

Celebration Capitalism and the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics

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This article expounds a theory of “celebration capitalism” and argues that the Olympic Games are a quintessential example of this formation of modern-day economics. Celebration capitalism differs from Naomi Klein’s “disaster capitalism” whereby neoliberalism emerges during a catastrophic state of exception. Instead, celebration capitalism occurs in an exuberant state of exception and is marked by mass-media-trumpeted political spectacle, festive commercialism that rallies public backing for the Games, public-private partnerships that are often lopsided in favor of private entities in terms of input and risk, the feel-good claims of environmental and social sustainability, and a boon for the security industry and local policing units responsible for preventing terrorism and safeguarding the Games. The second part of this paper analyzes how celebration capitalism has taken shape with distinctly Russian characteristics as President Vladimir Putin and his allies prepare to host the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.



Introduction

In July 2007, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced that Sochi, Russia had defeated the South Korean city of Pyeongchang and Salzburg, Austria to host the 2014 Winter Olympics. The IOC’s selection made Sochi—a resort city nestled along the Black Sea—the first subtropical location for the Winter Olympics. At the official signing of the host city contract, IOC President Jacques Rogge was upbeat, applauding Russia for its Olympic bid: “Sochi presented a strong and visionary project,” he said. “I have every confidence that Sochi will host excellent Games in 2014.”¹ One news outlet reported that upon learning of the IOC’s decision, “Ecstasy engulfed Russia’s Sochi delegation . . . Ministers and sports officials hugged each other and laughed like children, unable to believe what had happened.” Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Zhukov pointed to the symbolic value of Sochi’s selection and its wider socio-political importance, asserting, “This is international recognition of the new Russia.”² The Duma’s Boris Gryzlov added, “Russia is once again becoming a world leader.” The Olympic Games were clearly part of the Russian leadership’s strategy for reasserting itself as an economic, political, military, and sporting power.

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This strategy was articulated consistently by President Vladimir Putin, who played a vital role in securing the bid. Putin viewed the IOC's pick as "without a doubt not only a recognition of Russia's achievement in sports," but also a wider "assessment of our country. This is an acknowledgment of its growing capabilities, first and foremost in the economic and social spheres."³ Putin and his colleagues were not the only ones celebrating. Russian television broadcast a hopeful throng of some 15,000 Olympic supporters in Sochi who gathered in the town square to learn the final IOC vote. After the IOC's announcement, revelers danced in the streets and state officials announced a day off to commemorate the triumph. One celebrator in Sochi said, "I've never been so happy in my whole life. It means that Russia has reached the level of Europe, and we can be proud of our country."⁴

President Putin was correct to observe that in the 21st century, the Olympic Games have a great deal to do with "the economic and social spheres." Writing about 18th century athletics, sport historian Tony Collins notes, "Sport was not merely co-terminus with the expansion of capitalism but an integral part of that expansion, not only in economic organization but also in ideological meaning," adding, "modern sport was capitalism at play."⁵ Similarly, in our contemporary moment, the Olympic Games are no mere symbol or reflection of capitalism, but an active producer of socio-economic relations.

For many social scientists who aim to illuminate the nexus of sports, politics, economics, and culture, neoliberal capitalism—or neoliberalism—has become a go-to explanation. Indeed, the Olympics have thrived under capitalism and, in particular, during the era of neoliberal capitalism; the Games evolved considerably under the leadership of IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch who moved to commercialize the Games during the 1980s and 1990s in an effort to create fiscal stability and profit. Although neoliberalism is best known as the preferred economic approach of President Ronald Reagan in the United States and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in Britain, it has ideological rhizomes that stretch back to Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman. Neoliberal capitalism is marked by the premeditated unfettering of market forces via privatization, deregulation, and the financialization of the economy. The idea is to deliberately dismantle the social welfare state while snuffing out Keynesian principles and programs. "The basic prescription of neoliberalism," write sport scholars Michael Silk and David Andrews, is to "purge the system of obstacles to the functioning of free markets; celebrate the virtues of individualism . . . and competitiveness; foster economic self-sufficiency; [and] abolish or weaken social programs."⁶ Neoliberal capitalism's much-recited mantra is to let the market decide. Neoliberalism, and the claim that there is no viable alternative to it, "brought forth a new age of hyperconsumerism, media spectacularization, and market fetishism," according to sports academics Joshua Newman and Michael Giardina.⁷

Some scholars in the field of Olympic studies have contended that there has been a “neoliberalisation of the Games.”⁸ Although the Olympic Games of today are immersed in, and assist in the reconstitution of this “new age,” I argue in this article that the Olympics themselves are not fundamentally a neoliberal affair. To be sure, the modern Games emanate neoliberal capitalism in several ways. The Olympics have become markedly more commercialized as private capital has taken on a higher profile in regards to corporate sponsorship. Also, private security firms have assumed a larger role policing the Games. Yet, the public routinely pays for a large majority of Olympic costs, rather than privatizing them, and corporate sponsors hold a privileged position for future pacts—the free market does not “decide.” Rather than deregulation, we see a stringent regime of rules and regulations emanating from the IOC. Rather than economic financialization, where fictitious funds are ferreted away in abstract configurations, there is public debt replete with strict payment schedules. In sum, the principles of neoliberalism, as relevant as they are in some respects, do not offer us full explanatory leverage. I maintain that the Olympics Games are the quintessential example of “celebration capitalism,” a specific formation of capitalism that in many ways slices against the neoliberal zeitgeist.

Celebration Capitalism

In *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* Naomi Klein enumerates the methods neoliberal capitalists employ to capitalize on catastrophe. With “the disaster capitalism complex,” Klein argues the goal is to exploit social trauma. Disasters—such as wars, hurricanes, military *coups d'état*, terrorist violence, and severe economic downturns—spark collective states of shock that can soften up the citizenry to the point where people are willing to concede to aggressive political and economic elites what they would otherwise ardently defend during normal political times. In the aftermath of disaster, while the general population is reeling, corporations team up with their collaborators in government to orchestrate the institution of neoliberal policies rooted in privatization and deregulation.⁹ Klein argues that disaster capitalists manipulate “the disorientation of rapid political change combined with the collective fear generated by an economic meltdown.” This leaves the population vulnerable to “the promise of a quick and magical cure—however illusory.”¹⁰ Free-market proponents make use of pervasive social instability to enfeeble the state and install neoliberal policies and principles where they previously did not exist. While Klein notes that privatization can often “be paid for with public money,” her primary contention is that “the ultimate goal” of the corporations at the centre of disaster capitalism is to normalize the privatization of the public sphere, to convert government responsibilities into corpo-

rate functions in the “perpetual quest for clean sheets and blank slates upon which to build model states.”¹¹

Some Olympic scholars have argued the Olympic Games are fundamentally a neoliberal project and a prime example of Klein’s “disaster capitalism” under the “shock doctrine.”¹² Sociologist John Horne has suggested that sports mega-events like the Olympics “can be viewed as the twin of disaster capitalism’s shock therapy, involving their own shocks and generating their own forms of awe.” He proposes that “the spectacular impact and impression that contemporary sports mega-events make on their host locations and global audiences can be seen as an ally of, rather than in conflict with, this [shock] doctrine.”¹³ In this article I flesh out this speculation, highlighting how celebration capitalism plays out in different ways, depending on the host city’s, and wider host country’s, economic, political, and social norms and circumstances.¹⁴

Both disaster capitalism and celebration capitalism occur in states of exception: catastrophe and exuberance respectively. And both modes of capitalism carve a path for politicians and their economic allies to advance policies that would be impracticable during normal political times. Academics and activists have long argued the Olympics are an elite-driven affair with scant opportunity for meaningful public participation. Bent Flyvbjerg, Nils Bruzelius, and Werner Rothengatter note that megaproject boosters, either because of ignorance or a desire for efficiency, “often avoid and violate established practices of good governance, transparency and participation in political and administrative decision making.” This translates to civil society being “typically kept at a substantial distance from megaproject decision making.”¹⁵ Furthermore, Graeme Hayes and John Horne assert that civil society has “rarely been factored into the definition of the Games or Games projects. The role of civic organizations and publics is one of implementation and support, not one of definition and decision.”¹⁶ With both disaster capitalism and celebration capitalism, undercutting democratic processes is commonplace. However, while disaster capitalism leads to the weakening of the state and the installation of neoliberal policies, celebration capitalism deploys state actors as strategic partners, putting forth public-private partnerships—rather than full-on privatization—as the dominant mode of economic transaction. In the context of the Olympics, these public-private partnerships are frequently lopsided: the public pays more, thereby taking on more of the risk.

Capitalism has proved to be a nimble shapeshifter, showing flexibility in the face of social, political, and economic obstacles. John Lauermaann and Mark Davidson write, “Capitalism is neither uniform nor consistent, and consequently, responding to crisis within it will necessitate a diverse range of initiatives.”¹⁷ As such, capitalism has exhibited divergent forms in different moments in history and appeared in different formations in a single instant:

Anna Tsing designates this as “the heterogeneity of capitalism at every moment in time.”¹⁸ Such simultaneous heterogeneity is the case with disaster capitalism and celebration capitalism. Together, these forms of ‘actually existing capitalism’ can harmonize into a potent combination, with celebration capitalism clearing a path for disaster capitalism, and vice versa. They can make for a powerful one-two punch. While the predominant economic current flows thick with neoliberalism’s privatization, deregulation, and free-market rhetoric, it also contains distinctly non-neoliberal elements. Critically examining sports mega-events helps underscore the dynamics of celebration capitalism that cut against the neoliberal grain.

In the context of the Olympic Games, celebration capitalism exhibits six essential elements. First, it occurs during a state of celebratory exception where the normal rules of politics can be temporarily suspended. Second, the IOC and the mass media combine as a linchpin in creating and trumpeting a political-economic spectacle. A third dimension is festive commoditization that rallies public backing for the Games. Fourth, celebration capitalism depends on the formation of public-private partnerships that are often lopsided in favor of private entities in terms of input and risk. Fifth, celebration capitalism is buoyed by the feel-good claims of environmental and social sustainability. Finally, celebration capitalism gives a lift to the security industry and local policing units responsible for preventing terrorism, corralling political dissent, and safeguarding the festive spectacle. Celebration capitalism exhibits these six central features, but it takes distinctive form depending on the political and historical context. These elements coalesce to forge a celebratory socio-political space where political activists and social critics are unwelcome. While disaster capitalism relies on supranational entities like the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organization to proffer neoliberal policy and ideology, celebration capitalism has its own powerful promoter: the International Olympic Committee. The IOC, with support from the Organizing Committees of the Olympic Games (OCOGs), National Olympic Committees (NOCs), and International Sports Federations (IFs), advocates public-private partnerships while concurrently furthering the other key tenets of celebration capitalism. Despite the IOC’s stated desire to sidestep politics, the Olympics are eminently political in numerous ways.

States of Exception

Political theorist Carl Schmitt famously contended that the ability to assert the state of exception is at the core of the concept of sovereignty: “Sovereign is he who decides on the exception. Only this can do justice to a borderline concept.”¹⁹ In the midst of perilous politics, the sovereign locates its traction and

purpose. Schmitt viewed the state of exception as a moment that bestows the state with “the monopoly to decide.” He asserted, “The exception reveals most clearly the essence of the state’s authority.”²⁰ Challenging extant juridical norms extends sovereignty and facilitates unity. Giorgio Agamben assumed a more critical view of the state of exception, focusing on how it divides sectors of the population. In *State of Exception*, Agamben explained how an exceptional condition, as defined by people in positions of power, can lead to a tumult of measures that the powerful deploy to maintain their advantage. Meanwhile, political rights are squelched as the state flexes its sovereignty. Agamben feared that the exception all too easily would become the rule: “One of the essential characteristics of the state of exception—the provisional abolition of the distinction among legislative, executive, and judicial powers—here shows tendency to become a lasting practice of government.”²¹ As such, the state of exception creates political space for repressive techniques of government that can, in turn, become normalized. Vitaly, Agamben argued that the state of exception is a space where “above all the very distinction between public and private—are deactivated.”²² This blurring of public and private space can stultify the prospect of political fightback.

While, as Schmitt argued, exceptional political conditions can often bolster the state apparatus, Agamben spotlighted the fact that it can also pave a path for crushing civil liberties and political freedoms. And while Klein highlights how the state of exception can lead to the institution of disaster capitalism, it can also come about because of unique celebrations where, rather than a frenzy of dread and disaster, the public gets a jamboree of sport and spectacle. In sum, the state of exception can take the form of disaster, but it can also veer towards celebration: for Olympic host cities, the Games are the quintessence of celebratory exceptionality. The Olympic Games facilitate the creation of spaces of political-economic exception, while, according to sports anthropologist Thomas F. Carter, the IOC serves as “a sovereign subject maker” in this scenario.²³ To be sure, neoliberalism is the predominant mode of modern-day economics, but as Lauermaann and Davidson note, “Viewing particular forms of neoliberalism as functioning always in relation to universal capitalist logics... enables an ideologically contextualized analysis of particular governance projects.”²⁴ The Olympics, as a “particular governance project,” can be better understood through the lens of celebration capitalism.

Olympic Spectacle and Festive Commercialism

The IOC plays a pivotal role choreographing and proliferating spectacle, a vital element of celebration capitalism. The iconoclastic Situationist Guy Debord wrote, “The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather, it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images.”²⁵ This “social relationship” is

crucial to both the Olympics and celebration capitalism. For Olympic scholar John MacAloon, the Games “are spectacle par excellence, a type case against which all others may be compared.”²⁶ MacAloon argues that the spectacle is a “genre of Olympism” that gives “primacy to visual sensory and symbolic codes” while installing “the bicameral roles of actors and audience, performers and spectators.” The spectacle, which requires “a certain size and grandeur,” is “a dynamic form, demanding movement, action, change, and exchange on the part of human actors who are at center stage, and the spectators must be excited in turn.”²⁷ Spectacles are not so much a means to an end, but instead, gestures that reverberate significance through their association to symbols, aspirations, and fears. The Olympics are no mere site of spectacle; rather, the Games actively *produce* spectacle.

As mentioned above, in the 1980s, IOC President Samaranch galvanized the corporatization of the Olympics, facilitating the transfiguration the Games into what Olympics scholars Robert Barney, Stephen Wenn, and Scott Martyn describe as “a commercial leviathan.”²⁸ Samaranch shepherded the corporate sponsorship program that channeled corporate cash into IOC reserves. Television behemoths haggled with Olympic officials for the best sponsorship arrangements, while various cities’ bid organizers worked to impress IOC members in order to win their votes. Barney, Wenn, and Martyn contend that Samaranch’s dogged turn to the corporate sector as well as “the prostituting of the bidding process for Olympic festivals” ended up straining “the integrity of the Olympic enterprise” and engendering a scene ripe for corruption.²⁹ On the flip side, thanks to these strategic moves, the Games began to resemble Debord’s idea that “The spectacle is *capital* accumulated to the point where it becomes image.”³⁰ Indeed, the 21st century Olympic spectacle is intimately connected to capital accumulation. Sport scholar Michael Silk argues that the Games are “a highly mediated commodity spectacle.” As the quintessence of “sporting spectacle,” the Olympics “can deeply influence thought and action, acting as a tool of pacification and depoliticization.”³¹ The Games can divert public attention from the economic costs of the Games, swerving attention onto intangible pride benefits and athletic prowess. The modern Olympics as a sports mega-event reinforce the commodification of everyday life. However, while Silk asserts that the Games chime with the “neoliberal politics of spectacle,” I argue that the Games are less about neoliberalism than the dynamics of capitalism more broadly.³² Rather than neoliberalism’s workhorses of privatization and deregulation, we see the IOC wield remarkable power over the Olympics. It commands commercial transactions, maintains autonomy over IOC membership lists, and enjoys full control over the selection of Olympic host cities. It demands that the local laws of host cities conform to commercial imperatives, and the IOC enforces stringent brand protection, forcing host cities to comply.

Olympics Economics: Public-Private Partnerships

While disaster capitalism tends to “fight for the advancement of pure capitalism,” which erodes the power of public bodies, celebration capitalism eschews rampant privatization, instead employing public-private partnerships where public entities play a vital role.³³ The state is not eradicated, but appropriated for private profit. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) became commonplace in the UK under Thatcher and in the US under Reagan. Eventually New Labour in the UK and Democrats in the US made PPPs standard practice.³⁴ PPPs share core elements with neoliberalism: the private sector is deemed to be more efficient, while, normatively speaking, the public sector’s role should diminish. Graeme Hodge and Carsten Greve assert that public-private partnerships have “enjoyed a global resurgence” in the modern era, becoming “icons of public administration.”³⁵ Yet, PPPs, they assert, may be more of “a favourite expression” than materially effective in terms of the value of expenditure.³⁶ Scrutinizing the economic literature on long-term infrastructure contracts (LTICs), a type of PPP common to sports mega-events like the Olympics, they encounter “mixed” results.³⁷ Despite the rose-tinted declarations of PPP proponents, they find a dearth of statistically reliable evidence and deem backers over-reliant on the calculus of risk transfers and the selected discount rate. In short, methodology matters. Also, preliminary cost measurement estimates often turn out to be much less than the actual costs that materialize later.³⁸ Such lowballing has become routine with Olympic spending. In part this is due to the fact that the IOC and local organizing committees often focus only on the operating costs of the Olympics while ignoring other compulsory costs like security, venue construction, and infrastructure building, thereby downplaying a preponderance of Olympic funding.³⁹

Others have come to spikier conclusions regarding PPPs. Focusing on equity issues stemming from PPPs between disadvantaged communities, governments, and private companies, Faranak Miraftab argues that PPPs can be a “market-enabling strategy” that advantages those who already hold power. She writes, “Like the Trojan Horse, these partnerships might arrive with the promise of a gift but only to further dispossess the poor from their locally mobilized resources.”⁴⁰ This “market-enabling strategy” also relies on problematic economic impact studies, which are typically designed by economic consultants who quite predictably predict economic success. Finance and tourism scholar John Crompton determined, “Most economic impact studies are commissioned to legitimize a political position rather than to search for economic truth. Often, this results in the use of mischievous procedures that produce large numbers that study sponsors seek to support a predetermined position.” Crompton elucidates ten “mischievous procedures” that lead to exceedingly rosy conclusions: “including local residents; inappropriate aggregation; inclu-

sion of time-switchers and casuals; abuse of multipliers; ignoring costs borne by the local community; ignoring opportunity costs; ignoring displacement costs; expanding the project scope; exaggerating visitation numbers; and inclusion of consumer surplus.”⁴¹ He also points to economic impact studies’ questionable deployment of “multipliers,” or secondary spending that, after entering from outside the economy, reverberates through an economy.⁴² Economist Victor Matheson concurs, noting that multipliers “can easily be manipulated to yield inflated results.”⁴³ Furthermore, academic economists have found that the Olympics suffer from the tourism displacement effect and the stay-away factor.⁴⁴ Visitors who would otherwise holiday at the Olympic city change their plans to avoid crowds and inflated prices.⁴⁵ Economic impact statements also show a tendency to underestimate the role of the “substitution effect,” or the reallocation of leisure spending. However, when people attend the Olympics, they are opting to not spend their money in their local communities and, thereby, are substituting their expenditures from one geographical area to another.⁴⁶ Frequently, economic impact statements incorrectly assume zero economic activity in the absence of the Olympics. Academic sports economists have come to the general conclusion that hosting the Olympics does not generate the benefits that economic impact studies promise.

Moreover, hosting the Olympics gives host governments an incentive to backstop projects when they go wrong so as to avoid embarrassment under the global media spotlight and to ensure the Games go on. This allows private companies to surrender fiscal responsibility, leaving the taxpaying public to pay the five-ring tab. Therefore, with many PPPs, the public takes the risks and the private entities scoop up the rewards that may accrue. David Whitson and Donald Macintosh assert that, optimistic promises aside, the predominant pattern is that “the games *lose* large amounts of public money and add to public sector debt.” They continue, “Public sector debt will repay itself, according to the standard official rhetoric, in private sector opportunities and ultimately in economic growth that will benefit the whole community. Investment in the games is thus framed as a particular form of public assistance to private accumulation, a postindustrial variant of traditional subsidies to industry.”⁴⁷ As such, public financing of the Games sets the table for private capital to capitalize on the revamped city. These dynamics thrum at the economic crux of celebration capitalism.

Environmental Sustainability

In the 1990s, the IOC added another vital dimension to celebration capitalism: environmental sustainability. The notion of ecological betterment for the benefit of future generations is popular, at least in the abstract. Most people feel positive about living and working in healthy, safe environments and are even

willing to take action to secure such eco-space. These feelings nourish the process of celebration capitalism. But sustainability is a slippery term. Further, as social theorist Leerom Medovoi points out, “Sustainability, emerging as it did out of the ‘sustainable growth’ and ‘sustainable development’ movements, has always referred quite directly to regimes of capital accumulation.”⁴⁸ This chimes with Helen Jefferson Lenskyj’s differentiation between “light green” and “dark green” sustainability practices; she argues the IOC has consistently adopted a “light green” approach that views the environment as an economic resource with discursive use value rather than espousing a “dark green” vantage that privileges nature’s intrinsic value and the idea that ecological preservation can and should trump economic development.⁴⁹ Many capitalist companies associated with the IOC have benefited from sustainability by vending an array of ecologically-minded consumer products as the purported ticket to a greener future. Green is the new green: claiming the mantle of environmentalism can stimulate significant profits. Nowadays, each Olympic host city is obligated to claim to be ‘the greenest Games to date.’

The IOC took action in response to the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, where sustainable development was center stage, and to the Albertville Winter Olympics in 1992, where there was pushback over the widespread ecological losses caused by the Games. Emerging from the Rio Summit the UN announced “Agenda 21,” its action plan for environmentally sustainable development. The IOC took action to ride the zeitgeist. At the 1994 Olympic Congress the IOC declared the environment to be “an essential component of Olympism.”⁵⁰ The IOC then added ecological concerns to the *Olympic Charter*. By 1995, Rule 2 asserted the IOC, “sees to it that the Olympic Games are held in conditions which demonstrate a responsible concern for environmental issues.”⁵¹ The IOC also inaugurated a Sport and Environment Commission that convenes each year and established its own “Agenda 21” in October 1999. The IOC pressed the Olympic Movement “to integrate sustainable development into their policies and activities” and “encourage all individuals...to behave in such a way as to ensure that their sporting activities and their lifestyles play a part in sustainable development.”⁵² In sum, the IOC has integrated sustainability into its rhetoric, naming it the third pillar of Olympism, astride sport and culture.⁵³ IOC-style environmentalism emerged full-force at the 2000 Sydney Summer Olympics. Organizers contended, “The environment record of the Sydney 2000 organizations was one of the shining achievements of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. From the earliest days, commitment to the highest standards of environmental achievement were a hallmark of Sydney’s Games.”⁵⁴

Sustainability coalesces conveniently with celebration capitalism. While producing green goods and services enjoys cultural credibility, there is also a proclivity for businesses to do the bare minimum in order to claim the green

mantle, which some critics call greenwashing. Numerous Olympic scholars are skeptical of the IOC's sustainability talk.⁵⁵ Janice Forsyth has questioned the Agenda 21 "Sport for Sustainable Development" plan as simply reconstituting power relations, less about sustaining the environment than prolonging historical imbalances. Forsyth asserted, "Agenda 21 thus far appears like a watered-down statement of environmental concern that shifts the focus of attention to special interest groups without actually requiring the industry to do something meaningfully concrete."⁵⁶

Security Boon

Another key dimension to celebration capitalism is the rise of securitization vis-à-vis the Games. The security and surveillance industries as well as local police forces are some of the biggest beneficiaries of celebration capitalism. At the Olympics, the biggest peacetime operation most host cities will ever experience, the role of security officials is to prevent people from marring the celebration or averting attention from the sports and commercialism. Local and national security officials use the Olympics to enhance and militarize their weapons supplies.⁵⁷ While the Olympics justify the creation of a security structure designed to thwart terrorism, that very same structure can also be deployed to suppress or intimidate acts of political dissent. The distinctions that policing bodies draw between terrorist security threats and 'social disorder' can be blurred by those with the requisite institutional power and incentive structure. As such, terrorism and political protest are often conflated in official rhetoric by blurring the two into 'threats' or 'risks' to the Olympics. At London 2012, for example, when Chris Allison, Scotland Yard's Assistant Commissioner and the national coordinator of Olympic security, briefed the London Assembly in late 2011 on policing costs for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, he singled out "four key risks to the Games"—terrorism, protest, organized crime, and natural disasters.⁵⁸

In the 21st century, militarized security forces have become a familiar feature of the Olympic Games. The shift toward intensified Games policing occurred in the wake of the 1972 Summer Games in Munich, where individuals from a Palestinian group called Black September kidnapped Israeli athletes from the Olympic Village. A gun battle ensued in which all the Israeli athletes and five Palestinians were killed as they prepared to board an airplane. Following the massacre in Munich, and the Atlanta pipe-bombing in 1996, security has quite reasonably become a serious concern. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 only amplified the trend, with the 2004 Athens security budget skyrocketing some 800% over the security funds expended in Sydney four years earlier.⁵⁹ For the Vancouver 2010 Winter Games, the security budget was pegged at CAN\$175 million, but ballooned to about CAN\$1 billion.⁶⁰ At Lon-

don 2012, the initial security-budget estimate was £213 million, but ended up being more than £1 billion.⁶¹ While securitization thrives under neoliberalism and disaster capitalism, with celebration capitalism the state security apparatus, more than private policing ventures, experiences a sharp boost in its coercive capacities. A recent exception is the world's largest private security firm G4S, which was entrusted to supply more than 10,000 bag-checkers and other personnel for London 2012 venues, as stipulated in its £284 million (\$458 million) contract. However, just before the Games commenced, G4S announced it would be unable to supply the trained security personnel and British troops were called in to make up for the shortfall.⁶² This highlights the trend under celebration capitalism whereby the public bails out private entities when they fail under pressure.

The 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics

Economic geographer David Harvey has highlighted how the capitalist class cannot continue to clutch power “without changing its character and moving accumulation on to a different trajectory and into new spaces.”⁶³ Celebration capitalism is one such shapeshift that has facilitated continued capital accumulation, and sports mega-events constitute a prime example of capitalism's capacity to slide into “new spaces,” most notably the emergent economies known as the BRICS: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. The 2008 Beijing Olympics set the trend, followed by the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa. The Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics and the 2016 Rio Summer Games are trailing in their wake.

Celebration capitalism, as a theoretical paradigm, could be construed as what Max Weber dubbed an “ideal-type.” Weber viewed an ideal-type as “formed by the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete individual* phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified *analytical* construct.”⁶⁴ Elsewhere he defined an ideal-type as “a mental construct for the scrutiny and systematic characterization of individual concrete patterns which are significant in their uniqueness.”⁶⁵ For Weber, the ideal-type's “function is the comparison with empirical reality in order to establish its divergences or similarities, to describe them with the *most unambiguously intelligible concepts*, and to understand and explain them causally.”⁶⁶ As such, the ideal-typical methodology helps capture the complexity of empirical reality, interpreting this complexity and organizing it into a coherent form. Ideal-types are useful for analyzing “historically unique configurations or their individual components,” Weber notes.⁶⁷ As Russia prepares to host the 2014 Winter Olympics, it reveals itself as a “historically unique configuration” of celebration capitalism.

In other words, under Putin we see celebration capitalism with distinctly Russian characteristics.

State of Exception and Media Spectacle

During Tsarist Russia, Sochi was the refuge of the Russian aristocracy who congregated to relax and soak in the mineral-rich waters. Later, Vladimir Lenin planned to convert Sochi into a retreat for Soviet workers, although he died before his vision became reality. Eventually the city emerged as one of Stalin's favorite resort getaways; his once-secret dacha was eventually converted into a hotel and museum.⁶⁸ President Putin has become laser-focused on Sochi, intent on instigating a positive economic jolt for the city. The state of exception brought on by the Olympic Games has given Putin an opportunity to extend the ambition he asserted in 2000, when he initially assumed office, that he would help achieve a "dictatorship of law."⁶⁹ Putin has regularly trumpeted the fact that hosting the Games, as well as the 2018 Soccer World Cup, are extraordinary occurrences where the normal rules do not apply. The President, who led the charge to secure the Olympics and is committed to staging them without incident, told a collection of high-level security officials that Russia would soon be hosting "very important political and sporting events" and that "it should be a matter of honour for law enforcement officials and special forces to ensure that these events take place in a normal, businesslike and festive atmosphere."⁷⁰ In this way, the Games have afforded Putin and his allies political space to accelerate the extension of state power. This harkens to Agamben's assertion that "the state of exception is the opening of a space in which application and norm reveal their separation."⁷¹ This dynamic can be a dream for those with authoritarianism tendencies and a nightmare for people wary of political constriction. Both scenarios inhere in Russia as Sochi prepares to host the Winter Games.

Under celebration capitalism, the media are necessary to abet spectacle. The spectacle is a vital part of Carter's notion of "athletic urbanism," which "produces distinctive use-value characteristics while simultaneously serving as gigantic exchange-value processes inextricably wedded to capitalist accumulation."⁷² Russia's media terrain is particularly conducive to such spectacle creation of the "athletic urbanism" variety. State television has avidly covered Putin's many feats of bravado and machismo; and when the President's maneuvers go wrong, state media can be relied upon to cut the tape to prevent political fallout.⁷³

The Russian elite who monopolize television news, the most common medium for political news in the country, are lined up behind Putin in support of the Games. State media in Russia include the three most popular national television channels, Pervy Kanal (a.k.a. Channel One), Rossiya 1, and NTV,

which one scholar describes as “finely tuned propaganda tools that herald the political line of Russia’s ruling elites around the two central figures Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and President Dmitriy Medvedev.” While state media offer “unconditional support” to the ruling elite, even non-state mainstream media routinely support of the elite agenda, acting in a “largely loyal but selectively critical” way.⁷⁴ There may be “an elite pact” between Putin and Russia’s powerful media oligarchs, but Tina Burrett argues the relationship “has not tamed politics” but “has papered over rather than settled core disputes⁷⁵.” Liberal opposition media have carved out some tactical space in which to air such political discord. And the rise of social media, a sort of modern-day *Samizdat* system, has assisted in the creation of viable political alternatives to the Kremlin’s diktats. Nevertheless, as *The Economist* memorably put it, “the Kremlin can have a magic sway over television new⁷⁶s.” Such “sway” derives in part from Putin’s aggressive moves to bolster state control of the media by launching the Ministry of Press, Broadcasting, and Mass Communication, and by amalgamating the state TV and radio firm (VGTRK) into a media behem⁷⁷oth. Beyond this, the *Guardian* revealed in October 2013 that the Russian FSB security service plans to monitor “all communications” at the Sochi Winter Games. Security officials will deploy Sorm, a program for capturing and tracking phone and Internet communication, in order to surveil foreign guests as well as domestic residents during the Olympic period. The *Guardian* noted that athletes and spectators in Sochi “will face some of the most invasive and systematic spying and surveillance in the history of the Ga⁷⁸mes.”

In short, Russia is not a friendly location for journalists, or citizen-journalists for that matter. The NGO Reporters Without Borders (RWB) ranked Russia 148th in its 2013 Press Freedom Index, dropping the country six slots from the previous year’s ranking due to the intense repression of journalists and the impunity with which attacks on the press are carried out.⁷⁹ In March 2013, RWB unveiled a campaign focusing on Sochi 2014. Secretary-General Christophe Deloire said the campaign was introduced “in order to renew our support for Russia’s journalists, bloggers and human rights defenders at a crucial moment for freedom of information in that country.”⁸⁰

Public-Private Partnerships, Russia Style

Particular economic arrangements, marked by cost lowballing, public-private partnerships, and state backstopping, sit at the heart of celebration capitalism. With Sochi, Putin and his allies are anteing up a distinctly Russian brand of the Weberian ideal-type. Typically with celebration capitalism, the state supplies funding and private entities enjoy strategic latitude to act relatively autonomously once they have secured state monies. Thanks to the political-historical circumstances in Russia, PPPs take a markedly different form with the Krem-

lin firmly in the driver's seat. To understand these arrangements, we must step back in history to the early days of the post-Communist era when Boris Yelstin aggressively implemented Klein's "shock doctrine." Yelstin orchestrated "the tumultuous course of economic shock therapy in Russia," as Klein writes, shifting privatization and deregulation into overdrive.⁸¹ Yet, as economist Steven Rosefielde notes, Yelstin's wrenching brand of privatization was "an exercise in plunder instead of an equitable denationalization" with "the plundering conducted under legal cover." Opportunistic, well-connected oligarchs emerged with extreme wealth and resources; the 1990s, writes Rosefielde, "was a swindler's paradise."⁸² Oligarchic capitalism emerged to dominate natural resources and utilities, along the way doling out lawless violence and assembling ostentatious displays of wealth. It was an oligarchic free-for-all. Rosefielde asserts, that in the wake of Yelstin's policies, "much of what passe[d] for government contracting, regulation and business promotion [was] thinly veiled transfers from state coffers that would be criminal in the West."⁸³

Then along came Vladimir Putin. According to economist Peter Rutland, Putin presented a "new model of state-oligarchic capitalism" whereby state power trumped oligarchic wealth. Although Putin brought the "increasing fusion of state and oligarchic power," intense renationalization of businesses and resources took place while the state used unorthodox methods to mask its economic activity.⁸⁴ Putin repudiated the oligarchic bacchanalia of the 1990s, and according to Russia scholar Richard Sakwa, "came to power intent on restoring the state."⁸⁵ This firm reassertion of state power meant reining in the tycoons-gone-wild, curbing the "robber capitalists," as some prefer to call them. The quintessential example of this involved the prosecution and jailing of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the oligarch behind Yukos, Russia's largest oil company. In 2003 Khodorkovsky was arrested and charged with tax evasion; ultimately he was sent to prison for a lengthy sentence.⁸⁶ As flimsy as the charges appeared to numerous observers, they sent an unequivocal message to the oligarchs: defying Putin's renationalization plans meant risking prosecution. Plus, the arrest of Khodorkovsky gave Putin a nearly seven-point boost in his domestic approval ratings.⁸⁷ Although Putin publicly spoke the rhetoric of privatization, Russia analyst Marshall Goldman points out that the president "nonetheless set out to reassert the state's interest by either renationalizing the country's corporations or by applying subtle—and sometimes not so subtle—intimidation to convince those corporations that they should temper profit considerations in favor of advancing what Putin had decided were the country's geopolitical or strategic goals."⁸⁸ Sakwa notes that Putin had effectively signaled "new conditions for business and for most of the elite... instead of partners, they were reduced to functionaries."⁸⁹ With the oligarchs on their back foot, Putin can freely deploy what Rosefielde calls the "signature feature" of his political-economic playbook: "revocable entitlement."⁹⁰ As such, the

Russian political context is particularly conducive to celebration capitalism in that profit-motive and privatization are not hegemonic drivers, as they are with disaster capitalism's neoliberal policies.

Sochi bid documentation initially projected Olympic costs to be \$10.3 billion (\$1.5 billion in operating costs and another \$8.8 billion in non-OCOG costs), but since then the five-ring price tag has quintupled.⁹¹ A half-year before the commencement of the Games, costs had jumped to \$51 billion, making them the most expensive Olympics ever. Russia's state-owned development bank, which was anticipating its role as fiscal backstop, was already projecting losses in the billions.⁹² According to one source, early on Putin promised to underwrite \$12 billion in Games-related costs through the Federal Target Program.⁹³ But the takeaway is that state contributions have increased steadily from the time Sochi was awarded the Games, leading Putin critic Boris Nemtsov to assert in 2013 that "the Olympics are being built almost entirely at the taxpayers' expense. Moreover, at the end of last year, the authorities officially announced that almost all the Olympic facilities without exception have been built at a loss and will never pay for themselves."⁹⁴

The enormous \$51 billion price tag does not tell the whole story. Celebration capitalism chimes with Tsing's theorization of an "economy of appearances" and its relationship to "spectacular accumulation." Aspiring Olympic host cities fabricate spectacles that are attractive to global investors. She argues that with "speculative enterprises" such as the Olympic Games, "profit must be imagined before it can be extracted; the possibility of economic performance must be conjured like a spirit to draw an audience of potential investors. The more spectacular the conjuring, the more possible an investment frenzy."⁹⁵ Such "an investment frenzy" was a *fait accompli* in Russia, thanks to Putin's remarkable influence and the tight relations between the state and business oligarchs.

Martin Müller dissects "the regulatory arrangement of the Sochi Olympics," describing it as a "model of state dirigisme that accords primacy to the national state, challenging conventional accounts of state rescaling and urban entrepreneurialism." This is not full-fledge privatization, per the abstract tenets of neoliberalism. He adds, "In Sochi the national state coordinates the preparation process and directs the investment for the Olympics, reining in the autonomy of the private sector. Despite the formally high share of private investment, principles of entrepreneurialism that emphasize profitability, market-led development and the international mobility of capital take a backseat to directive state action."⁹⁶ Yet, per celebration capitalism, with Sochi's funding arrangement, "The close ties between the state and business corporations blur the boundaries between public and private."⁹⁷ Putin and his Olympic allies have scant faith in the hidden hand of the free market. The Russian state is propelling the financing of the Olympics, with oligarchs allowed to keep their

billions on the condition they pony up millions to finance the Games. As such, private investment, which at first glance appears substantial, is misleading. The goal of private contributions are not so much to generate profits as to ingratiate firms with the federal government.⁹⁸ Moreover, these investments are “subject to state control or even state ownership of capital.” Müller makes the vital point that “State banks and the Russian government are the major creditors for Olympic construction. Almost all major investors are either owned or co-owned by the state or receive state-backed funding.” And, as recent history has amply demonstrated, the Russian state will backfill any budgetary shortfall, thereby acting as the financier of last resort should private entities fail to come through, whether through state funds proper or by arm-twisting a billionaire to cover cost overruns. State-private relations are so entwined vis-à-vis the Olympics that “what figures as private investment might be more adequately called quasi-private: through a variety of ways it is directed by the national government instead of market forces.”⁹⁹

With this “quasi-private” investment in the Games, a group of compliant tycoons that commentators call the “national champions” have played a vital role. In response to the actions of oligarchs who, during the Yeltsin era, put their interests ahead of wider Russian interests, Putin cultivated a group of “national champion” oligarchs who were willing to sacrifice the profit-maximization imperative on the altar of the state’s domestic and international interests. According to Marshall Goldman, “These national champions would most likely be more than 50 percent owned by the Russian government,” although “with the right type of guidance and pressure, there was no reason that predominantly private companies could not also serve as national champions.” In practice under Putin, “most national champions are either wholly or predominantly state owned.”¹⁰⁰ National champions are active in Sochi. Vladimir Potanin (head of the metals company Norilsk Nickel) and Oleg Deripaska (chief of Rusal, an aluminum firm) are major backers of the Games, as is natural-gas behemoth Gazprom, which committed \$3 billion to Games-related construction projects. Potanin, who began constructing his Roza Khutor ski resort even before Sochi was awarded the Games, is kicking in \$2.5 billion. Mikhail Kasyanov, a former prime minister under Putin who is now an opposition leader, framed such fiscal contributions as a coerced levy: “If you want to carry on doing business in Russia, here’s the tax you need to pay—the kind of a tax that [Putin] wants you to pay.”¹⁰¹

Müller asserts that through this process, Putin and his associates are “able to convert public into ‘private’ expenditure by exerting dirigiste power and granting investors in sports facilities concessions such as landownership.”¹⁰² Again, this is not straight-up neoliberalism, but distinctly celebration capitalism, and in this instance spiked with corruption. Some estimate that a whopping \$30 billion in Olympic spending has been pocketed by private entities

through corrupt practices.¹⁰³ One road connecting Sochi venues cost an astonishing \$200 million per kilometer.¹⁰⁴ Iconoclastic Russian dissident Garry Kasparov characterized the celebration-capitalism-style mode of Games funding as a “massive shift of Russian assets from public to private hands—this time under the cover of the Olympic rings.”¹⁰⁵

Green Dreams

Chiming with a key tenet of celebration capitalism, Olympic organizers in Sochi have pledged to execute “the greenest, most environmentally aware Games ever staged.”¹⁰⁶ However, the green claims of boosters have been picked apart by environmentalists who assert that venue and infrastructure construction are damaging the sensitive mountain landscape, hurting biodiversity, and dumping toxins into the Black Sea. Critics contend that Olympics-related development has ignored environmental regulations and undercut the environmental impact assessment process.¹⁰⁷ By 2010, both Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) had severed ties with Russia’s state-owned construction firm Olympstroy, which the NGOs blamed for dumping heavy metals and industrial waste.¹⁰⁸ In 2009 the Russia-based group Environmental Watch on North Caucasus lodged a complaint that the natural gas giant Gazprom was illegally crossing into the Caucasus Strict Nature Reserve in order to build a road connecting to the Olympic Ski Complex.¹⁰⁹ A few years later, in February 2013, the group issued an open statement to the IOC asserting that deforestation and the release of toxic effluents had degraded the natural landscape in the Sochi region. Meanwhile, the Russian government declared 2013 to be the “Year of the Environment” and the IOC announced that Coca-Cola, a longtime Worldwide Olympic Partner, would receive a “Sustainability Award” for its work in the Black Sea region and Dow would be an “Official Carbon Partner” tasked with minimizing Sochi 2014’s carbon footprint.¹¹⁰

After the IOC awarded the Games to Sochi, bid director Dmitry Chernyshenko argued that hosting the Olympics would give Russia a democratic boost: “There is no doubt, they will help make Russia more internationally orientated, more democratic,” he said.¹¹¹ Ghosting behind his claim is the fact that, hosting the Olympics aside, Russia is no civil-liberties paradise. Just ask the high-profile feminist punk-rock collective Pussy Riot that had three members incarcerated after a confrontational guerrilla performance at a Moscow cathedral in early 2012. But, despite Chernyshenko’s assurances, the Russian security state has firmed up its grip as the Olympics approach, passing a slate of toothy laws aimed at squelching the actions of dissident citizens, including those who might disrupt the five-ring celebration.

The Russian Duma has passed an array of restrictive measures that Putin has signed into law. In summer 2012, it furnished a law mandating “politically

active” NGOs that receive funding from outside Russia to register as a “foreign agent.” Individuals who fail to report the requisite fiscal information can be fined 50,000 roubles (\$1,700), while NGOs can be docked \$1 million roubles (\$34,000). A few months later, at the behest of the Federal Security Service, the Duma approved legislation with a voluminous definition of “high treason.” Civil libertarians are concerned it could be applied to any Russian, especially political activists, who collaborate with foreign groups.¹¹² One law aimed at organized demonstrations defines political activity as any attempt to “influence state policy or public opinion.” The government has also instituted fines for public “disorder.” Even if protesters have secured permits, they can receive punishments of 20,000 roubles (\$660) or up to 50 hours of community labor if “disorder” occurs. For unsanctioned political events, the penalties are harsher: more than 300,000 roubles (\$9,000) for participating activists and more than three times that for organizers. Putin routinely accuses left-wing opposition dissidents as being terrorists, inculcating them for rousing “mass disorder.”¹¹³ Political protests are regularly conflated with “extremist” actions. In July 2013, prominent left opposition leader Alexei Navalny was sent away for five years in a prison camp on what the *Guardian* characterized as “a demonstrably sham charge.” A Russian court eventually suspended his sentence while upholding a questionable theft conviction.¹¹⁴ Additionally, a cyber-law in Russia squeezes free speech online, allowing authorities to clandestinely compose a blacklist that quickly ensnared approximately two hundred web sites for their allegedly “offensive content.”¹¹⁵ In August 2013, Putin issued a decree that banned non-Olympic “gatherings, rallies, demonstrations, marches and pickets” in Sochi between January 7 and March 21, creating a one-month buffer on either side of the Games.¹¹⁶ These laws have sent political activists and NGOs an unequivocal message: actions that undercut the festive celebration of the Olympic Games will not be tolerated.

Moreover, the region around Sochi is one of the world’s hottest political-conflict zones. As such, Russian security officials confront a slew of geopolitical challenges. Paul Goble, a former CIA and State Department official specializing in the Caucasus, stated, “It has become increasingly clear that Sochi is very much the wrong place for holding a winter Olympic Games,” adding “The Sochi Olympics are being staged in the wrong place, at the wrong time, and by the wrong people. In terms of security, it is one of the least secure places on earth.”¹¹⁷ For starters, Russia is in a longstanding disagreement with Georgia over Abkhazia, which sits approximately 25 kilometers southeast of Sochi.¹¹⁸ Sochi is also situated near the precarious provinces of Chechnya, Dagestan, and Ingushetia, where anti-Russian sentiment roils. Less than a year before the Games were to commence, Russian officials received a grim reminder of the separatist wars of Chechnya and Dagestan when Doku Umarov, a high-profile Chechen rebel, implored his fellow militants to “do their utmost to derail” the

Olympics, which he viewed as “satanic dances on the bones of our ancestors.”¹¹⁹ In short, staging the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi has agitated opposition across the region.¹²⁰ Social commentator Tony Wood sums it up: “In recent years, there has been an upsurge in the activity of armed Islamist groups across the North Caucasus, raising the spectre of a regionalization of insurgency.”¹²¹ Matthew Light adds that although the Olympics “are intended to cement Russia’s links to the Northwest Caucasus,” the “preparations for Sochi 2014 are only highlighting the problems that Russia faces in the region.”¹²² For Olympic security officials, the ongoing threat of regional insurgency creates a self-reinforcing circle of militarization and securitization in the name of retaining a celebratory, safe atmosphere for the Games. The Olympics-induced state of exception, taking place in an already extraordinary geopolitical space, has been a boon for security officials interested in fortifying their power.

Furthermore, the Games are slated for the 150-year anniversary of the Circassians’ forced removal from the Black Sea littoral by Tsar Alexander II. Matthew Light characterizes the event as a “violent ethnic cleansing of the indigenous inhabitants” and points out that “many Circassian activists today would use the term ‘genocide.’”¹²³ These Adygean nationalists assert that the Olympics are being built on the site of a mass grave where tens of thousands were slaughtered and then buried by Tsarist militia in 1864.¹²⁴ The downhill ski slope in the Yasnaya Polyana mountain area is site of a bloody 19th century battle in which the Russians brutally pacified the local population; Yasnaya Polyana translates to “red meadow” due to the bloodstained fields the fight left in its wake.¹²⁵ New Jersey-based Circassian Dana Wojokh asked me, “Would you have an Olympics in Darfur? Would you have an Olympics in Auschwitz? No, so why Sochi?”¹²⁶ Despite this remarkable array of challenges, the *Olympic Review*, the official publication of the Olympic movement, confidently commented that “it’s clear that the benefits of the 2014 Winter Games will be felt long after the Olympic flame is extinguished.”¹²⁷ Yet for many, this claim raises a larger question: for whom does the Olympic political-economic juggernaut boom?

Conclusion

Pierre Bourdieu argued that, “a particular sport cannot be analyzed independently of the totality of sporting practices.” A significant part of this “totality” has to include the economic dynamics that are the engine of the sport system, or what Bourdieu calls “the structure of the space of sporting practices.”¹²⁸ In this article I have contended that the Olympic Games of the 21st century cannot be fully understood without interrogating the political, economic, and social relations that sit at the sports festival’s core. Examining this relational thicket has led me to elucidate a Weberian ideal-type I call celebration capitalism, the smiley-faced counterpart to Naomi Klein’s “disaster capi-

talism” that is marked by six central features: (1) a celebratory state of exception where political-economic norms are shelved in the short term; (2) Olympic boosters teaming up with the media to forge a spectacle; (3) jovial commercialization that gathers public support; (4) public-private partnerships that tend to encumber taxpayers with fiscal input and risk; (5) claims of environmental and social sustainability; and, (6) a jumpstart for the security industry and local policing units responsible for safeguarding the Games. These tenets do not add up to neoliberalism with its penchant for privatization, deregulation, and “letting the market decide” while the state is sidelined. Rather, as Collins notes about modern-day mega-events like the Olympics and the soccer World Cup, “the ‘magic of the marketplace’ could only conjure up profit when underpinned by public subsidy.”¹²⁹ Long ago economic historian Robert Heilbroner wrote that the capitalist market system is “blinkerered to follow the arrow of economic advantage.” He emphasized that “The market has a keen ear for private wants, but a deaf ear for public needs.”¹³⁰ Olympics critics like Vancouver-based activist Am Johal captured this dynamic and brought it into conversation with the core of celebration capitalism when he said, “The Olympics are a corporate franchise that you buy with public money.”¹³¹

It is important to highlight that celebration capitalism and disaster capitalism are complementary formations. Celebration capitalism, with its ample public spending, can create political space for disaster capitalism to follow; politicians can argue that thanks to expansive public subsidy, the public has no choice but to institute austerity in line with neoliberalism. Claiming fiscal exigency, governments can launch austerity programming and cuts to social spending. The opposite is also possible: the harrowing perils of disaster capitalism can render the general public craving the happier inducements of social celebration. In short, celebration capitalism and disaster capitalism can coalesce into a poignant one-two punch of political-economics in dialectical relation.

On the normative front, whether the Olympic Games under the sway of celebration capitalism are a boon or boondoggle for a host city depends entirely on the political-economic context and the popular will of the people. A key component to celebration capitalism is public-private partnerships that are often lopsided in favor of the private partners involved. Yet, if a general public states through democratic channels—perhaps via a public referendum where all sides are on equal footing in terms of available funds to press their case—that it wishes to spend the public treasury in such a fashion, then it would be hard to argue against it. As Heilbroner noted, “The market gives a wide range of results, depending on circumstances. Sometimes its dispensations are very much in the public interest. Sometimes they are not.”¹³² Yet real-deal democratic channels for host-city denizens to weigh in on the “public interest” vis-à-vis the possibility of accommodating the Games are virtually

non-existent. Another prospect would be for public officials to negotiate with more vim and principle on the front end of the Olympic process to ensure that taxpayers get the most from their investment and to guarantee that public spending truly boomerangs to meet the social needs of the community. Local planners could mandate that the Olympic Village be automatically converted into social housing after the Games. In theory, celebration capitalism could be a Keynesian pump-primer for the economy that helps reorganize society and redistribute wealth in order to benefit those who need a boost. However, at present, this is not how celebration capitalism functions in the context of the Olympic Games, as evidenced by the 2004 Athens Olympics, the 2008 Beijing Games, the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, and the London 2012 Summer Games. The case of the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi brings the machinations of celebration capitalism—albeit with distinctly Russian characteristics—into sharp focus.

Endnotes

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- 27 *Ibid.*, 243, 244.
- 28 Robert K. Barney, Stephen R. Wenn, and Scott G. Martyn, *Selling the Five Rings: The International Olympic Committee and the Rise of Olympic Commercialism* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2004), 289.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 302.
- 30 Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 24, emphasis in original.
- 31 Michael Silk, "Towards a Sociological Analysis of London 2012," *Sociology* Vol. 45 (2011), 736.
- 32 *Ibid.*
- 33 Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, 20.
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- 35 Graeme A. Hodge and Carsten Greve, "PPPs: The Passage of Time Permits A Sober Reflection," *Economic Affairs* (March 2009), 33.
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- 38 Ibid., 36-37.
- 39 John Horne, "The Politics of Hosting the Olympic Games," in *The Politics of the Olympics: A Survey*, eds. Alan Bairner and Gyoza Molnar (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 38.
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- 44 John R. Madden makes the important point that by deciding to employ predictive input-output models common to economic impact analysis, economists opt, through their methodology, to ignore the crowd-out factor. See: John R. Madden, "Economic and Fiscal Impacts of Mega Sporting Events: A General Equilibrium Assessment," *Public Finance and Management* Vol. 6, No. 3 (2006), 349.

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