

# ***Mapping the Olympic Growth Machine: World-City Networks and the Transnational Capitalist Class***

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## **Abstract**

Research on world cities and global urban systems has been central to urban studies for nearly forty years. Similarly, classical urban political theories of urban regimes and growth machines have nourished vibrant debates through generations of political-economic transformation. With few exceptions, however, these two literatures remain separate avenues of inquiry. In this paper, we engage these two literatures by drawing on Leslie Sklair's theory of the transnational capitalist class to analyze the preparations for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver. We examine Vancouver's urban growth regime, and we trace global connections in investments across several Olympic sites and other locales of urban spectacle in order to show the intersections between local and transnational growth machines. While investments in Olympic infrastructure are ultimately place-bound, key facets of control and ownership of growth-machine assets are becoming transnationalized.

## Introduction

Processes of globalisation have been discussed in myriad contexts, but it is widely agreed that the strongest globalising force is an economic process that is the result of the expansion of capitalism. One sub-category of research on globalisation focuses on the emergence of world cities. Since the publication of Sassen's (1991) thesis of a triad of global cities, the presence of large concentrations of producer services firms and headquarters of transnational companies have been used to rank cities on a global scale. More recent approaches go beyond a focus on economic processes and include political networks and those related to engaging in a global civil society (see Taylor 2004, 2005a, 2005b).

At the same time classical urban political theories of growth machines (Logan and Molotch, 1987) and urban regimes (Stone, 1989) have nourished vibrant debates over Petersonian city limits (Peterson, 1981) through generations of political-economic change. Imbroscio (2003) argues that regime theory has largely ignored economic questions and is thus hampered in its ability to respond to the theory of economic determinism. Moreover, we find that regime theory with its intra-urban focus has integrated transnational developments in urban development only poorly. With few exceptions the literatures of world city research and urban growth machines and regime politics remain separate avenues of inquiry.

Mega-events such as the Olympic Games have often been described as one of the primary expressions of the globalisation of culture. Although we do not challenge this interpretation of the Games, we stress that these global spectacles are not merely a cultural event, but are tightly interwoven into the global economy and are an increasingly important aspect of the creation of new leisure and consumption spaces. These events have to literally take place in a particular locale – or possibly in a small number of locales – and are almost exclusively urban phenomena

that require large public and private investments. While these investments are usually placed bound in the form of bricks and mortar infrastructure, the economic interests in these investments are often global.

Using the Olympic Games as a case study we employ Leslie Sklair's (2001) concept of the transnational capitalist class to re-theorise mega-events, and the Games in particular, as an integral part of the world economic system that is globalising in control and ownership, yet highly integrated into both the Westphalian interstate system and urban regimes. Our case study focuses on the Vancouver 2010 Winter Games as a starting point and we trace global connections in Olympic investments across several Olympic sites and other locales of urban mega-events and mega projects. Thus we will employ an analysis of mega-events as economic catalysts to include and go beyond an analysis of intra-urban growth machine and regime politics by exploring the role of transnational actors in contemporary urban regimes, which are not traditionally their "home" and could be located anywhere, if the right conditions persist.

## **Transnationalism, elites and a world system of cities**

The theory of the urban growth machine (Molotch, 1976; Logan and Molotch, 1987) emerged in the late 1970s as an attempt to explain the power relations in urban politics and identify the main beneficiaries thereof. The term growth machine describes groups of local actors that organise around the property development industry and advocate the application of market forces to land use. Similarly, regime theory (Stone, 1989) provides an analysis of the forces in urban politics that facilitate growth through the formation of relatively durable -- but not permanent nor structurally determined -- alliances amongst various urban-based elites. However, regime theory does not identify one particular group or a small number of groups, but tries to

explain urban growth by investigating the conditions under which certain groups will enter into coalitions that facilitate growth. While both approaches remain powerful paradigms in urban studies, each approach focuses overwhelmingly on intra-urban relations and does not pay sufficient attention to inter-urban and transnational processes. Although both theories recognise intense place-based competition for investment, they neglect the role of increasingly mobile elites and national and supranational political forces. One rare example of an attempt to move beyond this problematic dichotomy is Kipfer and Keil's (2002) insightful analysis of Toronto's planning for an Olympic bid and a major redevelopment of the city's waterfront as part of an effort to create a highly competitive world city. Kipfer and Keil's work highlights the intimate connections between the world-city mentality of city officials, planners, and entrepreneurs, the evolving complexity of local regime politics, and the increasingly competitive transnational political discourse surrounding hallmark events such as the Olympic Games. Yet few other analysts have explored these multi-scalar relations in empirical context, and so our work is designed to offer a Vancouver-based counterpart to some of the processes described by Kipfer and Keil (2002).

The relations between cities and globalizing processes have been central to urban studies for many years, and key theoretical questions in today's world-cities debates can be traced to the earliest urban systems theories. Network formations have been explored in depth based on indicators such as office locations of transnational corporations, stock market size, communication and transportation connectivity or media representation of places (compare for example Beaverstock, Smith, Taylor, Walker and Lorimer, 2000). However, other factors that may well be highly influential in the process of world city formation do not necessarily lend themselves to similar quantitative analyses and have subsequently not been applied as

systematically and are less prominent in the world city literature. Personal networks and the role of individuals or particular groups of people are one example of relatively poorly researched aspects of globalisation and world-city formation, although early in the evolution of this literature Friedmann and Wolff (1981) observed the formation of what they termed transnational elites, “a ‘new class’ of technocrats [that] is managing the current transition of the world economic order” (p. 14). One of the main characteristics of this highly mobile “new class” that Friedmann and Wolff identified was their willingness to serve transnational capital and put national interests second.

Leslie Sklair has explored the role of these highly mobile elites in her concept of a transnational capitalist class (Sklair, 2001). This work goes beyond traditional class analysis insofar that it recognises the existence of a class outside national boundaries and defines such a class not only in terms of strict ownership of the means of production, but rather in terms of control over resources necessary to mobilise production in a capitalist society. Although there may not be as strong ties amongst transnational capitalist class as in national classes, such as intermarriage, Sklair argues that the participation in global patterns of capital accumulation, consuming and thinking provides a strong tie amongst the members of this class. For analytical purposes Sklair identifies four main fractions of the transnational capitalist class: 1) Transnational Corporation executives and their local affiliates (the corporate fraction); 2) globalising bureaucrats and politicians (the state fraction); globalising professionals (the technical fraction); and 4) merchants and media (the consumerist fraction).

Members of the transnational capitalist class also have important common interests such as the protection of private property and the right of individuals to acquire private property. In this sense the transnational capitalist class is strongly tied to urban regimes and growth machines

through a common interest in these prime locations for property and capital accumulation. Technological advances in communication and transportation as well as neo-liberal policies of “free-trade” and global markets have aided the transnational capitalist class in pursuing and achieving its goal. Such processes of globalisation have also enabled the exponential growth of wealth for a super-rich global elite. While the incomes of the super-rich are rising, the disparities can to a large extent be explained by the reduction of redistributive policies of individual nation states (Beaverstock, Hubbard and Short, 2004).

Although both world cities as heterogeneous collections of individuals and the transnational capitalist class are both powerful forces in a global economic system, their interests and goals are often facilitated by national actors and governments. Kipfer and Keil (2002), for example, attest a strong role of all three levels of government in Toronto’s waterfront redevelopment. In a revision of his world-systems theory, Immanuel Wallerstein (2004) attests a strong role for national governments in the negotiation of trade relations, using the example of US aircraft manufacturers requesting protection from Washington. The regulation of immigration has similarly remained under national jurisdiction, which cannot be negotiated alone by private actors. Neil Brenner (1998, p. 22) argues that the changing relationships between capital, state and socio-political forces are producing territorial politics that differ from the traditional conception of the nation state, but that there remains a strong role for the state. Moreover, “globalization must be understood as a rescaling of global social space” (Brenner, 1998, p. 27).

## **Spectacular Events in a Global Economy**

There is a long history of spectacular mega-events that attract millions of visitors to a few select urban centres. The ‘Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations’ with 19 000 exhibitors (Chalkley and Essex, 1999, p. 370) and an official estimate of 16 million visitors (Richards, 1990, p. 35), held in London in 1851 in the custom-built Crystal Palace, “began a vogue for expositions and world fairs, many of which involved the preparation of a special site, investment in new infrastructure, and the use of distinctive architecture and designs” (Chalkley and Essex, 1999, p. 370). The 1851 Exhibition in London was grandiose showcase of Britain’s imperial strength and its industrial progress (Chalkley and Essex, 1999, p. 370). These world exhibitions, usually hosted in a country’s capital or other significant city, became important events in creating the image of great modern cities with their emphasis on architectural achievements and erection of spectacular structures such as the Eiffel Tower, often nested in the spirit of 19<sup>th</sup> century European nationalism and national competition. After London’s first in 1851, Paris alone hosted five world exhibitions before 1900.

Although the Olympics focus on sports the initiative by French nobleman Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympics, was motivated by an inherent interest of achieving economic success and progress. As Chalkley and Essex (1999) write:

[De Coubertin] believed that the inclusion of physical education in British schools after 1840 was a major reason for the UK’s prosperity and imperial power, in comparison with the physical inertia of the French. His proposal to revive the ancient Games received unanimous support at a Sports Congress at the Sorbonne, part of the University of Paris, in June 1894.

Although one of de Coubertin’s goal was equality throughout the world through the Olympic Spirit, the Games themselves, of course, are often characterised by fierce competition amongst nations, manifested in medal counts, legal battles over doping charges and most

symbolically the wrapping of the lean athlete bodies in national flags and the trumpeting of national anthems after winning a race. The battle to host the Games has become a competition in and of itself. And hosting the Games is not only a competition amongst cities, but amongst nations, since each country can only submit one bid to the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Olympic Games take place in one city, but the processes and symbols of the Olympics ultimately recognise the nation state as one of the jurisdictions of decision making power.

We are now well into the second century of mega-events, and indeed in the last thirty years the proliferation of expos, fairs, and high-profile sporting events has stretched beyond any easy classification. Describing the scope of an intended audience is easy, but when we escalate from community events to regional competitions to the Pan-Am Games to the World Cup, we quickly run out of suitable names for the next, bigger events. What's beyond 'global'? Maurice Roche hints at this confusion in his taxonomy of public events, distinguishing hallmark events (which typically emphasize the national realm) from special events (world-regional in focus) and mega-events -- the largest celebrations and competitions that mobilize truly worldwide popular attention (Table 1) (Roche, 2000, pp. 3-4). Yet as global as this attention aspires to be, celebrations must always and quite literally take place, and so hallmark events and mega-events have created a dynamic and enduring *spectaculum urbanus* – a constellation of happenings that are impressive to see, designed on a large scale to attract attention, and fundamentally, inescapably urban.<sup>1</sup> The largest of these events include the World Expositions held in irregular intervals, for which cities submit bids nine years in advance to the Bureau of International Exhibitions in Paris; the World Cup, administered by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association;<sup>2</sup> and the Winter and Summer Games of the Olympics, for which cities submit detailed bids to the IOC eight years in advance.

[Table 1 at end of manuscript]

In spite of the emphasis on the place of the spectacle for mega-events, all examples recognise the nation state and thus the interstate system as the primary principle of global order through an emphasis on national competition. National teams, not local clubs play at the Football (Soccer) world cup, athletes cannot start individually at the Olympics, but have to compete for a country in which they hold citizenship and Expos still feature pavilions of countries to showcase their achievements within the specific theme of the exhibition.

Spectacle has long been a part of urban life, both as large one-time events and permanent exhibitions of leisure and consumption, and have often served nationalist imperial purposes. In Haussmannian Paris of the 19<sup>th</sup> century boulevard openings, the unveiling of monuments and of course the world expositions were examples of one-time events and cafés, department stores and the popularisation of operas by Offenbach and others, were examples for the latter. In a Gramscian sense these spectacles were fundamental for the social control of the masses that would turn to such events after a hard day of work (Harvey, 2003).

## **Contemporary Olympic Urbanism**

Spectacular celebrations remain a core aspect of contemporary Olympics. The opening and closing ceremonies are carefully scripted performances that usually amount to some form of gigantism, promotion of the host city, region or country as well as the marching in of athletes neatly sorted and uniformed by their respective nations. The IOC mandates a cultural programme

to accompany the sports events during the 17 days of the Games to be organised by the local host committees.

Although the attention a city receives through hosting the Games and associated events and programmes is an attractive marketing tool for many urban politicians and bureaucrats, the event became ever more uncertain during the 1960s and 1970s. The scale and complexity of the 1960 Games in Rome prompted calls for the next event to be cancelled (Chalkley and Essex, 1999, p. 373) and more serious risks of hosting the Olympics were made clear with the massacre of unarmed students on the eve of the opening ceremony in Mexico City (1968), the murder of Israeli athletes by Black September terrorists in Munich (1972), the enormous public debts left over a generation after Montreal (1976), and the Cold War politics of the U.S. boycott of the Moscow Games (1980). These events also point to an inherent political meaning that the Games carry. The protests of the 1968 student movement, which Wallerstein identified as a serious anti-systemic movement to the world system, did not stop for the Olympics with its noble goals of equality and progress and similarly international conflicts as the occupation of Palestine and the Cold War could not be excluded from the Games, whereas the latter one was the explicit decision by a national government of probably the most powerful country – already at the time (compare Short, 2004, pp. 98-100). In addition, the Games were considered a symbolic re-integration of the rouge countries of World War II, Italy, Japan and Germany, emphasising new values these countries would now stand for (Shoval, 2002, p. 589).

The 1984 Summer Games, however, are widely regarded as the fundamental landmark that overcame this widespread ambivalence among potential host cities. The Los Angeles Games managed to erase many of these memories and associations in a post-modern turn that saw a shift from large urban mega-projects such as the Montreal Olympic Park to a form of flexible

accumulation in a decentralised Olympic city. The private financing model created a general perception of a profitable, successful event, while the emphasis on sponsorship and marketing (the event became known as “the Hamburger Olympics”) demonstrated the magnitude of an expanding global television audience.

Other changes in IOC policies and procedures had the effect of making host bids much more attractive. In 1986, the IOC instituted a rotation of Summer and Winter Games (to begin with 1992) every two years, in part to increase and stabilize marketing and television revenues. Two years later, the IOC refined the Los Angeles sponsorship model and launched The Olympic Partners (TOP) program, which offers product-category exclusivity in return for long-term financial commitments. In 1995, a new long-term Olympic broadcast marketing strategy was launched, in part to avoid market fluctuations and to “allow broadcast partners to develop stronger Olympic associations” over longer periods of time (International Olympic Committee, 2006, p. 42). These changes mean that a city’s successful bid brings a quick and relatively simple insertion into an existing worldwide circuitry of marketing and broadcast funds, eliminating the need for detailed negotiations from scratch. And while these funds are substantial the private financing model was not adopted universally. Public funds continue being provided either directly or indirectly to cities for hosting the Games. With the exception of Lillehammer in 1994, Vancouver has with more than 50 percent the highest share of public funding for Winter Games since 1980 (see Figure 1). While there is a rich history of the evolution of inter-city and inter-nation competition to host the Olympics since their modern revival in 1896, in the past such competition was largely based on direct state and government initiative and today, in contrast, the competition is heated up by a flexible alliance of local growth machines, transnational elites, state governments and multi-lateral bodies that find a common ground and interest in the

promotion of an event that satisfies the capitalist class through its push for investment in capital infrastructure for leisure and consumption as well as the promotion of virtually unlimited consumerism through advertisement and gigantism.

[Figure 1 at the end of manuscript]

In spite of the commercial turn of 1984, politics of the nation states remained part of the Games as the Eastern Bloc countries with the exception of Romania remained absent from the Games as a sort of retaliation for the west's absence from the 1980 games in Moscow. Moreover, the 1988 Olympics in Seoul served the South Korean government as a national project of political legitimisation for economic development and international recognition (Short, Kim, Kuus, Wells, 1996). The spectacle of the Olympics was an important event to put both the city and the country on the map of advanced industrialised countries. Similarly, the 2008 Beijing Games will be an exercise in gigantism par excellence. The spectacle, for which Chinese film maker Zhang Yimou, who agreed not to engage in the production of any films for two years prior to the Games, and Hollywood director Steven Spielberg have signed contracts to design the opening and closing ceremonies (Anonymous, 2006), will provide a boost for the most populated country on earth in its efforts to modernise. This late modernity of the Olympics in Beijing comes at an enormous cost to city residents, many of who are being displaced in the rapid and large scale modernisation process. But the majority of people in Beijing are willing to accept as a matter of pride (Broudehoux, 2006).

The rise of the Olympics as the ultimate mega-spectacle marks a shift from an explicit focus on economic might and technological advancement of world expositions, which were the

dominant mega-events in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, to a spectacle of leisure and consumption, the Olympics. The world expositions are a show of invention and innovation focused on the achievements of the industrial revolution and technological progress. The Olympics are a more symbolic event, which emphasises consumption and leisure of the post-industrial societies of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The Games create new leisure and consumption spaces, are often supported by local, regional and national governments, and ultimately and immediately reach a global audience that will be attracted to the site of the spectacle. As well the “Olympic” hope is that people will subsequently visit and consume post spectacle amenities. All of these factors have made Olympic bids much more attractive for the transnational capitalist class in its search for finding a suitable locale for investment. Here lies one crucial intersection between transnationalism and local regimes, because the promise of place promotion is a great attraction to local growth machines in host cities that hope for increasing numbers of visitors to the Olympic city that will provide income to the local economy and transnational investors.

The Winter Games, by most measures, are only one-half to one-third as large as the Summer Olympiad; and they have more specialized geographical and infrastructure requirements. Yet since the early 1990s, Winter Bids have become intensely competitive. Vancouver’s win came after at least 22 cities began a planning process, eight cities prepared formal bids, and the IOC short-listed three. As of January 2006 there are seventeen potential candidates for the 2014 Winter Games. Cities announcing formal plans include Salzburg (Austria) and Pyeongchang (South Korea), which both bid for the 2010 Games, as well as Almaty (Kazakhstan), Borjomi (Georgia), Jaca (Spain), Sochi (Russia) and Sofia (Bulgaria); at

least ten other bids in the planning stages have been abandoned or withdrawn (GamesBids.com, 2006).

In general, Winter bids tend to come from cities somewhat lower on the urban hierarchy in comparison with the Summer Games. However, the two most recently selected locales for the Olympic Winter Games Torino (2006) and Vancouver (2010) are sizable cities, which could contend to host the Summer Games as well. Torino is with a population of 860,000 Italy's fourth largest city, while Vancouver, with approximately two million people, ranks third in size within Canada. But hosting the Games had two distinctly different meanings for the two cities. For Torino the event served as a catalyst for urban renewal and re-imaging after an era of Fordist production in the Italian industrial heartland. For Vancouver, the Games serve as a consolidation of a *Dream City* (Berelowitz, 2005) image, with its spectacular skyline surrounded by Ocean and Mountains. The catalyst for urban renewal in Vancouver had been created 20 years earlier, when the city hosted Expo '86, after four previous attempts to host the Olympics.

### **Mega-Events and early transnational growth in Vancouver**

Plans for hosting Expo '86 in Vancouver were first documented in 1974, but the idea was not pursued seriously until 1978. By 1980 British Columbia Premier Bill Bennett viewed the World Fair as a trigger for an enormous redevelopment of the area around False Creek, a large former industrial area that was unused and adjacent to the city's downtown (Olds, 1996a, p. 7).

Bennet said the following about the event in 1980:

“As Canada's gateway to the Pacific, as the frontline of Canada's opportunities for trade and contact with that vast number of people and countries that are the Pacific Rim, this park of business and leisure will become for all British Columbians and our visitors the focal point of our great province.” (Olds, 2001, p. 101)

The words of the Premier indicate a radical shift in the province's and more importantly the city's development. From the frontier town of Canada's western resource economy Vancouver was to move to the "frontline" of opportunities for trade with the Asia Pacific region. Industrial parks with saw mills and smelters were the past and about to be swiftly replaced with a "park of business and leisure", creating an image of the new Vancouver, where visitors and residents alike engage in the free spirit of mixing work and leisure in the new post-industrial, post-fordist, post-modern economy.

As intended, Expo '86 triggered an enormous re-development: The Pacific Place project on the False Creek site. This development was also the manifestation of a significant overseas influence in the Vancouver property market. Through Concord Pacific Developments Ltd., Hong Kong businessman and majority shareholder in the company Li Ka-shing, the world's 33rd wealthiest person (Beaverstock, Hubbard, Short, 2004), started bidding for the redevelopment of the former Expo site in 1987 after he was satisfied that the bid process was not pre-determined by the British Columbia government. The land was sold to Concord Pacific in 1988 in one piece (Olds, 2001, p. 113). Although Li Ka-shing started to accumulate properties in Canadian cities, including Vancouver, in the late 1960s (Olds, 2001, p. 115), this development was at a new scale and manifested the business relationship and influence of Li and later his sons in Vancouver and Canada.

Li, a self-made businessman who started his fortunes by selling plastic belts and watchbands after his father died in 1942 and setting up a plastic products factory with US\$ 7000 savings in 1950 (Olds, 2001, p. 116), had likely several reasons to choose Vancouver as an outlet for his accumulated capital, which Harvey describes as the second circuit of capital (Harvey,

1985). The relatively open immigration system for investors and skilled labour in Canada was certainly a factor and his oldest son Victor Li became a Canadian citizen at the age of 18 in 1983 (Coe, Kelly and Olds, 2003, p. 53). In addition, even before the two major political factors of the 1980s, the 1984 Sino-British accord regarding Hong Kong and the 1989 Tiananmen square issue (Coe, Kelly and Olds, 2003, p. 52), created major push factors for Hong Kong residents to secure a point of presence overseas. Additionally, Hong Kong was a spatially confined market and expansion was limited, in fact much more limited than currently with opportunities for expansion into mainland China. As the managing director of a Hong Kong based securities firm describes it in relation to job promotion for his staff: “[... ] Hong Kong is a fairly small market. Therefore we’ve got some very good executives, but if the market can’t expand any more, then there is no room for these people to grow” (Yeung, 1998, p. 107). Hence, Hong Kong capital from what would include both the first and second circuits of capital (Harvey, 1985) needed a place to expand to. This capital needed a spatial fix, which could be found in Canada, primarily its only major city on the West Coast, Vancouver. Over time Li Ka-shing and his two sons, who are both Canadian citizens, would also establish networks that integrate them increasingly into Canadian based networks. The specific functions of social networks in Chinese capitalism have been explored in great detail by several authors (see for example Olds, 2001; Yeung, 1998, 2002). Main characteristics are the importance of family and kinship relations, especially the role of sons, as well as personal relations rather than formalised contacts and the reliance on such relations over long periods of time. However, social networks, albeit with different characteristics, are likely of equal importance in western capitalism, but have not been explicitly identified as an ethnic white western practice.

Li Ka-shing was in a comfortable position to bid for the purchase of the former Expo lands in 1987. He had established a close business relationship with Canadian Banks, especially the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC) of which he holds approximately 10 percent (Olds, 2001, p. 65), and the family had a vacation house in Vancouver's Oakridge neighbourhood since the early 1970s (Olds, 2001, p. 115). However, the network and linkages in Vancouver and the rest of Canada will undoubtedly have expanded and become denser, especially considering the presence of son Victor in Vancouver between 1988 and 1993, who was then Senior-Vice President and Director of Concord Pacific.

### **Consolidating transnational growth**

Early transnational interests in Vancouver through large investors like the Li family and multiple smaller investors started with the relaxing of immigration rules for non-European immigrants in the late 1960s and reached its temporary climax with the unprecedented foreign infrastructure investment into the BC Place project. More recent investments by transnational actors are thus not a new phenomenon any longer, but an established phenomenon in the city that is a consolidation of rather than a catalyst for growth.

The Li family was not officially involved in the Vancouver 2010 Bid Corporation, but there are obvious linkages to at least two of the Bid Corporation's directors, namely Stanley Kwok and David McLean. Kwok immigrated to Vancouver from Hong Kong at age 40 in 1968. He is an architect and developer and gained experience in leading positions at different property and development companies. Until 1986 he was on the board of directors of Expo '86 and served as a director and later as Chief Executive Officer of the Crown Corporation BC Place. In 1987, when the provincial government abandoned plans to redevelop the Expo site, Kwok joined the

private sector and became director and senior Vice-President of Concord Pacific. A position from which he resigned in 1993. His position was filled by Terry Hui, son of another Concord shareholder K.M. Hui (Olds, 2001, p. 102). Kwok was also on the board of directors for Li Ka-shing's flagship company Cheung Kong and for Husky Energy (Public Service Human Resources Management Agency of Canada, 2004), which is 95 % majority owned by the Li family (Olds, 2001, p. 117). The ongoing relationship between the Li family and Stanley Kwok and his family is underlined by Eva Lee Kwok's (Stanley's wife) involvement of Li Ka-shing's companies. She serves on the boards for Cheung Kong Life Sciences and Cheung Kong Infrastructure as well as Husky Energy (Business Vancouver, 2005). She resigned from Air Canada's board of directors in 2003, when Victor Li pursued to acquire a 700 million Canadian Dollar share in the airline (Anonymous, 2003).

David McLean, who is chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the McLean Group of Companies, was chairman and a director on the board of Concord Pacific for many years. He was chairman of the Vancouver Board of Trade as well as the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and remains actively involved in both organisations (The McLean Group, 2006). The Vancouver Board of Trade continues to be involved in the development of the 2010 Olympics through leadership summits and other special events. The McLean Group also owns the Vancouver Film Studios, a business certainly benefiting from the image of spectacular urbanism.

McLean has close ties to the Federal Liberal Party of Canada. He was appointed to the Board of Canadian National Railways, but lost that position when Conservative Brian Mulroney was Prime Minister. Liberal Prime Minister Jean Chretien re-installed him later to the board (Parry, 2006). David's son Jason worked in the Prime Minister's Office in 2001 as a special assistant, leading the advance teams for international and domestic visits including international

trade missions (The McLean Group, 2006). During a trade mission in February 2001 David McLean travelled as a representative of Canadian National Railways. For the same mission Jason was the official responsible for the programme for Mrs. Chretien (Debates of the Senate, 2001, pp. 261, 275). In November 2001 David McLean was appointed to the board of directors of the Vancouver-Whistler 2010 Bid Corporation by the Liberal Minister of Canadian Heritage, Sheila Copps (Canadian Heritage, 2001).

The board of directors of the Vancouver-Whistler 2010 Bid Corporation was diverse and included 96 people at the time when the bid book was handed over to the IOC. The board members included representative from local First Nations as well as 18 athletes. (Berry, 2003). However, a number of business people, including those of property developers from the city appear to have played a central role. Amongst them is Concert Properties, which was represented on the board of the Bid Corporation by Jack Poole, David Podmore and Kenneth Georgetti. Poole and Podmore co-founded Concert Properties and Podmore had previously been involved in planning Expo '86 and the construction of BC Place (Lee, 2003). Concert Properties is owned by British Columbia Unions and Management Pension plans (Concert Properties, 2003). Jack Poole is now the chairman of the Vancouver Organising Committee (VanOC) and Tony Tennessy, a director of Concert Properties, serves on the 20 member VanOC board.

Both Concord Pacific and Concert Properties together with three other developers submitted expressions of interest, when in August 2005 the City of Vancouver prepared for the purchase and development of the site for the Olympic Village on the South East of False Creek, across from the former Expo lands (Andrews, 2006). Concert Properties withdrew its expression of interest after questions of a conflict of interest arose (Lee, 2005). Subsequently Jack Poole also gave assurance to British Columbia's Minister responsible for the Olympics that Concert

would not bid for any Olympic construction (Palmer, 2005). Concord Pacific submitted a bid, offering 170 million Canadian Dollars with the promise of some profit sharing with the city under certain conditions. However, a bid offering 193 million Dollars by the Vancouver based Millennium Group, which has also a number of projects in France particularly the Paris region, was selected for the site in April 2006. Michael Geller, a former president of the Urban Development Institute, a lobby group of British Columbian developers, estimated that the price was the highest price per square foot paid anywhere in Canada (Bula and Lee, 2006).

## **Transnational Policies and Learning Networks**

In spite of inter-urban competition for the hosting of hallmark events, cities are also dependent on each other's experience to facilitate the hosting of global events. The Vancouver Board of Trade, for example, has shown a keen interest in the Olympics. At its 2001 Greater Vancouver Leadership Summit Frank Sartor, Lord Mayor of Sydney, Australia, gave a keynote speech entitled *What has Sydney done to earn such international accolades in bidding for and hosting the Olympics?* At a panel discussion Frank Sartor discussed *The realities of the Vancouver Whistler 2010 Olympic Bid* with James Villeneuve of the Toronto 2008 Bid and local representatives. The panel was facilitated by Jack Poole. A year later, and about ten months after the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Michael O. Leavitt, Governor of Utah, provided a keynote speech with the title *Lessons from Salt lake City* and participated in a subsequent panel discussion at the 2002 Greater Vancouver Leadership Summit. Jaques Rogge, president of the IOC, was scheduled to speak at the 2003 Greater Vancouver Leadership Summit, but his presentation had to be cancelled due to illness. However, at a luncheon panel IOC member and board member for the Vancouver Organising Committee, Charmaine Crooks; the Chair of the

volunteer committee for the 1988 Calgary Winter Games, Sandra LeBlanc; the Vice president of the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, David Simon; and Phil Wolff, chief of staff of the 1980 Lake Placid Winter Games, discussed the theme *Vancouver 2010: The best Games Ever?* At the same summit Gordon Goodman, executive director of business development programmes for the B.C. Olympic Games Secretariat, an agency of the British Columbia government under the Ministry of Economic Development, used the example of the Australian Technology Showcase, which for three years utilised the interest around the Sydney Olympics to highlight over 200 small businesses although it was not related to the Olympics at all. And at the 2005 summit, Michael Knight, former President of the Sydney Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games, gave his advice about hosting successful Games to a Vancouver audience.<sup>3</sup> Torino, the Italian host city for the 2006 Winter Olympics, sent 100 delegates on an IOC organised mission to Vancouver that was aimed at ensuring trouble free games for 2010 (Anonymous, 2004).

The transnationalisation of urban policies has been well documented by other authors (see for example McCann, forthcoming) and the involvement of the Vancouver Board of Trade in the Olympic enterprise and the considerable interest in experiences from other hosts suggests a very high level internationalisation in the process of bidding for and hosting of the Games, establishing a formal dynamic inter-urban learning network. A host bureaucrats, professionals and business people, the professional fraction of the transnational capitalist class, join forces in these forums to streamline the process of organising urban spectacles and making the process ever more efficient.

## **Linkages of Transnational Growth Machines**

Transnational interests in large urban developments or Urban Mega Projects (UMPs) as Kris Olds has termed it (for example Olds, 1996b; 2001) are not unique to Vancouver. In the last three decades these projects have often been linked to the theme of waterfront re-development and there are myriad links to employ mega-events as catalysts for these developments. Examples of such urban redevelopment projects include the Toronto waterfront as well as the Canary Wharf project in London. Waterfront redevelopment was also a major part of the proposal for the 1992 Summer Games in Barcelona and the Sydney 2000 Games.

The re-development of the waterfront in Toronto has been subject to debate since the industry located on it left the city in the 1970s and 1980s. In 2000, the City of Toronto set up a Waterfront Revitalization Taskforce to develop a master plan for the area. The idea was supported by all three levels of government through an unusual moment of agreement amongst then Toronto mayor Mel Lastman, Ontario Premier Mike Harris and Prime Minister Jean Chretien. The original plan drafted by the taskforce was – of course – linked to the city's bid for the 2008 Olympics, but in July 2001 the Games were awarded to Beijing, not Toronto. However, by that point the idea had gained enough momentum that the Task Force was turned into the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation and the head of the task force, Robert Fung, was named chairman of the board of directors of the corporation. Fung is in charge of translating the plans into reality and organising the financing. The project, if implemented in full, has a budget of 17.4 billion Canadian Dollars and will be the largest urban renewal project ever undertaken in Canada (Kipfer and Keil, 2002; Lilley, 2003).

Although Toronto's history of bidding for mega-events has been one of unsuccessful bids – in addition to the 2008 Olympics the city bid for the 1996 Games and Expo 2000 – the dream

of hosting something big has not yet died. In April 2005 the city council has voted 32 against eight for spending 1 million Canadian Dollars to undertake a feasibility study of bidding for the right to host the World Fair in 2015 (Moloney and Hall, 2005). The plans include extensive use of the water front lands in three sections: the exhibition grounds, the Toronto City Airport on Toronto Island and the lands of the Toronto Port. Not only would much of the water front lands be redeveloped, but the area would also become more accessible through new and improved transit connections. The bid is being prepared through the Toronto World Expo Corporation, which was established as a subsidiary of the Toronto Economic Development Corporation (TEDCO). The Toronto World Expo Corporation recently received advice from Greg Clark, Director of Strategy for the London development Agency, who also gave recent advice to cities and regions like Trentino, Turin, Belfast, Johannesburg and Glasgow (City of Toronto, 2005; Clark, 2005). Even at this early stage, the growth machine seems to work well. In addition to the official web-site by the corporation ([www.tedco.ca/2015expo.html](http://www.tedco.ca/2015expo.html)), an unofficial web-site promotes the bid even more enthusiastically ([www.expotoronto.ca](http://www.expotoronto.ca)). The site does not provide any hint at who or which organisation is putting it on the web, but provides a legal notice that it is not an official site by either the City of Toronto or the Bureau Internationale des Exposition (BIE) in Paris. What is striking about the unofficial Expo Toronto site, however, is its devotion to promoting the bid and probably more importantly the inclusion of a theme for the potential fair, which is the future of the city. The site also boasts a logo related to the theme.

So far practically no development has taken place, neither through the Toronto Waterfront Revitalisation Corporation or the Toronto World Expo Corporation. However, in preparation for the Expo bid the city has already consulted with an international expert, who has previously worked in Olympic cities like London and Turin, on how to market itself. Possibly

more importantly in the debate on transnational urban growth and a transnational capitalist class are the connections of Robert Fung, who has already secured the support from three levels of government. In the politically sphere Robert Fung is friends with two former Prime Ministers, Jean Chretien and Paul Martin, both Liberal. In 1984, Fung gave Chretien a job at Gordon capital, where he worked at the time, and Fung's son was later a junior staffer in Jean Chretien's office. Paul Martin was Fung's university roommate and Martin is the godfather to one of Fung's sons (Lilley, 2003). Fung has also good contacts to the developers of the 1986 Expo site in Vancouver. His son Robert Jr. worked at Expo '86 as a developer and Fung was a mentor to Richard Li, Li Ka-shing's younger son, when he was working for Gordon capital, where Fung was in a senior position then. Fung continued to work at Gorden for four years after Richard Li gained the controlling share of the company (Lilley, 2003).

The relationship between Fung, the Liberal Party and the Li family may not be of any significance in the redevelopment of the Toronto Waterfront. Yet what is notable is an apparent overlap between international developers and the interest in hosting mega-events. The plans for the Toronto waterfront redevelopment were amongst others developed by Tony Coombes, who oversaw the Battery Park project in New York and the Canary Wharf project in London on behalf of Reichmann family (Lilley, 2003). When Toronto based property developer Olympia and York, which was controlled by the Reichmann family, had to file for bankruptcy protection in 1992, Li Ka-shing suddenly resigned from the board of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC), on which he had been for many years and since 1985 in the position of deputy chairman. Newspaper reports estimate that both HSBC and CIBC, of which Li is a major shareholder, had lent the Reichmanns a minimum of more than 500 million Dollars each.

Li was also interested in some of the assets from Olympia and York, amongst others to increase his share in Calgary based Husky Oil. Although reports on which assets Li took over from the Reichmann's are conflicting, Li never bought the Canary Wharf project, which was acquired by Paul Reichmann in the mid 1990s after restructuring and was sold in 2004 to US Investment Bank Morgan Stanley (Davey, 2004). Although the Battery Park project started in 1980 and the Canary Wharf project in 1987, it should be noted that both New York and London were bidding for the 2012 Olympics. In fact, much of the Olympic related development in London will be right next to Canary Wharf in the city's East Side. In New York state and city have announced the creation of a convention corridor on Manhattan's West Side in 2004. The project included increasing the capacity for hosting conventions in New York and redeveloping large parts of the waterfront on Manhattan's West Side. The project was closely linked to the 2012 Olympic bid (New York State, 2004).

While it can only be asserted from the above description that networks of transnational property developers, like those controlled by the Li or Reichmann families, have a vested interest in utilising hallmark events as a stimulus for urban mega projects in seemingly self repeating cycles of post-industrial convention, lifestyle and waterfront development, the interest of the two leading and virtually unchallenged global cities in hosting Olympic Games is an indication of the size the roughly two-week spectacle has reached. Cities increasingly use the Games as a way to support public capital investment projects, like upgrading transport systems or other infrastructure projects, that were due for investment anyway (Shoval, 2002). However, mega-events rarely come without any new developments at all and are usually large scale.

## **Post-Olympic transnational property development**

A decision to redevelop the Sydney Olympia Park with more than 1 billion Australian Dollars (about 650 million US Dollars) was reached in 2003. Developers Babcock and Brown as well as Multiplex plan to complete a 288 million Australian Dollar development for 736 residential units and approximately 2000 people by October 2008. Another 70 million Australian Dollar project has been awarded to Grant Constructions, a fully owned subsidiary of Watpac.

Babcock and Brown is a diversified investment and advisory firm with 21 offices in North America, Europe, Africa, and the Asia Pacific Region. The company was co-founded by its current executive chairman James Babcock in 1977 and relocated its global headquarters to Sydney from San Francisco (the city that lost the right to bid for the 2012 Olympic Summer Games in the national competition to New York) in 2004, when it was preparing for a listing on the Australian Stock Exchange in an effort to raise additional capital. In 2004 the company was 80 percent owned by its executives and since 2000 German Bank Hypo und Vereinsbank, with headquarters in Munich, owns the remaining 20 percent<sup>4</sup>. Watpac is a large construction and property group based in Queensland Australia and listed at the Australian Stock Exchange since 1985 (Watpac, 2005). Multiplex is a large Australian investment firm that is listed on the Australian Stock Exchange since 2003. It was a private company for more than 40 years and has currently offices in Australia and New Zealand as well as United Kingdom and the Middle East (Multiplex Group, 2006). Multiplex is also part of a consortium consisting of UK developer Stanhope, Australian shopping centre developer Westfield and the Reuben Brothers that received a contract for the four billion British Pound Stratford City regeneration project, which will be adjacent to the athletes' village in East London (Mathiason, 2005; Anonymous, 2005).

Immediately after the 2000 Summer Games, the New South Wales Government launched a 24 billion Australian Dollar post-Olympics investment and job creation strategy. The strategy included major infrastructure development projects primarily in the Sydney region (Vass, 2000). One part of the strategy was the Sydney Cross-City tunnel, a 2.1 kilometre road tunnel that connects the city centre with the neighbourhoods of Kings Cross and Darlinghurst. The 680 million Australian Dollar project was based on the projection of about 90 000 vehicles a day at the beginning of construction in 2001. When the tunnel opened in 2005, about 20 000 vehicles used it per day. The toll-route tunnel is unpopular with motorists, which refuse to pay the fee, but traffic regulations and street closures are used to funnel traffic into the tunnel. If the city is changing these rules and allows for more alternative routes to the tunnel it may have to pay up to 100 million a year to the developers, who have a 30 year concession on it. The Cross City Tunnel is connected to substantial transnational interests. It is 50 percent owned by Li Ka-shing's Cheung Kong with the other half held by Deutsche Asset Management, the Investment arm of Germany's largest Bank Deutsche Bank, and Bilfinger Berger, a construction and real estate management firm headquartered in Mannheim, Germany, with more than 60 offices around the world (Colquhoun, 2005; Bilfinger Berger AG, 2006).

While the continued investment into the Sydney housing market on the Olympic site highlights the real estate component of the Games related growth machine, the substantial public funding for large projects like the Sydney cross-tunnel and the 24 billion Australian Dollar post-Olympic investment and job creation strategy question the rhetoric of privately funded Games. Even if the Games themselves can be funded to a considerable degree through private investors, the state government provided post-Olympic funding that serves large transnational interests.

## Conclusion

Spectacle has long been an essential part of urban life and has traditionally found its largest expression in the imperial capitals of 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, as for example the Crystal Palace for London's 1851 World Fair or Paris's multiple Expos and other events. Spectacle has also served in a Gramscian sense as a control mechanism for the masses. Throughout the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Olympics, mainly Summer but increasingly Winter Games as well, have evolved into the single most important urban spectacle globally. However, in spite of a post-modern turn to a decentralised urban structure and financing model since the Los Angeles Games, the Olympics remain in many respects a festival of nation states that meet every two years in a large urban centre and thus are not only part of maintaining the interstate system, but are also dependent on the national competition in both the sporting events as well as the race to host the Games. Moreover, large portions of the Games are still publicly financed. The nation state is alive and well and embodied in the flag wrapped athletes that give the event all of the excitement – or at least part of it.

While there is a shift towards creating a spectacle that caters towards individual consumption and leisure, either through its advertising or through place promotion, such events are neither placeless nor do they transcend national boundaries. Yet today's spectacles no longer emphasise the imperial successes of colonial states of earlier mega-events. Rather the modern Olympic Games are a gigantic show that provides a mix of individualism and national competition. As this paper has detailed, the modern mega spectacle is controlled by a transnational elite that elevates its own business interests above the nation state, and utilises the resources and decision making power of states to facilitate its own interests in such mega-events. The event itself becomes a core industry. Protected by exclusive contracts, copyrights and public

financing that would amount to unfair subsidies in other industries, this industry of spectacle produces a value added product in the form of television contracts and tourist sites. As such, just as the 1988 Summer Games in Seoul, South Korea, elevated the country symbolically to an advanced industrialised state, the same effect is expected for the 2008 Games in Beijing.

The Transnational Capitalist Class is highly engaged in the local urban regimes and at the same time internally well connected, less through traditional class structures, but through cross ownership and capital control structures in the management and on the boards of transnational property developers. The transnational class consists of networks of bureaucrats, managers, organisers and politicians, who as Friedmann and Wolff noted are willing to put national interests second in the effort to achieve ever greater capital accumulation. Although these elites are highly mobile, they are not placeless and often highly integrated in local structures and networks. Main actors of Vancouver's Olympic growth machines are closely connected to local property developers, at least one that is owned by unions and management pension plans. These in turn have connections to national political elites, and international entrepreneurs such as the Li and Hui families, and have loose ties to Olympic organisers, bureaucrats and managers from other sites of the spectacle facilitated by organisations such as the Vancouver Board of Trade. A similar network can be traced in developments surrounding Sydney, where government funds continue to flow into the coffers of transnational capitalist class members through the investment in large urban projects, like the Sydney Cross Tunnel or post Olympic job creation projects. Both private or individually controlled firms as well as public companies, such as Deutsche Bank and Morgan Stanley, are well integrated into this urban economic system of world cities, where spectacle facilitates growth and becomes a core industry in itself.

Through an exploration of the intersection between local growth machines and transnational elites this paper explores the connections of transnational capital and local place bound investments in cities around the globe and thus provides an addition to the existing world city literature that focuses on network formation amongst cities rather than the connections of transnational actors to specific places. Hosting of mega-events is one important process through which these connections manifest themselves, but there are likely myriad other events and processes through which networks are being created and shaped.

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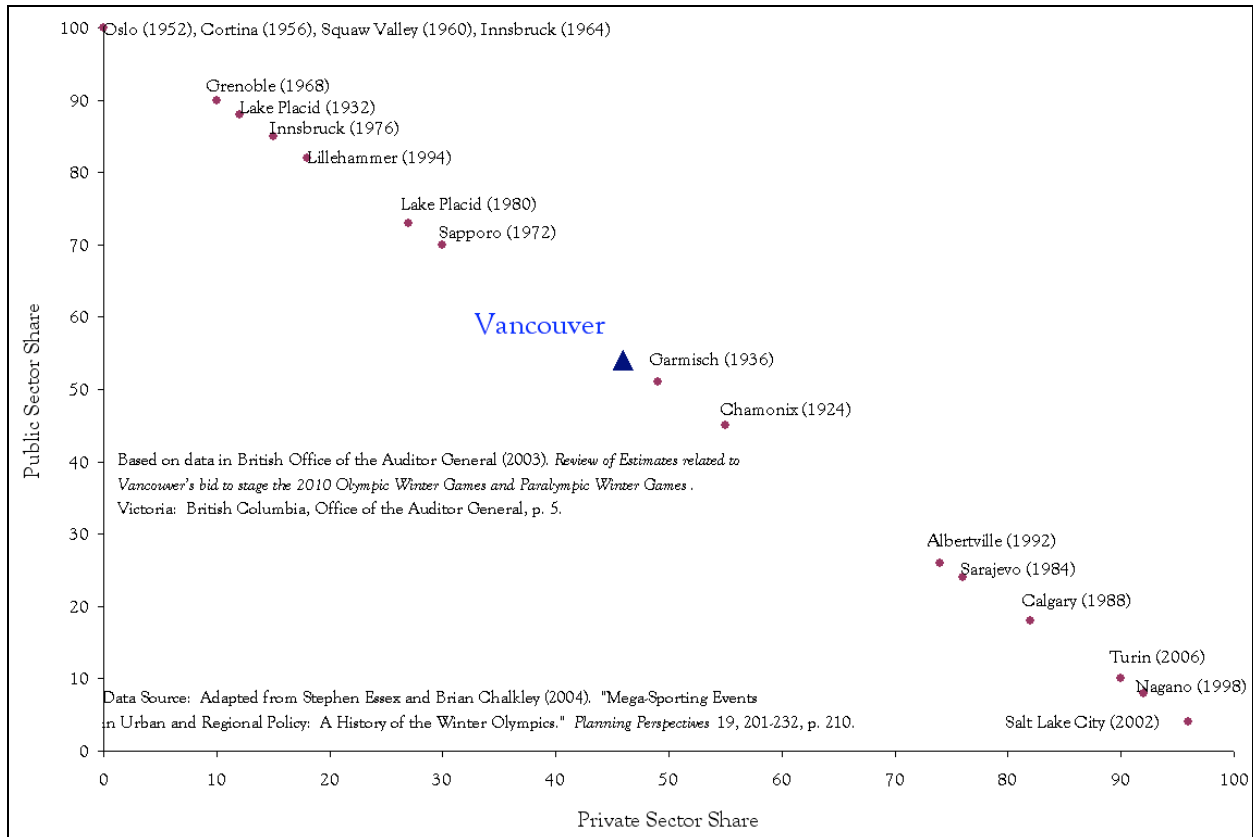
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**Table 1: A Taxonomy of Spectacular Urbanism.**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Scope of Audience</b>	<b>Dominant Medium</b>
Mega-Events	World Expositions	Global	Global television
	Winter and Summer Olympic Games		
	World Cup		
Special Spectacles	Grand Prix Formula One	World Regional / National	National television
	World Regional Sport (e.g., Pan-Am Games, Asian Games, African Games).		
Hallmark Events	National Sport Events (e.g., Australian Games)	National / Regional	National television
	Big city sports / festivals	Regional / Local	Local television
Community Events	Parades, festivals, and other local celebrations	Local	Local television
			Local print press

Source: Adapted from Maurice Roche (2000). *Mega-Events and Modernity: Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Culture*. London: Routledge, pp. 4-6.

**Figure 1:**



Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> *Spectaculum* and *urbanus* (both from the Latin) have acquired additional meanings in modern times, including (for spectacle), one whose behavior is seen as ludicrous, and (for spectacular) a long, lavish movie or television show.

<sup>2</sup> FIFA recently instituted a new rotation policy, to begin with bids from cities in Africa for the 2010 World Cup.

<sup>3</sup> The information in this section to this point is compiled from the web-site of the Vancouver Board of Trade, accessed between December 2005 and February 2006, <http://www.boardoftrade.com/>.

<sup>4</sup> The information is based on Babcock and Brown's web-site accessed on 20 January 2006. The content of the site has since changed. The general site's URL is: <http://www.babcockbrown.com> . Pages that are not operational anymore included: <http://www.babcockbrown.com/Standard.aspx?NavItemID=148> ;  
<http://www.babcockbrown.com/Standard.aspx?NavItemID=167> ;  
[http://www.babcockbrown.com/uploads%5CBB\\_Release\\_220704.pdf](http://www.babcockbrown.com/uploads%5CBB_Release_220704.pdf)