

Sports Mega-Events, Knowledge and Power

John Horne^{*}

University of Central Lancashire, UK

Abstract

This paper offers reflections on the contribution that sociological knowledge can make in understanding the potential of sport and associated mega-events, especially the Olympic Games, to bring about, or impede, progressive social change. The paper in part takes the form of a dialogue with sport historian and Olympic scholar Bruce Kidd (2010). I illustrate my side of the dialogue with reference to recent collaborative research I have conducted on alterglobalization and sustainability in association with sport, and especially the Olympic Games (Harvey et al., 2009; Hayes and Horne 2011). As Kidd suggests sport scholars should do, my collaborators and I have begun the attempt to recover, re-present and re-write the histories of social activism around and within sport and sports mega-events, such as the Olympic Games.

Keywords: alterglobalization, Olympic, sports mega-events

^{*} John Horne is professor in sport and sociology at the University of Central Lancashire. He is author and editor for several books: *Understanding the Olympics* (2012); *Sport in Consumer Culture* (2006); *Sports Mega-Events: Social Scientific Analyses of a Global Phenomenon* (2006); *Football Goes East: Business, Culture and the People's Game in China, Japan and Korea* (2004); *Japan, Korea and the 2002 World Cup* (2002). He also is co-Managing editor for *Leisure Studies* and member of editorial board for *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*.

Introduction

Why study sports mega-events, and especially the Olympic Games, if you are a sociologist, historian, anthropologist, or other social scientist? Some answers include: because the Olympic Games are there, they exist; because study of them promises to shed new light on scholarly and disciplinary concerns; because study of them can shed new light on sport and its associated mega-events, with the relations between sport and society; because it might bring about change in sport or the Olympics; and finally because it might help bring about wider progressive social change.

Personally I am not too interested in the first, 'study for studies' sake response, but the second, third, four and fifth have always been important to me throughout my career. My interest in gaining knowledge about sport, sports mega-events or the Olympics is not because they exist per se, but because, as a sociologist,

I want to test theoretical and conceptual understandings (including those with which I both agree and disagree).

I want to find out more about the spectacular and much publicized sports mega-event beyond the largely promotional information made available and circulating in the public domain of the news media, broadcasting, etc.

I have a professional interest in '*alternative futures*' and '*the critique of existing forms of society*' (Giddens, 1986, p. 22).

And specifically, as a sociologist of sport, I have an interest in contributing to increasing awareness of the perception and place of sport in society.

In various ways these interests combine into a concern with the relationship between the acquisition of knowledge through research and the potential to actually contribute to progressive social change. In this regard I share many concerns recently articulated by the Canadian sport historian and Olympic scholar Bruce Kidd (2010), although my conclusions about the power of sport, especially sports mega-events such as the Olympic Games are less optimistic than his.

The Power of Sport

In a paper derived from a conference in 2008 Bruce Kidd (2010) suggests that we must not exaggerate the 'power of sport' to effect progressive change. Sport seldom links effectively with progressive groups outside sport. Sport politics tends to be reformist, rather than revolutionary; Kidd argues that we need to be prepared to see shoring up public opportunities for sport and physical activity in the contemporary neo-liberalizing political, economic and ideological cultural climate as a positive form of engagement. I would agree with him that sport politics tends to be reformist in character, for example the consumer politics of sport tends to be around 'value for money' (VFM) issues rather than questioning the role of global multinational corporations in association with sport and its major events, such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA Football World Cup Finals (Horne 2006, pp. 165-168).

Kidd (2010, pp. 162-164) suggests that the scholarly contribution to the promotion of social change can take place in four different ways:

Documenting and problematizing the contradictions between the promise and the reality in sport, and such mega-events as the Olympics, (between 'saying' and 'doing'). He refers to the use of 'report cards' on the outcomes of policies and other forms of evaluation (for example 'Green', environmental reports) and the rigorous examination of promotional statements about specific sport-related strategies or events and the eventual outcomes.

Conducting critical research by not taking the official statements for granted but testing the efficacy of sport, and such initiatives as 'sport for development', the idea of 'trickle down' impacts of elite success, the equality of the sexes and sport, and statements of universalism that may mask continuing ethnocentric or even Euro-American bias.

Engaging students through instruction and by retooling them with the skills to conduct their own research effectively and robustly.

Supporting open source publications, including access to ebooks and other online publications.

He argues that there have been some successes in this respect. Global supply chains and fair labour practices in the sports goods industry have been examined, found wanting and critically assessed accordingly. A shared, critical understanding of the history of struggles in and around sport has been developed. As Kidd (2010, p. 158) notes, ‘the moral claims of sport legitimize it as a site of struggle’. But he adds that much still needs to be done, as the claims made by sport and on behalf of sport continue to be articulated.

So what is to be done and how? Once again Kidd (2010, p. 160) provides some valuable advice. Firstly he suggested that scholars should adopt approaches to the study of sport (and the Olympic Games) that ‘assume contingency, dynamic complexity and the importance of history’. This is consistent with British sociologist Anthony Giddens’s view that sociologists should ‘study long-term patterns of institutional stability and change’ (1987, p. 14; see also pp. 37-39) and that the blurring of disciplinary boundaries has been ongoing for at least the past four decades. This advice is also not alarming to me as a sociologist since my undergraduate degree in social science taught me to appreciate the different attributes and insights into ‘the social’ made possible by social history, political science, economics, social psychology, and social anthropology, as well as sociology.

Kidd (2010, p. 160) next suggested that scholars and other involved in sport should work politically where they are located institutionally. He argues that sport, like other institutional locations, does offer a measure of space for independent thought and criticism. Regarding sports mega-events he also argues that it would be too dismissive to see them as by definition incompatible with social justice. I have less optimism than him about sports mega-events but accept that their very complexity allows spaces of resistance where alternative conceptions to dominant or hegemonic ideas might be developed.

Finally, Kidd suggested one way in which scholars can contribute to work on sport and social change is to recover, re-present and write the histories of social activism (around and within sport and sports mega-events, such as the Olympic Games). He also asked scholars to unravel events and determinations and thus create new or refined interpretations

and understandings. In a comparable vein I would emphasize the importance of continuing to ask difficult questions. Who actually benefits from sports mega-events such as the Olympic Games? Who (which social groups) are excluded? What scope is there for contestation? (Gruneau, 2002 and f/c asks similar questions). I want to illustrate these awkward questions in the next section with reference to three pieces of ongoing research work that I have recently been engaged in or associated with.

Alterglobalization, social protest and sustainability in sport and the Olympic Games

The first piece of research, I conducted with Jean Harvey and Parissa Safai, looks at sport and alterglobalization (Harvey et al., 2009). The second, conducted by Graeme Hayes and John Karamichas, reflects on the nature of social protests associated with sport (Hayes and Karamichas, 2011). The third offers an assessment of what it would mean for the forthcoming Olympics Games in London to be sustainable (Hayes and Horne, 2011).



Alterglobalization and sport

With Jean Harvey and Parissa Safai I have recently explored the idea of alterglobalization in relation to sport (Harvey et al., 2009). The following sub-section draws in part on that article.

Much has been written about globalization and anti-globalization processes and dynamics in general. Although globalization encompasses intertwining cultural, social, technological, political and economic dimensions (Harvey et al., 1996), it is the political and economic domains that have generated the most attention because it may be argued that the political and economic forms drive the changes in the other categories. Whilst we recognize that numerous studies of sport, music, the mass media and other cultural forms have been undertaken in response to the argument that the political economic processes of globalization (particularly in its current neo-liberal permutation) dictates, directly or indirectly, the direction that other aspects of globalization will follow, we leave the issue of theoretical priority aside in this paper. We argue

however, that all of the above mentioned processes of globalization are deemed important for the understanding of this complex phenomenon. This is particularly the case for the understanding of alterglobalization, as the global movements associated with it do strive for political, social, and cultural as well as economic change.

Alterglobalization is a multifaceted form of resistance to neo-liberal globalization that emerged with the first World Social Forum in Porto Allegre, Brazil, in 2001. Since then, global social movements, as well as a myriad of non-governmental organizations, have been active at the local and the global levels in advocating more humane globalization. Alterglobalization refers to the large spectrum of global social movements that present themselves as supporting new forms of globalization, urging that values of democracy, justice, environmental protection, and human rights be put ahead of purely economic concerns.

Our article outlined a framework for the study of the influence of alterglobalization on sport and posed questions such as: what forms do the movements challenging the world sports order take today? Does an alterglobalization movement exist in sport? What alternative models of sport do they propose? In the first part, we defined and discussed key concepts through a review of some of the literature on social movements as well as a periodization of social movements. In the second part of the paper, we presented a typology of sport and alter-globalization in which we described specific examples illustrative of different political responses to globalization. In the third part of the paper, we revisited the questions about alter-globalization and sport and concluded by identifying where more theoretical and empirical research exploring the vast panoply of alterglobalization initiatives might best occur. This is still an ongoing project, but in the rest of this section I will identify the main conclusions to date.

Alter-globalization champions global social movements, but what do global social movements mean exactly and what makes them so different from other forms of social movements? We followed the definitions of Diani (2000), who defines a social movement as ‘...a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a

shared collective identity' (p. 165), and Camilleri (1990) who suggests that new social movements '...articulate new ways of experiencing life, a new attitude to time and space, a new sense of history and identity. Indeed, it may not be far-fetched to suggest that they are in the process of redefining the meaning and boundaries of civil society' (p. 35). New social movements are different from old social movements in so far as they do not have economic concerns as their sole focus nor do they advocate, as their main goal, the radical change of society through drastic measures or proletarian revolution, like the 'old' workers' movements. In other words, new social movements aim to change society not just in economic ways, but also in various social, cultural, identity and political aspects. Therefore we identified the following under the label of global social movements: civil rights; ecological; women's rights; anti-racist; peace; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and queer rights; human security; workers' rights; children's rights; aboriginal rights and general internationalism.

A key feature of the concept of alterglobalization is the principle that alternatives to contemporary social relations, processes and institutions *do* exist and that 'another world is possible'. Alterglobalization can have reformist and transformist tendencies: 'alternative' can mean either globalization continues differently in a reformed manner or that it is replaced. Hence a distinctive feature of alterglobalization is its diversity. Whilst 'neo-liberals' tend to accept globalization as a means of expanding market exchange and promoting capitalist relations of production, 'rejectionists', who might also be considered as 'anti-globalization', tend to look to local, or rather national, responses to it. Only 'reformists' and 'transformists', amongst whom the global social movements we consider here take their place, can be understood as proposing alter-globalization itself as a response. The latter two responses focus more on harnessing the force of globalization either for institutional reforms within a mixed economy via public policy initiatives, or utilizing globalization as a means of stimulating social change, fighting for human security and protection of the environment, as well as a wide range of human rights. These two types of alter-globalization were the main focus in our article.

One reason why there has been little attention paid to new social

movements and sport since the early 1990s is the complexity and variety of forms of organization that makes simple classification difficult. Another reason for the lack of scholarly attention to social movements and sport could be that whilst sport scholars often prescribe radical social change in order to improve social conditions, most of the movements surrounding sport in consumer culture tend to be pressure groups interested in achieving reformist goals or simply ‘value for money’ rather than wholesale social or political transformation, as previously mentioned. Just as there are multiple reactions to globalization and sport, a working typology of different organizations, groups and networks that directly or indirectly pose a challenge to hegemonic global sport order under the alter-globalist paradigm will be similarly diverse.

The current hegemonic global sport order, is based on fully commodified sport, that is a form where sport is prominently an exchange value, is monopolized by multinational corporations of the manufacturing and professional sectors of the sport industrial cluster and is governed by a supra-national authority, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the largest international federations’ globocracy (Nelson, 2002). For some, this global sport world order constitutes the sport branch of the current supranational ‘Empire’ that dominates the world, as described by Hardt and Negri (2002). We do not have to subscribe to that analysis fully to acknowledge the influence of global capital on the growth and development of sport and especially sports mega-events in the past four decades.

Since the first half of the 1990s however contestation and resistance to globalization has expanded to form a vast, loosely connected, international network of resistant groups, sporting and otherwise, that have coalesced around the notion of anti-globalization and, more recently, the concept of alterglobalization. Figure 1 outlines a typology of alter-globalist positionalities associated with sport.

[Insert Figure 1 about here; N. B. Figure 1 and 2 are at end of the document]

The table makes a distinction between non-sport organisations that use sport to achieve broader social changes or try to change sport and its institutions, and sport organisations that seek to achieve social change or socially progressive transformation of sports forms, sports competitions and sports organizations broadly. In line with the diversity and fluidity of alter-globalization initiatives we recognise that, in practice, individuals, groups and agencies may link, overlap and shift around between two or more of the categories into which we have placed them in the figure; nonetheless, we argue that this typology is useful for the purposes of analysis.

The typology highlights two alterglobalization related responses involving both sport and non-sport organizations: *reformists* who attempt to modify sport and/or produce difference in existing sport institutions and organizations; and *transformists* who seek to produce alternative sport forms within different sport organizations. In short, the impact on sport of global social movements/alter-globalization can be both the modification of existing social relations, and/or the production of alternative social relations. The examples in the figure under each response (reformist, transformist) are presented in order to illustrate theoretically possible relations between sport, global social movements and alter-globalization. As such, these examples do not constitute a comprehensive inventory or even sample of existing alter-globalist movements in sport. Moreover, the placement and discussion of the examples presented in this section of the paper are not the result of thorough empirical investigations, yet. Rather, we present them in order to help us illustrate the different possible positionalities to be found under the alterglobalization umbrella concept. Conversely, they should be viewed as a series of research propositions and empirical case studies that will be studied in the future.

Social protest in sport and the Olympic Games

The second recent piece of work I want to discuss draws on the typology introduced in Figure 1 and has been developed by Graeme Hayes and John Karamichas (2011). Figure 2 outlines their development of the typology for understanding different forms of social protest

movement and their relationships to sports and sports events, including mega-events such as the Olympic Games.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

The first series of relationships represented in the typology are primarily *superficial*, structured by the widespread mediatisation, political intensity and non-negotiable timeframes of the event. Here, the political legitimacy, staging conditions, social consequences and so on of the event itself are generally not brought into question by protesters. Rather, the event provides a platform for civil society organisations and an opportunity to access a wider public audience for their cause through the coverage afforded by the print and electronic media, along with the possibility that political power holders may make concessions in order to ensure social peace during the event. Such superficial, opportunistic protest would include the sabotage of the pitch with knives and oil at Headingley cricket ground in Leeds in August 1975, preventing the final day's play of the Third Test between England and Australia. The sabotage was carried out by supporters of George Davis, who had recently been sentenced to twenty years imprisonment for armed payroll robbery. Following the protest an internal Metropolitan police enquiry was launched and the Home Secretary released Davis the following spring (but jailed two years later for bank robbery). In similar vein, Jean-François Polo has discussed in detail the regular, often local social mobilisations, which target the Tour de France in order to gain national media and public attention from the massive attention, commanded by the cycle race (Polo, 2003). The relationship between protest event and sports event is superficial, in the sense that there is no causal or systemic link between them; the substantive objectives of protest are unrelated to sport.

More complex, and in a different vein, are the mass 'no-TAV' campaign against the construction of a high speed rail line through the Susa valley – and a €7.6 billion euro, 52 kilometre long tunnel through the Alps to connect Lyon in France and Torino in Italy (and indeed, Lisbon and Kiev) – which threatened the organisation of the 2006 Winter Olympics in Torino, and the pre-First World War campaign of the British women's suffrage movement. Though the suffragist movement did not

consider organised sports events to be its main target, the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) held the organisation of competitive sport to be integral to the system of domination it challenged, and instrumentalised sports in its direct action campaigns. Famously, Emily Davison died after rushing in front of King George V's horse at the Epsom Derby in 1913. But this incident was just part of an extensive, frequently clandestine, nationwide campaign of arson, sabotage and intimidation conducted by the WSPU throughout that year. Pavilions, boathouses and grandstands were set alight, slogans were cut into turf: horse racing, rowing, cricket, lawn tennis, bowls, football, rugby, swimming, billiards and golf were all targeted (Vamplew, 1980, p.10; Kay, 2008, p.1341-6).

Though both these campaigns appear opportunistic in the sense that their main target is not sport itself, the relationship between protest event and sports event is not necessarily superficial, as to some extent the substantive objectives of protest are systemically linked to the conditions of organisation of the sports events. They are also fundamentally reformist, seeking changes in the structures or terms regulating hosting or access.

Superficially related campaigns can also feature more comprehensive, rejectionist positions regarding the staging of the sports event itself. This type of campaign includes the extensive 1981 protests in New Zealand against the touring South African Springbok rugby union team. In South Africa, racial segregation was an integral part of apartheid regime, a powerful signifier of White identity and hegemony and of the exclusion of Blacks from recreational and organisational spaces and from the national community (Booth, 1998, p.55-84; Merrett, 2005). From the late 1960s, the racial segregation of sport in South Africa led to the country's exclusion from international competition (most notably from the 1968 Mexico Olympics, and from the IOC, but also from cricket, tennis, athletics, weightlifting, and swimming). However, the New Zealand All Black rugby union team toured South Africa in 1976, a tour that led to the boycott by twenty-five African states of the Montreal Olympics, and to the 1977 Gleneagles Agreement, signed by Commonwealth Heads of Government, which stated that 'apartheid in

sport' as in other fields, is an abomination'. When South Africa nonetheless toured New Zealand four years later, extensive local and national opposition was coordinated by HART: the New Zealand Anti-Apartheid Movement. Matches were characterised by mass protest, pitch invasions and police repression, with the tour 'contested on the fields and the streets under siege-like conditions' (MacLean, 2010, p.76). There are thus clear links between this kind of response with the multiple mobilisations against the passage of the Beijing Olympic torch relay through Europe and North America by Free Tibet campaign groups in 2008. Here, the Games were seen as an opportunity to pressure China over its systematic human rights abuses. In both these types of protest, the relationship to the event is still *superficial*: the event is constituted as a pre-text for pursuing social objectives or addressing social problems that are not a consequence of the staging of the event itself.

Beyond superficial protest, we can point to a second type of relationship between the protest event and the sports event. Here, the relationship is what Hayes and Karamichas (2011) term *organic*; structured through a causal relationship between sports event and social mobilisation. Here, we have on the one hand protests that are not predicated on an ideological opposition to the political or symbolic meaning of the event per se, but rather articulate a conjunctural opposition to specific decisions made within the context of the event. This type of opposition might typically include very specific campaigns against event urbanisation decisions, from the highly localised environmental and social impacts of venue construction to the norms and specifications of venue construction and event hosting. In the former category we can place campaigns such as the mobilisations by NOGOE, a local community action group, to stop the hosting of the 2012 Olympic equestrian and modern pentathlon events on Greenwich Park in south London (see Hayes and Horne, 2011); the opposition by Ile de France Environnement to the proposed extension of the Roland Garros tennis stadium in the Paris 2012 bid, discussed in Hayes (2011); and the campaign against the highway at Eagleridge Bluffs between Vancouver and Whistler (see Whitson, 2011). Crucially, these are localised land use conflicts caused by specific Olympic organising committee and local

government decisions; opposition is not directed toward the event *per se*, but rather at the revision of specific, limited, planning decisions. We can also conceptualise in this way the PFOC anti-sweatshop campaign, or the work of the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) on population displacement and evictions. The PFOC is not opposed to the Olympic Games, as it sees the Games as an opportunity to drive up standards in the sportswear clothing supply chain, and is exploiting the opportunity of the event to pressurise the IOC and its supply partners to address the issue. Similarly COHRE seeks regulatory safeguards and the protection of housing rights, and as with PFOC, the intervention of the IOC to ensure 'fair play' in the future.

Alongside this type of causal relationship stand, in contrast, social mobilisations expressing a fundamental opposition to the event *per se*, perhaps as an aggregation of specific localised issues, or as an ideological response to the function of (sports) mega-events. Here the event cannot be redeemed, as its symbolic value, and political, economic, social and cultural impacts, are held to be inherently negative and generated by the intrinsic nature of the event, irrespective of the precise details of its specific iteration. Examples of this type of opposition would include various national and international anti-Olympic Games committees and organisations, such as Games Monitor, No Games Chicago, the Olympic Resistance Network, and so on. No Games Chicago cast the Olympics as a structural drain on public finances, arguing instead for 'Better Hospitals, Housing, Schools and Trains'. For No2010, a campaign group set up against the decision for Vancouver to host the Winter Olympics in 2010:

The Olympic industry uses sports and athletes as commodities to market corporate products and services. Governments use Olympic games to unite their populations behind nationalist symbols, to impose greater social control, and to attract corporate investment. Despite claims that Olympics are not 'political', they have devastating social and ecological impacts that cannot be ignored and which must be challenged. (No2010, 2007)

The next section looks at developments in London aimed at creating a sustainable Summer Olympics in 2012 that have also attracted social

movements and protests.

Sustaining the Unsustainable: Olympic Games, Shock and Awe

In recent work with Graeme Hayes (Hayes and Horne, 2011) we have attempted to develop a distinctive approach to understanding the relationship between the Olympic Games and sustainability. We follow Seghezze (2009, p.552) who argues that we should eschew trying to establish a single, universal definition of sustainable development, instead seeking to place our analysis and understanding of its meaning and operation within its own context. Claims to sustainable development, Seghezze argues and we agree, are highly contingent and site-specific.

Two points need to be made. The first is that the approach engendered by London 2012 organisers to sustainable development is essentially a top-down approach, that its operational scope is very limited, and that the extent of civic engagement in its production has been extremely narrow. Even environmental non-governmental organisation (NGOs), increasingly regarded as key stakeholders in the initiation and implementation of environmental programmes in sports mega-event planning, have been effectively replaced by a technocratic monitoring body. The Commission for A Sustainable London 2012 (CSL), which has the statutory advantage of being empowered to demand information from organising bodies, has taken the lead role post-bid in ensuring compliance with the sustainability agenda. It thus is able to a great extent to take over the traditional NGO advocacy and oversight role; accordingly, in the post-bid phase, one of the lead NGOs, WWF, has tended to concentrate on liaising with corporate sponsors, whilst another, BioRegional, remains engaged on built environment aspects of Games preparation, such as working with the contractors on the Olympic Park.

Whilst we would agree with the CSL that a 'sustainable Games is synonymous with a low carbon Games' (CSL, 2009, p.13) and would recognise the considerable effort already placed by London 2012 into reducing its carbon footprint, we would also ask whether a sustainable Games is synonymous with *more* than a low carbon expenditure, about

more than creating paradigm shifts in the construction, catering, and merchandising industries? This could involve the creation of new lateral civic solidarities, the critique of the organization and function of social, economic and political systems, the reduction of social inequalities, or the attempt to find and develop innovative, deliberative or participatory democratic forms. The Games are designed to bring collective social benefits (themselves contentious), but it is also clear that whilst civic publics have been factored into the outputs and implementation strategies of Games decisions, they have rarely been factored into the definition of a sustainable Games or Games projects. The role of civic organizations and publics is one of implementation and support, not one of definition and decision. The lesson from London, as from other Games before it, is that sustainable development is conceptualized as ‘best practice’, ‘best available technology’, ‘green growth’ and so on; it is not a question of challenging the compatibility of economic growth with environmental remediation, nor of constituting environmental citizenship as democratic deliberation. In many ways then London appears to be of a piece with previous experiences of hosting the Olympics; for Andranovich *et al* (2001; see also Burbank *et al.*, 2001), citizen participation and democratic accountability in decision-making for the respective Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Salt Lake Games were notoriously absent.

The second point is to ask what a low carbon Games means in the context of the outputs of London 2012; or indeed in that of any subsequent Summer Olympic Games? The London Olympics, originally costed at £2.4 billion, is now budgeted at over £9 billion of public funding, during a global economic crisis. We should thus ask to what extent a six year scheme of construction for a four-week festival of sport can rightly lay claim to being ‘the most sustainable Games ever’? Indeed, members of concerned NGOs that we have talked to typically stress that the incoherence at the heart of the project – the staging of a single, short-lived, event requiring vast public works as a ‘sustainable Games’ – can (only) be justified in terms of its capacity to bring about social and cultural transformation. For the CSL, this lies chiefly in advances in methodology, materials and systems in construction, the plastics industry, and so on. Yet we are concerned at what this means for the definition of a politics of

sustainable development, which might open up the possibility of a socially-inclusive environmental citizenship beyond the direct, time-pressured concerns of service and event delivery. Indeed, it seems to us symptomatic of the nature of social participation imagined by London 2012 that the recruitment and training of the 70,000 volunteers required for the staging of the Games is to be managed by McDonald's. In other words, to be subsumed within the IOC's corporate branding and sponsorship rights agenda, and run by a TNC synonymous with standardization, top-down control, employee deskilling, job insecurity, environmental exploitation, de-unionization, and poor nutritional quality. Despite London 2012's emphasis on a 'volunteering spirit [that] will spread wider than the Games themselves as we encourage everyone to give their time to help others' (London 2012, 2010), it is clear that the primary emphasis here is not on cultural change, civic participation, or 'healthy living', but rather on market-driven service delivery, with the disbursement of public funds legitimized by the creation of apparent social and ethnic representativeness.

Behavioural change is a key narrative of mega-events, extending well beyond London 2012; but there is little or no evidence that this has been achieved through major event programming, whilst reliable and comparable data collection from previous iterations and similar events is a key problem (see Collins et al., 2009). Moreover, Karamichas (2011) has recently argued that the evidence of neither Sydney (widely praised as the 'first Green Games') nor Athens (widely derided for its poor environmental record) points to the existence of a positive causal correlation with institutional and cultural change towards environmental sustainability. Even if we accept the possibility of Games staging as a 'cultural spike' in the terms set out by the organizers, then this presupposes the existence of both a domestic and global event governance regime with the capacity and will to ensure that it is implemented. Yet, at the global level, the IOC (and, indeed, FIFA) steadfastly refuses to play such a role, devolving responsibility for methodology and standards to OCOGs. Public post-event compliance, reporting and monitoring is weak to non-existent.

From a vantage point of less than two years prior to the London

Games, this absence of long-term governance capacity is equally apparent at the domestic level. NGOs that we have talked to argue that the 'ready on time' culture of the Games has obscured the necessity of post-event transmission. On one level, there are few mechanisms for diffusion of processes or practices between mega-event iterations, beyond the official IOC mechanism to share knowledge between host cities. There has to date been no active strategy of event learning, of diffusing the sustainability principles of London 2012 to future mega-events, such as on social inclusion and footprinting, and it is not in the remit of the CSL to present its data to the IOC. In the absence of institutional leadership 'legacy transition' becomes the responsibility of NGOs and government. But on another level, it is a question of an absence of consideration as to how the processes of cultural change are to be funded and brought about, about how civic populations are to be involved and included in changing existing cultural practices and defining new ones, other than by the top-down demonstration effect of event spectatorship. Again, the lack of a strategy is patent.

The concept of a 'sustainable Games' thus emerges as less a benign paradox than a systemic *contradiction* of advanced late-modern capitalist democracies. Blühdorn and Welsh have recently set out a provocative research agenda in environmental sociology, seeking clarification and analysis of the mechanisms through which such democracies 'try and manage to sustain what is known to be unsustainable' (2007, p.198). In our view, the Games is a fundamentally unsustainable event, and not simply because of the evident contrast between a decarbonisation agenda and the IOC's corporate partnership promotion of individual mobility and consumption-based lifestyles, and the massive infrastructural programme and associated high carbon expenditure seemingly required to stage the Games (if recent staging decisions – Beijing, London, Rio de Janeiro – are an accurate guide). This is fundamentally because the Games functions temporally to engineer a crisis of deliberative structures: the immutability of the deadlines, the stakes of the reputations, the primacy of delivery, and the scale of the watching audience engender a systemic violence to existing or potential participatory democratic structures, from planning processes to established civic freedoms. The criticality of legacy

creation demands large-scale transformative projects; the primacy of delivery renders civic deliberation impossible. Shock and awe indeed.

Conclusion

“The sceptics have been eliminated; the Olympic Games have not a single enemy” (Baron Pierre de Coubertin, 26 March 1896, cited in Guttman, 1984, p. 16).

“Without sponsors, there would be no Olympic Games. Without the Olympic Games, there would be no dreams. Without dreams, there would be nothing.”

Advertisement for sponsors in the *Official Souvenir program of The Games of the XXVII*

Olympiad, 15.9-01.10 2000 New York: Sports Illustrated: Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG).

“In reality, sports tournaments rarely do much to transform the fortunes of the countries that host them – at least not for the better – let alone change the fate of whole continents. But they can tell us a lot about where power really lies” (David Runciman (2010), ‘Football’s goldmine’, *The Guardian*, ‘Review’ section, 22 May).

In this presentation I have attempted to provide a snapshot of some recent research I have been conducting into sports mega-events, and the relationship this knowledge has with understanding social power. Hopefully through this research I have begun to recover, re-present and write the histories of social activism (around and within sport and sports mega-events, such as the Olympic Games) that Bruce Kidd has asked for. Although not as optimistic as Bruce, I hope that through studies such as these of sports mega-events, the Olympic Games and sport more generally, new light can be shed on more than simply scholarly and interdisciplinary concerns. If shedding new light on sport and the Olympics can lead to alterations and challenges to balances of power, this might bring about change in sport or the Olympics and thus contribute to wider progressive social change.

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Figure 1 Alterglobalist Positionalities in Sport

		Reformist	Transformist
Non-Sport Organizations	Social Change	Play Fair Campaign, in collaboration with Oxfam Clean Clothes Campaign	Reporters Without Borders
	Changing Sport	Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE)	Amnesty International
Sport Organizations	Social Change	Surfers Against Sewage (SAS)	Unione Italiana Sport Per tutti (UISP)
	Changing Sport	Play the Game	Intercrosse

Source: Harvey et al. (2009), p. 393.



Figure 2 Relationships between sport, events and protests

		Desired outcomes (of protestors)		
Relationship of protests to sports event	Superficial	Unrelated Free George Davis Tour de France	Reformist No TAV Suffragist movement » PFOC	Structural Change Free Tibet HART No Games Chicago COHRE
	Organic		Eagleridge Bluffs »	Games Monitor Olympic Resistance Network

Source: Adapted from Hayes and Karamichas (2011)

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Address: 250, Wen Hua 1st Rd., Kueishan, Taoyuan County, Taiwan
33301

Phone: +886-3-328-3201 Ext. 8533 or 8305

Fax: +886-3-3280596

E-mail: tsss@pixnet.net

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