INTRODUCTION

The density and diversity of urban populations has long been understood to provide a context for the expression of various forms of collective behavior in the public spaces of cities (Mumford 1961; Lofland 1998; Castells 1983; Jukes 1990; Jacobs 1961). From street festivals, parades, and pilgrimages to riots, marches of resistance, and demonstrations, such expressive and instrumental activities have been among the most observable aspects of urban social life. Juxtaposed next to more spontaneous behavior supported by large urban agglomerations were large planned gatherings of people for religious, sporting, or political purposes in cathedrals, coliseums, or state buildings. Special events provided occasions for celebration, commemoration, or declaration as emotions intensified, generating excitement that altered the daily routines of urban dwellers. Even special market days could draw crowds to specified locations in a congested city in a manner that altered the nature of urban living. Cities and their public spaces have always provided an environment for a wide range of special events that changed the daily rhythm of city life (Whyte 1980).
In the contemporary era, cities continue to be centers for special events that draw people like magnets from within the city as well as beyond. Some special events are primarily local, whereas others are deliberately planned to attract non-residents, such as festivals, major sporting events, or conferences (Getz 1997). Some events are a regular part of city life (e.g., taking place annually) while others are one-time events specially awarded to a city. Given the process of globalization (Sassen 1991), some special events have become so significant, as a result of either widespread recognition or perceptions of their meaning and impact, that cities have actually engaged in competitions with other cities in a "bid" process to host these events. The larger the event as measured by the number of participants, the extent of media exposure, the potential revenue generation, and the international nature of the event, the more likely that cities will pursue the event as desirable (Zukin 1995).

THE CONCEPT OF MEGA-EVENT IN URBAN PERSPECTIVE

When a special event is a short-term, one-time, high profile event hosted by a city, it is referred to as a mega-event. The high profile nature of the event is related not only to some form of international or large-scale participation but specifically to the fact that in some significant sense, the mass media carries the event to the world. A special event habitually hosted by a city on a fixed time schedule (such as festivals or exhibitions) may attempt to draw international visitors, but it has become part of the rhythm and identity of that particular city (Getz 1997, p. 8). In contrast, a mega-event rotates among cities, occurs intermittently (which presumably heightens its importance), and generates intense global media exposure specifically for the duration of the event. A mega-event is normally sponsored by a body outside of the city or country in which the event is hosted that establishes the parameters and ground rules for the event. Thus, in an important way, ultimate control of the mega-event does not rest with the host city, which is increasingly expected to provide guarantees and comply with other rules and timelines set by the sponsoring body. The awarding of a mega-event to a city is often contingent on the city meeting these external obligations in relation to a fixed date, which creates a sense of urgency that is not always conducive to urban democratic processes and established long-term planning goals.

The best illustrations of mega-events are World's Fairs (expositions) and the Olympics (Allan 1997; Benedict 1983; de Lange 1998). World's Fairs are organized by the Bureau of International Exhibitions, and the Olympics are controlled by the International Olympic Committee. Both organizations establish event requirements which host cities must follow and create competitiveness between bidding cities as a leveraging device to ensure that the event secures the most favorable terms from the host city and from different levels of government. There are other sporting events of an international nature, such as the World Cup in soccer or the World Track and Field Championships, but in most cases they use preexisting facilities or they do not command the same media focus. World conferences of global organizations can also be considered mega-events to some host cities (Hiller 1995), but again, they do not have the same global impact as expositions or Olympics.

From an urban point of view, the most important thing about a mega-event is that its size, scale, and special requirements typically require the construction of new facilities and amenities that transform the urban environment in some way. Furthermore, the urgency of a fixed-date event usually requires a compact preparation period and a reprioritization of the urban agenda. Cities may use the mega-event as an occasion to make public-sector improvements such as infrastructure changes (e.g., rapid transit, new or improved freeways), build new facilities (e.g., stadiums, convention/exhibition halls) to accommodate the event, or make private-sector additions in hotels and restaurants supporting the tourist industry. In short, in contrast to other special events having much lower profiles and more restricted budgets, the mega-event serves as a catalyst for significant alterations to the urban environment. Often, mega-events provide signature structures for the urban landscape (e.g., the Crystal Palace in London, Olympic Stadium in Montreal, or Space Needle in Seattle) and prompt the mobilization of public-sector and private-sector capital investment which would not have occurred in the same fashion under normal circumstances. While the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles is an exception because it largely made use of existing facilities, mega-events become highly politicized, particularly because they typically require considerable public-sector funding in preparation for the event.

From the perspective of an urban analyst, any large-scale special event can be considered a mega-event if it has a significant and/or permanent urban effect—that is, if it is considered so significant that it reprioritizes the urban agenda in some way and leads to some modification or alteration of urban space which becomes its urban legacy. So, for example, the Commonwealth Games do not approach the impact of the Olympics in terms of media exposure, but because Kuala Lumpur used the 1998 Games to build new structures and to make some infrastructural improvements, there is an urban impact which can be assessed. In addition to transformations of the built environment, it is possible that there are also temporary or permanent urban effects of a more psycho-social nature, such as the generation of urban pride or the place marketing of a city for economic purposes, but those impacts are not discussed in this paper.

A special event becomes a mega-event for a city when it intervenes in the normal functioning of the city to mobilize resources for event preparation and event hosting. Such action is predicated on the belief that the event showcases the city on the global stage and that the reputation of the city is in some way at stake (Hiller 1989). While there are variations in the extent to which a particular mega-event may place the city on the world stage, the more media coverage which a
mega-event is thought to generate, the more the event becomes a justification for larger expenditures and greater change (including that of a cosmetic nature). Similarly, the greater the media exposure, the greater the likelihood that the event and its media coverage also can be sold to corporate sponsors (Crompton 1994; Cunningham and Taylor 1995). This socialization of the event can lead to some revenue-sharing in which the host city may be a beneficiary. The best case in point is the contemporary Olympics, in which the sale of media rights by the International Olympic Committee yields U.S.$600 million or more to the local organizing committee. Not all of these funds are used to transform the host city, but it is clear that such a financial motherlode has elevated interest in hosting the Olympics for many more cities. It was no wonder that after the financial debacle of the Montreal Olympics, no city wanted to host the next summer games, but since media (particularly television) rights have become so lucrative, bidding for the 2004 Games, which was decided in 1997, involved a record 11 cities. Thus, the greater the actual global impact of the event, the more likely that the mega-events will mobilize urban resources in a manner that will lead to some kind of urban transformation.

MEGA-EVENTS AND EXISTING MODELS OF URBAN ANALYSIS

The analysis of mega-events has been largely missing from the urban literature, partially because, historically, mega-events were limited to a few dominant cities (e.g., London, Paris, New York, Chicago) that hosted these unique events, which were better understood as reflections of the broader processes of industrialism and capitalism than of internal factors to a specific city (Benedict 1983). In the contemporary era, a whole new range of cities has discovered mega-events and used them as mechanisms to advance their interests in a world shrinked by the process of globalization (Macintosh and Hawes 1992). Seldom have mega-events been understood as phenomenon in their own host urban context, as reflecting the urban dynamics within the host city. Instead, the focus has been on their broader global meanings and significance. This paper presents the argument that mega-events must be interpreted not only as reflecting the broad processes of urbanism but also as being both actors and products in specific urban environments, and as playing a role in initiating internal change as well as participating in the dynamics of change within the city.

Each of the dominant paradigms in urban sociology has the potential to be relevant in such an analysis. The political economy paradigm represented the first attempt to relate social processes to spatial factors and was most prominent before the late 1960s (Logan, Whaley, and Crowder 1997). Mega-events of the order which are discussed here always represent incursions into urban space and often set in motion processes such as invasion and succession. To the extent that cities can be defined as systems, the infrastructural requirements of mega-events produce effects on the urban region that potentially alter or rearrange existing patterns. The fact that urban ecologists largely ignored mega-events as an object of analysis was probably due more to a perception of their special case status than to an assessment that the events did not fit their analytical perspective. It is also possible that these events could have been considered merely one of many mechanisms producing urban adaptation and change.

The political economy paradigm of the new urban sociology (Gottdeiner and Peig 1988) is relevant at two levels. First, it links the mega-event to policies of the state (whether national or municipal) and understands the mega-event in relation to capital accumulation and the need for investments as well as the internationalization of capital. Second, it points to the role played by urban elites, who use the mega-event to promote private-sector interests in the internal rearrangement of urban space and in the reprioritization of the urban agenda. The unevenness of benefits and costs of the mega-event in relation to different urban social groups alters the supposed "naturalness" of internal change to a focus on power relations involving displacement or opposition.

The "growth machine" paradigm builds upon political economy and is particularly useful in linking mega-events with pro-growth coalitions working at the local level (Logan, Whaley, and Crowder 1997). Logan and Molotch (1987) were instrumental in developing a sociology of urban space through their emphasis on the concept of land as a commodity and their distinction between use value and exchange value. The assumption was not only that a coherent coalition of elites had a vision for the city but also that this vision coincided with their own interests and power roles. Regime theory (Stone 1993; Kantor, Savitch, and Haddock 1997) added a different dimension by focusing on local decision making as political action and on the coalitions created, which induced cooperation between the public and private sectors and emphasized the role of agency in urban outcomes.

The new urban political economy was able to better understand the dynamics of social processes and urban space because it more clearly identified the role of human action (Walton 1993, p. 314). Since mega-events are always the result of initiatives taken by urban elites or elite fragments as pro-growth coalitions, urban political economy has great potential in their analysis. Furthermore, since mega-event site and infrastructural requirements are usually substantial, a restructing of urban space usually occurs, at least to some degree, and this supports the need for an evaluation of the social consequences. Critiques of mega-events usually focus on the role of public funds and indebtedness in relation to select circuits of profit-making, while hiding negative outcomes with public delusions of grandeur (Craik 1989). The fact that mega-events are increasingly being sought by cities in support of pro-growth ideologies amid debates about uncontrolled costs and declarations of civic pride and success suggests that mega-events must be understood as an increasingly important urban phenomenon of our time. In short, while mega-events are unique one-time urban events, their increasing prevalence as an urban...
It is possible, however, that the structures especially built for the mega-event can become tourist attractions in themselves into the future and thereby support urban tourism. For example, the gigantic Olympic Speed Skating Oval built for the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics is one of only two indoor, covered speed skating ovals in the world and, because of its sheer size, has become a tourist stop with accompanying plaques and commemorative tributes. Tourists seldom come to a former mega-event city just to see its structures, but while they are there, the structures may become one of the pantheon of things to do while in the city. I will return to this theme of the role of mega-event structural legacies in relation to the commodification of urban leisure later.

MEGA-EVENTS AND PLACE MARKETING

It is not until recently (1990s) that there has developed a growing awareness that mega-events must be understood within their urban contexts. Analysts working within the tourism tradition indeed have made scattered observations about the urban impact of mega-events. One of the more dominant themes has been the role of mega-events as image makers for a city to either promote inward investment or promote tourism as a form of inter-urban competition or urban entrepreneurialism (Hall 1997). Ascendant cities, as opposed to older established and dominant cities (such as London or New York), are now particularly interested in the role which a mega-event can play in enhancing their growth or consolidating their preeminence regionally if not globally (Hiller 1997; Bennett 1991; Wamsley and Heine 1996). The mega-event represents an imaging strategy for place marketing in order to obtain interurban competitive advantage (Whitson and Macintosh 1996). The place marketing of cities has also been considered by economic elites to have internal advantages in selling a city as a cultural resource for gain, and as a mechanism of social control to engineer consensus among residents by all elites (Kearns and Philo 1993).

Kotler, Haider, and Rein (1993) have pointed out that cities that go through growth-and-decline cycles and experience external shocks from technological changes, and that because the transformation from self-contained national economies to the global economy affects cities in ways beyond their control, the need for place marketing is a critical strategy. So, both declining cities and ascendant cities focus on place marketing in order to expand their pools of business visitors and tourists, attract new businesses, help existing businesses expand, and enlarge their export markets. The defeat of Athens by Atlanta in the competition to host the 1996 100th anniversary Olympics (of particular importance to Greece) was a direct result of place marketing involving two powerful Atlanta-based corporations, Coca-Cola and CNN (Kotler, Haider, and Rein 1993, p. 131) in conjunction with other urban boosters wanting to promote Atlanta as the “next great international city” in what Rutheiser (1996, 1997) has called “imagineering.” Even cities
with a tired old industrial image (e.g., Manchester—see Roche 1994) have attempted to use mega-events to transform their images. The Manchester 2000 Olympic bid explicitly linked the proposed mega-event to urban renewal by identifying the event as the “Regeneration Games” (Cochrane, Peck, and Tickell 1996).

The focus on image for economic advantage leads to a more careful focus on mega-event advocates and promoters. After all, the decision to bid for and host mega-events is in many ways a political decision in which interest groups/élites become convinced of the importance of the project and then seek to obtain large-scale support. Working within political economy, Hall (1992, 1994; Hall and Jenkins 1995) has pointed out that mega-events support both profit-making and the self-aggrandizement of élitists, in which it is assumed that the mega-event is of benefit to all urban residents when the disadvantaged and powerless may have little to gain and much to lose. The question of who promotes mega-events and why requires further research, but it is clear that the assumption that mega-events benefit or are supported by all urban residents because economic growth is necessarily good for all or that trickle-down benefits will reach them, is overstated. The commodification of expositions and the elite nature of Olympic sport, with its high performance athletes and corporate sponsors, tend to detract from the notion that mega-events are akin to general public festivals. They do represent special interests, but what needs to be pointed out here is that these interests are not directly related just to the profit potential of the event but also to the broader role which the event plays in place marketing the city.

MEGA-EVENTS, URBAN RENewAL, AND LEISURE COMMODIFICATION

When mega-event analysts have focused on urban factors, then, the first point to be discussed here is how the mega-event can be related to marketing, imaging, or reimagining a city for interurban competitive (largely economic) advantage (Paddison 1993). The second point situates the mega-event into urban renewal strategies. In fact, the most commonly recognized role which mega-events play in relation to the built environment of cities is the transformation of space from uses considered obsolete and decaying structures and the activities associated with them—most typically, in the inner city. The shift from the industrial city to the postindustrial city has played a key role in precipitating such initiatives from the United Kingdom (Hughes 1993; Roche 1992). The decline of old industrial cities such as Birmingham (1992 and 1996 Olympic bids), Manchester (1996 and 2000 Olympic bids), and Sheffield (1991 World Student Games) not only meant that the mega-event could become a place marketing initiative but that it could potentially play a role in the transformation of the built environment, including improving its aging infrastructure (Roche 1994).

The lands selected for mega-event sites are most often central city locations with either obsolete uses or in advanced states of deterioration. (One notable exception was the 1980 Moscow Olympics, where the intent was to restrict downtown growth, so all event sites were built at the city’s periphery, including the Olympic Village; see Gordon 1983, p. 156). Mega-event organizers have learned that unoccupied nonresidential property is likely to generate the least resistance and controversy for what would amount to an urban renewal project because mega-events require large tracts of land for new structures. However, this is not always available, and displacement may occur. Even when the main site itself is either unoccupied or industrial, residual effects may occur on adjacent land that lead to displacement. Olds (1998), for example, has demonstrated how Expo ’86 in Vancouver led to evictions in the Downtown Eastside community along the boundaries of the northern and eastern Expo site. The fact that the residents were poor and living in rooming houses and residential hotels, whose space was planned for upgrading to take advantage of the lucrative tourist trade prompted by the mega-event, fostered redevelopment and evictions. The gentrification of adjacent mega-event property (Homebush Bay) has also occurred in Sydney’s “rust belt” of industrial sites and working-class dwellings in what is known as the Olympic Corridor (Bounds 1996). Rutheiser (1996, 1997) found that the 1996 Atlanta Olympics was originally conceived as an initiator for inner city redevelopment. Yet, in the end, Olympic organizers excluded much of the inner city by only improving space “inside the fence” of Olympic venues. Clearly, the mega-event can play a role in the transformation of undervalued property and the replacement of activity and populations of a different social class. Land adjacent to a mega-event site almost always undergoes significant capital appreciation.

Because the physical structures required for mega-events must of necessity be built adjacent to major traffic arterials and/or rapid transit lines, and because proximity to other services is also vital, central city locations are preferred over distant suburbs. As noted above, this virtually assures that the mega-event site will be linked to some form of reclamation or renewal. One of the key developments of the postindustrial or postmodern city is the revitalization of the city through gentrification, leisure, and entertainment (Hannigan 1995; Harvey 1989). The emphasis on the urbanite as consumer in market-based landscapes of spaces of pleasure and cultural production is clearly transforming city centers from the way we once knew them (Zukin 1991; Hannigan 1998). Much has been written about the role of Expositions in the celebration of consumerism, capitalism, and technological progress (e.g., Benedict 1983), but now that leisure and entertainment have become increasingly commodified, central city space increasingly reflects structures that serve as urban entertainment centers (Sorkin 1992) or urban entertainment districts (UEDs) to produce what Hannigan (1998) has called “fantasy city” or what Ley (1996:298) calls “the convivial city.” This activity is directed not only at urban residents but also at tourists. In fact, urban tourism as commercial activity arose as direct response
to urban industrial decline (Law 1993). In this case, what the urban touristic encounters is not really the city but its consumer icons, which presumably entertain the tourist with waves of pleasurable experiences.

In many ways, the mega-event itself fits this objective of commodified leisure (Roche 1992, 1994). It represents a sort of Disneyfied experience nicely packaged for its entertainment value and offering multiple consumer opportunities (Zukin 1995). Even events like the Olympics bring with them cultural festivals, heightened street activity, and all kinds of nonathletic entertainment in a festival or party atmosphere (Hiller 1990). There may be status-enhancing value for both residents and tourists in attending the event. Commemorative souvenirs and various trinkets are sold in large numbers. Pin trading is a major component of Olympic street activity (Horna and Olmsted 1989). Fragments of international cultures are presented for their entertainment value and simulations of these cultures are always a part of exposition sites (Craik 1989, p. 101).

Mega-events are also dramatizations of power or desired power both for host cities and for the forces of production that stand behind the event. If the first World’s Fair in 1851 dramatized the ideals of industrial capitalism of production and consumption, a process which continues to this day (Benedict 1983, p. 2), then the corporate sponsorships of the modern Olympics schools populations with the same objectives—either overtly or more subtly (Jennings 1996). Notwithstanding the international nature of the mega-event, the role of the mega-event in the commodification of leisure is particularly noteworthy at the local level. For example, the 1988 Exposition in Brisbane, Australia, drew about 80% of its attendees from the local area (Craik 1989, p. 103; Bennett 1991, p. 32), a not-unusual percentage that demonstrates the heavy reliance on local consumerist patronage. In that sense, the Brisbane Expo could be considered primarily a sixmonth carnival of commodified leisure for urban residents, many of whom made multiple visits to the site.

Since the mega-event itself is of restricted duration, it is not just the event which must be analyzed for its broader cultural meanings but what role the event plays in the urban processes of specific cities. For example, what are the postevent uses of the facilities constructed? It is here that we see the role which mega-events play in the transformation of urban space for leisure consumption, in what Mullins (1991) has called “consumption compounds.” Montreal provides an interesting example as it hosted both the 1967 Expo and the 1976 Olympics. The Expo site now houses an amusement park called La Ronde, the former U.S. pavilion (a spectacular Buckminster Fuller geodesic dome) is now a tourist/educational environmental display called Biosphere, and the former French pavilion is a casino. The main Olympic site is now called Montreal Olympic Park. The Olympic Stadium not only hosts athletic and musical events now but has a glassed cable car ride to the top of the “world’s tallest inclined tower” as a visitor attraction. Other transformations of Olympic-built structures on the site, which draws 3.2 million visitors a year, include a Biodome, Insectarium, theater, museum, and sports cen-

The mega-event is not just something that happens at a particular point in time from which we can measure its economic effects (as most typically assumed in the tourism models) but is something that must be understood in its urban context longitudinally. A linkage model can be utilized that disaggregates the different elements of the event as both dependent and independent variables (Hiller 1998). A forward linkage points out how the event itself is the cause of effects. The mega-event may create employment, improve roads, increase tourism, or change the built form of a site. Some effects may be quantifiable, while other effects (e.g., community pride) may not be, but the end results are all attributable to the event, whether viewed positively or negatively. Backward linkages refer to the background objectives or interests that stand behind the event. They may provide the

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**MEGA-EVENTS AS URBAN INTERVENTIONS**

Mega-events are high priority events which intervene in normal urban processes by requiring site preparation and large-scale mobilization of resources to facilitate them. While there is some sense that the mega-event is embraced by the metropolitan region, it is primarily site-specific. Thus, site selection itself is a reflection of urban dynamics which is contestable or which represents power relationships within the city. The prior question of which groups have even placed the mega-event on the urban agenda is also important, but once the event is adopted and the bid accepted, the mega-event becomes an intrusion on existing space which is transformed by the event. We have already seen that even space peripheral to the site may be transformed, so the site and its periphery must be viewed as a location of conflicting interests. How the site is transformed is also debatable because of postevent and cost implications, often involving public funds. Infrastructural improvements, access changes, amenity legacies, and structural additions are all consequences of human decisions that have urban consequences. Therefore, the focus proposed here is not so much on the macro questions of what this transformation represents in the evolution of human settlements but on how mega-events alter urban processes. For example, the decision that a city makes about where it will site the mega-event has urban implications. In addition, how the site is developed has long-term consequences for the city.

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The three phases in the evolution of a mega-event can be identified as preevent, event, and postevent, and these will be analyzed in terms of their urban meaning. The primary actors in this process are event advocates, event organizers, the urban economic elite consisting of land owners and corporate leaders, civic leaders and city planners, the host urban community at large, and local communities. The process from bidding to implementation, to hosting and the event aftermath involves building a support base of coalitions from among these interest groups that will not only ensure a successful event but will produce urban changes consonant with the background linkages and rationales for the event.

The Phases in a Longitudinal Analysis

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Phase 1: Preevent

The preevent phase for a mega-event is essentially a planning phase and, of necessity, involves urban planning from site selection to transportation issues to housing. It is divided into two components: bidding and preparation. If the bid is not successful then, of course, the preparation component does not occur. However, competitive bidding forces a bid city to articulate more precisely than ever all aspects of the bid plan, and it must be shown how the bid plan deals with the event requirements laid out by the sponsor. In other words, there is an enormous amount of planning that must be represented in the bid plan and which is specified in the bid book (for the Olympics, it is called the candidature file). This involves not only financial matters but also a site development plan, and is often contained in multiple volumes. Presumably, the bid selection decision is based on this plan, though ultimately, it is clear that the decision is primarily political. Nevertheless, achieving serious consideration in the final bid decision is dependent on having a clear plan for how the mega-event would be situated and accommodated within the host city. Some fine-tuning occurs in the preparation period, but the general outlines of the plan in terms of urban siting are normally determined in the bid period.

Mega-event planning is top-down planning. Just as the idea to bid is itself normally an idea of an elite group that then tries to sell the idea to other elites and urban residents at large, so is mega-event planning the specification of a design plan (sometimes with site alternatives) for how the city could accommodate the event to which citizens will be given an opportunity to react. The idea of citizen participation is, then, primarily merely responding to a plan conceived by others, and community hearings often become information sessions where planners impart the rationale and nature of the plan rather than deal with basic questions about whether the community even wants the event in their area—for example, the Cape Town 2004 Olympic bid (Hiller forthcoming) or the Sheffield 1991 World Student Games bid (Roche 1994). Since the foundation of the plan is laid in the bid phase, there is always a tendency for urban residents to see the exercise as only hypothetical and, therefore, not to take it seriously. When citizens do take it seriously, it can be countered that this is only an early plan. But the problem is that, when and if the bid is successful, something conceived by others as only a conceptual idea takes on a life of its own as the plan. Once a city wins the bid, then, of course, fast track planning and implementation goes into effect, because now the timelines for preparation are fixed, and little time can be wasted on controversy and consultation. Thus, mega-events present all kinds of dilemmas for urban planners and host communities alike. The sociology of bid planning and event preparation is something requiring more careful analysis.

In some ways, this may appear to be little different from any other urban development proposal (e.g., a regional shopping mall), but the difference with a mega-event is that the event itself has prestige, urgency, and a sense of external obligation that often leads politicians and organizers to subvert normal planning proce-
duced (e.g., zoning laws, appeals, etc.; see Hiller and Moylan 1999). The scale of
the urban space required for the mega-event is also significant. Expo 1986 in Van-
couver, for instance, began the massive redevelopment of the False Creek area
from a domed stadium to offices, retail and so on, and housing but also prompted
a rapid transit system, convention center, and pier development (Gutstein 1986).

Phase 2: Event

The event itself creates its own urban dynamics. Visitors/participants become
consumers of the commodifications of local culture, and increased demand may
lead to price rises in stores, restaurants, and hotels. Rental accomodations may
become scarce or rents may soar as the event draws event officials, preparation
crews, international delegates, and media entourage to live in the community for
a longer period of time. Displacement, gentrification, and loss of low income
housing may occur to accomodate event housing demands (Hall and Hodges
1996). Community residents may experience increased noise levels or traffic con-
gestion (e.g., the Taejon, Korea, 1993 Expo; see Jeong and Faulkner 1996). In
some cases, normal work patterns may be disturbed due to event transit demands.
On the other hand, the mood of urban residents may change dramatically during
the course of the event through the creation of excitement and a festival atmos-
phere that makes urban life more enjoyable and that celebrates positive emotion
(e.g., the 1988 Calgary Olympics; see Hiller 1990). Volunteerism for the event
might increase a sense of identification and satisfaction with the community (Gor-
ney and Busser 1996). Ley and Olds (1988, p. 208) found that the 1986 Vancou-
ver Expo advanced intersubjective bonds among residents because it promoted
visits from nonresident friends and relatives, who did not come to Vancouver just
to attend Expo but used the mega-event as the prompter or occasion to travel to
the city. The focus on most mega-events has been on the event itself, when more
research attention needs to be given to its effect on the daily routines of urban res-
dents. The question that follows, of course, is how these effects are distributed
differentially among city dwellers.

Phase 3: Postevent

In the postevent phase, it is presumed that urban residents can return to their
normal activities when the mega-event has concluded, but it is important to deter-
mine if and how the mega-event permanently altered those normal patterns in any
way. Or, to put it another way, how have the infrastructural changes altered/improved the provision of urban services (e.g., transportation). Most cities seek
to ensure that some improvements/service enhancements occur as a consequence of the
mega-event, most typically the upgrading of rapid transit. New athletic or com-
unity facilities may also be the legacy. Increasingly, mega-event organizers
legimate the event to cities by identifying these improvements as event “lega-
cies” even before the event is held. Event legacies are understood to be permanent
improvements to the built environment. Such improvements, of course, may ben-
efit some people more than others.

However, the major issue that is highlighted by the conclusion of the event is
after-use. How will the main event structures be used once the event is over? In
some cases (e.g., the 1964 New York World’s Fair), the site can struggle for a
long time with no apparent planned use and fall into disrepair. In other cases (e.g.,
the 1986 Vancouver Expo), the event structures may be largely removed to pro-
duce what has been called “a throw-away event,” and the site redeveloped. Other
mega-events have produced permanent housing or signature structures that play a
highly symbolic role for the cities’ identity. Mega-event sites have also anchored
parks and commodified leisure, as we have already noted. Perhaps one of the
greatest urban issues is not just the construction costs of these structures (if per-
manent) and future uses, but the economic viability of their maintenance into per-
petuity. It is perhaps no wonder that their adaptability to commodified leisure and
gentrification is not only coextensive with contemporary urban processes but also
resolves fiscal concerns. The problems of aligning the structural implications of
event requirements with uses congenial with long-term city needs is a significant
urban problem.

Key Research Questions

We can now sketch a research agenda that links the three phases in the life-
cycle of the mega-event to the host city.

Preevent Phase: Bid Component

While cities as corporate entities may endorse a bid, bidding always begins with
entrepreneurial individuals, who arouse support among elite segments and then
attempt to secure the support of other elites, the civic political administration, and
urban residents at large. In most cases, bid groups stand outside the existing dem-
ocratic structures. Who initiates bidding and why? What interests are represented
in bid advocates and how does the city deal with them? What legitimations are
used? How is the projected mega-event linked to restructuring objectives and land
use changes? What opposition develops and why? In what ways does the bidding
process reveal social fractures or conflicts within the city? What fiscal commit-
ments does the city make in bidding and what assumptions stand behind the bid?
What is the relation between marketing the bid to the international sponsoring
body and the case made to local residents? To what extent does the need for strong
civic support to strengthen the bid internationally submerge or dismiss opposition
within the city? What is the relationship between the bid organization and city
authorities? Are urban planners part of the planning team? Who has the power in
site selections? What is the relationship between different levels of government and the mega-event?

Preparatory Component

Once the decision is made and the mega-event is awarded to a city, what unresolved urban issues re-emerge? Typically, when the need for internal unity is required in the international competition, internal conflict may be submerged, but after the award has been made, internal conflict may resurface. Who are the actors in this conflict and who do they represent? What is the relationship between the bid plan and the implementation plan? What promises or assumptions contained in the bid plan are ignored or changed in implementation, and why? What is the relationship between the organizing committee (an independent body) and civic authorities? How does the urgency of preparation legitimate alterations or shortcuts in the normal planning process? What urban infrastructural changes are implemented and what difference do they make both for the event and for the city? What items are elevated on the urban agenda and which items lose their priority given the mega-event? What are the implications of unexpected or higher costs and how does the city pay for infrastructural costs? Who benefits most from construction and other elements of preparation? What preparations are made for those who might be disadvantaged by the event or by the preparation for it?

Event Phase

In actuality, what is the relationship between the event and the city? To what extent do citizens become involved and who are the ones who do so? How and why? Who participates in the event and who is denied access through such things as ticket availability? Who benefits the most from the event? Are efforts made to involve the entire city in the event? If so, what are these efforts? To what extent does the event become hegemonic to the urban populace? What communities are adversely affected, and how are they so affected? How does the dominance of the event affect other urban institutions? What social controls are in place to ensure stability? Are personal freedoms at risk? How are event crises dealt with? How does the city manage the media and who sells the message? How is bad press received? How is the event useful in place marketing?

What temporary changes are made to the facade of the city to improve its imagery or to create a different aura? What auxiliary or independent events are scheduled for the time of the mega-event, and at whom are they directed? What is the mood in the city? What factors have created or changed that mood? Who serves as volunteers for the event? How do people of different status groups become involved in the event? Who is apathetic about the event and why? How do groups opposing the event react during the event? What role does the city play in providing support services (e.g., policing) and what are the costs to the city?

Postevent

What unexpected consequences of the mega-event are experienced by the city? What struggles occur in the aftermath of the event when it becomes clear to what extent the event was a success and what its failures were? What were the fiscal and social costs of the event to the city? How are the mega-event sites transformed for postevent use? What are the land use changes from preevent to postevent? What are the specific event legacies, especially to the built environment? How will these legacies be maintained? Are there any housing legacies or housing impacts? How have property values been affected in the region of the site? How has the mega-event altered public perceptions of the site? What retrospective views do local residents have about the event? How has the event permanently transformed the city? What population shifts were prompted by the mega-event? Has the mega-event been successful in place marketing the city so that inward investment has occurred, new jobs have been created, or in-migration took place? What items that lost their priority on the urban agenda resurface and what were the consequences of their postponement?

Because mega-events are one-time events, there is little incentive for host cities to engage in thorough evaluations and research. Governments are seldom interested in supporting such research because they do not want the event to be defined as anything but successful, and so give positive spins to anything even vaguely negative. The optimism of positive preevent economic forecasts is seldom tested against ultimate outcomes in any precise way (Crompton and McKay 1994; Roche 1992, p. 562), although some outcomes are obvious (e.g., the failure of the 1984 New Orleans World’s Fair to meet attendance projections; Dimanche 1996). Job creation through expanded tourism has often been an anticipated result of the mega-event in the context of urban restructuring (Shultis, Johnson, and Twynam 1996; Hall 1992), but again, there is little systematic reasearch on this theme. Impacts pertaining to urban renewal are typical, but since many of these observations are made in the context of tourism rather than by urban analysts, their implications in terms of urban processes have not been developed (Dimanche 1996; Mules 1993; Hall 1996, 1997). Furthermore, mega-event organizations are disbanded soon after the event, and the emphasis is placed on winding things up rather than prolonging the organization’s existence with big-picture questions.

MEGA-EVENTS AND THEORIES AND PROCESSES OF URBAN CHANGE

The thrust of this argument is that instead of the focus being on the mega-event that happens to have occurred in a city and that reflects dominant cultural themes and ideologies, the focus ought to be on the city and how the mega-event contributes to and is reflective of processes of urban change. It is possible to list a number
of ways in which the mega-event can be an instrument of specific urban forces. For example, urban elites and suburbanites may be embarrassed by urban blight, so the mega-event becomes the mechanism that kickstarts urban renewal, and the mega-event has the potential to obliterate the blight in a comprehensive and urgent manner. Furthermore, the high profile nature of the event may help the city to enlist regional and national governmental financial support that otherwise may not have been forthcoming so quickly and to such a degree. In fact, the profile of the event may help to legitimate fiscal transfers from higher levels of government that are unavailable to other cities. Because of the importance of the event, appeals to federal officials might also be made for assistance in infrastructural matters such as mass transportation upgrades or airport upgrades which, again, might not have been on the top of the agenda without the mega-event. Such use of public funds led Cochrane, Peck, and Tickell (1996, p. 1320) to say that the emphasis on growth coalitions in this kind of boosterish activity needs to be replaced by an emphasis on grant coalitions where public funds are sought to support these transformations. In the process of transforming areas of blight, property values change, and it is to be expected that land uses will change as well. Thus, in the long-range scheme of things, the mega-event can play a significant role in urban change but only in the context of other changes of redevelopment and revitalization that also contribute to urban transformation.

In short, then, mega-events are catalysts for urban change, specifically in locations where change is considered desirable by urban elites. In particular, the size of the mega-event site and the adjacent area means that a significant segment of urban space will undergo a substantial land use change. The combination of unique event requirements and postevent use may spark creativity in planning that may not have occurred otherwise. Projects that have an urban impact may be taken on that might otherwise be considered too ambitious or too expensive because the mega-event mobilizes funding (public and private) that might not otherwise have been forthcoming. Planning and implementation have fixed completion dates that must follow a tight schedule which, on the one hand, ensures results rather than unending deliberation but, on the other hand, may produce autocracy against which opposition may arise. Infrastructural improvements related to the event (but required anyway) may improve urban life but at a significant cost because the improvements are made in a compressed period rather than amortizing costs over a longer period of time—vindicating opponents who point to the high cost of the mega-event. Thus, mega-events play a critical role in supporting the transformation of urban space (see Figure 1). Given the fact that mega-events are typically sited in the central city in what urban ecologists would label “zones in transition,” the land use change marked by the mega-event (especially when related to the commodification of leisure) plays a role in subsequent land use changes for the surrounding area as well (Hiller and Moylan 1999).

There is no question that the decision by cities to host mega-events is related to pro-growth ideologies and coalitions. The interest of local governments in encouraging development as a tax source is undeniable. Furthermore, land developers and local businesses may also support pro-growth strategies, and their profit prospects may be enhanced through mega-events. However, whether mega-events truly do produce such benefits on a large scale (as opposed to only for select persons), even among economic interests as widely as is assumed, is open for question. In comparison to the growth machine approach, which suggests decision making by tightly knit coalitions, mega-events are best understood as the product of an alliance of interests partially acting as a growth network (Gottdeiner 1994, p. 143) but also partially serving as an opportunity network where a variety of economic and non-economic interests may be served. For example, civic pride cannot be treated simply as a delusion of grandeur, whether at the grass roots or among local corporations who ride on the coattails of the prestige of the event. This focus on opportunity networks is important because it suggests a loose coalition of diverse interests (rather than something hegemonic in a purely economic sense) and also suggests that some sectors of society may be more supportive than others, which may be apathetic or in clear opposition. In short, not everyone considers hosting a mega-event as a desirable opportunity.

This observation suggests that the new urban sociology has considerable utility when considering the urban significance of mega-events but that it needs to be modified to allow for a broader range of interests to be considered. Having said this, however, it is not without significance that mega-events always begin as projects of select members of the elite (in either the public sector and/or the pri-
vate sector), who try to sell both the public at large and the elite sectors themselves on the importance of supporting the mega-event. The fact that there would be a wide range of opinions on such an undertaking at both the grass roots and among elites should be no surprise. It also suggests that local factors (including finances, culture, and local government; e.g., Flanagan 1993, p. 95) must be carefully analyzed as a counterpoint to sweeping generalizations about hegemonic elites imposing a mega-event agenda. Rosentraub and Helmske (1996) have already pointed out in their study of a medium-sized city that the economic actors of growth coalitions and the political actors of regimes both have played important roles in various urban initiatives. Furthermore, the new urban sociology encourages analysts to assess the assumptions of boosterism advocates that mega-events are always in the best interests of a city and its development goals when, in reality, their effects may be overblown or at least very uneven in both the short term and long terms.

To the extent that mega-events do participate in the restructuring of urban space, they represent the result of a social imaginary in which select urban space (identified as "abstract space" in the work of Lefebvre 1990) is redesigned according to a vision of how this space could be transformed for different purposes. The visions of government and business for that space may conflict with its current uses in everyday life ("social space"), which may be the source of conflict within the city. The mega-event itself may also be symbolic of the kind of imagining which Rutheiser (1996, 1997) discussed in relation to the city of Atlanta, where international image and central city transformations of space went hand-in-hand with redesigning the city, while ignoring urban populations who used that space and problems which did not fit that image. It is not surprising, then, that mega-events often serve as triggers for competing ideas of how select urban space should be utilized.

The use of sport facilities as an urban development strategy has been recognized, and there is some evidence that investments in stadiums, for example, are poor generators of urban economic growth (Baade and Dye 1988). But the stadiums so constructed and the sport teams which they facilitate play an important symbolic role for the cities (Rosentraub et al. 1994, p. 222; Euchner 1993). Many mega-events provide sport facilities for professional sport teams (e.g., the Atlanta 1996 Olympic stadium is now home for the Atlanta Braves baseball team). While the needs of professional sports teams are of longer duration than those of a mega-event, it could be that the mega-event itself is also a poor mechanism for urban economic growth. What mega-events and sport facilities have in common is the symbolic role they play both for city residents' identification with the city and for intercity and international place marketing. We still have much to learn to determine how to assess this symbolic role of mega-events.

If new stadiums and their city-representative sport teams promote urban boosterism, and if it is true that boosterism supports pro-growth ideologies which may reflect class interests (Schimmel 1995), then there is no reason to believe that mega-events (and the new construction that they require) may not also play the same role within cities, and contribute new dynamics to contestations over land use. In that sense, mega-events can play a significant role in restructuring urban space. But mega-events also have the potential to serve as defining moments in the evolution of a city by creating new initiatives, new directions, and new structures that may not have arisen otherwise. It is for this reason that in an analysis, a mega-event must be seen as both an independent variable or cause of urban change, and as a dependent variable reflecting broader urban forces at work. In either case, mega-events cannot be understood outside of their urban context.

NOTES

1. Rutheiser (1996, p. 270) refers to this transformation in Atlanta as "re-neighboring."

2. Mules and McDonald (1994, P. 49) use the concept of "induced visitation" to discuss the tourism promotional effect of special events.

3. One report indicated that nine-tenths of the developed world and two-thirds of the developing world watched at least parts of the 1996 Atlanta Olympics (Marketing Matters, no. 9, 1996).

4. Cunningham and Taylor (1995) note that whereas corporate sponsorship originally was more altruistic, it now has become a more strategic marketing device. Event marketing has recently quadrupled, while other forms of advertising are in decline. Fuji, for example, used the 1984 Olympics of which it was a sponsor to introduce its relatively new name in the United States in order to increase market share (Catherwood and Van Kirk 1992).

5. The commercialization of the Olympic movement has been well-documented (see Nixon 1988; Jennings 1996).

6. For example, the World Police and Fire Games draws about 12,000 participants, which for a city of a million or less might be considered a mega-event, in view of the local organization and preparation required and the sudden influx of visitors, all trumpeted by local media. However, it is unlikely that this occasion will lead to infrastructural changes in the city or even to new tourism initiatives such as hotel construction. The low media profile of this event outside of the local area also reduces its significance as a mega-event.

7. The Cape Town 2004 Summer Olympic bid took place precisely at the time that tourism was beginning to expand in South Africa. With the fall of apartheid in 1990 and the first democratic elections in the country being held in 1994, and after years of experiencing anti-apartheid political and economic sanctions and boycotts, the "new" South Africa experienced a tourism boom from the early to mid-1990s. In 1985, only 772,552 foreign tourists had visited South Africa, but by 1990, tourist numbers had jumped to 1,029,094, and by 1995, to 4,684,064. Consequently, hotels, airlines, banks, and leisure industries were key backers of the Olympic bid. Cape Town projected all kinds of new hotel construction (South Africa 1996).

8. Ritchie and Smith's (1991) study of the impact of mega-events on enhancing a city's international image shows what they call "awareness decay" from the high point of the mega-event to the postevent period.

9. Calgary (1988 Winter Olympics) and Brisbane (Expo 1988) are both ascendant cities. Bennett considers the Brisbane Expo to be a signal of the city's transformation from a provincial backwater to a world city and, above all, a means for local residents to participate in this transformation through repeated attendance.

10. Rutheiser (1996, p. 270) refers to this transformation in Atlanta as "re-neighboring."
The housing built for the Olympic Village is now predominantly a retirement community. The spectacular and futuristic housing of Habitat '67 is now an exclusive structure (Dean 1986).

Architects have always loved mega-events because of the opportunity for creative design and deep pockets. For example, Moshe Safdie, the creator of Habitat at Expo 1967 in Montreal, felt that World's Fairs should be judged by the extent to which they are catalysts for new developmental concepts (Fulford 1969, p. 109). Habitat became a real visual symbol for futuristic housing by making each apartment garden-like, but the concept never was adapted for mass housing, and the demonstration project became an elite apartment complex.

11 The housing built for the Olympic Village is now predominantly a retirement community. The spectacular and futuristic housing of Habitat '67 is now an exclusive structure (Dean 1986).

12 Compare Roche (1992), who makes a similar point.

13 The use of the word normal may be somewhat elusive here as normal may imply a state of equilibrium that seldom exists. Growing cities constantly experience pressures for the redevelopment of land or the development of vacant land, which are sometimes mega-projects in themselves. They may, in some instances, also be intrusive. On the other hand, the mega-event is often considered an initiative taken by the city itself (or at least adopted by the city), and because of the event's high profile fast-track preparation, and requirements for public funds, it often controls the urban agenda for a time.

14 For an interesting discussion of how the Toronto bid was modified through citizen participation, see Kidd (1992).

15 I am deliberately avoiding a lengthy discussion of the complex matter of mega-event finances. Most mega-events can be operationally self-financing if their marketing is successful and they are well-managed, but the major problem is with structural and infrastructural costs. The issue here is that of appropriating the costs of a fixed asset that may have a one-hundred-year life span over an event that lasts only three weeks or three months. Also, infrastructural improvements presumably create benefits that have a longer life than the event itself and that benefit citizens other than mega-event users.

Toward an Urban Sociology of Mega-Events


REFERENCES


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