changed to signal Games-time was approaching (Fig. 6). The event takeover included product placement of Games sponsors, and new sponsor activation sites, part of the brandscaping of local environments (Smith and Osborn, 2016) to capture the visitors’ gaze. Event zones and adjacent areas became spatially transformed as roadblocks, Games’ signage and security protocols were deployed to control visitor flows and spending toward event zones containing sponsor activation sites, Games’ sponsors and stadia. A good example was the closure of beaches, for example, erecting a volleyball arena on Coolangatta beach forced the beach to close, at least in part, for five months. Similar issues were repeatedly found across the Nerang and Currumbin areas too (see Fig. 6) as access to Currumbin beach, and its car park, was closed due to the race walk, as were various streets as Traffic Management Plans were

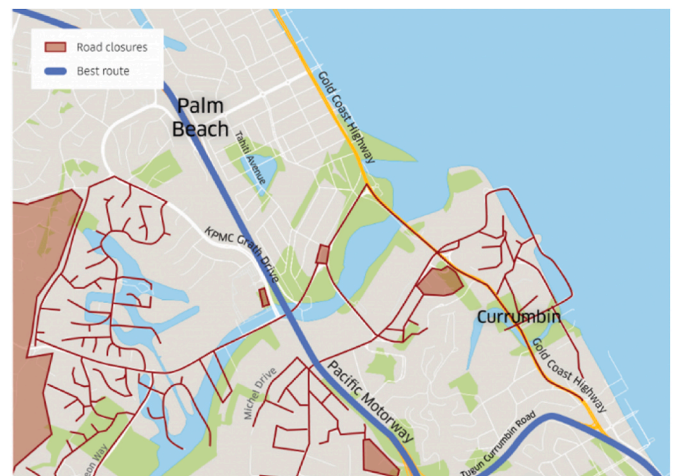


Fig. 6. One example of the extent of road closures in the Gold Coast (Uber, 2018 – see web link for all other sites affected across the Gold Coast).

designed to ensure the safety of event participants, spectators, event personnel and road users. This included road closures, changed and reduced access for road users and residents, and detoured some public transport (State of Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads, 2018).

#### 4.1. Local business loss and absence of engagement

Our interviews identified uncertainty and concern from local businesses about the Games organisers' failure to deliver on promises of benefits in the form of increased visitation and financial rewards. For example, we heard of three blocks containing local businesses being told to close in the Nerang area. Even those businesses situated just 50 m away from the main event zone, for example, 'On Fire' cafe on Broadbeach (a space containing live music, entertainment and big screens for events) reported being "50–60% down" claiming "This is the worst Easter we've ever had" (The Guardian, 2018), and:

... from a food and beverage side, we were completely disappointed (...) the attendance probably was not as consistent as we would have hoped, and also the way road closures were positioned and safety barriers were positioned. The hotel was pretty much cut off from the festival (...) we were completely, actually inaccessible for walk in and for traffic (#8)

The spatial reconfiguration of the city, with temporary event zones delineated, meant that access to public space and local resources was impacted in numerous ways. These processes and subsequent impacts have become even more significant over the past decades as events have extended their territorial presence across host destination resource environments, creating fan parks and live sites (McGillivray & Frew, 2015). At GC2018 a similar pattern emerged with the erection of temporary stadia in public areas, restricting local residents' access to these areas.

Residential areas bordering tourist hotspots were partly, or fully, closed down not just in the immediate periods in and around the live staging of the Games, but for prolonged periods afterwards too. For example, GC2018 was used as the impetus to host more events after it finished, much to the dismay of locals. One remarked that:

No public consultation was held in any way, shape, or form [for a post-GC2018 event]. They wanted to put 35,000 people on our beach. The community was just [no way] (...) we've just got our park back. It's taken five months just to get the park back on the beach (#2).

Hosting major events can represent the thin end of the wedge and can directly, or indirectly, impact on local resources for prolonged periods of time. As Smith and McGillivray (2020) showed, major sport events can help normalise the use of urban public spaces as event venues of the future and represent a Trojan Horse, producing the conditions for changes to urban environments that would otherwise be difficult to implement.

Another key theme related to resource transfer was the financial resources that local businesses wasted in planning for the Games-time bonanza. Businesses talked about additional investment in increased staff and stock to serve customer demand. However, because event zoning and securitisation processes directed spectators and visitors to official competition and non-competition venues, local businesses reported significant financial losses before, during and after Games time:

you've got to factor in the added costs. We haven't analyzed that as yet but when you think about that period of time leading up to the Games, the resources devoted to planning, risk mitigation, all of the things that we were told to do (#1).

Businesses reported reductions in footfall before and during the events because of media reports urging visitors without a ticket to avoid local areas in and around the Games' event zones (e.g. The Guardian,

2020; ABC, 2018). The regular conveyor belt of local residents, would-be domestic visitors and international tourists were displaced:

Our members just steered away from us for that period of time due to road closures and that type of stuff (#1)

Businesses on the Coast suffered badly (...) people were scared to come so they stayed away (...) the organization let quite a lot of local businesses down (#9).

In our business, it's a loss of income for not only the two weeks, but it was the lead up as well and then after, it just didn't recover for probably two months ... nobody else has ever heard that story from me, how hard it's hit, except our own family (#10)

they [local businesses] were led to believe that they were going to be rolling in people and business. People spending money, whether it's in restaurants or whatever (#3).

The failure to translate rhetorical statements about business benefits into practice is closely tied to the idea of resource dependence. The legal and contractual models that govern major events reinforce the transfer of commercial benefit from host destinations to event owners and their partners. Moreover, the formation of an organising committee with a clear focus on Games delivery, as opposed to long term legacy, also contributes to short term thinking and maximising the generation of revenues for external partners. GOLDOC was judged on the success of the event, not the financial accounts of local businesses. Businesses reported that the temporary nature of the organising committee and its separation from local political and economic processes generated frustration. Making decisions from afar, unaware of the implications for local neighbourhoods or businesses, produced skewed decision making. One business remarked, "we had so many decisions impacting on us made by organisers residing in headquarters in Brisbane". That's where local people got lost. And the ability to connect locally didn't happen at the beginning." (#11). Building on this point, there was a belief among the interviewees that local business representative organisations were left out of the consultation processes, exacerbating the problems:

Basically, the whole team at Surfers Paradise Alliance is events managers. Getting liquor licenses, and putting up pop-up bars, and dealing with sponsors. Broadbeach Alliance is exactly the same. They know how-to put-on events that maximise foot traffic for their trader s [...] those specific people in those organisations who run those events were not engaged in providing any advice for how those events should roll out in the precincts (#6).

Because host destination resources are transferred to external agents, local imperatives are often overlooked when major sport events are staged. The host community may have fora where they can come together and discuss opportunities and challenges, but our interviewees expressed frustration at their inability to secure change. This was reflected by one business who described the event's operational delivery as "to be honest, it was a juggernaut that was going somewhere, and the ability to change anything on the juggernaut was very limited." (#11). The fallout from a lack of meaningful engagement and ownership locally, is that major sport events, by seizing, controlling and/or extracting local host destination resource, often leave a bitter taste in the mouths of those who are negatively impacted. This leads to a general view that hosting is not worth it, and that the Games are unsustainable investments that do more harm than good to local communities. Our interviewees expressed concerns over the legacy of the event and whether it would continue to be a drain on resources, particularly the upkeep of venues and facilities:

It just gives a flip to infrastructure and real estate, but that's all artificial I would say. It's not something that goes on for long. I mean for example we made this monument, Commonwealth village, next to Griffith University. I don't know what the purpose of that would be and what impact will it have on real estate [...] And when I say money could have gone into something more useful, you know there are, I do not know. Something like creating an industry park or, you know,



something that will be long lasting.” (#4).

There is an increasingly widespread question that emerges after major sport events as to whether such events contribute effectively to sustainable urban planning and economic policy, and whether or not they can be considered to represent a wise use of taxpayer money. Because the events cease to exist after delivery, there is no longer-term stake in the interests of the destination. Therefore, external stakeholders to the destinations (e.g., event owners) can enforce projects on host destinations with little knowledge of the local environment and shake things up. The transient nature of external stakeholders temporarily descending on a host destination can lead to a lack of accountability, and this is part of the soft power play that enables harder power plays also to be implemented, as echoed by one business:

... it [GOLDOC] doesn't exist now. Last Friday, there is nothing. It's gone. Anything that was documented has gone into the ether; ... no one has anything now, related to GOLDOC. Last Friday the last person walked out of the door, they pulled the plug and there's not a contact detail, there's not a person that's custodian of information. Nothing. And so, this organisation started whatever, eight years ago or something like that, does not exist. Nothing to do with it exists now. Today (#11).

The overarching theme is that host destination resource dependence goes beyond simple spatial implications to include resource implications that are greater than expected.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

In this article, we have examined the complex resourcing relationships between major sport events, well-developed tourist destinations and host destination resource environments. We have applied and extended an RDT perspective and associated concepts to explain how and why major sport events deploy *constraint absorption* (hard power) and *co-optation* (soft power) tactics to render host-resources under internal control. We have argued that managers do this to reduce dependence, lower organisational uncertainty and minimise the risk of failure, irrespective of the local disruption caused. Our findings illustrate how the event owners and local organising structures achieve this by deploying a series of soft and hard power play tactics to seize, extract and/or control the host destination's resources. Throughout, we argue that major events, like parasites, only survive by extracting resources from their hosts using specific techniques. The resources extracted are those required to operationally deliver a contemporary, major sport event and its business model. But the business model often drains, or negatively impacts, existing local social-economic activity, leaving limited residual, host community benefits.

The governance and contractual arrangements put in place for peripatetic sport events seek to bring external resources situated across host destination resource environments under internal organisational control, if only temporarily. This is deemed necessary because event owners (e.g., CGF) possess scarce internal resources relative to those they must secure externally to deliver a spectacular and profitable event. To do this, two tactics associated with RDT are deployed at various levels and over varying time periods: i) co-optation, and ii) constraint absorption. We have demonstrated how event owners create structures with contractual weight that are situated in a host's governance network to influence decision making, and how these dynamics are used to encourage hosts to plan the event and to increase the likelihood of host resource munificence. However, these softer power plays are often ineffective, necessitating the deployment of harder, more coercive tactics, to secure the resources required to operationalise the event's complex logistical demands and achieve ambitious social and economic development objectives.

We refute one of the central propositions of RDT that resource ownership and control is *not* necessary as the basis of power (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). There are two specific lines of argument to support this contention. First, whereas RDT posits that 'A's (host) power over 'B' (event awarding body) is equal to B's dependence on A's resource, in the

complex major sport event and host resourcing relationship, this is not entirely accurate. That is because the event owner's soft and hard power play tactics, specifically constraint absorption (e.g. legal and regulatory exceptionality) and co-optation (e.g. embedded external-internal coalition formation), enable unilateral seizure, extraction and/or control of host destination resources in a way that is rarely seen in other contexts. Local land, infrastructure and real estate resources are swiftly secured and dissent depoliticised or quashed, with little meaningful two-way dialogue between event and local-host stakeholders. The local state is recast as an enabler of resource transfer, providing the conditions for events owners and their corporate partners to extract surplus value. Host resource munificent is seldom required and by no means the only tactic that organisers rely on to secure the necessary resources. The event owner, (B), initially possessing scarce resources and highly dependent on host resource environments, swiftly gains control over the host's (A) resource by deploying soft and hard tactics. Interestingly, now RDT's central proposition, albeit initially refuted, appears to be more accurate: B (the event owner) renders the initial resource owner and controller 'A' relatively powerless once ownership and/or control of host destination resource is secured.

As well as refuting RDT's *resource as a basis of power* proposition, we also challenge the idea that organisations who engage in resourcing relationships typically do so by seeking win-win, mutually reinforcing, resourcing arrangements to sustain positive long-term relationships. Indeed, when considered in the context of GC2018 we suggest that the power play tactics deployed by the event owner subjected local business stakeholders to negative impacts as part of the collateral damage that emerged from the event planning and staging. The disruptions and displacements detailed in the findings section of this paper illustrate how resourcing relationships can be conceived of as a win (for organisers and supporters of the event) and a loss (for those seeking to secure business benefits). This finding echoes Malatesta and Smith's (2014) argument that we often misconstrue the resource-power relationship between organisations as we do not always not fully consider the situational and relational dynamics occurring at the local level. This counter *win-lose* argument is a key finding of this article.

Developing the win-lose argument, we characterise the major sport event host resourcing relationship as having a self-referential nature. Neoliberal projects, particularly exogenous shocks like major sport events, require a market-oriented host to willingly cede ownership or control of internal resource and engage in host resource munificence. To win, hosts voluntarily accept that they have to temporarily cede control of their host destination resources, protecting and policing them for external actors so that the latter (e.g. the CGF) can extract value without interference. This is, of course, aligned with neo-liberal urban policies, whereby the corporate partners are attracted by the allure of low taxation, subsidy and captive audiences, on the basis that investment begets investment. Short term hits provide the basis of long-term rewards.

The application of RDT to major sport events provides a new and useful contribution to the literature. Although there has been some high-quality, empirical work examining resourcing challenges in the context of sporting events, most of it has been highly descriptive or authors have used other non-resource theory related conceptual frameworks to study similar phenomena. Applying RDT offers profitable, conceptual avenues and linguistic structure (i.e., a set of concepts, terms and labels) to explain complex event-host resourcing relationships. This study offers a practical example of these relationships in a specific event case study setting, that of GC 2018. Although in this study these ideas have been applied to the context of major sport events, there is a need for scholars to apply, test and refute propositions related to smaller, and recurring, events too. All events, large or small, engage in resourcing relationships with host environments. However, the context of major sport events is an ideal environment to apply, test and refute the central propositions of RDT due to the complexity of resourcing requirements that such events entail. Indeed, testing RDT in a new empirical context directly responds to Pfeffer and Salancik's (2003) call to do so. This work opens up new

ways for scholars to utilise RDT as a useful theoretical framework, whilst encouraging RDT theorists to consider events as valuable, organisationally-complex incubators ideal for testing, refuting, supporting and extending, conceptually, key tenants of RDT.

We also believe there is merit in extending the use of RDT as a means of analysing major or mega sport events, with three key priorities being: i) arming local-host communities with the skills and information required to resist seizure, extraction and/or control of local-host resource; ii) utilising the idea of public ownership and control to increase community stakeholder salience; and iii) conceptually and practically disaggregating particular local-host community social groups specifically to help assess local interests.

First, we suggest a need for research that better understands how, across host destination environments, local communities and social groups can leverage the idea of public ownership to resist the seizure, extractions and/or control of local host resources. This research should examine how local communities can appropriately protest, resist and dissent at a local level, and at what time in the major event lifecycle this is most effective. At the moment, due to the power play tactics deployed by the event owners, we have demonstrated that there is an uneven playing field that needs to be equalised. Second, we suggest future research should look at how organisers and host governments (at a regional, national or international level) could award stakeholder salience as a result of recognising that local communities should commonly own public space, particularly commons land [to contrast the easy seizure, extraction and/or control enabled by the hosting of events]. Finally, our argument calls for greater nuance and disentangling of who, in various contexts, constitutes the host community present across host resource environments. This is important as this is a limitation of this article, as we take a pan-geographical case study and stakeholder perspective to help make broader conceptual points. However, we suggest the next phase of research should delve deeper into one specific geographical case study and stakeholder perspective to apply, test and/or refute the conceptual points made within this article by examining the locally situated implications of event and host resourcing relationships. Some of these may include, residential communities (e.g., estate, housing district), business and commercial zones (e.g., high streets, town centres), vulnerable social groups (e.g., penurious, deprived or homeless communities), bounded geographical areas or spaces (e.g., designated Olympic districts or suburbs), specific tourist hotspots (e.g., public parks, beach fronts, entertainment districts), or entire industries (e.g., tourism, hospitality, events industries).

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