

Mega-Events and Globalization: A Critical Introduction

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Over the past two decades, academic writing about large scale, highly visible, urban events has become a growth industry. There are now conferences all over the world devoted to discussions of the meaning and importance of the Olympics, or football World Cups, and to debates about their risks and potential legacies.¹ The burgeoning interest in events doesn't stop with these obvious mega-events; it extends to include a range of other high profile entertainment events and urban festivals. In recent years there have been special issues of academic journals devoted to the study of these events and it has become difficult to keep up with the sheer numbers of books that address the topic in some way or another.² Commenting on the recent upsurge of writing on mega-events, Martin Polley notes wryly that if “the motto of London 2012 was ‘inspire a generation’ for hundreds of authors this was easily recast as inspire a publication.”³ Prominent publishers such as Routledge, Elsevier and John Wiley have started book series in “event management” and there are a growing number of university programs devoted to preparing students for careers managing and hosting major events.

Definitions of “mega-events,” and of “event studies” more broadly, vary across different theoretical understandings and disciplines and there are a number of roughly equivalent phrases in both academic and popular writing, such as “Hallmark” or “Marquee” events. Writing in 2000, Maurice Roche offered one of the earliest definitions

of mega-events: “large-scale cultural (including commercial and sporting) events, which have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance.”⁴ This definition has the virtues of simplicity and inclusiveness. Still, it seems almost modest by today’s standards, when the world’s most prominent mega-events command such unprecedented public visibility and popularity, now not just “mass popular appeal,” but mass appeal on a truly global scale. In recent years, scholarly researchers and university administrators have recognized just how much mega-events *matter* to hundreds of millions of enthusiasts: as vital civic occasions; celebrations of identity, nation and community; and welcome opportunities for distraction. Because they are recurring events held according to an expected schedule, Olympics and men’s football World Cups, in particular, have become normalized as seemingly natural features of the rhythms of modern life, an unfolding horizon of festivals of modernity anticipated like the changes of the seasons.

A handful of other regularly scheduled major events, such as the Superbowl in the U.S., can reach similar levels of prominence and, in Roche’s words, there is a “dense social-ecosystem” of second and third tier mega-events vying for public and media attention on the global stage, such as the Commonwealth, Pan American or Asian Games, Youth Olympics, “other” World Cups in sports such as rugby, cricket, track and field athletics and Formula 1 car races.⁵ These sporting events jostle for space in international, national and local civic calendars with large-scale political gatherings, such as G8 Summits and IMF or World Bank conferences, as well as prominent art, film and music festivals, and a wide range of “heritage” or historical celebrations. In many parts of the world, civic life and leisure in the early twenty first century are strongly influenced by the

rhythms of these events. In this context, it shouldn't be surprising to find that the academic study of events, has become regularized and normalized too, often connecting to institutions outside the academy to promote new ways of thinking about events, and new conceptual or organizational skills, all geared to a fast growing economy of events and intense experiences.

Economy is the operant term here because the world's most prominent mega-events have become economic monsters, sucking in huge amounts of public investment while generating global audiences whose attraction for cities, and value to advertisers and sponsors, has inflated dramatically since the 1980s. Bent Flyvbjerg suggests that we should probably distinguish between 'mega' (million), 'giga' (billion), and 'tera' (trillion) dollar (USD), projects depending on their scale.⁶ But, the point is that civic and national ambitions for mega-events-- for recognition, visibility, political leverage, tourism, foreign investment, or economic development—now underwrite the production of spectacles that are increasingly significant nodal points of global communications and capitalist accumulation. As a result, it has become more difficult than ever to conceive of such events as stand alone occasions with political, economic or cultural autonomy; rather mega-events in the twenty first century reveal themselves as deeply and profoundly *relational*. In this sense all mega-events today are inherently global. They necessarily connect the local to the global because their very existence requires a sustained engagement between national and local authorities, supporters and critics, with global networks of capital accumulation and circulation, culture and communications, international governmental relations, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and international flows of migration and tourism.

Mega-Events, Academic Writing and the Project of this Book

These relational networks and flows include the writing of academics, the organizations that fund research, the agencies that hire academic consultants and the publishers of scholarly work. The growing academic interest in mega-events has not only developed in conjunction with the escalating scale, visibility and cost of mega-events, it has also been influenced by a strengthening entrepreneurial culture in many universities since the late 1980s.⁷ Diminishing state investments in Western universities have been accompanied by greater demands for quality assurance, accountability and, in some jurisdictions, the establishment of competitive “merit-based” funding models. Swept up in this competitive market logic, universities have worked harder to measure and improve “productivity” while simultaneously promoting their “brands” in national and international markets for research funding, investment, and student and faculty recruitment. In a world driven by university and departmental rankings, citation counts, impact indices, and sizes of research grants, academic writers have been pushed to be more entrepreneurial in their day-to-day professional lives.

The academic study of mega-events has taken off in this context, not just because of the prestige by association that can accrue to individual researchers and their universities through the study of these events, but also because mega-events offer rich opportunities for collaboration with consultants, planners, marketers, business organizations, INGOs, BINGOS (business oriented, international non governmental organizations) and governments. Such collaborations often bring the entrepreneurial agendas of university-based researchers into a (largely) harmonious relationship with the entrepreneurial ambitions of the cities and nations who host mega-events as well as those

of the INGOs and corporations who sanction the events, promote them, profit from them, or use them as platforms to achieve other agendas.

Consider just two examples. First, during the 2010 Shanghai World Expo--whose theme was “Better City, Better Life” -- academic researchers and consultants played a prominent role in congresses and forums examining issues of urban development and environmental sustainability. This resulted in a joint United Nations/International Bureau of Expositions “Guide for Sustainable Urban Development in the 21st Century.”⁸ Academics literally became part of the exhibition through their contribution to the “social responsibility” framing of the event. There is nothing particularly new in this. From the time of their origins in nineteenth century Europe, International Expositions have often involved prominent academics in event organization and have hosted congresses and public lectures that attracted researchers and practitioners from a wide range of disciplines.⁹ The growth of social responsibility themes in the branding of World Expos since the 1970s represents a continuation of this older pedagogical tradition and expands it in a progressive contemporary direction, thereby opening up opportunities for collaborations with academic researchers in newer fields of global relevance such as environmental sustainability and social marketing.

A second example is the role played by academics over the past twenty years in the international promotion of sport for development and peace; variously working in conjunction with United Nations agencies, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Commonwealth Games Committees, the Federation Internationale de Football (FIFA) and advocacy groups, such as the INGO, *Right to Play*. As Bruce Kidd has noted, a late twentieth century shift towards market-oriented solutions to global problems ushered in a

“new focus on entrepreneurship” that saw growing interest in the use of sport as a strategy for social development, largely driven by a spirit of humanitarian intervention.¹⁰ Bringing international sport organizations such as the IOC or FIFA into such endeavors underlined the notion that sporting mega-events can promote socially progressive and positive outcomes, including opening up of sporting opportunities for women and people with disabilities, championing human rights and using sport as a tool in international economic development.¹¹

These examples demonstrate how academic collaborations with agencies involved in the staging of mega-events in recent years have been important both in the promotion of broader social objectives and of more immediate “legacies.” In the latter case, it is well established that the legacies of mega-events can be tangible in nature; that is, related in some way to improvements in the material infrastructure or, more controversially, to the economies of a city or nation. Tangible legacies typically involve such things as major investments in mass transportation, the redevelopment of waterfront communities or the building of iconic sports stadiums. In addition, mega-events can also leave intangible legacies related to the rich lived experiences they often provide. As Roche has noted, mega-events can provide audiences and participants with popular memories and cultural resources for construction of “a meaningful life” and for reflecting upon identity and enacting agency.¹² Sporting mega-events, in particular, Roche suggests, provide important opportunities for the creation of a global sense of “co-presence” among the world’s populations. In contrast to such things as disasters, wars and VIP funerals, Roche argues, “the planned and positive (celebratory) character” of sporting mega-events

“provide cultural realizations of ‘the global village’ that are otherwise unmatched as global cultural forms.”¹³

There is no question that academic work focused on identifying and weighing the tangible and intangible legacies of mega-events, or on how mega-events might promote socially progressive agendas, has provided important information and significant insights. But, in our view, much of this literature—even when it appears progressive in intent—tends to downplay the negative or contradictory features of these events, especially in respect to considerations of injustice, inequality, social polarization and domination. At its worst, this can lend itself to uncritical evangelism in mega-event studies or a blind rush to cash in on them in various ways. For example, despite its joint sponsorship by the United Nations, the *Shanghai Manual* produced at the World Expo in 2010 reads more like a promotional brochure for its sponsoring body, the Bureau of International Exhibitions, than a measured academic assessment of mega-events and issues of environmental sustainability.¹⁴ The claim that “investment in mega-events is an investment for the public good” is treated throughout the document as an axiomatic principle.¹⁵ This leaves no room to consider more controversial aspects of mega-events, such as the slum clearances and displacements of poor citizens that occurred in the years before the Shanghai World Expo, displacements masked by the self-professed commitment to environmental sustainability.¹⁶

Similarly, much of the writing on sport for development and peace (although certainly not all of it) has failed to address the possibility that some of its sponsoring organizations may be implicated in the exacerbation of economic inequality and social polarization, issues that the movement is arguably committed to address. In other

instances – the case of FIFA sponsored initiatives is especially notable here –there has been insufficient scholarly attention to the possibility that sport and development projects may be implicated in intra-organizational cronyism, corruption and clientalism. In some cases, the involvement of academics with major sporting INGOS can lead to significant conflicts of interest; for example, as Helen Lenskyj suggests, when the participation of academics in research institutes subsidized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) can blur “the lines between Olympic cheerleading and scholarly debate.”¹⁷

These lines are easily blurred because well-established organizations that sponsor sporting mega-events, such as the IOC or FIFA, have a taken-for-granted global presence through their longstanding roles as sport regulatory bodies and their histories of partnership with governments, powerful corporations and other international organizations. Moreover, since the 1990s the increased wealth of these organizations has heightened their capacities for largesse on a variety of fronts, including support to projects of interest to academic researchers. At the same time, intense competition between nations and cities for sporting mega-events has created greater possibilities for scandal, including, most recently, a number of indictments and arrests of prominent FIFA officials for allegations of bribery and corruption made by U.S. authorities. The long-term consequences of these indictments and arrests remain to be seen but, like the IOC, FIFA has shown itself to be exceptionally adroit in the past at circumventing challenges to its authority and influence. Both organizations have worked hard, often using public relations specialists – experts in the art of “spin”—to deflect criticism and promote themselves as non-profit entities with a socially progressive mission: expanding sporting opportunities for *all* on a global scale. ¹⁸

The seductive romanticism of this image, matched with the economic and geopolitical ambitions of hosts and sponsoring organizations, and the global popularity of events such as the Olympics or men's World Cup, have tended to give a Teflon character to organizations such as the IOC or FIFA. Criticism can be frequent, and in the case of the IOC has led to modest reforms, but few of the most trenchant criticisms seem to stick. To complicate things further, in a world characterized by what David Harvey calls "the commodification and commercialization of everything," even highly critical analyses of mega-events can be subsumed and subverted by commercial and promotional forces.¹⁹ For example, activist criticisms of mega-events can readily find places in non-critical university courses in event studies, adding just enough criticism to bolster a claim to comprehensiveness or social relevance while simultaneously inoculating students against the dangers of political radicalism. The critique of mega-events can also contribute to what Thomas Kemple calls "new ways of knowing and doing capitalism," where the targets of criticism learn from their critics and adapt accordingly. In such circumstances criticism can simply become part of the "stocks" of commercial and political acumen that find their way into the "portfolios" of the very organizations that are being criticized.²⁰

Furthermore, the lines between the sales objectives of mega-event promoters and sponsors, and those of publishers who sell academic discourses about such events—even critical ones--can sometimes be very thin. This book, whose contributors take a largely critical view of mega events, is no exception. Such are the contradictions in a world where images and video clips of urban protests in Brazil during the Confederation Cup in June of 2013 were posted on YouTube and used by newspapers to sell audiences to advertisers, or, as James Compton states in his chapter in this volume, where digitally

shared narratives and videos of Cossacks whipping members of the activist group, Pussy Riot, at the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics were readily incorporated into “the promotional machinery of the global marketing of events and experiences.”

Still, despite the powerful conformist tendencies and pressures noted above, the contradictions surrounding mega-events today don't always result in the neutralizing sale of criticism or the containment of its oppositional energy. The more economically monstrous and spectacular that mega-events have become over the past two decades, the more opposition they appear to have generated. Because mega-events are inherently relational in a more broadly global sense than ever before, the nations, cities and INGOS who typically award and license these events must now engage with an international cacophony of dissenting voices, with the unlikely prospect that these voices can be completely silenced in the age of global media. As Kevin Fox Gotham observes later in this book:

“Unlike the past, where opposition to mega-events was often muted or exceptional, today we witness an explosion of unrest and protests led by opposition coalitions dedicated to drawing global attention to the inequities and anti-democratic nature of spectacles.”

Sporting mega-events have become especially notable focal points for social criticism and unrest because they provide internationally visible opportunities for critics to protest perceived inequalities, corruption or social injustice by “seizing the platform” that the events provide.²¹ Depending on the social and political context of the event in question, criticism can variously be found in large public demonstrations, street art, graffiti, and popular literature in addition to news reporting, investigative journalism and opinion columns in both mainstream and alternative news media, as well as in a considerable body of academic work. Criticism can also circulate globally in digital form,

in blogs, tweets and on activist websites, creating new social and intellectual resources and new networked possibilities for opposition. The critique of sporting mega-events has become an important aspect of globalization because it provides a transnational social and political space for public discussion that exceeds the boundaries of nation states. This lends itself to greater opportunities to evaluate mega-events from multiple standpoints of global justice, postcolonial aspirations and other important ethical, social, political and ecological issues of our time.²²

Our goal in this collection is to map the main lines of criticism directed towards mega-events in the early twenty-first century, while exploring theoretical explanations of the increasing prominence of mega-events in contemporary life, especially in non-western contexts, such as East Asia, the so-called BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and areas of the world often designated as “the Global South.”²³ The widespread hosting of mega-events in Asian and Southern nations is a comparatively recent phenomenon. For example, throughout the first half of the twentieth century the Olympics were exclusively hosted by cities in Western (now often called “Northern”) nations. There was greater global variation in host cities for men’s football (soccer) World Cups, largely due to the intensity of support for football in South America, as well as FIFA’s policy of spreading the event to its regional associations. Still, between the inception of the World Cup in 1930 and the end of the twentieth century, the event was held in Western nations 10 times in comparison to only 5 times in countries in either the East or South.

The geographical distribution of host cities for World’s Fairs and major international expositions reveals a roughly similar spatial trajectory. There were

numerous “international” expositions in the nineteenth century, ranging in scale and public visibility, hosted in major European cities. Major industrial exhibitions were also staged frequently throughout the colonies of the World Powers during the nineteenth century—in cities such as Buenos Aires, Calcutta, Rio de Janeiro, Bogotá, Sao Paulo and Bombay. As Armand Mattelart points out, among major nations of the era, only China and Japan proved initially resistant to the emergence of this “new form of contact among nations via industry.”²⁴ However, in the years between the end of the First World War and the 1990s, the process of awarding International Exhibitions became more regulated and host cities were more likely to be located in the West. However, by the end of the twentieth century, World’s Fairs, or “Expos” began to be awarded to cities in the East and South in greater numbers. We have already noted that Shanghai was host to the “World Expo” in 2010. Yeosu, South Korea, hosted the ensuing World Expo in 2012 and World Expo events are scheduled for Kazakhstan in 2017 and Dubai in 2020.

A similar globalizing trend is evident in the case of sporting mega-events. The BRICS nations have been especially notable in this regard, with the summer or winter Olympics awarded to Beijing in 2008, Sochi in 2014, Rio de Janeiro in 2016, youth Olympics to Nanjing in 2014 and Commonwealth Games to Delhi in 2010.²⁵ Since 2000, the men’s football World Cup was held in South Africa in 2010, in Brazil in 2014 and is scheduled for Russia in 2018. Outside the BRIC nations, since the late 1990s, prominent sporting events have been held, or are scheduled, for many other cities and nations in the East and South. Examples include Japan (Winter Olympics in Nagano in 1998, the 2002 men’s football World Cup in multiple cities and the Summer Olympics in Tokyo in

2020); South Korea (the 2002 men's football World Cup and the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang); Qatar (the 2022 men's football World Cup).

In compiling the chapters in the book we had a number of central organizing questions in mind. What are the factors that have made mega-events so important in cities and nations around the world and in particular why has the hosting of mega-events become so attractive to cities in the BRICS nations and the Global South? What are the economic, political and social risks and benefits of hosting such events? What implications, if any, can be drawn from analyses of recent spectacular events in the BRICS and South for a broader understanding of changing relations of economic and political power on a global scale? To what extent do such events promote or deform concepts of local and global citizenship or shape conditions of governance at local, national and international levels? To what extent do mega-events contribute to global social inequalities or provide opportunities for challenging them? What do such events tell us about the significance or the effectiveness of various forms of popular resistance to global power networks?

Key Issues in the Critical Analysis of Contemporary Mega-Events.

The chapters that follow do not offer definitive answers to these questions but taken collectively they highlight a number of important issues in the critical analysis of mega-events and globalization. In addressing these issues, many of our contributors take their inspiration from the “alter-globalization” struggles against social polarization, economic inequality and injustice that became prominent around the world over the past two decades. In our view, the nature and scale of these struggles, and the social conditions that appear to have generated them, are leading greater numbers of researchers

to re-engage with critical political economy perspectives that fell out of fashion in academic writing on globalization and mega-events during the 1990s and early 2000s.

Consider just a few examples of critical political economy's fall from grace in the late twentieth century. Roland Robertson's influential sociological work on globalization in the 1990s is particularly notable here as is Roche's early work on mega-events. Both writers position their projects as an attempt to go beyond the limitations of critical political economy perspectives such as the Marxian analysis of imperialism, Latin American dependency theories, and the World Systems Theory of writers such as Immanuel Wallerstein or Giovanni Arrighi. In Robertson's words it was necessary to go beyond the economistic focus of these theories to emphasize "*culture* and the agency aspect of the making of the global system."²⁶ Roche takes a similar view in arguing for a more "complex" analysis of how mega-events can be associated with globalization, and especially with the formation of "global culture."²⁷ In addition, albeit with a different and more critical focus, many late twentieth century theorists of "postcolonialism" challenged what they saw as the Eurocentrism and economic determinism of Marxian-inspired theories of imperialism, dependency or capitalist globalization.²⁸

These were extremely important and compelling interventions that introduced a much-needed sensitivity to issues of human self-creation, gendered, racial and national *differences* and hybridities in academic writing on globalization. But, over the past 20 years the increasing prominence of alter-globalization movements at WTO, IMF and G8 meetings; the U.S. centered "Occupy" movement; struggles over "structural adjustments" in South America and over "austerity" in the Eurozone; and the struggles of dissident indigenous and other subaltern groups across Latin America, Africa and Asia have all

suggested a need to reconsider the value of critical political economy. One common theme that emerged from such struggles was a growing awareness by academic critics of the extraordinary impact of the late twentieth century neo-liberal ideological turn in international economic relations, with accompanying policies that accelerated the mobility of capital around the world while generating increasing social inequality and environmental destruction in its wake. The global financial crisis of 2007-2008 in particular invited a political economic analysis of the irrationalities and contradictions of unregulated capitalist globalization. By the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, notable Marxian critics, such as David Harvey, had become influential in international academic networks in many disciplines and there were a number of conferences and special editions of journals making a plea for the return to critical political economy perspectives on globalization.²⁹

Taking up this challenge we argue that one of the most important critical issues in the study of mega-events is to assess the role they play in expanding the realm of capitalist exchange on a global scale. The centerpiece of industrial capitalism has always been the making of tangible objects for consumption—items such as machines, clothing, knives or forks. However, as long as industrial capitalist production is concentrated on the production of tangible objects “it faces chronic problems of overproduction due to the tendency for markets to become satiated.”³⁰ For financial expansion to occur the lifetime of consumer products must ideally be shortened and dependencies on new products must be developed. The push for new products in the postwar era-- new forms of commodification – led to the growth of economies built around the production of immaterial goods such as services, knowledge, experiences and events. By the final two

decades of the twentieth century, the production of events in many parts of the world was beginning to rival the more traditional making of things.³¹

As early as the 1940s, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno commented on the striking development of “cultural industries” in Western societies.³² There has been a significant and consistent growth in the scale and value of cultural commodities in the world since then and mega-events have been a constituent part of this process. The essential political-economic points here are twofold. The first is the degree to which the growth and commodification of events has facilitated economic growth by expanding the sphere of exchange—the universalization of the market. The second is the way that ephemeral commodities and the peripheral activities they stimulate have provided a way for capital that is launched into circulation to be recuperated quickly. As David Harvey argues, echoing Marx: “the faster the capital launched into circulation can be recuperated, the greater the profit will be.”³³ With their fixed and short time frames, the recuperation of capital investments in mega-events is noticeable faster than, say, in the automobile, electronic or aerospace industries.

This partially explains the extent to which mega-events have acted historically as constitutive features of the rationalization of space and time associated with the global market system. The spatial rationalization of many of the world’s most prominent cities has involved numerous programs of “creative destruction;” for example through massive population displacements and dispossessions, the destruction of older communities and of the natural environment, the replacement of low rise communities by high rise buildings, and the broad scale redesign of urban space to facilitate the easier movement of people and commerce. But, the last forty years have witnessed an unprecedented boom in the

urbanization of economic life around the world, resulting in hundreds of million people streaming from rural areas into the worlds largest cities, and most often into slums, barrios and favelas.³⁴ At the same time, many urban areas have developed to become what John Hannigan calls “fantasy cities;” homes to spectacular architecture, vast entertainment complexes of theatres, upmarket stores, museums, and sports stadia, along with substantially gentrified downtown populations.³⁵ The “fantastic” aspect of life in these cities, or at least in their core entertainment and gentrified residential zones, derives from their heavy reliance on spaces of spectacle.

This raises the question of exactly who has benefitted most from the programs of creative destruction associated with the intensified global production of spaces of spectacle. There are usually clear borders between slum dwellers and the residents of gentrified spaces in fantasy cities. However, an important part of the creative destruction that often accompanies mega-events is the transgression of these borders by opening up favelas, ghettos and slums to the combined interventions of real-estate investment and finance capital.³⁶ On the one hand, these areas can be emptied of their residents in the run up to staging mega-events, sometimes forcibly, in order to open geographically desirable slum spaces for financial speculation and gentrification. On the other hand, mega-events can also act as stimulants to open slums to the sale of internationally branded products by inundating poor communities with the advertising of event sponsors, encouraging a loosening of credit restrictions to encourage consumption and providing a rationale for a police clampdown on black market activities.

The use of cities to promote accumulation in this way has led to a sometimes-bizarre mix of market volatility and gentrification in the wake of hosting mega-events.

In economically strong economies, such as the U.S., some European societies, as well as *some* of the BRICS and East Asian nations, mega-events provide a way of absorbing surplus capital while simultaneously providing additional stimulants to local economies by multiplying and accelerating connections to global circuits of capitalist production and circulation. However, huge capital investments in spectacle have tended to hyper-inflate the importance of real estate not only in “global cities” but in many aspiring cities as well. For example, unprecedented rural in-migration in Chinese cities has made the construction of residential apartments a major factor in an economy that in turn has become “the main driver of the global economy since the world-wide crisis that began in 2007.”³⁷ When you add in expenditure for creating factory, warehouse and office spaces, along with investment in gentrified shopping and entertainment districts and large-scale infrastructure projects— including mega-events such as the Beijing Olympics, the Asian Games in Guangzhou, or the Shanghai World Expo -- the scale of investment in Chinese cities over the past two decades has simply been overwhelming. In this regard, Harvey points to a *Financial Times* report noting how “in just two years, from 2011 to 2012, China produced more cement than the United States did in the entire twentieth century.”³⁸ Along with this urban boom, real estate values in the “desirable” areas of many Chinese cities—Shanghai and Hong Kong provide obvious examples--have increased significantly, while also being subject to volatile swings in market prices.

At least in China a socialist legacy has meant there have been attempts (although rarely at market rates) to compensate the stunningly large populations that have been displaced by mega-projects and mega-events.³⁹ As the regulatory climate in international economic development has shifted in a neoliberal direction in many other parts of the

world there has been greater reliance on privatization in place of older state-centered models that operated on the notion that progressive taxation and rational planning could provide vital *public* amenities and services. Today, many self-defined “world class” or “global” cities struggle with problems of homelessness and reduced public services while taxation rates for corporations and wealthy individuals continue to fall. Urban elites often view mega-events as vital strategies of wealth creation but there is little evidence to suggest that the wealth they create trickles down to urban underclasses who face an erosion of public services and the challenge of finding affordable housing, health services and transportation. In many of the world’s “global cities” a combination of gentrification and land speculation has lent itself to shortages in affordable housing frequently combined with surpluses of properties that sit empty as investors wait for property values to increase.

If mega-events are often associated with programs of creative destruction, gentrification, social polarization and property speculation, they have also been important manifestations of significant financialization in late twentieth and early twentieth century capitalism. A sweeping deregulation of the international financial system in the 1970s, matched with technological developments in communications and computing; a neoliberalization of monetary policy in a number of the world’s major economies; and a parallel neoliberal turn within the World Bank and the International monetary fund had the effect of shifting the nexus between states and international finance from the 1970s through the 1990s.⁴⁰ Two key aspects of late twentieth century globalization arose from these circumstances. The first was a dramatic increase in the number of corporations that began to organize their profit taking across state boundaries. The second was a rapid

integration of previously globalized national and regional markets into a single, largely unregulated, global market.⁴¹ As Samir Amin argues:

“whereas a few decades ago the large corporations still waged their competitive battles essentially on national markets, the market size now required for victory in the first round of matches is approaching 500-600 million consumers.”⁴²

Few circumstances in the world can mobilize these mega-markets of potential consumers like contemporary mega-events and especially major international sporting events such as the Olympics and the men’s football World Cup. At the risk of only slight exaggeration you can make the argument that sporting mega-events have increasingly become a terrain where much of the world does business. Moreover, their escalating scale in recent years has effectively made them institutions that promote intense financialization and speculative investment. Most notably, the production of mega-events is typically dependent upon a parallel production of often staggering debt. The world’s bankers and well-capitalized investors are the inevitable winners. The losers are cities and nations not yet sitting at the world’s financial head table but who are tempted to borrow heavily to finance their ambitions for an invitation to the dinner. As Greece found out in 2004, the turn to mega-event capitalism as a solution to slow economic growth, let alone as an expression of national pride and regional political ambition, can be an immense financial trap.

The capacity of digital media to provide new opportunities for broadening and valorizing audience attention is another significant issue in the critical analysis of mega-events and globalization in the twenty-first century. The commodification of new audiences in online platforms creates enhanced capacities for an expansion – a further pushing back—of capital’s frontiers. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter have

become unprecedented vehicles for creating new markets, commodities, synergies, forms of marketing, networks of publicity and, some argue, even new forms of immaterial labour.⁴³ They also play a key role in the acceleration of the recovery time of digital investments. But, as noted earlier, they simultaneously provide enhanced means to criticize the very markets, synergies and networks they create. This invites the question whether the possibilities for reflexivity and opposition that social media create can offer *effective* challenges to capitalist accumulation or whether, as Jodi Dean argues, these challenges are likely to be little more than democratic or participatory “fantasies.”⁴⁴

Amin raises an important point for debate when he argues that the highly mediated global politics of the twenty-first century – or as he calls it, “low intensity democracy”--has a tendency to devolve into populist positions that are as likely to move in socially conservative directions as progressive ones. Insofar as the criticisms of low intensity democracy largely focus on local, regional or national issues—such as transportation costs, and housing availability--Amin suggests, they tend not to grasp the dynamics of the current stage of international market-centered imperialism.⁴⁵ Mezzadra and Neilson take the analysis further, arguing that the challenge is one of “translatability,” of implementing effective articulations between local and global criticisms based on shared understandings of “the processes of dispossession and exploitation that crisscross the operations of capital.”⁴⁶ This may mean linking up or coordinating criticism raised at different types of mega-events, for example of WTO summits and men’s football World Cups or the Olympics. The ultimate goal is the attempt to build “new transnational forms of democratic political organization capable of combining struggles and multiplying their affirmative aspects.”⁴⁷

Democratic governance is another significant issue surrounding mega-events and globalization in the twenty-first century. Mega-events not only require creative destruction, they require it on a fixed schedule, with little room for error. Transportation infrastructure must to be well in place by the start of the event and land redevelopment completed, with pavilions, stadiums arenas and other venues finished to required standards. For these reasons, the run up to staging mega-events is often put on an emergency footing with an accompanying relaxation of normal democratic oversight. In this sense, and virtually from the point at which bids from hosting nations or cities are accepted, mega-events occur as “states of exception” where normal rules of governance become suspended in deference to the “needs” of local organizing committees, sponsors and the INGOS that have given them their blessing.⁴⁸ INGOS in sport, such as FIFA and the IOC, wield considerable power by their ability to select between cities or nations with competing bids, insisting on certain event standards and pressuring governments about where to put what venues. This increases the democratic deficit associated with mega-events because these INGOS are not accountable to any electorate, as FIFA’s numerous bribery and corruption scandals have graphically demonstrated. Furthermore, the power of the largest sporting INGOS has accelerated since the 1980s as their own capacities to accumulate capital have grown through increased media and advertising revenues, sponsorships and the aggressive defense of copyright associated with their brands. In 2010, FIFA reported “reserves” of \$1,280 million (USD) with a substantial portion of that generated after 2000. The IOC earned a record \$ 8 billion (USD) between 2009 and 2013.⁴⁹

A state of exception intensifies during the actual staging of mega-events, largely due to security concerns, forcing citizens to endure higher levels of security and surveillance than they might normally accept. Fear of the threat of terrorism drives these concerns and provides a powerful rationale for increased security, with the largest mega-events now spending billions of dollars on highly militarized security and surveillance regimes. Research has shown that sports mega-events above all provide unique opportunities to deploy and test new technologies and strategies, with the lessons learned at one sports mega-event readily transferred to other events in a developing model of “best practices” in security.⁵⁰ In recent years this has sometimes involved contracts with private security companies, most recently, Brazil’s multi-billion dollar retention of Israeli security companies to assist government and police agencies during the 2014 men’s football World Cup.⁵¹ While the official rationale for high security is based on meeting the threat of terrorism, enhanced security forces and technologies can be deployed in response to a much broader range of “security challenges” deemed to potentially threaten the event, including the militarized “management” of legitimate protests.

Once a highly militarized security apparatus is put in place it is hard to roll it back. As one security official told U.S. journalist Dave Zirin before the 2012 London Olympics, if you buy a drone, you are not going to “just put it back in the box.”⁵² More broadly, we might say that the world’s apparent addiction to mega-events (and to related urban mega-projects) in the twenty-first century is strongly implicated in an increasing *normalization of states of exception*. In many parts of the West that means the normalization of conditions where traditions of democratic governance are under revision, where the formerly “exceptional” is becoming increasingly routine. However, the militarization of

mega-event security is only one coordinating dimension of an intensified focus on quasi-military “logistics” as a normal state of planning in states of exception. Mezzadra and Neilson define logistics as “ the art and science of building networked relations” in order to “organize capital...to make every step of its ‘turnover’ productive.”⁵³ As mega-events have grown in scale and economic value over the past half century we can observe a subtle historical shift in their organizational dynamics and management—from comparatively amateur approaches to management at the mid-point of the twentieth century, to more professionalized approaches through the end of the century, to today’s highly coordinated, networked, logistical approaches dominated by an underlying “code” which introduces “the social relation of capital into the most minute and detailed operations.”⁵⁴

Still, and despite its omnipresence, this code is subtly mediated by national specificities associated with the histories and ambitions of hosting nations. The character of networked operational logistics at the Summer Olympics in Beijing in 2008 was not precisely the same as in the 2012 London Olympics in London, nor in the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia. This is an important point because it seems somewhat at odds with the terms of globalization that are now so often set by transnational actors. For example, the European Union can dictate monetary policy to member states – the current situation in Greece is an obvious example; organizations such as the G8 provide platforms for a dense web of international agreements; transnational organizations such as the IMF or World Bank dictate economic terms to many nations; and, while not on the same scale of importance, highly capitalized INGOs such as the IOC and FIFA have delegations from nation states regularly begging at their doorsteps.

Nonetheless, states still matter. If there was a focus on the decline of state power in much of the writing on globalization during the 1990s, in recent years there has been a more subtle reconsideration of the role states play in global capitalism and in the assertion of neo-imperial ambitions. This point seems obvious enough given the success of Chinese “state capitalism” and there is no doubt that the United States continues to be a significant force in framing many of the rules that govern international trade and financial institutions. But, more broadly, states have always had an ambivalent but *necessary* relationship to the transnational corporations (TNCS) who are in the forefront of capitalist globalization. As Immanuel Wallerstein points out, TNCs:

“have always needed states and fight states. They need states to guarantee their global attempt at monopolization and hence high profit levels, as well as to help limit the demands of workers. They fight the states insofar as the states act as protections of antiquated interests or are over responsive to workers (or popular) pressures.”⁵⁵

Mega-events can provide dramatic forums where these tensions are played out. On the one hand, they are staged to promote economic interests associated with the attempt to revalorize urban spaces, as well to attract investments, skilled or affluent immigrants and tourists as well as priming local consumer markets. But, on the other hand, their promoters seek legitimacy by referencing sometimes “antiquated” interests and representations, such as civic or national pride, citizenship and “popular” sovereignty. The contradiction can lend support to opposition when mega-events are seen to promote actions running contrary to local traditions and values, when they appear to oppose hard won democratic victories, or fail to live up to their own rhetorics of legitimation. For example, Mezzadra and Neilson argue that mass protests in Brazil during the 2013 Confederation Cup and 2014 men’s World Cup could mobilize around “the political legitimacy acquired in the years of the Lula governments and the social power manifest

in an unprecedented access to consumer opportunities” deriving from previous income redistribution policies.⁵⁶

It goes without saying that the lure of mega-events in nations and cities around the world is driven by much more than purely economic rationales, even if those rationales are now inescapable dimensions of any nation’s or city’s decision to launch a bid. Rationales for bidding on mega-events in the East and South, for example, are often similar to those of cities in the West or North but are differentially inflected based on particularities of the nations and cities in question, many of which have histories of Western colonization. As several of the contributors to this volume suggest, mega-events are widely understood across the East and Global South to offer both economic and political opportunities for formerly peripheral nations and cities to demonstrate entrepreneurialism, organizational competence and technical expertise, all with a view to improving their civic and national images and achieving a more central position in global circuits of investment, finance, communications and tourism. However, they are also seen to provide opportunities for nations and cities in the East and South to stake a claim to something more –recognition, respect, and full fledged participation on the “world class” stage of twenty-first century modernity, not only in economic, social and political terms but also in the cultural realms of art and architecture.

Earlier, we referred to mega-events as “festivals of modernity” and as Arif Dirlik argues there can be little doubt that if “globalization means anything, it is the incorporation of societies globally into a capitalist modernity.”⁵⁷ But today, capitalist modernity has become far more complex and variegated than in the early twentieth century when it was dominated by a singularly colonial and Western sensibility. The

Second World War and its decolonization aftermath, in Dirlik's words:

“restored the voices of the colonized, and opened the way to recognition of the spatial and temporal co-presence of those whom a Eurocentric modernization discourse had relegated to invisibility and backwardness.”⁵⁸

By participating in mega-events, formerly colonized countries can showcase their economic and technological “development” and make their own claims on modernity. In doing this, they have typically juxtaposed memories and representations of their own pasts and hopes for the future with dominant Eurocentric strands of late twentieth century modernity. Today, as Dirlik argues:

“intensified and accelerated interactions between societies—that justify the discourse of globalization—are surely signs of the modern. Yet these very same relationships render modernity into a site of conflict and contention, raising fundamental questions about its historical and ethical meaning (or meaninglessness).”⁵⁹

So, the presence of formerly colonial societies as hosts and participants in today's mega-events is at once an affirmation of their inclusion in a global system of capitalist modernity and an ongoing source of reflexivity about fissures and fractures in the ways that global modernity can be promoted and experienced.

This raises additional questions about the role that mega-events in non-Western societies might play as manifestations of global power shifts, and most notably in the erosion of the power of the “global triad” of economic powers that became dominant after the Second World War: the United States, Europe and Japan. China, in particular, emerged during the late twentieth century as a returning power in the global economy suggesting the re-emergence of an increasingly multi-polar economic system. Yuezhi Zhao points out that China's striking economic growth was accompanied by a number of significant “soft power” initiatives in the early 2000s.⁶⁰ Examples include the establishment of Confucius Institutes all over the world, “state funding to official media

outlets with an explicit objective to expand their global reach” as well as increased interest in issues of global media governance, among many other initiatives designed to improve China’s image abroad.”⁶¹ Bids for mega-events such as the 2008 Summer Olympics, or for second tier events such as the Asian Games, are fully consistent with these broader initiatives. They are also consonant with international development policies that have seen Chinese financial aid and engineering expertise involved in constructing more than 50 sports stadiums across Africa, South America, Latin America and other parts of Asia.⁶² At the same time, as Huyn Bang Shin points out in this chapter in this volume, the quest for mega-event hosting in China has also been influenced by *internal* power dynamics associated with rising inter-city competition made possible after the economic reforms of the 1990s.

If there is a distinctively Chinese approach to capitalist modernity that portends a more geographically multi-polar international economic and political order there are also influential variants emerging in many other parts of the world. For example, the Sochi Olympics and upcoming Russian men’s football World Cup were clearly pursued for the promotion of Russian identity as well as an assertion of the virtues of Russian capitalist modernity. Similarly, elites in the oil rich Middle East are seeking to use mega-events to promote their brands of (Islamic) modernization, despite that region’s internal struggles with sectarian differences and resurgent “tradition” in the form of fundamentalist political movements. The spectacular real estate, construction and sporting mega-projects scheduled for cities such as Doha and Dubai in the next decade demonstrate a way to absorb surplus capital in the region.⁶³ But they are also part of a self-conscious strategy of international public relations operating along many fronts, including participation in

leadership roles in sporting INGOS and investments in major sporting events and franchises outside the Middle East, such as ownership of iconic European sports teams and significant investments in European sports stadiums or sponsorships.⁶⁴

Still, critical discussions of mega-event hosting as exercises in soft power –the “politics of attraction” – are one sided unless they are situated in a parallel analysis of the instabilities and stubborn regularities that run through these various capitalist modernities.⁶⁵ Peter Dicken describes the emerging twentieth century global economy as increasingly “volatile,” with “short lived surges of economic growth punctuated by periods of downturn or even recession” and centered on a handful of global cities rather than nations.⁶⁶ In William Robertson’s view, it is a complex, disorderly and highly uneven system that appears to have no coherent center because of “the transnational geographic dispersal of the full range of world production processes” and because digitized “financial circuits allow wealth to be moved around the world instantaneously.”⁶⁷ However, at the same time, and in a seemingly contradictory way, the world has also become a densely “unified field for global capitalism.”⁶⁸ For example, economic growth in East Asia continues to be heavily reliant on the health of its major export markets in North America. This is just one example of how the late twentieth century triad, especially the United States, continues as a vitally significant nodal point in the field.

Indeed, even though the power of the triad (including U.S. protectorates such as South Korea and Taiwan) is now highly refracted through international agencies, the old late twentieth century axis continues to have substantial control over what Amin calls the “five monopolies:” international technological development, international financial flows,

communications, access to the world's resources, and production of weapons of mass destruction.⁶⁹ Elsewhere, other than the BRICS nations, a relatively small number of “developing” societies have experienced significant economic growth. But, even here as Dicken concludes, some are “in deep financial difficulty while others are at, or even beyond, the point of survival.”⁷⁰ For elites in these societies hosting mega-events can fuel intoxicating dreams of “catching up” or “modernizing” and if the world's major mega-events are out of reach economically there is strong incentive to host one of the lesser mega-events, such as the Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, or a World Bank International Conference.⁷¹ The attraction of these second and third tier mega-events for ambitious cities and nations, not only in the East and South, but globally, has driven up the costs of these events and has inflated their imagined significance.

Concern is sometimes raised in the popular press that there is a growing trend for the world's most prominent mega-events to be staged in countries that lack democratic traditions and oversight and that the future of many mega-events may lie primarily in countries where militarization and repression are *non-exceptional*. In this view, the combinations of cost, security demands, and surveillance will make these events less attractive in Western liberal democracies, leading to greater likelihood of the largest global spectacles gravitating to authoritarian environments. By the same token, there is an implicit suggestion that INGOS such as the IOC and FIFA are being seduced by the ability of wealthy authoritarian regimes to insure the orderly staging of their events.

It is worth noting here that there is often considerable ethnocentrism, even racism, in the treatment of such topics in the Western press, a point that Grant Farred addresses in his chapter in this volume. For example, Western writers have been quick to criticize

human rights abuses in China, or in Qatar, but typically ignore or downplay the history of “freely negotiated” labour in their own societies, its longstanding connections to racism, displacement and enslavement and to ongoing inequities and modes of domination in sweat shops, in the toil of migrant workers and in the trafficking of sex workers.⁷² An international division of labour has been characteristic of capitalism for hundreds of years, but Mezzadra emphasizes the heterogeneity and mobility of contemporary global labour relations today, suggesting “a different sort of globalization, what we could call a subaltern globalization, which accompanies capitalist globalization.”⁷³

The migratory character of work in the early twenty-first century is an indication of this “subaltern globalization” indicating that the critical analysis of “labour migration control regimes” is a vitally important topic in studies of globalization. It is only a short step from this general point to the argument that the critical analysis of mega-events must also engage with how the staging of mega-events is connected to these regimes of control, where what is at stake is not simply a wage, but often the biopolitical control over life itself. The horrific case of quasi-enslaved migrant workers building World Cup stadia in Qatar springs immediately to mind, but the globalization of subalternarity is by no means limited to the Middle East and it is necessary to extend this kind of analysis to other spaces and places and, especially, to the way that global capitalist modernity itself produces inequality on a dramatic and increasing scale.⁷⁴

Saskia Sassen has recently referred to this production of accelerating global inequality as a “savage sorting of winners and losers.”⁷⁵ As countries advance national agendas in pursuit of a geographically multi-polar capitalist modernity we face the challenge of imagining what a truly multipolar world order might look like. Amin argues that some

think of this as “restoring balance in the Atlantic Alliance,” to allow the European Union and Japan to have a position “similar to that of the United States in running the world.” Others see a world where the BRICS nations, “perhaps even some emerging nations in the South, will join and achieve balance in the concert of the major powers.”⁷⁶ The dream of freedom from what Makarand Paranjape calls the “bear hug of the West” continues to have a strong resonance in many of these societies and is reflected throughout a great deal of postcolonial theory.⁷⁷

However, others see the dream of multi-polarity as a better balance between dominant and subaltern groups within global capitalism *without* the assumption that the decolonizing agendas of formerly peripheral or semi-peripheral states will necessarily achieve this. Amin considers himself among this group and argues that the most meaningful prospect of progress through globalization must not be thought of with respect to the geopolitical advantage of states so much as the provision of a “reliable and robust basis for democratization” on a global scale.⁷⁸ Zhao makes a similar argument in the case of China, suggesting that *unless* China’s “awakening” follows a “post-capitalist and post-consumerist, sustainable, developmental path, or is at least reflective of both internal and external debates and struggles between dominant and alternative visions of the global order,” China will become just another home to a dominating transnational capitalist class, with accompanying inequality, domination, and social unrest throughout the country.⁷⁹ It should be evident by now that our own views lean towards a similar conception of *social* multi-polarity, which gives priority to struggles for justice and equality among the world’s people’s through the immanent critique of global systems of accumulation, dispossession and domination. We see the critical analysis of capitalist

spectacle as an important and necessary aspect of this broader political project.

The Structure and Organization of this Book

In keeping with the range of issues described above we have organized chapters into three broad thematic areas: (1) creative destruction, modernization and spectacular capitalism; (2) states of exception; and (3) economies of events and experiences. In his chapter in the first section, Kevin Fox Gotham expands on the concept of creative-destruction to theorize ways in which the planning and staging of mega-events reflect geographically uneven and politically volatile trajectories of urban development. He pays particular attention to the ways in which capital seeks to destabilize and undermine inherited institutions and social structures that impede capital accumulation in order to facilitate new forms of investment and profit making. His analysis reiterates some of the points we have made in this introduction: mega-event preparations typically anticipate and work toward the revalorization of space through displacement, rezoning, and the conversion of unprofitable land-uses into spaces of profit making via consumption-based entertainment experiences. But they are also deeply contradictory and produce widespread social reaction and opposition to these tendencies.

James Compton follows this with a discussion of ways that sports mega-events are implicated in the general acceleration of media in global sporting cultures. He argues that the study of mega-events has paid insufficient attention to the political economy of global media, the construction of global audience commodities, and the politics of cultural performance. His chapter addresses these issues with specific reference to the proliferation and growing importance of sports mega-events in global capitalism. In particular, he explains the role that global sporting spectacles play in capitalism's need to

accelerate the processes of production, circulation, and consumption. Using the concept of the “integrated spectacle,” outlined over 50 years ago by the French Situationist critic, Guy Debord, Compton also examines contradictions that emerge between “concentrated” and “diffuse” forms of spectacularized sports mega-events.

In the next chapter Simon Darnell and Rob Millington examine the hosting of sports mega-events as a specific dimension of the relationship between sport and development. They offer a comparative analysis of two significant sports mega-events in Latin America – the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City and the forthcoming 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. They synthesize scholarly analyses of Mexico ’68 and Rio ’16 alongside media reports and show how supporters of sports mega-events have consistently traded on development rhetoric in order to justify the expenses of hosting such events and the benefits they accrue. Despite some important differences between Mexico ’68 and Rio ’16, particularly in the context of political economy, there are consistencies in the *kind* of development promises attached to them. Sports mega-events continue to signify and support traditionally dominant ideas of development attached to the promises of modernization. Rather than a shift away from modernization, and in parallel with development thinking more broadly, hosting sports mega-events has moved towards a more fully integrated relationship between sport, development, corporatization, and “celebration capitalism.” In turn, the advent of neo-liberal globalization and the corporatization of the Olympic spectacle have only heightened the development stakes of hosting, and increased the seductive promises of modernity ascribed to sports mega-events.

Ashwin Desai begins the next chapter by noting that Nelson Mandela's years as the first democratically elected President of South Africa often seemed like a series of spectacles. Nothing epitomized this more than the sporting fields of the country. The 1995 winning of the rugby World Cup, the winning of soccer's African Cup of Nations helped develop the idea of *Madiba* (Mandela) *Magic* that caught the public imagination in South Africa. It also signaled a time when those who suffered under apartheid would take their place as fully-fledged citizens, under a new flag and new national anthem, guided by a new constitution in a new South Africa. But, if Mandela marked the closure of one history, defined by colonial dispossession and racial oppression, he also signaled an opening to potential exploitation under the banner of spectacular capitalism, creating a future of economic crisis and endless cycles of debt. Desai points out how mega-events become like an addiction, where the only cure to the ongoing crisis in South African capitalism comes to be understood as "more capitalism," and in a spectacular form.

The next section of essays, loosely organized around the theme of "states of exception," commences with reference to the recent experience of Brazil in hosting sports mega-events. In the opening chapter in the section Carlos Vainer argues that residents of Rio de Janeiro ('Carioca') are experiencing a complex and contested formation of a new coalition able to propose, and impose to the "city in crisis" a new hegemonic project. He identifies the concepts of the city that underlie this process, the make up of the coalition that now runs the city, and the ways that mega-events have induced a state of exception that is becoming increasingly normalized, not only in Rio but, on a smaller scale, in other host cities around Brazil. In an environment of exception, urban policy gives priority to "flexible negotiation" through the pursuit of "flexible accumulation" and reveals the "true

nature and meaning of neoliberal governance.” But, at the same time, this “direct democracy of capital” has created widespread movements of resistance.

In the following chapter, Ann Marie Broudehoux explores how mega-events are entrenched in the politics of urban image construction. Not only do such events play a role in the spectacularization of the urban landscape, they also impose a particular worldview, shaped by the interests, desires and aspirations of local economic and political elites, international sporting federations and their global sponsors. Broudehoux demonstrates how hosting mega-events exerts pressure upon host cities to transform their urban environment to fit imagined global expectations of modernity. Cities invest in spectacular urban projects that will attest to their economic performance, organizational efficiency and cultural sophistication, while aspects of urban reality that suggest backwardness or decline are left out or often hidden, because they may tarnish the city’s carefully constructed image. Broudehoux goes on to suggest how mega-events seek to exclude specific members of society from urban image construction as well as working to hide, beautify and discipline the poor and their material manifestations. The chapter also investigates how groups have mobilized against such exclusionary policies and it examines multiple and creative forms of radicalization and resistance in host cities.

In discussing the 2014 Winter Olympic Games held in Sochi, Russia, Jules Boykoff assesses the dialectic between state repression and activist mobilization. He argues that repression does not automatically quell dissent. Sometimes state suppression can galvanize activism. In the case of Sochi 2014, the coercive structure slotted into place in advance of the Games severely constricted the possibilities for expressing political dissent during the Olympic event itself. However, despite these structural barriers a

number of activists did use the Sochi 2014 Olympics as a platform for expressing political dissent. Some of these were athlete-activists, but most were non-athletes attempting to use the Olympics spotlight to illuminate issues that mattered to them.

In the ensuing chapter, Grant Farred explores the interplay between civic and national ambitions, the continued growth of the high security state and issues of colonial and racial difference, drawing examples from the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, the South African World Cup in 2010 and future World Cups in Russia in 2018 and Qatar in 2022. In Farred's view there is a primary contradiction in all sports mega-events: they are "autoimmune," by which he means they "contain within themselves the very condition of their own destruction." In the quest for acceptance, every host nation not only risks cultivating negative images, they also invite the presence of forces aiming to attack the state. An ever-escalating round of militarization is the manifestation of a game that can never ultimately be won. Through a comparison of the South African men's World Cup in 2010, and the forthcoming men's World Cup in Qatar in 2022, Farred goes on to discuss the significance of colonialism and race in discourses surrounding each event, suggesting that race is a "floating signifier" ironically emptied of much of its potency in the case of discourses surrounding South Africa, yet, mobilized powerfully in ideological ways in respect to considerations of the World Cup in Qatar. At the same time, however, Qatar's own preparation for the event necessitates criticism based on the abuses of migrant workers.

While Carlos Vainer focuses on the politics of urban planning in one Brazilian city, Chris Gaffney's chapter explores the socio-economic impacts of hosting the 2014 FIFA World Cup throughout Brazil, and introduces the third main research area of this

collection; economies of events and experiences. Gaffney's analysis stems from substantive observations developed during extensive engagement with scholars, activists, and media in Brazil as well as a longitudinal study that dealt with the urban impacts of the World Cup in all twelve of the host cities. Gaffney explores subtle regional variations between host cities but argues that that a condition of permanent crisis, emergency, and exception led to a weakening of Brazilian democratic institutions, the deterioration of public spaces, and the increased socio-economic polarization of Brazilian society.

Hyun Bang Shin's chapter brings together analysis of the event-led development experiences of Guangzhou, China and Incheon, South Korea in hosting the 2010 and 2014 Asian Games respectively. The Asian Games developed after a conference held during the 1948 Olympics in London when several Asian countries, recently independent from colonial rule, sought a regional forum to display the improving level of achievement in Asian sport while showcasing developing unity in the region. The first Asian Games was held in India in 1950 and the Games have been held every four years since. Shin points out that the political significance of recent Asian Games may have been less prominent than recent Olympic Games in the region (for example, the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games and 2008 Beijing Olympic Games), but the two Asian Games had remarkable impacts on the host cities. The juxtaposition of these two sports mega-events reveals how mega-event preparation entails the spatial manifestation of longer-term developmental aspirations held by entrepreneurial local states, and how resulting speculative and debt-driven booster projects can be detrimental to host cities by incurring a heavy financial burden.

In the final chapter, Borowy and Jin speculate about the possibility of “eSport” developing as a platform for staging “mega-events of the future.” In so doing they analyze the growth and development of eSport events as public spectacles, on a global scale. More specifically, they demonstrate how South Korea, in particular, has played a major role in the “sportification” of digital gaming, not coincidentally due to a unique conjuncture of social and technological developments associated with Korea’s hosting of the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul. During the 1990s Korea formally recognized digital gaming as an official national sport. By examining the evolution of esport from arcade games, and private forms of amusement, into larger scale sport-like events held in concert halls, arenas and stadiums, they outline the transition of a competitive digital play activity into a form of global capitalist spectacle. They suggest this transition is usefully situated in a broader discussion of the growth of “the experience economy” around the world. In their view, the rise of public gaming spectacles has had the effect of repositioning players and fans within new promotional chains that organize synergies between competitive play, public events, spectating, marketing, and business strategy. In their view, the spectacularization of gaming (built literally on devices constructed by a new digital proletariat) is at the forward edge of change in the development of high-technology capitalism.

We began this “critical” introduction with a reference to Maurice Roche’s definition of mega-events and, noting Roche again, we acknowledged the contributions that mega-events can play both in the creation of meaningful human experiences and the making of global culture. But, our goal in this collection is to explore issues that go beyond Roche’s analysis and in this introduction we have made a case for a revived political economic

perspective on mega-events with a focus on how mega-events may expand the operational scopes of global capitalism and the high security state, with their systematic sorting of urban, national and transnational “winners” from local and global subaltern losers. In conclusion, we not only want to make a plea for the critical analysis of mega-events, we also hope this collection demonstrates the value of multidisciplinary standpoints for criticism. The contributors to this book work in a variety of disciplines and research areas including sociology, communications, urban studies, political studies, kinesiology, architecture and literary studies. In bringing an international group of contributors together from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds we hope to offer a unique range of critical angles of vision on mega-events and globalization. It will be up to the book’s readers to decide if we have succeeded.

Endnotes:

¹ Recent examples include: ‘Mega-Events and the City II’, International Conference, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, April 2014; ‘Metropolitization and mega-events: the impacts of the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics’, International Conference, Observatorio das Metropoles, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, December 2013; Conference on ‘Local legacies and sports mega-events’, Mulier Institute, University of Utrecht, The Netherlands, April 2013; Conference on ‘Impacts of hosting sports mega-events’, Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan, February 2013.

² For recent journal issues devoted to a focus on mega events see: *Leisure Studies*, Volume 31, Number 3, July 2012; *British Journal of Sociology*, Volume 63, Issue 2, 2012. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, Volume 4, Number 3, November 2012. *Contemporary Social Science*, Volume 9, Number 2, June 2014. *Sport in Society*, 2013. Some recent books include: Grix, *Leveraging Legacies*; Girginov, *Handbook*; Tzanelli *Olympic Ceremonialism: and Hayes & J. Karamichas, Olympic Games*.

³ Polley, “Inspire A Publication”, 255.

⁴ Roche, *Mega Events and Modernity*, 1.

⁵ Roche, *Mega Events*, 3.

⁶ Flyvbjerg, ‘What You Should Know.’”

⁷ For example, see Collini, *What are Universities For?*; Docherty, *Universities at War*; and Hearn, “Through the Looking Glass.”

⁸ United Nations et. al., *Shanghai Manual*.

⁹ Mattelart, *The Invention of Communication*, 112-132.

¹⁰ Bruce Kidd, 'A New Social Movement,' 374.

¹¹ A critical analysis of such arguments can be found in Gruneau, "Sport, Development."

¹² Roche, *Mega-Events and Modernity*, 225.

¹³ Roche. "Olympic and Sport Mega Events," 6.

¹⁴ The Bureau of International Expositions (BIE), formed in Paris in 1928, is the organization that sanctions "World" Expos. In 2014 the BIE was made up of 168 member nations, all of which agree to be bound by BIE controls over event hosting. While the BIE has no mechanism to limit the ambition of countries or cities outside the organization that are determined to stage urban trade fairs or exhibitions, all BIE members agree only to participate in BIE-sanctioned expos. See the BIE "official site" <http://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/>

¹⁵ United Nations et. al., *Shanghai Manual*, 34.

¹⁶ On urban displacements in Shanghai in the early 2000s see Huang, *Spectacular Post Colonial Cities*. Useful discussions of tension between urban entrepreneurialism and environmental sustainability can be found in Jonas and While, "Greening the Entrepreneurial City."

¹⁷ Lenskyj, *Olympic Industry Resistance*, 10.

¹⁸ Payne, *Olympic Turnaround*; Corporate Watch, "Hill and Knowlton;" Jennings, 'Journalists?'

¹⁹ Harvey, *Rebel Cities*, 109.

²⁰ Kemple, "The I/eye of Capital," 20. Also see Raco, "Delivering Flagship Projects."

²¹ Price, "On Seizing the Olympic Platform;" and Timms, "The Olympics as a Platform."

²² For some examples see Harvey et. al., *Sport and Social Movements*.

²³ Labeling using terms such as East and West or North and South can be misleading because the categories overlap in complicated ways. For example, there are significant cultural and economic differences between an "Eastern" country such as Japan or South Korea and "Western" countries in Europe and North America. These Western countries are also typically designated as falling in the "Global North." But, in the second half of the 20th century Japan, in particular, formed an important part of an economic axis (a triad) with the United States and Europe, suggesting closer affiliation economically with the Global North than the South. To acknowledge this tension we adopt the convention of referencing both East/West and North/South divisions.

²⁴ Mattelart, *The Invention of Communication*, 113.

²⁵ On the BRIC nations and mega-events see: Horne, "Building BRICs by building stadiums;" and Curi et. al., "The Pan American Games."

²⁶ Robertson, "Mapping the Global Conditon," 28.

²⁷ Roche, "Olympic and Sport Mega-Events."

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- ²⁸ A more developed discussion can be found in Rao, *New Imperialisms, New Imperatives.*”
- ²⁹ For example in communications see Fuchs and Mosco, “Marx is Back.”
- ³⁰ Harvey, “The Enigma of Capital.”
- ³¹ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity,*
- ³² Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment.*
- ³³ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity,* 179.
- ³⁴ On global rural-urban migration see UN HABITAT, *The Challenge of Slums,* Davis, *Planet of Slums.*
- ³⁵ Hannigan, *Fantasy Cities.*
- ³⁶ Mezzadra and Neilson, “Extraction, Logistics, Finance,” 12.
- ³⁷ Harvey, “The Crisis of Planetary Urbanization.”
- ³⁸ Cited in Harvey, “The Crisis of Planetary Urbanization.”
- ³⁹ See Ying Fen Huang’s discussion in *Spectacular Post Colonial Cities.*
- ⁴⁰ Some of these issues are summarized in Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism.*
- ⁴¹ This point is explored in greater depth in Arrighi, “Globalization and Historical Sociology.”
- ⁴² Amin, *Beyond U.S. Hegemony,* 4.
- ⁴³ For example see Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx.*
- ⁴⁴ Dean, *Democracy.*
- ⁴⁵ Amin, “Capitalism, Imperialism, Globalization.”
- ⁴⁶ Mezzadra and Neilson, “Extraction, Logistics, Finance,” 17.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸ The German philosopher Carl Schmitt first popularized the phrase “state of exception,” but it is more recently associated with Giorgio Agamben’s book, *State of Exception.*
- ⁴⁹ FIFA, 61st FIFA Congress, Financial Report, 2010, 14; Lubin and Delevigne, “Olympics Inc.”
- ⁵⁰ For example see, Boyle and Hagerty, “Spectacular Security;” and Cornelissen, “Mega Event Securitisation.”
- ⁵¹ For a more detailed discussion of security in Brazil see, Zirin, *Brazil’s Dance with the Devil.*
- ⁵² Zirin, “Exporting Gaza.”
- ⁵³ Mezzadra and Neilson, “Extraction, Logistics, Finance, 13.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵⁵ Wallerstein, cited in Arrighi, “Globalization and Macrosociology.”
- ⁵⁶ Mezzadra and Neilson, 12.
- ⁵⁷ Dirlik, “Global Modernity? 275.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., 276.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., 276.
- ⁶⁰ Zhao, “China’s Quest,” 19.
- ⁶¹ Zhao, 20.
- ⁶² On Chinese “stadium diplomacy” see Will, *China’s Stadium Diplomacy.*
- ⁶³ Hanieh, *Capitalism and Class.*
- ⁶⁴ See Hann, “Middle East and Asia.”
- ⁶⁵ We’ve taken this phrase from Grix and Lee, “Soft Power.”

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- ⁶⁶ Dicken, *Global Shift*, 68.
- ⁶⁷ Robinson, "Global Capitalism Theory." 12.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid., 5.
- ⁶⁹ Amin, *Beyond U.S. Hegemony*, 4. Our view here follows Amin's argument more than Robertson's emphasis on a shift from "world" to "global" economic relations where states have become less significant. See Robertson, "Global Capitalism Theory."
- ⁷⁰ Dicken, *Global Shift*, 68.
- ⁷¹ For example see Greene, "Staged Cities."
- ⁷² On this point see Charavartty and de Silva, "Accumulation, Dispossession and Debt."
- ⁷³ Mezzadra, "How Many Histories of Labour?" 166.
- ⁷⁴ Amin, "Capitalism, Imperialism, Globalization," 158.
- ⁷⁵ Sassen, "A Savage Sorting;" also see Baumann, *Wasted Lives*.
- ⁷⁶ Amin, *Beyond U.S. Hegemony*, 2.
- ⁷⁷ Paranjape, "The End of Postcolonial Studies."
- ⁷⁸ Amin, *Beyond U.S. Hegemony*, 2.
- ⁷⁹ Zhao, "China's Quest," 28.

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