OLYMPIC CITIES: Lessons Learned from Mega-Event Politics

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ABSTRACT: *As cities compete for jobs and capital in the context of limited federal aid and increasing global economic competition, a new and potentially high-risk strategy for stimulating local economic growth has emerged. This strategy, called the mega-event strategy, entails the quest for a high-profile event to serve as a stimulus to, and justification for, local development. We examine how the mega-event strategy has played out in the three US cities with contemporary Olympic experience: Los Angeles (1984), Atlanta (1996), and Salt Lake City (2002). We analyze the approaches taken by these three cities to bidding for and staging an Olympic mega-event. Our comparison focuses on the decade long period that cities use to prepare to host the games. We conclude with a discussion of lessons learned and the policy implications of the mega-event strategy on urban politics.*

Recent studies of urban development have emphasized both the role of consumption-based economic development in cities (Hannigan, 1998; Judd & Fainstein, 1999; Law, 1993) and the importance of civic boosterism and reimaging strategies to gain recognition and competitive advantage (Holcomb, 1999; Pagano & Bowman, 1995; Short, Benton, Luce, & Walton, 1993). The reliance on civic boosterism and signature events by cities is not, of course, a new phenomenon. American cities have a long history of using showcase events to attract residents, investors, and visitors. In recent years, however, this strategy has been revived with a renewed prominence as the result of the confluence of several factors, notably changes in federal urban policy and increased global economic competition. Beginning in the early 1980s, federal aid to cities was cut (Caraley, 1992; Wolman, 1986). While some local governments

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responded by reducing development activities, others adopted more entrepreneurial policies for economic development (Eisinger, 1988). Clarke and Gaile (1998) identify the period after 1984 as the "postfederal" era in local economic development policy making. The postfederal period is characterized by a greater willingness of local governments to take risk, an increased cooperation among governments on a metropolitan or regional level, pooled financing, and greater reliance on public-private partnerships or quasi-public agencies to implement development projects.

At the same time, the reality of the global economy hit home in the 1980s with important consequences for urban areas (e.g., Barnes & Ledebur, 1998; Noyelle & Stanback, 1984). Economic restructuring led to the reorganization of urban space, requiring new forms of social control as well as new solutions for those who have been left behind in the new economy. For governments and businesses, however, it became increasingly evident that competition for jobs and investments would no longer be primarily with the state or city next door; competition now took place on a global stage. In short, the global economy had become an important feature of the broader environment within which cities compete for economic growth (Fry, 1995). Cities, particularly in the hardest hit regions of the country, began to focus on alternatives to production-based jobs. Leisure and consumption-oriented development marked the shift toward a post-industrial, service dominated economy as cities catered to the needs of corporate headquarters, high tech industries, and the advanced producer services that support them.

The combination of declining federal aid and increasing worldwide competition for business meant that American cities not only had to employ more entrepreneurial techniques to promote development but had to do so on the world stage. Among the strategies that city leaders have pursued under the guise of getting jobs and enhancing their competitive advantage is the pursuit of mega-events, such as the Olympic Games. The Olympic Games are prestigious for several reasons. One factor that makes the Olympics so valuable is its relative scarcity. Each set of games is held only every four years and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has a habit of rotating the location of the games. Further, the escalating amounts paid for broadcasting rights make the Olympics "an economic resource in its own right" enticing more cities in the United States and from around the world into the competition for the Olympics (Rowe, 1999, p. 21; see also Larsen & Park, 1993). The symbol of the Olympic Games, the five rings, is the most readily identified image in the world. The rings are recognized by over 90% of the world's population, which is higher even than the logos of megabrands such as Shell and McDonald's (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998).

Far from being merely symbolic, though, the desire to create a world-class image presents an important opportunity for a city's economic development strategy. Pagano and Bowman (1995) provide the link between image creation and local government: image creation provides a rationale for the allocation of scarce resources. Mega-events allow cities to focus economic development activities and attention for competitive gain. Mega-events are a category of events so spectacular that they are recognized around the world as a peak event, worthy of everyone's attention. Today, the Olympic Games are the mega-event of choice for city and national government development agendas (e.g., de Lange, 1998). Mega-events are intended to attract tourist revenues and more important, national and international media recognition for the host city. Moreover, from a local perspective, making a debut on the world stage requires looking the part, and cities can usually leverage event preparations to promote an impressive array of development opportunities. Public officials contemplating a mega-event strategy, however, have to recognize that getting the games is neither easy nor is it risk free (cities first compete nationally and the winners of national competitions bid against international competitors). The lure of the potential benefits is there, however, for cities willing to accept the odds.

This article addresses the policy opportunities and challenges in hosting the Olympic Games, focusing on the experiences of Los Angeles (1984), Atlanta (1996), and Salt Lake City (2002). Our focus is on the adoption of the mega-event strategy and the effect it has on urban policy making. We begin with an overview of the critique of consumption-based economic development, focusing on two dimensions that are important to analyzing the mega-event strategy: building convention centers and sports development. Then, we discuss how mega-events have been assessed and describe our comparative case study design. This is followed by the presentation of our findings from the three Olympic cities. We close with a discussion of the lessons learned from the mega-event politics in Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Salt Lake City, and their implications for future policy making.

CONSUMPTION-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development has long dominated the agendas and politics of urban governments. Where the pursuit of production activities, such as manufacturing, was once dominant, however, cities have turned toward attracting consumption activities in leisure, entertainment, tourism, and sports (e.g., Eisinger, 2000; Fainstein & Stokes, 1998; Gladstone, 1998; Judd & Fainstein, 1999; Law, 1993; Sorkin, 1992; Zukin, 1982, 1991). The cutting edge of this type of economic development can be seen in cities that pioneered arts and entertainment services in their downtown areas, such as New York (Zukin, 1982) and San Francisco (Wolfe, 1999). Most cities, however, have adopted the corporate-center strategy favored by growth regimes of building convention centers, sports facilities, museums, shopping malls, and entertainment and gambling complexes alongside the typical government, professional, and retail space developments.

Zukin (1991) describes several different types of consumption-based landscapes, including gentrified downtowns and postmodern resort colonies. In the former, exemplified by New York, Boston, and Chicago, what was originally touted as a way of reasserting local identity instead turned out to be the product of an international market culture, providing advantages to middle-class consumers over low-income residents. The postmodern resorts in Miami, Orlando, and Los Angeles present the urban landscape in fragments to heighten the visitor's fantasy or dream, thereby hiding the growth of service sector jobs that enhance the profits of the creators of these landscapes. Hannigan's (1998) analysis of the emergent Fantasy City assesses six salient features of consumption-based development: it is theme-centered, aggressively branded, in constant operation, modular in design, separate from existing neighborhoods, and postmodern. He argues that these new urban spaces provide middle class users with an authentic urban experience free from the unpredictability of city life. Furthermore, the organization of these new urban entertainment spaces includes a role for the public sector, often in public-private partnerships that facilitate a business-oriented approach to the development and use of urban space. Finally, Hannigan points out that the meanings of urban life, the "urban imaginaries," have aestheticized the "blood, sweat and tears" of city building (p. 196), effectively decontextualizing the new consumption-based developments.

Judd (1999) uses the concept of a "tourist bubble" to illustrate some of the more problematic effects of this approach to development. In many cities there is a well-defined boundary separating tourist spaces from the rest of the city, creating tourist reservations that are "secured, protected, and normalized environments" (Judd, 1999, p. 36). While land use is contested in most cities, and the physical environment includes areas of poverty and decay, the tourist bubble reflects a "romanticized, nostalgic sense of history and culture" with a well-crafted image of the city displaying none of this conflict (Judd 1999, p. 36). This contributes to the sense that downtowns are being reshaped for recreational users rather than for living.

Urban outcomes such as those noted above have led to a broad critique not only of the economic and cultural effects of consumption-based development, but also of its politics. Just as the competition for manufacturing industries led to copycat subsidy programs, consumption-based economic development creates seemingly standardized tourism environments consisting of convention centers, fancy hotels, entertainment and gambling complexes, and sports facilities alongside new office towers and redeveloped waterfronts. The idea behind these developments is to evoke a certain image of the place and a status for those experiencing it, rather than those living in the city (e.g., Eisinger, 2000; Hannigan, 1998). Among the techniques used to achieve these aims are the construction of unique visitor attractions, playing host to prestigious events, or the use of theme festivals to link tourism development to city marketing (Hall, 1996; Short et al., 1993). A brief examination of two components of the tourist bubble—convention centers and sports development—highlights the increasing complexity of consumption-based economic development policy making and changes in urban politics that accompany it.

The development of convention centers has been a staple of urban regeneration since the urban renewal programs of the 1950s and 1960s. In large part, the politics of convention center development stemmed from their financing arrangements. In the 1950s and 1960s, financing was carried out through general obligation bonds requiring a public vote (Sanders, 1992). This procedure had two effects: (1) voters were given a direct voice in economic development decisions, and (2) convention center proposals required skillful packaging in order to be acceptable to a majority of voters. Thus, development conflicts were open to public scrutiny and resolution. By the 1980s, however, financing for convention centers had become more specialized, for example by creating a dedicated visitor tax as a funding mechanism. In addition, development was often organized through special purpose governments or the state government, shifting the policy-making arena away from cities. This change resulted in a lack of public scrutiny and local accountability in policymaking, and has contributed to the development of downtowns that are more tuned to the needs of middle class visitors than residents.

For example, in St. Louis $200 million in public funds were committed to convention and stadium development rather than parks and police, in part due to a shift in decision making authority to the county and state governments (Sanders, 1992). San Diego voters rejected convention center bonds for nearly 35 years until a special purpose government, the San Diego Unified Port District, proposed a convention complex on land it already owned. The convention facility, new luxury hotels, and a $10 million contribution to pay for light rail service were financed through the port district (Sanders, 1992). Similarly, in Denver the construction of the new Colorado Convention Center resulted only after a new financing scheme boosted hotel and car rental taxes and levied a new restaurant tax. The state also put $35 million toward acquisition of a new site, but the legislature's involvement led to a two year delay and ended with legislation requiring local support for further state action (Sanders, 1992). Sanders suggests that a restructuring of local politics to include a more complex role for government, particularly as entities like special purpose governments and public-private partnerships become more important to policy making, appears to be at the expense of downtown residents.

Sports development plays an integral role in how cities see themselves, and it is becoming one of the anchors of consumption-based development (Euchner, 1993). The absence of a sports team, and a sports identity, is perceived to have a negative effect on a city's economic chances, even though there is no evidence to suggest that having a team affects economic chances at all (Baade, 1996; Noll & Zimbalist, 1997; Rosentraub, 1997). For example, Ohio's governor pledged $110 million from the state's capital budget for a stadium complex and warned that Cincinnati would become a minor league city if a voter referendum to increase local sales taxes failed and the city's professional football team moved (Kalich, 1998). Indianapolis was known as “Naptown” or “Indiana-no-place” before adopting its sports development strategy and is now perceived as a sports hub (Euchner, 1999, p. 228). Rosentraub (1996) suggests that sports provides the glue that holds elements of the local growth coalition together; in Indianapolis the sports development strategy “did permit the city to rebuild its skyline and hold onto a portion of the growth which was to take place in the Indianapolis region” (p. 29).

From the perspective of the sports team, of course, a threat to leave a city can be a valuable weapon. The National Football League’s Oakland Raiders demonstrated as much in 1982 when they moved to Los Angeles and into a more lucrative stadium deal. The owner of the Raiders, Al Davis, not only moved his team but also won a $42 million settlement against the NFL and opened the door to a wave of sports development activities. Five NFL teams followed the Raiders’ example by moving, while other teams got new stadium deals merely by threatening to move (the Raiders have since moved back to Oakland). Euchner (1999) notes that during a three-year period in the 1990s, $7 billion was either committed or spent to build new sports facilities or refurbish existing ones. Between 1990 and 1998, 31 new sports complexes were built for teams in four major league sports, 21 others were under construction, and 30 more were proposed. The extent of this investment is staggering, considering that each facility costs more than $100 million and this type of sports development is occurring in 24 of the 60 largest American cities (US Travel Data Center, 1999). Local governments, fearing the loss of “their team,” have developed creative ways to meet team demands. These new approaches include building single purpose facilities, establishing special tax zones, starting sports lotteries, selling personal seat licenses and rights to luxury boxes, offering guaranteed gate receipts, and introducing travel and tourism taxes. These new tools are being used in addition to the traditional mechanisms of issuing bonds and shuffling capital budgets (Kalich, 1998).

The use of a large-scale, high profile event like the Olympics as the centerpiece for development should be seen within the context of a shifting emphasis toward consumption in urban development. The mega-event strategy is extreme, however, because it is contingent on bringing an external event to the city. The mega-event strategy thus entails greater risk than a typical consumption-based development project because it requires a city to obtain the external event, and stage it in such a way as to achieve the city’s goals of attracting sponsors, tourists, and positive publicity. Even worse for a potential host city, some of the risks associated with the event, such as a boycott or scandal, cannot feasibly be anticipated by event planners. Furthermore, there is always the possibility that between conception and execution the event may not be sufficiently unique or exciting enough to maintain political support, jump start the city’s consumption development, or have a positive impact on image (e.g., Foster, 1976; Shlay & Giloth, 1987).

METHOD

We seek to learn more about how the mega-event strategy plays out in the context of US urban politics. To do so, we examine the three US cities that have experience bidding for and staging the Olympic games in the postfederal era: Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Salt Lake City. We focus on the Olympics because they have become the urban mega-event in the contemporary period of global economic competition (e.g., Burbank, Andranovich, & Heying, in press; Essex & Chalkley, 1998; Hill, 1996). We examine only US cities because the political economy of the federal system places American cities in a unique position with respect to hosting large scale events. Unlike cities in nations that can count on substantial assistance from national or regional governments, US cities must play a more entrepreneurial role to pursue a mega-event with no guarantee of financial support from the state or federal government.

Although typically discussed in terms of their economic impact, mega-events are multi-dimensional and multi-purpose occurrences (Hall, 1996; Ritchie, 1984; Roche, 1992, 1994). Our intent then is to understand the impact of these large-scale, multi-dimensional events by comparing the development process across cities as it unfolds through time. We examine events in each city over the course of three key stages: bidding for the games, organizing the games, and the post-games legacy. Of course, Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Salt Lake City are very different cities in terms of size, economic base, social composition, and political history. The time period for hosting the games in each city differs as well. Despite these differences, meaningful comparisons can be drawn by focusing on the political processes in each city that are central to bidding for and organizing the games. Each case draws upon multiple sources of evidence collected in each city. These sources include local government documents, official Olympic documents (e.g., local Olympic bid and organizing committee reports and office files, economic outcome assessments), interviews with local officials, local media reports, public opinion poll data, and other available sources (e.g., speeches, papers, and press releases by community groups, reports from local chambers of commerce). By comparing how these cities pursued the Olympics and organized their games, we seek to identify key features of the relationship between consumption-based economic development politics and the mega-event strategy in urban politics.

THE OLYMPICS AS AN URBAN MEGA-EVENT: LOS ANGELES, ATLANTA, AND SALT LAKE CITY

In this section, we report the results of a comparative analysis of the mega-event strategy in three Olympic cities. A mega-event strategy unfolds over a considerable period of time; typically there is a decade between launching a bid and the closing ceremonies and, of course, the legacy of the event can last for many more years. To facilitate comparison and present this material succinctly, we divide the Olympic mega-event into three periods: the bid process, the organization period, and the legacy of the Olympics.

Bidding for the Olympic Games

An Olympic bid is a difficult and uncertain undertaking. According to rules established by the IOC, only cities are allowed to bid for and host the Olympics games. Yet, in the US context, city governments nearly always lack the resources required to mount a serious bid. As a result, the way in which an Olympic bid bearing the city's name is undertaken can reveal a great deal about who the crucial political players are in a city, and how policy initiatives are undertaken. Table 1 summarizes key features of the Olympic bids in Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Salt Lake City. It illustrates the importance of business-dominated growth coalitions in urban mega-event politics and the variable role of local government. Although the politics of Olympic bidding were not uniform across the three cities, the goals of each city's bid were couched almost exclusively in the rhetoric of economic growth and image enhancement.

The Los Angeles bid was initiated by a progrowth group of downtown business leaders and civic notables operating through the Southern California Committee for the Olympic Games (SCCOG). This group raised $158,000 in private funds to finance bid activities leading up to selection by the United States Olympic Committee (USOC). The SCCOG was originally established in 1939, after the city's 1932 summer games, and sought unsuccessfully to bring the games back to Los Angeles for nearly 40 years. According to Rodney Rood (1977), an SCCOG member and vice president of Atlantic Richfield Corp., the reasons for bringing the games back to Los Angeles were: (1) the chance for Los Angeles to display its attractions on

TABLE 1

Bidding for the Olympic Games

City/Timeframe	Initiated by	Funding	Goals of Olympic Bid	Role of Local Government
Los Angeles 1975–1978	SCCOG	Private	• Provide LA with a global stage • Gain tourism revenues (est. $350m.) • Intangibles to enhance LA's position in history & contemporary society	Actively negotiate to limit city's financial responsibility
Atlanta 1987–1990	Entrepreneur	Private/ public	• Promote image of world class tourist & conference city • Redevelop downtown Atlanta • Provide benefits to city residents	Supportive of public-private partnerships
Salt Lake 1988–1995	City, state, entrepreneur	Private/ public	• Make Utah the winter sports capital of North America • Generate $900m. in benefits to the entire state • Provide a lasting legacy for Utah	Facilitative

Source: Compiled by authors.

a global stage; (2) the opportunity to increase revenues from the influx of new visitors; and (3) the intangibles that would enhance the city's position in history and contemporary society. For SCCOG president and attorney John Argue the publicly stated goal was to bring the games to Los Angeles at no cost to taxpayers.

While the private bid committee pushed ahead with the bid, the city government's role was largely limited to keeping the city financially removed from the games. Although there was some contentious debate, Mayor Tom Bradley was able to use his formidable political skills to maintain majority support on the city council in favor of his policies to make Los Angeles a world class city (Sonenshein, 1993). After winning the USOC's endorsement, Los Angeles had no serious competition at the international level, in large part as a consequence of the debt run up by Montreal in staging the 1976 games. Los Angeles emerged as the only viable choice to host the 1984 games, allowing the bid committee to negotiate an unprecedented contract with the IOC: the local organizing committee and the USOC, not the city, assumed all financial responsibility for hosting the games. After the IOC awarded the games to Los Angeles, the city council voted to impose an Olympic ticket tax and raise the hotel occupancy tax in place of using city general funds for the games. This measure also was placed on the November 1978 ballot as Proposition N and won approval of 74% of city voters (Lawson, 1985). Ironically, this vote not to use general funds for the Olympics made it possible for the LAOOC to be less subject to public control as the process to organize the games began in 1979 (W. Wilson, personal communication, July 14, 2000).

Unlike Los Angeles, Atlanta did not have an existing organization in place to initiate a bid. Much of the early work was done by a small group of acquaintances of a local lawyer and former college football player, Billy Payne, who would become the city's Olympic entrepreneur. Payne's group had little success until it was able to attract the support of members of Atlanta's business and political elite. One early convert to the Olympic cause was Mayor Andrew Young. After leaving office, Young became chairman of the Georgia Amateur Athletic Foundation (GAAF), an organization formed to promote Atlanta's bid. After the GAAF won the USOC's endorsement a new organization, the Atlanta Organizing Committee (AOC), was formed. The AOC became the vehicle for attracting support from Atlanta's business and political leaders, with Billy Payne serving as president and CEO, Andrew Young as chair, and Gerald Bartels, president of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, as secretary. Atlanta faced stiff international competition for the 1996 games, but the AOC was able to draw on considerable private resources from Atlanta businesses, the political connections of leaders such as Young, and its capabilities as a convention-tested city.

After Atlanta was awarded the games in 1990, it became apparent that there were conflicting visions for the Atlanta Olympics. For Young and others on the bid committee, the city's task was to put on a successful athletic event (Newman, 1999a). Mayor Maynard Jackson, on the other hand, described the challenge as scaling the "twin peaks of Mount Olympus": one peak was to stage a spectacular Olympics, the other was to use the games to revitalize inner-city Atlanta (Roughton, 1991, p. F3). Jackson's more expansive view raised expectations for what could and should be done during Olympic preparations and broadened the debate over what hosting the games should mean for the city's residents.

Like Los Angeles, Salt Lake City had a long history of interest in the Olympic Games. The city's earliest bids, for the 1972 and 1976 winter games, were primarily efforts to gain publicity for the ski industry organized by a coalition of downtown business boosters and government officials. By 1988, however, the bid process had evolved into a sophisticated campaign conducted by local business leaders and key government officials from Salt Lake City and the surrounding region. Although formally initiated by the mayor of Salt Lake City, the bid process was propelled by a small group of local business people and Olympic entrepreneurs who supplied the leadership and resources. One of the bid committee's early successes was to lobby the state legislature for public funds to build Olympic-quality sports facilities such as a ski jump and bobsled track; the legislature approved the plan subject to a public referendum. The commitment of public funds for sports facilities helped convince the USOC to choose Salt Lake City over Anchorage in 1989. After winning the USOC endorsement, the bid committee reorganized its structure as part of a campaign to solicit support from large corporations that could provide the funds needed to lobby the IOC.

The reasons given by supporters for attracting the Olympics to Utah were to generate revenue for the state's tourism industry in the short term and to provide long-term exposure to boost the city's and the ski industry's image. In response to criticism that none of these benefits would accrue if the city did not host the games, supporters argued that with or without the games Salt Lake City could become the "winter sports capital" of North America (e.g., Jardine, 1989). Public debate over the Olympics came to a head in Utah during a 1989 referendum campaign on the issue of diverting $59 million of sales tax revenues into a fund for the construction of Olympic facilities. The referendum passed, 57% to 43%, thus providing public money for Olympic development and giving the city's bid an enormous boost in the international competition. Ultimately, the bid committee spent nearly seven years and an estimated $13 million lobbying to get the games ("Private dollars," 1995).

The Olympic bids in all three cities shared two common features. One was that the Olympic bid was a product of regime politics. The driving force behind the Olympic bids in each city were influential members of the city's business elite with the endorsement of elected officials to provide public legitimacy. A second common feature was the desire to enhance or modify the city's image, whether as a "world class city," "convention city," or "winter sports capital." These images reflected the visions of city leaders and provided a compelling public justification for the bid. By creating a broadly appealing and intangible public goal, the leaders of the bid process could incorporate the agendas of different stakeholders, whether they desired to increase short-term tourism revenues, build the region's sports and recreation infrastructure, or redevelop the city. Each case shows a similar pattern of using the rhetoric and symbols of city image and economic development to mobilize support for the Olympics.

Organizing the Games

Organizing the Olympics is more than a complex logistical task. It also forces concrete decisions regarding the physical development and use of the urban landscape, which opens the development process to contestation. Table 2 presents the essential aspects of how Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Salt Lake City organized for the Olympic Games including the local organizing infrastructure, the relationships among the various constituent units, and the strategies pursued by the local organizing committees. Los Angeles created the entrepreneurial model that subsequent bidders hoped to emulate, but each city's path to the Olympics was different.

The Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee (LAOOC), with Peter Ueberroth as president, was the private, nonprofit organization charged with staging the 1984 games. Although some of the civic notables involved in the bid remained on the board of the LAOOC, Ueberroth and Harry Usher, an entertainment lawyer, made most of the decisions (Reich, 1986). With the political circumstances surrounding the city's support for the bid and the unprecedented deal with the IOC, there was widespread consensus over the LAOOC's purpose: to stage a "spartan" Olympics. The 1984 games have been dubbed the "capitalist Olympics" because of the LAOOC's determination to raise as much money as possible by seeking sponsorships from a limited number of large corporations while simultaneously trying to minimize costs (Nixon, 1988). The LAOOC limited costs by using existing facilities, having volunteers rather than paid staff, and requesting sacrifices from Olympic visitors and venue communities alike.

The politics of land use and image building remained on center stage during the organizing period. The major conflict over land use occurred in the San Fernando Valley over a proposal to put a rowing course and velodrome in the Sepulveda Basin. A coalition of homeowners' groups, businesses, and environmentalists, which had previously fought to stop a horse racing facility from being built in the basin, opposed the Olympic venues. Mayor Bradley supported the development as one element of a package intended to attract federal aid, with the LAOOC

TABLE 2

Organizing the Olympic Games

City/Timeframe	Local Organizing Infrastructure	Relations with Local Govt.	Strategy	LOOC Budget
Los Angeles 1979–84	• LAOOC	Contractual	• "Arm's length" approach • Seek corporate sponsors • Identify venues	$546m.
Atlanta 1990–96	• ACOG • MAOGA • City • CODA	Partnership	• Revitalize downtown • Sports/entertainment development • Reimage Atlanta	$1.58b.
Salt Lake 1995–present	• SLOC • Utah Sports Authority • Utah Athletic Foundation • City	Overlapping memberships	• Seek corporate sponsors • Seek IG funds • Attract sports development • Reimage Utah	$1.3b.

Source: Compiled by authors.

as a reluctant supporter (Ueberroth, 1985). Ultimately, organized pressure from the residents of the San Fernando Valley led the International Rowing Federation to reject the basin as an Olympic venue, and President Carter turned down Bradley's request for aid. Although Mayor Bradley lost on the development issue, he was successful when the issue was his city's image. During protracted negotiations with the Los Angeles Coliseum Commission, the LAOOC contemplated moving the opening and closing ceremonies to Pasadena's Rose Bowl. Mayor Bradley, however, was adamant that the world should see Los Angeles, not a neighboring city, and lobbied the LAOOC to keep the ceremonies in the city.

Overall, the LAOOC was given extraordinary latitude to organize the games with limited government involvement. Operating in the fragmented political environment of Los Angeles, the LAOOC had the power to make its own decisions without the need to build political consensus. The LAOOC pursued the goal of hosting the games while keeping corporate sponsors, local governments, and community groups at an arm's length (Reich, 1986). When faced with community opposition, the LAOOC either changed sites or provided minor concessions such as youth sports activities or improved facilities to placate neighborhood interests (Burbank, Heying, & Andranovich, 2000).

The organizational choices facing Olympic supporters in Atlanta were more complex than in Los Angeles where there was widespread agreement on the need for an independent Olympic organization. In Atlanta, members of the bid committee incorporated a new nonprofit civic organization, the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG), to stage the games. ACOG's governing board, composed mostly of members of Atlanta's civic and business elite, was co-chaired by Andrew Young and Robert Holder, Jr. ACOG's daily operations were handled by an executive committee, with Billy Payne serving as the president and CEO. In addition, elected officials wanted the city of Atlanta to play an active part in Olympic planning, and the state legislature had previously created the Metropolitan Atlanta Olympic Games Authority (MAOGA), a state entity with the authority to bond for Olympic projects, the power of eminent domain, and oversight responsibility. The relationship between the three was worked out in a "tri-party agreement," the terms of which made it clear that real authority would reside with ACOG (Fish, 1992; Roughton, 1992). Later, city leaders created the Corporation for Olympic Development in Atlanta (CODA), a public-private partnership intended to spearhead the redevelopment of inner city neighborhoods. Ultimately, CODA was underfunded given its ambitious goals and had little positive impact on neighborhood residents (French & Disher, 1997; Newman, 1999a).

During the bid period, members of the Atlanta committee self-consciously promoted the Los Angeles model. Yet, after winning hosting rights, Atlanta's Olympic organizations were faced with the reality that Atlanta did not have sufficient existing facilities to host the games (Newman, 1999b). Atlanta's games thus provided the opportunity to promote an aggressive development agenda. Of the estimated $1.58 billion ACOG spent on the 1996 games, $517 million was spent on construction including $209 million spent on a new Olympic Stadium. Another $127 million was spent on the athletes' village and the city spent $50 million on infrastructure. Atlanta also relied on federal largess, nearly $609 million worth, to speed up transportation, public housing, and other infrastructure projects for the games (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2000). In general, Olympic development plans drew one of two reactions. Large institutions such as Georgia Tech, the Atlanta University Center, and Stone Mountain were receptive to Olympic proposals and formed partnerships with Olympic planners that served their interests as well as ACOG's. In contrast, projects that impacted communities, such as the Olympic Stadium and Centennial Olympic Park led to disputes over development and sparked opposition by residents. Opposition to particular development projects often centered on longstanding issues of race and class (Burbank et al., 2000).

Because Olympic-related development was largely controlled through ACOG and not MAOGA, ACOG became the focal point of much of the conflict over development. For the most part, ACOG dealt with these controversies by steadfastly pursuing its objectives, making concessions only when necessary, and by taking full advantage of its status as a private organization with a claim on public resources. ACOG's role as a vehicle for pursuing a broader redevelopment and reimaging strategy can best be illustrated by the creation of Centennial Olympic Park in downtown Atlanta (Burbank et al., in press; Rutheiser, 1996). The park was not crucial to hosting sporting events, but was strategically located for the tourism and convention businesses. ACOG was able to overcome difficulties that had stopped earlier redevelopment plans by skillfully coordinating the park proposal with other Olympic projects and using the Olympic timeline to generate momentum. ACOG brought together the financing for the project and controlled its design. Absent from these arrangements were either the city government or CODA (Newman, 1999b). Neighborhood activists protested ACOG's actions, pointing out that these violated ACOG's policy of only funding Olympic venues, a policy that ACOG had used earlier to reject the demands of neighborhood residents for redevelopment assistance (Hill, 1993). Yet, these complaints were largely ignored, as were protests over the loss of low-income housing associated with the related redevelopment of Techwood/Clark Howell public housing (Keating & Flores, 2000; Quesenberry, 1996). As a private organization, ACOG could use its power to facilitate the redevelopment projects it saw as beneficial, but it was not obligated to be responsive to protests from city residents.

As in Los Angeles and Atlanta, the organizational structure for the 2002 games was placed primarily in the hands of a private, nonprofit group: the Salt Lake Olympic Organizing Committee (SLOC). In contrast, however, the early commitment of public money to build Olympic venues has meant a stronger public component to the organizational structure of the Salt Lake City games. The selection of the members of the SLOC board of trustees is jointly made by the mayor of Salt Lake and the governor of Utah. The governor's role is a legacy of state funding and an indemnification agreement reached by the city, state, and bid committee in 1991 (Beattie, 2000). In addition to SLOC, two state organizations were part of the Olympic organizing infrastructure (Fowler, 1999). The Utah Sports Authority was a state board created in 1989 to oversee the use of public money to build and manage winter sports facilities. The Utah Athletic Foundation was created by the state legislature in 1995 to assume ownership and operation of some of the winter sports facilities at the conclusion of the winter Olympics. Despite the existence of these public organizations, day-to-day decision making is largely controlled by the SLOC and thus generally insulated from public accountability.

SLOC's ability to control decision making is illustrated by a controversy over the site of an awards plaza in downtown Salt Lake. Olympic planners had long wanted to hold the awards ceremonies downtown, but SLOC did not have money budgeted for such a facility. Consequently, SLOC officials approached the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) to ask for a donation that included the use of a downtown city block, known as Block 85, and approximately $5 million needed to transform it into a ceremonial plaza. Church officials agreed and SLOC announced the donation to the public. City officials, however, opposed SLOC's selection of Block 85 because they favored another downtown location on city property and they were upset the SLOC officials had not informed them before the public announcement. Yet, the city council could not match the church's offer, nor could the mayor force SLOC to budget money to make the city's preferred site a suitable venue. Thus, Block 85 became the location over the objections of city officials. Although the decision was based on money, the choice of locations was symbolically significant as well. At the city's preferred location, the backdrop for the televised ceremonies would have been the city and county building. At Block 85, the television backdrop is the LDS Temple and Temple Square.

As a catalyst for development, the Salt Lake games fall in between the minimalist Los Angeles games and the ambitious redevelopment efforts undertaken in Atlanta. Clearly, preparations for the 2002 games have affected the development agenda in and around Salt Lake City. The most obvious impact has been the construction of sports venues, such as a bobsled run and speed-skating oval, built using public money. These facilities were constructed with the agreement that SLOC would buy them prior to the games and, after the games, turn them over to a private organization along with a $40 million legacy fund (Fowler, 1999). As was the case in Los Angeles and Atlanta, large institutions were able to use the promise of an Olympic subsidy to pursue projects that otherwise might not have been feasible, such as the construction of university student housing to serve as the athletes' village, renovation of a football stadium to be used for the opening and closing ceremonies, and construction of a hockey arena. The games also spurred private development, such as the construction or expansion of several hotels and the expansion of a privately owned ski resort. One of the most striking features of Olympic development, however, has been the way in which state and city officials use the Olympic image and the Olympic timeline to get federal assistance for public development projects. More than $1.3 billion in federal funds for projects such as building a light rail line and reconstruction of an interstate highway have been funneled into the state (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2000).

The 1984 Los Angeles games created the model for a successful entrepreneurial approach to hosting the games that subsequent bid cities found extremely attractive. Yet, neither Atlanta nor Salt Lake City used the Los Angeles model. Unlike Los Angeles, neither Atlanta nor Salt Lake City had existing world-class competition sites and both cities used the Olympics as a rationale for inducing consumption-based development, mixing the symbolic politics of city image making with the politics of pursuing tangible consumption-based development. Atlanta and Salt Lake City, by combining symbolic and instrumental values, increased the expectations for Olympic development. The decision-making processes in these two cities were more drawn out and demands by different stakeholders had a legitimacy not evident in Los Angeles.

As the development goals have become more ambitious, the relationship between organizing committees and public authorities has become more complex with a broader range of values being evoked. Still, the decision-making process for hosting the games is dominated by the private organizing committees, effectively limiting public accountability. Although the Olympic committees retain control over private resources, local governments have shown the ability to leverage the Olympics to obtain federal resources. The Los Angeles games used remarkably little federal money, but both Atlanta and Salt Lake City were successful in getting federal dollars for development projects as a part of the mega-event strategy. Yet, along with these more expansive development goals, both Salt Lake City and Atlanta have witnessed greater conflict over Olympic development than was apparent in Los Angeles (Burbank et al., 2000).

The Olympic Legacies

The Olympic legacy is the period with the longest effect on the host city. Table 3 summarizes the Olympic legacies for each city. The economic outcomes of the Olympic Games tend to be most frequently touted, which is not unexpected given the propensity of civic boosters to equate economic activity with local benefits (Roche, 1992). In assessing the impact of hosting an Olympic mega-event, the overarching theme is how few of the benefits of being a world-class city impact the everyday lives of the city's residents.

In contrast to the experiences of previous host cities such as Montreal, the 1984 Los Angeles games showed that mega-events could turn a profit. The 1984 Olympics provided some direct benefits to the city by prompting renovation of the airport and installation of $100 mil-

TABLE 3

Olympic Legacies

City	Economic Outcomes	Political Outcomes
Los Angeles	• $9.6b. tourism • $225m. "surplus" • Airport construction speeded up • New fiber optics infrastructure ($100m.) • Upgraded sports facilities • Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles legacy fund ($90m.)	• $145m. tax revenues • LA Mayor's presence enhanced • Interlocal cooperation • Mobilized anti-LA sentiment in San Fernando Valley • Public art • Ueberroth picked to head RLA in 1992
Atlanta	• $650m. in new construction • $609m. in federal funds • 18 companies relocated • $5b. in tourism • Expansion of tourism businesses • Chamber expands international sports presence	• CODA, ANDP created • Affirmative action employment & purchasing • Local politics nationalized • Federal Empowerment Zone • Public art • Downtown QOL ordinances • Liquor store licenses not renewed • Centennial Olympic Park
Salt Lake	• $1.3b. in federal funds • $4.5b. in tourism (est.) • Expansion of tourism businesses • $40m. legacy fund (est.)	• Enhanced IG lobbying capacity • Conflict over paying for costs in venue communities • $79.5m. tax revenues (est.)

Source: Compiled by authors.

lion in telecommunications infrastructure. Because the games relied heavily on existing facilities, however, only four new athletic facilities were built along with an administration building on the UCLA campus; all were privately financed (Perelman, 1985). The impact of the Los Angeles games on southern California was around $9.6 billion, including about $145 million that went to local and state government (MacCargar, 1985), although the effects across the region were uneven. There was also displacement as the region's big tourist draws—Disneyland, Universal Studios, and Six Flags Magic Mountain—reported lower attendance and fewer nonlocal visitors than usual (Economic Research Associates, 1984, pp. 55-56). Perhaps the greatest impact of the games, however, was the image of a successful capitalist Olympics. Not only did the Hollywood-crafted opening and closing ceremonies attract substantial positive attention, but the LAOOC ended with a tangible $225 million surplus, nearly 40% of which stayed in the Los Angeles area to support youth sports through the Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles.

The political legacy of the 1984 games boosted the prestige of Mayor Bradley, although this effect proved to be short lived (Purcell, 2000). Mayor Bradley's attempt to repeat Peter Ueberroth's entrepreneurial success by appointing him to run Rebuild LA after the civil unrest in 1992 was notably less successful. Also, Bradley's efforts to push for development in the Sepulveda Basin added to the concerns of political opponents in the San Fernando Valley that the city's political leaders did not hold the valley's interests in high regard. The push by these opponents to have the valley secede from the city of Los Angeles simmered from the mid-1970s until the late 1990s, when it was revived and is currently under review by the Local Agency Formation Commission in Los Angeles County. The most enduring political legacy of the 1984 games was the sense of accomplishment in Los Angeles. Indeed, in December 2000, members of the Los Angeles 2012 Bid Committee announced they would again seek the Olympic Games and implied that Los Angeles would be ready to step in if Athens was not prepared to host the 2004 games (Dwyre, 2000). As the mayor of Los Angles proclaimed, “Los Angeles is truly the capital city of the world. We promise we will put on a spectacular 2012 Olympics” (Elliott, 2000, p. D1).

In contrast, the 1996 Olympics produced a mixed legacy for Atlanta. Preparations for the games by ACOG and local governments boosted the economy and, to a greater extent than Los Angeles, physically changed parts of the city, most notably with the development of Olympic Stadium and Centennial Olympic Park. The games brought the expected influx of tourists, about two million visitors, and focused the world’s attention on the city. Overall, the Atlanta region was expected to receive a $5 billion economic boost (Newman, 1999b). Both the state of Georgia and the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce sought to extend the economic legacy of the games by using the Olympics to recruit new businesses and future sporting events. Still, the Olympic development left a legacy of ill will in neighborhoods, such as Summerhill, that bore the brunt of lost housing and dislocation (Newman, 1999a; Rutheiser, 1996). Even though hosting the games helped Atlanta to land one of six federal empowerment zones designations, overall the city’s efforts to use the Olympics to revitalize urban neighborhoods fell short (French & Disher, 1997; Newman, 1999a).

Moreover, the image that Atlanta sought to portray of a friendly, progressive city of the New South was not entirely successful. The media focused a great deal of attention on inconveniences in transportation and accommodations and, later, the bomb explosion in Centennial Olympic Park. Atlanta was also criticized by members of the IOC as well as the press for the city’s efforts to raise money from the Olympics by leasing public areas to small vendors and selling advertising. In closing the 1996 Olympics, IOC President Samaranch did not proclaim the games “the best ever,” leading to negative speculation in the media about Atlanta’s performance as host and its status as a world-class city.

It is too soon to know the long-term impact of the winter games on Salt Lake City. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to expect that the games will have a positive economic impact due to Olympic-related spending and an influx of tourists. The total economic impact for the 1996 to 2003 period is estimated to be $4.5 billion, with net revenues to state and local governments projected to be $75.9 million (Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget, 2000). Given the costs to the city and the way tax revenues are distributed, however, Salt Lake City may not come out ahead financially. The magnitude of the economic benefit depends in part on the level of spending by SLOC, which has encountered fund raising difficulties in the wake of the Olympic bribery scandal (e.g., Biele, 1999; Harris, 2000). The bribery scandal not only tarnished the luster of hosting the Olympics, it has also exacerbated tensions between SLOC and the venue communities over the allocation of costs associated with hosting the games. Moreover, several Olympic development projects engendered opposition from environmental groups or neighborhood residents (Burbank et al., 2000). With the budgetary uncertainties, questions about the future economic viability of facilities for elite athletes, and the lingering effects of the Olympic scandal, the 2002 Olympic Games are likely to produce a mixed legacy, at best, for Salt Lake City.

Over the course of the decade-long period from bid initiation to closing ceremonies, all three cities saw development of essential infrastructure such as transportation and telecommunications. Further, each city also witnessed the creation or expansion of sports, entertainment, and leisure facilities intended to push the city further down the path of consumption-oriented development. Yet, despite the public claims by local boosters, hosting an Olympic mega-event did not lead to urban regeneration or revitalization.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM URBAN MEGA-EVENT POLITICS

Why have cities seemingly embraced the mega-event strategy? Two reasons are given for engaging in the mega-event strategy. First, it seems clear that city leaders see the Olympic Games in strategic terms, providing opportunities to gain regional, national, and international media exposure at low cost. Even submitting a bid package to the national Olympic committee is enough to warrant media exposure and provide some claim to Olympic symbols to unify disparate stakeholders, however transitory these claims might be. The mega-event strategy also provides a clear timeline for development projects. Even though the promise of the Olympics does not eliminate regulatory requirements for planning, the Olympics are prestigious enough to force quick decisions. In the face of an increasingly complicated politics of development, this can be an important incentive to adopting this strategy. The 1984 games provided a model of entrepreneurial behavior, much in line with the prospects for postfederal economic development policy making noted by Clarke and Gaile (1998). Of course, the question arises of whose interests are served by a shift to such entrepreneurial activities.

Second, hosting the Olympics can be justified as a boon to tourism and tourism revenues. For cities seeking to be competitive this rationale supports the trend toward consumption-based development, which first requires the financing of a tourist-friendly landscape. The mega-event strategy seems to institutionalize the financing practices that have evolved from convention center and sports development, but this presents policy makers with a difficult situation. Providing the resources, public or private, to build tourist bubbles in support of international festivals in the face of increasing urban poverty raises the question, to what extent are local governments responsible for the everyday conditions faced by local residents? Atlanta’s failed attempt to scale the twin peaks of Mount Olympus shows that even if elected officials want to improve conditions for residents, hosting the Olympics does not provide sufficient opportunities to accomplish those goals.

What does our analysis of the mega-event strategy tell us about urban politics? The manner in which Olympic bids are conducted and the games organized raises serious public policy concerns, particularly with respect to the role of access, accountability, and responsiveness in the policy making process. In the United States, Olympic bid committees are private, non-profit organizations. The reason that Olympic bid committees are privately organized is that local governments lack the necessary resources to conduct Olympic bid campaigns. Although public money is often used in some fashion, in practice Olympic bids by American cities are paid for by contributions from private businesses. As critics have pointed out, providing festivals when people need bread is a dubious use of public resources (e.g., Eisinger, 2000; Law, 1993; Lenskyj, 1996). Yet as privately organized committees with controlled access trying to achieve specific sports-related goals and bring somewhat ambiguous intangible benefits to the host city, the bid permits the powerful interests in cities to attach their agendas to the Olympic process, creating the perfect policy mechanism for ensuring a growth agenda.

The fact that these Olympic committees are private organizations means that they are not clearly accountable to elected officials or citizens even though their activities have substantial public policy consequences. For the local organizing committee and corporate sponsors, the Olympic Games are the central focus and all of the committee’s efforts are to produce the “best games ever.” For the most part, local governments are treated like all of the other institutions and individuals trying to represent their interests. For local governments in these three cities, the public role in the public-private partnership was not clearly spelled out, leading to conflicts between private and public interests. Such conflicts are likely to be a central feature of the mega-event strategy because, as it has evolved since 1984, it seems to require an increased number of governmental actors as participants. But, as the host experiences in Atlanta and Salt Lake City show, an increased number of public organizations does not necessarily guarantee a guarding of the public interest. A further challenge is to ensure that community interests are not limited to professional sports teams, their owners, big developers, hotel and leisure industry operators, and the like; they also must include the needs local residents and local public spaces. In all three cities, however, the focus was on the Olympics-as-sport and communities existed only as venue sites.

The strategy of using mega-events to promote local development also raises concerns with regard to citizen participation. In general, citizen participation in the process of bidding for and organizing the Olympics is minimal (but, see Hiller, 2000). In our cases, the only instance of citizen participation during the bidding process was the Utah referendum on using sales tax money for construction of Olympic venues. Although the referendum was technically nonbinding, it at least encouraged citizens to debate the issue and express their preferences on bidding for the Olympics. In Los Angeles the outcome of the 1978 vote to ensure that no city general funds were used for the games reduced public accountability during the organizing period. In Atlanta, the passage of two infrastructure bonds in 1994 to help get the city ready for the 1996 games was the first successful bond vote in 25 years. However, it occurred only after a confluence of events led business leaders to fear that the wrong image would become attached to Atlanta. Because of the dominance of Olympic proponents over the city's development agenda, citizen participation is often limited to opposition from residents or interest groups to specific development projects after the bid had been accepted.

The symbolism of the Olympics allows advocates of growth to set the terms of the policy debate in cities, and these terms have been very narrowly defined around consumption-based economic development. As a public policy instrument that has a decade-long planning horizon and no broad public participation requirement, the Olympic mega-event provides an opportunity to substitute consumption-based economic development agendas for the other local policy concerns. This was most clearly evident in Atlanta, where the mayor stated his desire to achieve excellence both in sports and the city's civic responsibility to "uplift the people of Atlanta and fight poverty in the process" (Roughton, 1991, p. F3). Unfortunately, the city was not in a position to fund an antipoverty program, nor could it persuade the private Olympic organizing committee to do so. Public officials in Los Angeles and Salt Lake City made no such statements for the inclusion of non-elite interests in their justifications for the games.

Cities concerned with place marketing, city image making, and long-term strategies for subsidizing their development as consumption locations will continue to court mega-events in the postfederal environment. Indeed, there are nine American cities competing to be America's choice to host the 2012 summer games: Cincinnati, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City, San Francisco, Tampa, and a combined bid from the cities of Baltimore and Washington, DC (Wanninger, 1998). Whether or not these cities' Olympic dreams are achieved by winning the competition to host the games, the experiences of Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Salt Lake City suggest that urban fortunes will be overstated. Indeed, the long time frames needed for planning, the use of public-private partnerships to design and implement Olympic development, and the absence of general citizen participation during this process add up to an extended business-as-usual theme in urban politics behind the rhetoric and symbolism of the Olympic movement.

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