Mega-Events, Urban Boosterism and Growth Strategies: An Analysis of the Objectives and Legitimations of the Cape Town 2004 Olympic Bid

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Mega-events as urban phenomenon

Mega-events are short-term high profile events like Olympics and World Fairs that are usually thought of in terms of their tourism and economic impacts (Hall, 1992; Getz, 1997). Expenditures on facility and infrastructure preparation, as well as revenues from visitor spending, event receipts and media exposure, form the baseline of much mega-event analysis. But in looking beyond the event, it has also become evident that mega-events can be analyzed as tools of government policy (e.g. the 1988 Seoul Olympics: Jeong et al., 1990; Kang and Perdue, 1994) or ideologies (e.g. compare the Communist-showpiece objectives of the 1980 Olympics with the private-enterprise theme of the 1984 Los Angeles Games: Hill, 1992). Furthermore, mega-events can be assessed in terms of their role in the process of capital accumulation through corporate sponsorships, media audiences and the commodification of entertainment (Whitson and Macintosh, 1996).

What has received much less attention is how mega-events are related to urban processes, for they often transform urban space through the erection of landmark structures or through the renewal of urban space such as plazas or parks or new housing/retail developments. The extensive urban waterfront development in Barcelona for the 1992 Olympics is a particularly outstanding case in point (de Moragas Spa and Botella, 1994). In any event, the mega-event (formerly called hallmark event) may be of short duration but it has an impact and meaning far beyond the event itself for the host city (Ritchie, 1984; Hall, 1997).

Globalization and the economic restructuring of cities have both been powerful factors in the attractiveness of mega-events as stimulants to urban economic redevelopment (Roche, 1992; Hughes, 1993; Mules, 1993). For example, the economic decline of old manufacturing cities such as Manchester in a post-Fordist environment led to the conceptualization of its Olympic bid (which ultimately failed) as a tool of urban regeneration in what was billed as the ‘Regeneration Games’ (Cochrane et al., 1996: 1322). Or, the internationalization of capital can enhance the mega-event as a form of ‘place marketing’ for inward investment (Kearns and Philo, 1993). Mega-events are particularly useful to those urban boosters who advocate pro-growth strategies for long-term economic development and job creation. Whether, of course, mega-events do indeed produce such net effects is debatable (e.g. Vancouver’s Expo 86: Anderson and Wachtel, 1986) and difficult to measure (Compton and McKay, 1994)
The showcase argument points out that mega-events are spectacles that can best be understood as either instruments of hegemonic power (Ley and Olds, 1988) or public-relations' ventures far removed from the realities of urban problems and challenges. Whatever the motivation, there is increased awareness that the mega-event can also be a vehicle for some form of urban transformation. While there are usually significant conflicts between event requirements and post-event usage (Servant and Takeda, 1996: 104), the substantial fiscal demands of these projects has typically included some form of permanent alteration to the urban environment. Particularly in postindustrial cities, the mega-event is often linked to inner-city renewal and its concomitant gentrification (e.g. the 1996 Atlanta Olympics: Bailey and Robertson, 1997; Rutheiser, 1997), along with the commodification of entertainment as a new basis for central-city life (Mullins, 1991; Hamnett, 1994). From a sociological perspective, the mega-event usually symbolizes a social class change in the event location as a consequence of the displacement of existing working-class populations/industrial functions to middle-class residents and consumers (Bounds, 1996; Olds, 1998).

Opposition to mega-events is often related to perceptions of misplaced priorities and cavalier disregard for the powerless who are negatively affected by the preeminent status given to the event. For example, the Toronto 2000 Olympic bid generated considerable opposition based on a ‘bread not circus’ theme that ultimately led to significant modifications to the bid in terms of its urban/human impact (Kidd, 1992; Lenskyj, 1996). However, given the role of national governments in linking the mega-event to its own objectives of aggrandizement, the power and vast resources of the created coalition of elite who become bid advocates, and the public buy-in to the mystique of hosting a ‘world-class’ event with its associated promotional hype, the sheer momentum of the bid process and its euphoria of ‘winning’ the bid in international competition creates a trajectory that is often difficult to derail — regardless of the costs (e.g. the enormous debt of the 1976 Montreal Olympics) or consequences (Hiller, 1998).

In short, there are two issues raised for cities by mega-events. First, what is the urban impact of mega-events and in what way do they contribute to urban transformation? And second, how are mega-events legitimated in order to justify urban support? Since hosting mega-events are ideas promoted by elite segments, which ultimately become political initiatives, a rationale must be developed to mobilize public support. What links these two questions is the fact that the city provides resources to facilitate the mega-event and therefore it is appropriate to ask what the urban outcome will be. Or, to put it another way, legitimation can be a purely ideological manipulation or it can establish a set of expectations (or ideals) against which the outcomes can be measured. Whatever the objectives of national political leaders, local urban residents need to know what difference the mega-event will make to their city.

The Cape Town 2004 Olympic bid presents a unique opportunity to examine this question because the bid plan explicitly aimed to contribute to the process of restructuring the apartheid city. To most South Africans, the idea of bidding for and eventually hosting the 2004 Summer Olympic Games was a startling idea (Hiller, 1997). In a society still in transition from the ‘old’ to the ‘new’ South Africa, as represented by a new Constitution and the first democratically elected government (1994); in a society wracked by the pain and turmoil of the past as revealed in the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission throughout 1997 (the peak of the bid period); and in a society plagued by the continuing ravages of inequality where sheer survival (e.g. employment and housing) is a reality of daily life for many (Murray, 1996; O’Meara, 1996), the idea of another project of such a colossal nature as the Olympics appeared virtually overwhelming — if not misplaced and inappropriate. Yet, the Cape Town bid broke new ground in arguing that a successful Olympic bid would contribute to the transformation of the city through its emphasis on human development.

The thrust of this article, then, is to analyze and evaluate the bid in terms of its developmental aspects, to ascertain the urban significance of this theme, and to assess the
role which this development ideology played in mobilizing support for the bid and legitimating its existence. Was development merely a legitimation or ideology to mobilize support for the bid and to engender public consensus, or would it indeed have made a difference in the restructuring of Cape Town and improved the life of its residents? This is particularly important given the perception that elitist sport, the privileged International Olympic Committee, and corporate sponsorships are incompatible with development for the disadvantaged. It is for this reason that the Cape Town theme seemed both remarkable and ground-breaking, yet also worthy of further scrutiny.

The Cape Town rationale: human development and the city

History has shown that mega-events have been more or less restricted to cities of the developed world because of the costs involved, the infrastructural requirements, and the need for political stability. Expositions, for example, had their origins in the industrial revolution which made Europe and then the United States the prime sites for these events (Benedict, 1983). Later including Korea, Japan and Australia, most mega-events (two exceptions: Mexico City and Moscow) have rotated between Europe, North America and these additional three countries. Most of Asia, South and Central America, Africa, the Middle East and eastern Europe have not hosted mega-events, or have not ranked highly when they did bid for these events (e.g. Istanbul’s Olympic bid).

Cape Town’s bid for the 2004 Summer Olympic Games was unsuccessful (Athens was selected in September 1997) but is extremely important. In the first place, a record number of eleven cities bid for this event indicating the growing perception of the importance of mega-events in urban/national strategies. Since global television contracts meant that the winning city would automatically receive around US $600 million from the International Olympic Committee (IOC), it is perhaps no wonder that this injection of external capital meant that winning the bid had elements of truly winning ‘gold’. In the second place, a number of the competing cities were third-world cities such as Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Istanbul and Cape Town. Even among these cities, Cape Town’s bid was unique in that it explicitly linked the mega-event to the human development needs of a third-world city.¹

The two traditional pillars of the Olympic movement had been sport and culture. Environment had only recently been added (and is reflected in the Sydney 2000 theme) as announced by IOC President Samaranch in 1995.² On its own, the Cape Town bid added a fourth dimension which became ‘human’ development and was targeted to the historically disadvantaged populations. The so-called Bid Book or Candidature File (volume 1, p. 6) made it clear that every aspect of the Olympic process ‘should contribute to the upliftment and quality of life of the people of the city . . . we place special emphasis on our disadvantaged communities’. The goal was also to use the Olympics to help in the process of restructuring the city of Cape Town to address the inequities created by apartheid, by contributing ‘focus as no other event can, to the transformation of Cape Town’ (ibid.). Thus, the Cape Town bid really proposed two innovative ideas pertaining to the role which the Olympics would play: first, to serve as a catalyst to improve the life conditions of the historically disadvantaged; and second, to play a role in the redesign of the apartheid city whereby old barriers would be eliminated and new linkages created.³

¹ For example, the Rio de Janeiro Bid Book (Vol. 1, p. 36) included only one sentence indicating that improving conditions in slum neighbourhoods would be a priority. It was considered that this was a late addition prior to publication rather than being a keystone idea in the bid.
² Speech by IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch at the opening of the World Conference on Sport and the Environment, Lausanne, 12 July 1995.
³ See the Cape Town 2004 Olympic Bid Fact Sheets, Olympic Concept Plan, and the Bid Book or Candidature File.
Human/social development has a wide range of meanings and many critics (e.g. Crush, 1995; Escobar, 1995). In view of the subsistence needs of many South Africans, a basic needs’ approach would target absolute poverty and would be motivated by the desire for social justice (Webster, 1990: 34). Yet development also moves beyond the basic requirements to sustain life to include issues of self-esteem and personal choice through, for example, the provision of education and human rights (Todaro, 1985). The Olympic Bid Company seemed to recognize the complexity of the term ‘development’ by acknowledging everything from housing to jobs, to empowerment, to facility and service improvements for the disadvantaged.4 This was a tall order, unprecedented in mega-event planning. In chiding the IOC for regularly awarding the Olympics to affluent cities of the developed world, the Candidature File argued that by awarding the bid to Cape Town, the IOC would show that Olympism is not ‘beholden to gigantism and commercial exploitation’ but is ‘devoted to the progress of all people and must therefore also offer opportunity to those still struggling for their place in the economic sun’ (p. 38). Thus, in a significant way, the Cape Town bid provided a thinly veiled critique of all that Olympism had become and appealed to global justice as the rationale for awarding the bid to Africa. In this context, and seemingly against all odds, South Africa moved from a lowly position among the eleven bidding cities to the short-list of five cities in March 1997, and ultimately to third place in the final vote in September. While one could be somewhat cynical and suggest that Cape Town did so well only because it was the first bid from an African city, there was considerable surprise at the technical strength and compelling logic of the South African bid. In fact, the Cape Town bid provided an entirely new variation of the rationale for utilizing a mega-event for urban redevelopment.

The apartheid city: Cape Town in the South African context

From an urban perspective, the most important feature of South Africa is the nature of the apartheid city (Lemon, 1991; Swilling et al., 1991; Smith, 1992; Saff, 1994). Under apartheid, the roughly 15% white minority owned most of the urban property and enforced a strict residential segregation of races. The Group Areas Act provided the legal basis for the relocation of blacks and coloured persons to the margins of the city. Blacks in particular were restricted to rural reserves called homelands where they existed in poverty and unemployment unless required as cheap labor in the cities, presumably on a temporary basis (Wilson and Ramphele, 1989). When South Africa experienced an industrial boom in the 1960s, it was primarily the whites that benefited. As a result, gini-coefficients indicate that South Africa has one of the highest levels of income inequality in the world (McGrath, 1994: 49). Thus South Africa has many qualities of a more developed country at the same time that it can be referred to as a developing country. The lowest four deciles in household incomes make up about 53% of the population but only about 10% of total consumption (RDP Office, 1995: 7).

With the end of apartheid and the formal removal of restrictions to mobility, South African cities were swamped with black migrants from the old bantustans looking for a better life in the cities. This massive rural-urban migration (projected to be 84% of the black population by the end of the century: Mainardi, 1996: 57) has led to burgeoning squatter settlements on the margins of the major cities where lack of adequate housing and unemployment (variously estimated at 30–50% of the national population) had grown to epidemic proportions (Goodlad, 1996). Along with this situation, an active informal economy emerged as a survival technique in addition to various forms of crime (Rogerson, 1996). Since the government had limited resources to deal with such massive problems, and given the global shift away from the interventionist welfare state to fiscal

retrenchment and government down-sizing while depending on the market economy (du Toit, 1995: 386), the mega-event Olympic bid became tied to economic development initiatives as a pro-growth strategy to attract inward investment and to create jobs. The logic was that regular employment and income would enhance the likelihood of better housing with the outcome that cities would become more habitable and safer. Lacking any other way to present a new image to the world of a pariah nation formerly the object of disinvestment and sanctions (Jenkins, 1990), including disbarment from Olympic participation from 1970 to 1992 (Ramsamy, 1982; Mbaye, 1995), the Olympic mega-event ultimately became a clear instrument of government policy pertaining to a ‘new’ South Africa.

There is evidence that most South Africans thought that since the first democratic elections, the economy had not improved (and had probably got worse), but 71% of blacks had high expectations for the future (Opinion Poll vol. 2, no. 1, September 1996). A study for the World Bank in 1994 had identified the 1988–93 period as the longest recession in the country’s history due to a host of factors including political instability. Their prescription for redistributive growth was fast employment creation (Fallon and Pereira de Silva, 1994), and the Olympic bid became a populist symbol for economic expansion. The 1997 national budget reiterated the same theme, noting the need to grow the economy through new investment to accelerate employment creation and income redistribution (Republic of South Africa, 1997). Thus, from this perspective, the Olympics were only marginally about sport, and it is for this reason that the human development theme took on such political significance and heightened (often inflated) expectations.

Of all the cities in South Africa, Cape Town (with a population of three million) is unique in a number of ways (Bekker, 1995). First of all, as the ‘Mother City’ on the southern tip of the continent, it has long played a special role in international trade and for topographical reasons has enormous tourism potential. Second, it is located in a province (Western Cape) that has no homelands in its territory but has always had a much larger coloured population whose position vis-à-vis blacks has been better, though still marginalized. Cape Town is generally considered safer and more habitable than other South African cities, and yet it too was experiencing substantial post-apartheid immigration of Africans, particularly from the Eastern Cape that lacked a large metropolitan city. A measure of quality of life indicators, called the Human Development Index, gave the Western Cape the highest rating of all provinces, largely due to its higher formal-sector employment rate (Eckert, 1995), but due to the urban influx, this measure was obviously changing. Third, while most other South African provinces elected an African National Congress (ANC) government in the immediate post-apartheid era, the populace of the Western Cape elected the old Nationalist Party as its governing party. In short, Cape Town and its province of the Western Cape must be considered somewhat differently from the rest of South Africa. How this is linked to the Olympic bid will be discussed later.

In sum, the apartheid city of which Cape Town is still typical can be characterized as low density sprawl with little inner-city housing and a predominance of single detached housing, whether in dominantly white areas or the crisis-driven erection of shacks in informal settlements. For example, one of the larger growing squatter settlements in Cape Town is known as Khayelitsha and is made up of a mixture of core houses, site and service plots, and serviced and unserviced shacks (Cook, 1992). Figure 1 shows that the white areas are along the Tygerberg arm and the Southern arm, and that the area to the southeast (Cape Flats, metropolitan Southeast) are the areas of the disadvantaged populations which are less accessible to the central business district (CBD) and require long commutes. Public transport is generally not of good quality and fare evasion is a major problem. Segregation meant that there was an uneveness in urban development with some communities having a well-maintained infrastructure while other areas were often in a state of acute disarray. From an urban perspective, then, Cape Town needed to
enhance densification and compaction, improve its infrastructure in all areas, and in general work towards establishing a more equitable city.

An analytical assessment of the urban aspects of the bid plan

The question, then, is what exactly did the Cape Town bid propose to address this apartheid legacy and to make the city more equitable? What were the urban/developmental aspects of the bid? What follows is an analysis of the bid plan carried out during a four-month period in 1997 at about the time that Cape Town was short-listed for the final decision and during which preparations were being made for the final presentation to the IOC. Informal meetings were held with principal leaders of the bid and civic authorities, and site visits and discussions with urban residents, as well as bid opponents, occurred in the process of analysing the bid. Documents in the library of the Olympic Bid Company were also available for review. A comprehensive and contextual analysis of the bid plan and likely outcomes identified nine ways in which the bid was developmental, especially for the city, and the problems and possibilities of each will be discussed in turn.
A transformational catalyst accelerating change

By definition, development involves some kind of transformation. The key words in linking development with the Olympic bid are ‘catalyst’ and ‘acceleration’. The Olympics as a mega-event was to provide the occasion to take action to bring about change in the short term rather than in a nebulous long term. The fixed deadlines of the Olympic timetable were to motivate and jump-start innovative thinking, and create the need for action that would prevent stalling or gradualist approaches continuing into an undefined future. In that sense, the Olympic venture was to spark change and accelerate action that could contribute towards developmental transformation. Whether the Olympics sets the right agenda for change that is developmental is a moot question which will be discussed later.

At the same time, the Olympics was not the only catalyst for change; it was merely one among many catalysts for change. Consequently, while it may have had its own objectives, the Olympic proposals were not independent of but closely linked to existing programs, agencies and plans directing change. In particular, the Olympic plan relied heavily on key urban restructuring plans developed around the same time. The Metropolitan Spatial Development Framework adopted by the City of Cape Town (1996) sought to integrate the Cape Flats, a historically disadvantaged area for most of the non-white population of Cape Town, into the city structure; the Metro Southeast Plan established Philippi East on the Cape Flats as a key urban node (see Figure 1); the urban transportation plan, entitled Moving Ahead, proposed new initiatives to upgrade the urban transport network; and other plans of government agencies, such as the Provincial Department of Sport and Recreation to upgrade sports facilities and opportunities in disadvantaged areas, were also relevant.

In sum, while the Olympic bid may have had its own agenda, it did not stand alone and was deeply rooted in other transformation plans. The fact that the Director of Planning and Environment for the bid was seconded from the city’s Planning Department ensured that this linkage was active. In short, the Olympics provided the occasion and thereby served as a catalyst to see how mega-event planning and already established development goals might mesh in order to accomplish both objectives — perhaps sooner than might otherwise occur. The difficulties in doing so will be discussed later.

The construction of facilities in disadvantaged areas

The key planning decision that had developmental implications was the decision to distinguish between competition and training venues and to use a more dispersed approach rather than the highly centralized approach of recent Olympics. Competition sites were to be located in a semi-dispersed fashion, whereas training facilities were to be primarily dispersed to historically disadvantaged communities with the greatest need. Competition facilities requiring a larger infrastructure (e.g. spectator accommodation) were planned to be more centralized at Wingfield and Culemborg, while others could be dispersed.5

Of the 42 activity sites for competitions in the Cape Town metropolitan region, seven were planned for disadvantaged areas (two of which were upgrades of existing facilities — Turfhall for softball, Athlone for football — and five were to be new — Philippi East for badminton and basketball, Mew Way Khayelitsha for boxing, and Belhar for judo and taekwondo). Of the 77 training sites, 66 were to be located in historically disadvantaged areas (e.g. Blue Downs, Langa, Grassy Park, Athlone). Forty-seven sites represented facility upgrades and 29 were to be new facilities. Thirty-nine of 47 upgrades were in disadvantaged areas and eight in non-disadvantaged areas. In short, almost 86% of training sites (either newly built or upgrades) were planned for disadvantaged areas.

5 Both Culemborg (a railroad/storage facility) and Wingfield (a former military airfield) had non-residential uses so there would be no displacement of existing population.
The idea was that most of these facilities would serve as multipurpose community facilities both before and after the Games with maximum utilization by different user groups sharing the facility. From a development perspective, the facilities were to enhance communities long neglected under the apartheid system and take the first steps towards the equalization of amenities between white and non-white areas.

**Facilities as ‘kick-start’ initiatives**

In general, it was hoped that new and upgraded facilities would not be stand-alone endeavours but would stimulate community revitalization. In other words, the facilities would be part of a broader community plan to enhance the area with new housing, retailing and, more broadly, to attract new investment. This was particularly so because the apartheid system discouraged any kind of community infrastructure in disadvantaged areas. In some cases, the Olympic facility would be used to provide community offices or educational opportunities (e.g. computer training in Scottsdene) in addition to the athletic site, and to complement existing buildings. In other cases, the facility would be built where there were virtually no facilities at all, such as at the entrance to Khayelitsha. In all cases, the goal was to attract new investment, whether public or private, as the result of the Olympic initiative to enhance the disadvantaged community. At the same time, it was anticipated that whatever further development would occur would have to be the result of public-private-community partnerships in order to make them successful.

In one important case, Philippi East, the Olympic facility was to be an integral part of the proposed new urban node identified earlier in our discussion of the Metropolitan Space Development Framework. The goal was for a growth centre of high intensity and mixed use. High-density housing was a particular objective given the general problem of low densities in disadvantaged areas. One development concept called CUPID (Coordinated Urban Programme for Integrated Development) was proposed to provide an integrated strategy to the development of the area for the provision of housing, employment and other amenities.

**Quality sports facilities supporting community sports programmes**

Since recreational opportunities enhance the quality of life, and the lack of such facilities either prohibits such opportunities or reduces their quality, the Olympic facilities were to enhance community sports programmes, thereby giving athletes in disadvantaged areas the opportunity to develop their abilities in a manner commensurate with advantaged communities. It was also argued that better and more accessible sports facilities (especially when near transport nodes) would increase participation, help to reduce crime and contribute to more community pride.

**A human resource opportunity**

If there was one benefit that the Olympics were expected to bring to the host community, it was jobs. The Development Bank Of South Africa projected 90,000 permanent jobs being created as a result of the Olympics — not in the Cape Town area alone, but in South Africa. Many of these jobs were related to spin-off effects and not necessarily directly related to Olympic spending. For example, it was estimated that the Olympics would attract new capital investment which would create employment. Or, it was expected that the tourism industry would expand as the result of Olympic publicity. As with most economic impact projections of mega-events (Crompton and McKay, 1994), most of these estimates were speculative, but an important aspect of the legitimation of mega-event support.

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6 The idea that sports and recreation policy should contribute to equitable facilities and opportunities was made clear in the mission statement of the Department of Sport and Recreation in the Western Cape (Provincial Policy Framework Rainbow Paper, 1995).

Perhaps there was no greater expectation of how the Olympics would contribute to human development than the provision of jobs. But the question was not whether the Olympics would provide employment opportunities, but what kind of jobs they would be and how long they would last to truly contribute to development.\(^8\) Organizers talked of viewing labour ‘as a resource and not just a factor of production’. Reference was also made to the need for skills training, generic vocational training and transferable skills. However, while ‘people development’ was an acknowledged part of the explicit empowerment policy of the Bid Company, such objectives were far afield from the expertise and control of Olympic organizers. The national government had already set in place affirmative action policies and an Affirmable Procurement Policy (APP) which had been adopted by bid planners. The APP required that 30% of employees be local labour, which the Bid Company interpreted in the contextual sense to mean the local neighbourhood. The application of such a policy to facility construction in disadvantaged areas had real development potential for local residents.\(^9\) But here again, such objectives moved far beyond the expertise of Olympic organizers and required liaison with other agencies, such as the Office of Contract Compliance and the Cape Town Job Creation Centre, to ensure that the right people would be recruited to fill available jobs in order for human resource development to actually occur.

**Contribution to the stock of affordable housing**

One of the most striking things about Cape Town as a modern city in a developing continent is the large number of poorly housed persons in informal or squatter settlements. It has been estimated that there is a housing shortage of 170,000–180,000 units — most of which is among persons in the low-income or no-income category, and this need is constantly growing due to in-migration. This situation, of course, is not only rooted in underdevelopment generally, but is related to the apartheid past. In fact, it is this crying need that frequently put people off the Olympics altogether, because it is such a visible problem, demanding a remedy as a priority. Given the fact that housing for athletes, the media and others was deemed to be a major element of Olympic preparation, there was obvious pressure to ensure that this basic need for shelter be addressed by an Olympics that aims to be developmental. If, on the one hand, there was the expectation that the Olympics should make a significant contribution to the housing stock for persons of low or no income, on the other hand, Olympic requirements and construction finances meant that the housing constructed would be of quality and cost considerably above market entry levels. The Cape Town plan was a mix of housing at the Athlete’s and Official’s Village (Wing field) for 15,750 persons, including permanent two- and three-storey buildings for 5750 persons, and the remaining 10,000 persons would be accommodated in 400 single-storey relocatable units. Where these houses would be relocated was not specified but it was assumed that they would be for the poorly housed, according to some yet to be devised system which would clearly be controversial because of its selectivity. Whether there would be permanent affordable housing on this site (Wingfield) remained a moot question because of costs.\(^10\) Housing in the Media Village (Culemborg) would likely have been mostly permanent with probably only a small proportion of affordable housing amidst a more upmarket clientele of mixed-use space for housing, commercial and office functions. In short, it was not likely that Culemborg would make a major contribution to Cape Town’s massive housing problem. In sum, the

\(^8\) This is a difficult issue, not only as it relates to mega-events, but also to tourism as a development strategy (Britton, 1982).

\(^9\) McGregor and McConnachie (1995) discuss some of the problems of creating employment opportunities within disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

\(^10\) For example, the inclusion of a water course for rowing and canoeing events on this site would likely have increased its after-use desirability and commercial value. An Olympic Villages Advisory Forum, which included representation from the private-housing sector, had provided advice on after-use housing policy.
Olympics would have made some contribution to the affordable housing stock, but its contribution would be minimal in relation to the overall need. The problem was primarily that local mega-event publicists created expectations about housing improvement as a result of the Olympics, which could not reasonably be expected to make a difference to most poorly housed Capetonians. Housing improvement for only a few might be considered better than nothing but market forces would surely give preference to those employed over those unemployed who could afford ownership or rent requirements. It is for this reason that the job forecasts were so important to the bid ideology.

Support for small business
The shift from employee to employer and its attendant increase in responsibility and potential remuneration is an important part of development for disadvantaged peoples who move from unskilled to skilled employment. In order for development to occur, whereby small fledgling businesses emerge as a counterpoint to large established corporate entities, remedial efforts must be made to encourage such enterprises.

The national APP had an elaborate procurement formula in which bids were adjudicated 80% on price and 20% on affirmative action guidelines. However, the Bid Company embraced an economic empowerment policy which offered 50% of its business transactions to commercial and professional enterprises from previously marginalized communities. The policy was drawn up in consultation with black business organizations and a subcommittee of the Board of Directors was to monitor its implementation. In addition, two seats on the Board were allocated to representatives of the small-business community. While this policy was likely to encourage more middle-class entrepreneurs or the fledgling black bourgeoisie, operationalizing such a policy when some small businesses lacked capital or technology to compete may have been problematic.

Urban integration of the transport system
One of the difficulties created by the apartheid city was the peripheralization of the non-white population. The public transport system, whether road or rail, marginalized non-whites with long and cumbersome daily commutes. While central core access was somewhat better, cross-city access was usually very troublesome and direct routes often did not even exist.

The Integrated Metropolitan Transport Plan, called Moving Ahead, sought to address these problems. The goal was to integrate the Cape Flats more clearly into the city’s transportation network by creating routes where none had previously existed or which had entailed long detours. Of particular interest were the road upgrades that were to link the new urban node of Philippi (a black area) with Belleville and Wynberg (white areas), and serve as growth corridors for business uses. The establishment of a new rail station at Stock Road, which would be the heart of the new urban node at Philippi, would build from its proposed Olympic badminton facility to other plans for a new hospital and housing. The revitalization of public transport interchanges where rail, taxi and road networks would meet for passenger transfer and in support of other retail/service functions was also part of the plan.

Since these plans were in existence independently of the Olympics, the role of the Olympics in the plan would merely accelerate their implementation. The goals of the Olympics in relation to these changes were to ensure access to Olympic venues by public transport, to address the image and safety problems currently experienced on the public transport system, to modernize the rolling stock, and to demonstrate to the IOC in advance of their decision that Cape Town was committed to upgrading public transport—a significant problem among developing populations where matters such as fare evasion create many other problems.

A major contribution to these transport goals was made by a Transport Priority Project grant of R250 million from the national government in 1997 in advance of the
final IOC decision. While it is difficult to define a road improvement or rail station upgrade or the creation of a comprehensive design strategy as being developmental when all benefit, it is fair to say that more than 70% of the funds utilized were earmarked for projects that directly benefited the disadvantaged areas, and above all, that linked those areas more clearly into the urban structure.

Community consultation

One of the hallmarks of good development programmes is that they involve the community in an ongoing way. Ideally, the community affected has determined independently that a course of action is desirable, and then it is a matter of consultation to decide how, when and at what pace to institute the changes.

The nature of Olympic planning is that planning begins elsewhere rather than in the community. While there was clearly an acknowledged need for better facilities in disadvantaged communities, these often found themselves reacting to plans presented to them rather than having a sense of ownership in the plan from the start. Made much more difficult because of its multiple dispersed sites, a policy of community consultation was adopted following Integrated Environmental Management principles. Local Olympic Steering Committees were considerably successful in creating a sense of local empowerment. Because of the multiple sites, consultation took on an importance in Cape Town at a level not typical in other bidding cities. A Community Olympic Forum, hundreds of visits to community groups by Bid personnel and numerous other forums provided opportunities for community interaction. The problem was that often such meetings focused on transmitting information about Olympic plans for reaction (almost in a marketing style) and input more than they did on exploring the assumptions behind hosting the Olympics (a prior step over which there had not been grass-roots consultation) or considering that planning goals begin with the community (Xhegwana, 1998). Misunderstanding sometimes arose when communities were informed that a particular sports facility (e.g. softball or badminton) was being planned for their community, and since such sports were foreign to the local culture in contrast to a preferred sport like soccer, considerable persuasion was necessary to convince the community of the relevance of the proposed plan, and how the field or facility might be later modified to reflect community needs.

Cape Town did take an initiative pertaining to consultation never done before by a bidding city, which was to commission a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as an independent assessment of all aspects of the bid which would then be submitted for some kind of community ratification. This was a bold move, particularly since city residents had not been consulted initially at all about the decision to bid. Furthermore, the limited time available for this process — 5–6 months — created a sense of urgency that constricted it. Due to the alleged shortage of funds in view of the priority of international lobbying (a costly and controversial exercise for a developing country), this aspect of the consultation was delayed unduly and the SEA report was not released to the public in its entirety until August (instead of April) with the IOC decision pending in September 1997. The nature of the public input that resulted was rather limited at that point, and of course was constrained by the competitive nature of the bid process which effectively muzzled dissent in the face of the unity required for the bid to be successful.

11 A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a process of evaluating the likely consequences of a policy, proposal or plan before it is implemented. The use of the word environment refers to the economic, social and cultural environment in relation to the physical structure of metropolitan Cape Town. The focus of an SEA is not each individual project, but how the projects fit together, how they are related to public policy, and then the anticipation of the likely consequences of implementation. The proposed SEA involved specialist reports, public input prior to the commissioning of these reports, and public review of draft synthesis reports before the production of the final report (Cape Metropolitan Council, 1997).
The SEA was clearly an innovative idea in the process of community consultation, but its awkward positioning in relation to the final stages of the bid internationally meant that winning the bid took precedence over community consultation. If the bid had been successful, there is no doubt that the SEA reports would have played a pivotal role in some implementation decisions. However, by that time, the prior question about whether the Olympic bid was in the best interests of the city would be raised too late. In some ways, an SEA cannot be properly undertaken until there is first a plan; on the other hand, by the time the plan is in place, it appears too late to turn back, and while the SEA might lead to modifications, the plan is too advanced and its assumptions too ingrained to question the mega-event itself.

These nine points formed the heart of the development theme in the Cape Town bid. Other points might be added, such as the attempt to include a holistic and integrated concept of environment that moved beyond the physical and related built space to human users and social issues. The linkage with the city planning department ensured that planning principles such as intensification, densification, mixed-use, proximity to public transportation and arterials, and sustainability through post-event usage were also incorporated. Organizers tended to see other aspects (e.g. the schools programme or the proposed Torch Relay through the continent) as having developmental components (which they may have had) but it is clear that they also had ideological and marketing components as well in developing support for Olympism.

Elite coalitions, boosterism and populist support

There is no question that development was the key part of the rationale and ideology of the Cape Town Olympic Bid. But rationales can merely be justifications for other objectives. The pursuit of the Games might even mask other interests which remain more or less hidden in the face of the development rhetoric. If Hall (1994: 13) is correct that it is usually business elites that initiate and push for such mega-events, then it is important to analyse why support for this mega-event would be in their interests.

Building on the work of Molotch on economic elite coalitions and the work of Stone on political coalitions (regimes), Schimmel (1995) has argued that pro-growth urban coalitions usually consist of corporate elite, land entrepreneurs, members of the governing elite and city bureaucrats (see also Judd and Collins, 1979). Boosterism symbolically constructs consensus in the city but favours the interests of the dominant class. In the case of Cape Town, the Olympic bid was clearly a booster mechanism to build consensus around a pro-growth ideology, but with the added dimension that even the disadvantaged were expected to benefit.

The Cape Town bid originated in 1990 under the leadership of businessman Raymond Ackerman, the owner of a large grocery store chain (Bell, 1995). There is some question about where the idea of bidding for the Olympics originated, as others, such as key civil servants, also embraced the idea, but it is clear that Ackerman took the initiative to mobilize his contacts to set the bid in motion in 1993, and to fund it as well. Whatever their motivations may have been, the Ackerman group ran the bid on a corporate model in which a team of decision-makers promoted their ideas about bidding and primarily sought the endorsement of the city for what was still their initiative. The first democratically elected local government was not installed until 1996, but there was considerable debate over whether the Ackerman group had the authority of the city to merely advance the bid or to actually speak for the city. Furthermore, it was clear that the National Olympic Committee of South Africa (NOCSA) wanted to wait until the 1994 national election to obtain the support of the

12 Bell (1995: 29) describes Ackerman’s efforts as ‘his dream on behalf of the city’.

The end result of the manoeuvring was that the Ackerman group was finally pushed aside and the bid became much more clearly an instrument of national (ANC) government policy. The fact that the Western Cape province (1994) and Cape Town itself (1996) elected National Party governments through strong support of coloured people (Seekings, 1996) only exacerbated the tensions between these two levels of government and the national level because ANC members had a more prominent and controlling role in the bid process. In short, the local elite fragment was replaced by national ruling political elites who aligned with large national corporate elites to support and help fund the bid. In 1994, the bid company was reconstituted under the leadership of former banker Chris Ball and a board of elected officials and business persons. It is during this time that the bid became much more clearly a partnership between the public sector and the private sector as well as an instrument of national government policy.

The evidence is clear that the business community was behind the Cape Town Bid, from sponsorships to secondments of employees, to special project contributions. In some key ways, then, the Olympics was understood as being ‘good for business’. This would especially be so among companies listed as sponsors in the tourism/hospitality business sector (e.g. South African Airways, Sun International or the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront), but would also be the case for companies with an international profile or industrial and service firms involved with the development of Olympic infrastructure, such as Telkom (communications), Caltex (petrol retailer), Unifraco (global fruit distributor), Anglovaal Industries (diversified industrial portfolio) and Nedbank. One analyst projected that even selection to the short-list for Cape Town would increase the value of the shares of key South African businesses. So in some real sense, the business community would undoubtedly benefit by the Olympics from construction to goods and services.

But it is also noteworthy that the Cape Town Bid support went beyond this group to include all political parties and labour unions (Cape Argus, 15 February 1997). This does not mean that criticism was absent; indeed debate was lively, often ideological and political. Fears of uncertain public expenditures, misplaced public priorities, fears of drawing even more unemployed to Cape Town, perceptions of the future irrelevance of Olympic facilities, and accusations of the bid being driven by ‘white’ interests repeatedly challenged the bid (Maharaj, 1998). Yet overall, and in a society in which public resistance has a long history, there was a remarkable lack of concerted vocal public opposition to the bid. The Stop 2004 Bid Committee had been consistently strident in its opposition, yet it received weak overt public support.

The prevailing opinion among all elite sectors (perhaps in contrast to grass-roots beliefs) was that in some way, the Olympics would be good for the city, the Western Cape and all of South Africa, and was conveyed in the boosterish bid slogan found on billboards and posters all over the city: ‘If Cape Town Wins We All Win’. A 1995 opinion poll revealed that 80% of the population of the Cape Metropolitan area supported the Olympic bid, though some were qualified supporters.

The Cape Town bid was essentially financed by the private sector (with indirect contributions from the public sector), though the resolve weakened somewhat at the end of the bid phase when money problems led to requests for fiscal support from several levels of government. This would be consistent with the position that mega-events are normally the project of local growth coalitions (Hall, 1997: 82).

For an excellent statement of the opposition point of view, see Stop 2004 Olympic Bid Forum, The People’s Standpoint (1995). One of their key points was that there were more urgent priorities in South Africa. It is also important to note that a loose coalition of environmental groups such as the Wilderness and Wildlife Society negotiated an understanding with the Bid Company to ensure that environmental concerns were addressed and to ensure that the general public was consulted through some mechanism such as a poll.

This study was done by Carnelley Rangecroft and Roots.
was registered, whites were more likely to be sceptics or active rejectors than other racial groups, based on their fears of the costs. A 1996 poll indicated the same 80% support for the bid and the same pocket of opposition among the better educated, wealthy, older and white population (Cape Argus, 27 May 1996; Cape Times, 29 May 1996). Ninety-two percent of Cape Town blacks supported the bid (including residents of Khayelitsha [92%] and Mitchell’s Plain [91%]), whereas only 62% of whites did so. This white reticence became more vocal in non-representative newspaper reader polls with a large white readership such as the Cape Argus (‘70% Opposed’, 19 August 1995) and Peninsula Times (‘92% No’, 24 April 1996).

While it is important to acknowledge that there was no simple carte blanche acceptance of all aspects of the Olympic idea, it is also clear that, outside of the segments noted above, there was indeed widespread buy-in to the Olympic ideology. Supporting the bid became an ideological position because it was based on a belief that the Olympics would indeed foster economic growth. Whether, indeed, such expectations were realistic or not was less important than acceptance of the belief that the Olympics might or could have that effect, and linking the Olympic bid with human development strengthened this expectation. In that sense, the development theme had ideological benefits for mobilizing support for the Olympics, particularly among the previously disadvantaged.

It is also clear that the Mandela government viewed the Olympics as part of their growth strategy. On 5 June 1996 the Cabinet declared its unequivocal support of the bid and committed the government to underwriting Olympic costs. The government became very active in the latter stages of the bid process in international lobbying for a successful outcome.

How is it, then, that the key opinion leaders in South African society (including human justice advocates such as President Mandela and Archbishop Tutu) formed an elite coalition of strident support for the bid? It might be argued that the development theme was an ideology to legitimate both government and grass-roots support and thereby mask economic interests. There is little doubt that at least some members of the corporate elite would benefit from a successful Games bid. On the other hand, there was also the conviction that the mega-event could be harnessed to general civic and national interests in the fight to reverse the inequities of the apartheid society through economic growth. The notion of elitist commercialized sport as a tool of social justice, however, appears so contradictory that these notions almost seem incompatible. For example, world class stadiums and housing for squatters are two opposing goals that are not easy to reconcile. Or, to put it another way, the Olympic agenda and timetable, and the top-down thinking which it requires, does not easily dovetail with local agendas and timetables or community participation — key goals in development.

Urban regime theory acknowledges that coalitions in public policy include both popularly elected officials and interest groups who want to use the institutional apparatus to pursue material goals. These growth machines combine growth entrepreneurs with political actors on the presupposition that economic growth is a public good (Molotch, 1993). Logan and Molotch (1987), on the other hand, argue that there is little evidence that growth eases problems of housing costs or high unemployment. While more development does not necessarily ameliorate urban problems, Stone (1993) has developed

17 Sklair (1994) presents the argument that linking capitalism and development means linking local elites into a transnational capitalist class.
18 Hall (1994: 166) cautions that mega-events might be defined in terms favourable to the disadvantaged, but in reality they are more advantageous to the elite.
19 As one person put it, ‘Beyond lip service (and official documents really are full of it) there is little scope for direct public involvement in the policy development and planning of an Olympic Games. As a manager, all you can attempt and hope for is public buy-in. For the rest, it is probably best left to highly paid but accountable technocrats’ (Bell, 1995: 52). On the other hand, it was acknowledged that a mandate for absolute control was impossible in the new South Africa.
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The linking of the Olympic bid with development seems to have been present from the beginning — even in the intercity competition for bid rights with Durban and Johannesburg where no such theme was present (Weekend Argus, 22–23 January 1994). Since the host city decision is made by the National Olympics Committee (NOCSA), the marketability of Cape Town was a more important factor in site selection than development. However, once Cape Town had entered into the international competition and required government endorsement, the development ideology was an important legitimation for such action. Indeed, the bid might almost have been unthinkable as an instrument of government policy without it. Development provided the rationale to support the diverse interests of the elite coalition promoting the bid. And it also

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heightened the sense of expectation at the grassroots that the Olympics was part of a
general policy to improve and restructure the economy and the city.

It is important to acknowledge that the Olympics itself cannot be considered a project
in human development. In fact, the operation of the IOC, the requirements of elitist sport
and its athletes, and the special privileges given to Olympic sponsors and their guests are
clearly radically opposite to development. The point is that the Olympics is not about
development; it is about sport and commerce. But what appealed to the elite coalition in
South Africa was that the mega-event presented an opportunity to assert a new image of
South Africa to the world by signalling its re-entry into the international economy after
years of economic and political sanctions (Mills, 1994). In that sense, the economic elite
would benefit by re-forming linkages with global capital through the symbolism of a
high-profile mega-event. The large ‘underclass’, on the other hand, had nowhere to go but
up, and, in the current economy, there was little cause for new opportunity. The
Olympics, then, became a symbol of economic growth through anticipated inward
investment and job creation — even if it was unproven and perhaps wishful thinking. It
also conformed with the government shift in thinking from ‘growth through
redistribution’ to ‘redistribution through growth’ (Nattrass, 1996).

From an urban point of view, the Olympics was also symbolic of urban revitalization
in which the deadlines of hosting the world would contribute to accelerating the process
of change — even though some of the changes may have been purely cosmetic (e.g.
reconfiguring the approach road from the airport to hide the squatter camps) while other
changes (e.g. rapid transport) were imperative. Or, as another example, in the months
preceding the final selection by the IOC in 1997, concerted efforts were made to deal with
problems of urban crime and gang warfare in order to enhance the chances of the bid
(Cape Argus, 11 March, 9 and 11 June 1997). Given the media exposure of a mega-event
for a host city, the Olympics might even conceivably have been a consciousness-raising
event for development needs such as housing delivery. Again, much of this might be
wishful thinking but the Olympics were envisioned as a new catalyst for change.

Since the Olympics are not about development per se, the Games could only be
developmental to the extent that there was a deliberate will to make them so. Embracing
principles and putting them in operation are two different things — constantly endangered
by finances, time constraints and politics. Perhaps to ensure a development legacy
whether the bid succeeded or failed, as well as to serve as a demonstration of
development ideals, the idea of Priority Projects was operationalized. The goal was to
make use of a government grant of R86 million for construction of select facilities prior to
the September 1997 IOC decision date. Eight facilities were identified, seven of which
were located in previously disadvantaged areas (indoor halls in Belhar, Philippi East,
Khayelitsha [Mew Way] as kick-start centres, and multipurpose structures at Turfhall,
Langa, Scottsdene and Grassy Park — also including outdoor facilities). On the other
hand, using sports facilities as an anchor for urban renewal strategies has a mixed history,
often displacing its poor existing residents (Fainstein and Fainstein, 1983; Smith and
Keller, 1983; Lipsitz, 1984; Schimmel, 1995).

In pro-growth ideologies, business interests are always equated with the good of the
community as a whole (Judd and Collins, 1979; Schimmel, 1995). Since mega-events are
almost always linked with boosterist ideologies, it is usually assumed that they can be equated
with the public good. It is this assumption that mega-event critics are quick to question. Mega-
events may redevelop urban blight, but they may also only transfer it to another urban location
as the redeveloped site transforms property values and creates a better environment for capital
acquisition. But the conviction that a mega-event will benefit all urban residents, such as Cape
Town bid organizers argued, is based on a trickle-down assumption that may or may not be
accurate. For example, Schimmel (1995: 145–6) points out that growth may actually make life
more difficult for low-income residents, and that the quality of jobs (rather than the quantity of
jobs) created by a service economy are inevitably part-time or low-paying jobs. While the issue
of job quality has been of concern in South Africa, perhaps the more pressing need is for job quantity. The plan of the GEAR economic strategy (Growth, Employment And Redistribution — note growth comes first), announced in 1996, was to create over a million jobs; and yet, due to the rationalization of industry, there had been job losses in spite of economic growth (Osborn, 1997). So, while economic growth in itself does not always produce more jobs, the need for steady employment income through job creation is an absolute pressing need. Whether the Olympics would have been a catalyst to inward investment and job creation of sufficient magnitude to warrant such broad support among those marginalized may indeed be debatable. However, given the past history of South Africa in the world economy, it is clear that a successful Olympics may have assisted in the transformation of South Africa as a safe place for investment with anticipated labour-intensive outcomes.

The post-apartheid era and its reconstruction agenda have been more hopeful times for the disadvantaged majority in South Africa. Yet expectations have been much higher than the government has been able to deliver. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) made jobs and better housing key initiatives; yet delivery has been slow (Coetzee and Graaff, 1996; Simkins, 1996; Blumenfeld, 1997). The distraction hypothesis would suggest that the hype and hoopla associated with an Olympic bid was primarily a high-profile public diversion away from the failures of the government to deliver on its reconstruction goals. This argument could have been used by political opponents of the government, though it was in fact seldom used. It can therefore be argued that the Olympics were perceived by many as a springboard initiative for economic growth.

Conclusion

The idea of harnessing a mega-event to a broader urban agenda that moves beyond the interests of finance capital, developers, inner-city reclamation and the tourist industry is a relatively new idea. This is especially so given the preoccupation with winning IOC votes internationally and the minimization of local costs and dissent. The debate and controversy surrounding the 1996 Olympic bid in the city of Toronto (which ultimately was awarded to Atlanta) serves as an interesting counterpoint to this discussion because it was thought that the conflict over the bid within the city destroyed the bid internationally. Yet Kidd (1992) and Lenskyj (1996) point out that the public debate was an exercise in social democracy and community participation because the end result was a social contract (known as the Toronto Olympic Commitment) that, among other things, was to ensure post-event housing for persons of low income, subsidized Olympic tickets for local low-income residents, the maximization of union jobs and a requirement for environmental assessments of all Olympic projects. Toronto as well as Cape Town have not as yet had an opportunity to put their ideals into practice (though both cities have plans to bid again), but they do point to the fact that sensitization to urban impacts can take new forms — an absolute prerequisite for cities considering mega-event bids in developing countries.

Perhaps the most critical issue in the conception of third-world cities hosting mega-events is the application of political energies and government subventions towards event preparation demanded by the sponsors’ requirements. When local people in the millions lack adequate housing, food and other subsistence needs, preparing for a ‘circus’ when people need ‘bread’ will always appear inappropriate. But the Cape Town bid raises some new options for consideration that could give mega-events new humanitarian urban value. In the end, however, while mega-events might be made an instrument of development to an extent, they are never likely to become its handmaiden.

20 Cochrane et al. (1996) refer to this process in the United Kingdom as bidding for government grants rather than boosting for growth because of the dependence of mega-events on government support.
21 See, for example, the suggestions made by a Cape Town action group to the idea of hosting the Olympics from learning of the experiences of past host cities (Roaf et al., 1996).
It has been argued that in the current era, mega-events (as with other sporting events) can be linked to the revitalization of city centres for purposes of leisure, entertainment and consumption as specifically postmodern urban traits (Hannigan, 1995). Juxtaposed next to this postmodern agenda lies a very oppositional theme of human development in the Cape Town bid which attempted to redress a legacy of urban inequality. In actuality, adding human development to the pressures of mega-event planning may raise expectations that would surely have resulted in post-event criticisms for failure to substantially achieve development goals. Yet, on balance, it is refreshing to think beyond rationales and legitimations to the possibilities of harnessing such events for the broader public good.

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