Event, Image, History and Place:

How the NYC2012 Olympic Bid Constructed New York City

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This dissertation titled

Event, Image, History and Place:

How the NYC2012 Olympic Bid Constructed New York City

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines the bid book produced by the NYC2012 organization as part of its effort to have New York City named host of the 2012 Summer Olympic Games. The NYC2012 bid book, like any other Olympic bid book, is a unique, complex document. It is both a blueprint or future vision of a city, and an extensive, carefully-constructed piece of place-marketing aimed primarily (but not solely) at the elite decision-makers who control the Olympic Movement, along with all its economic and cultural power. Using a qualitative approach, drawing upon cultural history, urban studies, political economics, and other perspectives, this work identifies and discusses the key themes in the NYC2012 bid book: New York City’s cosmopolitanism; its urban needs and networks; its renascence and recaptured traditions; and its drama and spectacle. These themes, articulated explicitly and implicitly in the bid book’s overarching narrative of New York City at the start of the new millennium, parallel themes embedded in the story of the contemporary Olympics, permitting an evaluation of how the interests of a modern “entrepreneurial city” are tied to the interests of a globally-mediated “mega-event.” Such attempts to attach the interests, images and symbols to each other may or may not prove successful (as NYC2012’s effort was not) but remain viable, concrete sites for urban and cultural scholars to interpret.

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Approved: _____________________________________________________________

Joseph W. Slade
Professor of Media Arts and Studies
DEDICATION

To Henry and Connie Koch, my parents, for all their encouragement and faith in me. May it all be repaid and then some.

To K. & K.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My journey with this work – from the first spark of an idea to its final punctuation mark – has been a long one, spanning five years, three institutions, and countless long weekend nights and summer afternoons of “chipping away at it.” I would like to thank the members of my doctoral committee - Dr. Julie White, Dr. George Korn, and Dr. Roger Aden – for their patience and understanding over the long haul of dissertation work, as well as for their influence on my development as a thinker, academic, and educator throughout the time I have known and learned from them. A special thanks is reserved for my adviser and doctoral committee chair, Dr. Joseph W. Slade for his help and guidance throughout my career at Ohio University, and whose input and support on this dissertation was essential and inestimable. I felt from the start that the work I had in mind could prove a little unorthodox in its scope and interdisciplinary approach. Happily, my committee seemed to get what I was trying to do from the start. For that I am grateful.

It is hard to imagine how much harder it would have been to reach this point without supportive colleagues – if it would have been possible at all. I must thank my colleagues at Goucher College – Dr. Shirley Peroutka, Dr. John Turner, and Dr. Daniel Marcus – for taking a fledgling ABD out of a graduate program and into their department, and giving him a warm, welcoming home for what would be a very important year, personally- and professionally-speaking. Likewise, I want to thank my current institution, Marist College, and all my colleagues there for providing a supportive, friendly environment over the past three years. I would especially like to thank my department chair at Marist, Dr. Keith Strudler, not just for encouraging me to get this work done, but keeping my departmental burdens fairly light so that I could so.
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INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation I will present a historically-informed, case-oriented critical analysis of New York City's failed bid for the 2010 Summer Olympic Games. I will argue that Olympic bid proposals offer (among other things) visions of future cities. Those interested in media and place may find them suitable for evaluation, analysis and criticism. Given the formalized nature of their presentation, the “master plan”-like scope and scale of the projects proposed, the typical exposure of the proposal itself to the public, and the political and public relations work done on its behalf, I believe an Olympic bid such as this presents a unique, concrete and feasible site for analyzing the relationships and interplay between place, politics, media, business, popular culture and community in the modern world. That dynamic, difficult-to-ascertain relationship lies at the heart of my research interests and agenda.

Belying this assertion is the notable amount of academic interest in various “hallmark events” from “mega-events” (great expositions and Worlds' Fairs, Olympic Games and World Cups, and other major sporting and cultural events) to the typically smaller-scale festivals, fairs, and planned and spontaneous, ephemeral events. Hosting a high-profile hallmark event has become, according to some critics, “the quintessential postindustrial urban activity” (McCallum, Spencer & Wyly, 2005, p.25). Perhaps more than any other event, the Olympics are big; big in time and space, held by and in the service of big interests, for big stakes, and with correspondingly big impacts. Hall (1992) puts it this way:
The Olympics is probably the world's largest mega-event with substantial economic, social and political costs and benefits for the host nation, region and city. Probably few events have the ability to focus the attention of the world as much as the Olympics. The Olympics provide an unprecedented opportunity for publicity, urban renewal, the construction of physical infrastructure and economic development (Hall, 1992, p. 36).

With near-ritualistic regularity, the Olympic Games bring worldwide attention down upon an anointed city. No place is intrinsically prepared for this influx – at least not to the standards set down by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). As we shall see, even if a pret a porter Olympic city actually existed, a contemporary Games that did not catalyze much Olympic-branded, interest-driven building, renovating, re-imaging, and other forms of physical and symbolic work would be almost unimaginable.

Such a place must be created quadrennially. We watch cities around the world line up for the chance to construct and become that place at great cost, for great (projected) benefits. Athletes need places to compete and temporarily reside, media and businesspeople associated with the event need places to work from and do business in, and spectators need ways to get to and around the host city. Thus, new transportation and communications networks, new and renovated showcase athletic facilities, hotels and media centers, and whole swaths of land reclaimed and rebuilt as an Olympic Village are standard parts of cities' efforts to become an Olympic host city.

Looking at a given city's Olympic bid, a number of broad questions may arise even in the minds of those who have not yet acquainted themselves with the critical emphases found in Olympic scholarship. One may (and should) ask plainly; what is the
proposed future shape of the city, physically, symbolically? Where does the vision come from, based on what and whose ideas? Whose interests are promoted by it? Whose interests are marginalized? What is to be left behind when the event is over? Such issues are likely to be sources and sites of conflict.

Connected to this, and especially relevant to my work as a media scholar (albeit one with an interdisciplinary orientation) are questions about the mediated rhetorical work done within and parallel to the bid process; that done by the bid organizers directly in the course of their efforts, by those outside a bid but connected and/or sympathetic to it, and by those resistant to it.

The leading edge of my analysis will focus on the media materials produced for the NYC2012 bid. Such a category is broad and complex; some messages and objects are directed at the rarefied audience of elites (small in number, but ultimately powerful) who cast the deciding votes, others at the local (and to a lesser extent, national and international) populations whose consensual enthusiasm for hosting the Games must be believably constructed, if not actually substantiated. The main text I am analyzing is *New York City 2012*, the official bid book created by the New York City host city organizing committee (“NYC2012”), which was first presented at the national stage of the bidding process. Distinct from this but not disconnected is the work produced by major media outlets in response to and in the service of the bid, and the ways in which ordinary citizens and organized community groups, local and transnational business interests, and various other players use media to accommodate or resist a bid's efforts. All these materials and interests construct and sell the image of a city, and in my work I will analyze the bid at various levels.
Here I want to note the potentially problematic nature of the term “bid,” in order to illustrate the multifaceted nature of the subject, which makes it both an attractive and daunting subject. When we talk about Olympic bids, we are really talking about a number of interconnected things; temporal processes punctuated by design stages, key figures and interest groups banded together with varying mechanisms and clout at their disposal, media objects and the orchestrated campaigns that they are a part of, and so on. All of this goes into a bid. The process of organizing and running an Olympic bid is lengthy, complicated and involves a great number of moving parts – some internal to and controllable for the bid organizers, but many external and outside their direct influence and control. It begins with a simple concept, “-------------: Olympic City,” which may gestate in the minds of a few key local figures, and can sometimes be greeted with derision and disbelief when it first comes to light. It may require a great leap of imagination at the start, and the sharing and sustenance of that vision among the right figures at the right time. It requires money to get off the ground, and a great deal of additional funding throughout the multi-stage bidding process – funding drawn from business and civic boosters who are seldom disinterested bystanders. It involves multiple stages of organization, re-organization and corporatization. It involves the cultivation of, supplication towards, and negotiation with actors and agencies in local, regional and national politics to legitimate the vision – for according to the Olympic charter, cities are the only entities allowed to bid for the Games. It involves several rounds of competition from the national to the international arena, among cities with largely the same designs, tactics, claims and ambitions, fine-tuned by similar armies of consultants and lobbyists, in order to fashion or reinforce a “world-class city” image. The bid organizers' visions,
emphases and politicking must be directed towards different audiences at different times; plans and promises designed to build community support and create local and national momentum in the early stages (the assembling of a viable bid, the campaign to be named national candidate) are eventually superseded by strategies designed to appeal to the small, internationally diffuse set of elite decision-makers within the IOC.

It is not hard to find contemporary investigations into various aspects of the Olympics and the ideology of Olympism; among them, analyses of the political, social and cultural meaning of the Olympics throughout history, specific accounts of event organization and management, and work that looks at the Olympic Games as a prestigious, lucrative, politically and economically instrumental, globally-mediated mega-event. Following the publication of books such as Jennings and Simson's *The Lords of The Rings* (1992) which investigated the IOC under Juan Antonio Samaranch, and the scandals that came to light around Salt Lake City's bid for the 2002 games, scrutiny has also increased upon the spectre of corruption, bribery and graft in the bidding process.

As I have investigated the corpus of Olympic research from the standpoint of media and cultural studies, some themes and approaches have stood out. Recent analyses of Olympic host city bid materials and associated media coverage often aim to show how a prospective host city presents a specific Olympic-friendly public image, or, more to the point, aim to show how the economic and development interests of urban political and financial elites are embedded in the host city effort and put forth as the will of the whole city. These analyses are often implicitly or explicitly indebted to a common set of theoretical forebears. Logan and Molotch's theory of the city as growth machine in a postfederal urban political environment, and David Harvey's political economic critique
of the “entrepreneurial city” in the midst of a global, neoliberalist competition with other image-conscious entrepreneurial cities both emphasize the material needs and aims of the postmodern, postindustrial city. These interpretations typically hold that the city is steered by a coalition made up of political and business interests, with democratic processes and the voices of common citizens getting short shrift. When this coalition turns to a mega-event such as the Olympics to raise its global profile while simultaneously pushing through development projects (often extra-governmentally) then Chomsky and Herman's theory of “manufacturing consent,” and/or other ways of conceptualizing mass media as image-maker and persuader, may be adopted to describe how media and other authorities are conscripted, bought, or otherwise fall in line with the growth coalition.

These particular broadly-drawn theoretical chords resonate rather strongly with my research into the NYC2012 bid. Via collection and interpretation of the themes employed by the advocates of New York's bid and contested by their opponents, I have noticed how messages and images in and around the bid present conflicts: economic-growth and image-building imperatives against local community interests and needs; moneyed, politically powerful elites with close connections to mass media against the easily marginalized; and popular cultural entities – from the Olympic Games and the ideology of Olympism to the National Football League – against a loose, wide-ranging alliance of skeptics and opponents. Patterns drawn in critiques of the Los Angeles, Atlanta, Salt Lake City, Sydney and Vancouver bids (to name only some) are detectable in New York's bid effort too.
In this work I attempt to do more than just affirm that a consistent pattern of this sort is at work in the case of NYC2012; I aim to discern and describe its larger context and what that has to tell us. One clear-cut difference between my analysis and numerous others along these lines is that New York's bid failed. To a significant but ultimately unquantifiable degree consent was not manufactured in this case, if the measure of consent would be that the bid turned out successful.

It would be interesting if New York had won the right to host the 2012 Olympics, but it is somewhat beside the point for this work. The Olympic bid process is far too complex and full of contingencies. Outside factors, from the quality and resourcefulness of competing cities' bids, to the political climate of the moment (at all levels), to the shadow-world of favor-dealing and outright corruption that accompanies such an obscure and yet high-stakes process can and most likely do have an impact on the final decision.

Yet there is still much to be gained from analyzing New York's bid and exploring its mediation. New York's Olympic bid bears traces of the broader relationships between communication, culture, politics and urban form which have taken shape over the past decade, the past quarter-century and the past century, as well as the numerous ways in which scholars conceptualize and theorize these relationships:

1) Examination of a specific case like that of NYC2012 grounds, substantiates and nuances some parts of the theories that have become fundamental to analyzing the Olympics as eminent global mega-event. Without descending into a kind of reflex glorification that turns into inverted parochialism, for me this stems from the simple fact that New York is New York – it is unlike any other American city. We may relate this notion to the perhaps over-generalizing growth “regime” and “machine” theories which
emerge from urban sociology and political economy, which argue that a coalition of powerful, informally-connected political and business elites will tend to all pull together in the same direction to attract mega-events like the Olympics and the economic growth and media visibility associated with them. While recognizing that webs of power relations in most large American cities have opacities and complexities, New York may be said to have more of them, at greater and more varied scales, up to and including the national and global scale. After examining the development of modern sports stadia in historically comparable, yet vastly different cities like Cincinnati, Pittsburgh and Boston, Trumpbour (2007) underlines some unique aspects of New York's sociopolitical character, which problematizes any such theoretically pure views:

Power in New York can be tricky and unpredictable. The trappings of power can be easily visible; easy access to a coveted restaurant table or routine contact with heavy hitters. At other times, power takes on a less visible dimension. Power is often shared in uneasy alliances with competitors, and big plans can take years, if not decades to unfold. It is rare when single individual can exert dramatic change. New York's vast size and complexity conspire to wear down even the most persistent individual. (p. 198)

This is not to say that a city like New York defies the development of a “growth regime”; in fact, such informal power networks may be all the more profound and necessary there. It is only to say that the theoretical battle lines are not easily drawn, nor purposes easily presumed in actuality. In the case of NYC2012, one illuminating example would be the media campaign against the West Side Stadium – the linchpin of New
York's bid, and the crux of its ultimate demise. Competing corporate interests, led by Cablevision, owners of nearby Madison Square Garden, orchestrated a multimillion dollar campaign against what they saw as nearby competition. These particular elites, ostensibly members of an urban growth regime, cast their power on the same dissenting side as anti-stadium activists, who themselves ranged from Hell's Kitchen neighborhood refuseniks to well-heeled Manhattan society. It seems important to highlight – and a case like that of NYC2012 highlights well – that financial, political and symbolic power, for any number of calculated as well as lofty reasons, can be employed on multiple sides of an issue like an Olympic bid.

2) The intertwined legacies of urban development, political power, community activism and mega-events and projects in the New York City area throughout the 20th century, embodied by major events such as the Worlds' Fairs of 1939-40 and 1964, personified by influential figures such as Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs, and associated with the era of large-scale urban renewal and regional planning, slum clearance actions and neighborhood preservation activists, through to the rise of gentrification and high-profile squabbles over new sports stadia. It may be contemplated, for instance, what indirect effect the perennial threats to move popular institutions like the Bronx-based New York Yankees to Manhattan (or worse, New Jersey) in the 1980s and 1990s had on New York's Olympic bid. Neighborhood activists who mounted resistance to Yankees owner George Steinbrenner's idea of building a new stadium on Manhattan's West Side were well-placed to challenge the New York Olympic organizers who later proposed a bigger, more lavish stadium in the same area. There is also, of course, the symbolic and material presence of 9/11, which occurred in the middle of New York's Olympic bid.
campaign. This broad history sprawls. It can only be tackled in so much depth. But just the same it is important to integrate the NYC2012 Olympic bid into the modern history and accumulated attitudes and traditions of New York development and activism if we are to make sense of what was being envisioned, how it was being proposed, and why it ultimately fell on barren ground.

3) An increase in global public awareness of the costs and perils of mega-events such as the Olympics. A little more than thirty years ago, the bidding for the 1984 Summer Olympics attracted only two candidate cities. Since then the right to host the Olympics has become hotly contested. The bidding process stirs up ever more local advocates and antagonists in many candidate cities, complicating the notion that Olympic Games are indubitably a good thing for any city to host. Theories of the mega-event and critical analyses of what really goes into and comes out of a city's Olympic hosting experience have trickled out of the academy and into the consciousnesses and arguments of local activists and ordinary citizens. While mass media may tend to gloss over the bad and trumpet the nobility and splendor of the Olympics and other major events, others – especially activist blogs, grassroots websites and other new media-driven outlets – now offer new forums for citizens to come together, to formulate strategies and arguments, and to build a storehouse of resources and informational material. This may include the dissemination and preservation of insider material not intended for public consumption.

**Why it is Important**

I am keen to examine relationships between space, communication, urbanism, politics, culture and technology. In large part this focus has developed via a personal
conviction that as technology (particularly communications technology) advances, and as globalization spreads both the good and the bad further and faster, as broadly consumption-oriented, individualist ideologies proliferate, and as questions of ecological and cultural survival become more pointed, then place – its use, planning and imaging – becomes a more central human concern. Olympic host city bids stand out as remarkable examples of the use, planning and imaging of place.

One cliché associated with the Olympic Games is that for a couple weeks every four years, the world focuses its attention on a number of obscure or less-popular sports (luge, for example, or the hammer throw), then forgets about them until the next Games roll around. True or not, the same cannot now be said for the host city bidding process itself. 2011 is not an Olympic year, but that hardly seems to make a difference if we look at the news. The extension and distension of such a high-stakes, politically-charged global game as the determination of a host city, which projects a decade or more into the future (and has consequences for decades beyond) results in the Olympics being a constantly topical subject. While some readings of the Games (e.g. that of MacAlloon) emphasize their time-marking, deeply ritualistic character, in another sense the Olympics are now perpetual and unbounded. If the Games-as-competition do end, the Olympics-as-global-urban-event do not; they prove constantly important and influential in various places around the world, including many places which never actually host the Games.

There is a steady flow of stories on almost all imaginable aspects of future Olympic host cities, potential future Olympic host cities, hopeful potential future Olympic host cities. The cycle is continuous, and the ramifications of such massive, globally-attended events,
the fortunes and images riding upon them, no matter where they are, make them intrinsically interesting and worth study.

**Principal Question and Strategic Themes**

It may be that every project of this scale suggests its own methodological approach through the insights that it seeks, but I feel that this is especially true with my work, cutting as it does across disciplines, theories, and temporal scales. This work is interrogatory in nature – driven by questions, and the principal question underlying it all is this:

**How does the NYC2012 Olympic bid book construct New York City as a place which embraces the “Olympic spirit,” via reference to the city’s people, its history, its culture, its icons and landmarks, and its values?**

Scholars have analyzed how mega-events like the Olympics change cities both discursively and materially. When such an event is staged in a city, that city undergoes major changes to its image and its structure. My work looks at how even an unsuccessful Olympic bid can also be analyzed in order to understand how a city is envisioned and re-envisioned by bid producers, who tend to come from and represent that city's powerful interests. Roche's call to (identify) the urban regeneration and re-imaging strategies being used in mega-event proposals and planning guides my work.

In the chapters that follow I will identify and discuss four themes in the NYC2012 bid book, which connect the bid organizers’ vision of New York to the Olympic Games and the Olympic Movement:
**New York City Is Cosmopolitan (Chapter 1):** Like the Olympics, the city is innately diverse and colorful, energized by people and cultures from around the world.

**New York City Is Connected (Chapter 3):** Like the contemporary Olympic Games, New York City is composed of and helps comprise many different networks; it must always keep advancing and developing to maintain its place.

**New York City Is Resurgent and Recapturing Its Traditions (Chapter 4):** Just as the Olympic Games have enjoyed a renaissance over the past thirty years, so New York City has come back from the brink; a New York Olympics would crown that comeback.

**New York City Is Dramatic (Chapter 5):** New York City and the Olympic Games both create and thrive on drama and spectacle – visually striking scenes, thrilling moments, events and places.

Each of these themes will be discussed not in isolation but in the context of the history of the Olympics and the history of New York City, the significant features and evolution of modernism and global culture, mass media, corporate advertising, the era of deindustrializing, entrepreneurial cities and urban place-marketing.

One chapter (Chapter 2) does not deal explicitly with these themes, but discusses the post-1984 Olympic landscape and the background of the New York 2012 bid; who the bid's organizers and backers were; what part of the city’s social and political structure they came from, the context they worked in, the particulars of the bid’s journey through the national and international stages of the bidding process (the bid’s ultimate fate in the international arena, against the backdrop of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the United
States’s invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, will be addressed in the conclusion.)

Understanding the bid’s historical and institutional background, especially the conditions of its production, illuminates perhaps why some elements of the city were highlighted and others were not, why some needs were prioritized as needs and others were downplayed; why the bid turned out the way it did.

**The Bid Book**

Olympic bids are put together with extensive guidance from those who ultimately judge and select from the entries. Among other things, the IOC refers host city candidates to official manuals and questionnaires which detail technical obligations, planning information, procedures and processes, and proven practices. The information to be delivered, and the format it should be delivered in are formally circumscribed in a document running over 250 pages long; as the centerpiece of the official host city candidature file, the bid book is an illustrated text document several hundred pages in length, organized thematically by chapter. The themes set forth by the IOC, which each city's organizing committee must address are:

- **Olympic Games Concept and Legacy**
- **Political and Economic Climate and Structure**
- **Legal Aspects**
- **Customs and Immigration Formalities**
- **Environment and Meteorology**
- **Finance**
- **Marketing**
• Sport and Venues
• Paralympic Games
• Olympic Village
• Medical Services
• Security
• Accommodation
• Transport
• Technology
• Media Operations
• Olympism and Culture

The bid book is a blueprint, a plan, and a response to the needs and demands of the International Olympic Committee as it seeks to put on a premier modern sporting mega-event. It is also a sales brochure aimed at multiple audiences (domestic and international; public, political and corporate), a piece of place-marketing, a work of popular history, and an idealized future vision of a city, viewed (at least in contemporary iterations) through green-tinted, Olympic-branded glasses. It is a text with multiple aims and messages, produced not by a single author but by committee – a committee made up of inside members and outside consultants. It is meant to be many things to many people, and at the same time a coherent, persuasive whole. Therefore it is a rich, if somewhat predictable document; assured and positive in its tone, and middle-of-the-road in its literary style (or lack of.)

I contend that Olympic bid books in general, and the bid book put together by the NYC2012 committee in particular, can be analyzed in many ways. Since the Olympics
are inseparable from politics, markets, culture and society as a whole, since cities now
typically court the Olympics by proxy via private groups who possess their own
deliberate interests, intentions and visions of the future, and since these groups produce
the bid materials, one potentially fruitful analytical approach involves a search for
political-ideologically-, culturally-, and socially-significant themes or motifs embedded
in the bid book.
CHAPTER 1: OLYMPIC HISTORY, OLYPISM AND COSMOPOLITANISM

As he grew accustomed to the great gallery of machines, he began to feel the forty-foot dynamos as a moral force, much as the early Christians felt the Cross. The planet itself seemed less impressive, in its old-fashioned, deliberate, annual or daily revolution, than this huge wheel, revolving within arm’s-length at some vertiginous speed, and barely murmuring,—scarcely humming an audible warning to stand a hair’s-breath further for respect of power,—while it would not wake the baby lying close against its frame. Before the end, one began to pray to it; inherited instinct taught the natural expression of man before silent and infinite force.

Henry Adams, The Education of Henry Adams, 1918

Modernity, the time of Hell.
Walter Benjamin, The Arcades Project

If someone were to ask for the recipe for “becoming Olympic,” I would say the first prerequisite is to be joyful.


In The Age of Exhibitions

From this backward-looking perspective, we peg to the second half of the 19th century and first years of the 20th some abstract, theoretically sweeping -zations and –isms which might have baffled many of those who actually lived through that epoch. The names that we give to those broad trends and processes - industrialization, urbanization, standardization - label key features of what we recognize as our lingering contemporary condition – modernity.

A number of the 20th century’s foremost critics, from Benjamin through Foucault and beyond, surveyed the latter stages of the preceding one in attempts to produce an “archaeology” of this modernity. Our swimming among so many terms, concepts and
readings today (all the while slipping into something next, something “post-“) indicates how much time and energy has been poured into the task. Excavating this archaeological site could not have been simple in decades past. It certainly is not any easier now, yet it seems worthwhile to keep trying. Many countering, overlapping and derivative movements in politics, culture, philosophy and aesthetics that figured in that time are, in various direct or vestigial senses, part of ours, too: against the swelling, soot-belching industrial cities, neo-Romanticism, neo-Classicism, and eventually the suburban pastoral; against unfettered free-market capitalism, socialism, communism and fascism; against superstition and irrationality, Darwinism and science; against Darwinism and positivism, religious revivalism and mysticism; against tribalism, nationalism and against national sovereignty, imperialism; against ignorance and squalor, education, technology and “progress.” Most of all, against tradition and stasis, mobility and change.

Even during that time period, which ran roughly from 1850 to 1914, perceptive observers detected the state of flux and change. What to do about this change - whether to fight, fear, or celebrate it – provoked many different responses in the realms of politics, economics, social theory and organization, technology, and culture and aesthetics. In turn came yet more responses; amidst so much movement and fragmentation, fission and congelation, chaos and reform emerged “invented traditions,” cultural policies, and elephantine events like the great exhibitions. In fact, the period would come to be known as the Age of Exhibitions, the heyday of grandiose events designed to display and promote advances in science, technology, the arts, thought, national ambitions and national consciousness to the masses.
At these events, the material and psychic fermentation of the modern was crystallized and put on public display. Taken collectively, these early expositions, exhibitions and fairs (I will use the terms somewhat interchangeably) are important to us today for a number of reasons. First and foremost, they are important because they mark the origins of a distinctly modern, international public institution, the first (and to the extent that they developed in stages over the course of decades, proto-) “mega-events.”

Mega-events have been defined as:

- large-scale cultural (including commercial and sporting) events which have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance. They are typically organized by variable combinations of national governmental and international non-governmental organizations and thus can be said to be important elements in “official” versions of public culture (Roche, 2000, p. 1).

This definition suggests the mega-event genre’s typical outsized scope and its hybridized official/quasi-official organizational character (with all the political-ideological aims and conflicts that connotes), as well as its deliberate stirring of the senses of drama, populism, and harmonious cosmopolitanism. It marks all these elements as internationally significant. We easily recognize World’s Fairs and Olympic Games, the biggest and most important examples of the mega-event genre, in this description.

By referring to the conscientious development of national cultural policies (“‘official’ versions of public culture”) the above definition also underlines the part that mega-events played in processes taking place through the late 19th century which Hobsbawm has categorized as the inventing of traditions (specifically, those types of
traditions which were “actually invented, constructed and formally instituted.” (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992, p. 1)) The emergence of the mega-event is clearly rooted in time. That time is the mid-to-late 19th century, during which (through the work of cultural policy and policy-makers) many national traditions were cooked up and/or appropriated and fostered, while (to refer to a distinct but often concurrent process described by Benedict Anderson) national communities were imagined into being.

The Mega-Event as Mass Medium

While Hobsbawm is principally concerned with the internal nation-building aspects of the “invention of tradition,” Roche extends it towards the nascent sense of international politics, culture and society in the industrializing world through the fin de siècle. In Roche's view nations (especially those that had just recently come into being) took pains to construct traditions and identifiably national cultures not just for their own sakes, but because they were needed in a new, competitive-cooperative global arena. As nations began bumping up against each other more and more often in realms other than (but not excluding) the battlefield, national identities and traits buttressed by new traditions proved useful, as a way of knowing who others (and one’s self) were and defining what they did.

Roche argues that between the middle of the 19th century and the dawn of television in the middle of the 20th, large-scale expositions (and later, the Olympic Games) were the primary mass medium of cultural globalization. From our perspective, living in a world which is now thoroughly (and irreversibly, it seems) globalized, that point seems especially relevant.
Roche also suggests we consider the mega-event as not just a happening but as a medium. Like many media it has the capacity to structure individual and social senses of both space and time in numerous ways. Modern temporal consciousness has been shaped by several key forces. First and foremost, via an accelerated sense of speed as technology advances; secondly, the assumption of some *telos* that society is moving towards more or less quickly with all our “progress”; and finally, the arrangement of many secular rituals and events in a comprehensible, somewhat orderly pattern. Mega-events may be related to each of these forces but it is enough at the moment to note the large-scale, macro-temporal effects these events had upon the “cultural historical” level (Roche, 2000, p. 5). Early mega-events (namely the great expositions) helped catalyze the creation of an “event ecology,” a “dense social eco-system and social calendar of public cultural events” (Roche, 2000, p. 3) which has only grown more crowded and freighted with meaning as time has passed. Today that social calendar leaves no breathing space or room outside – it orients us constantly, and is tyrannical in its totality.

**Mega-Events Are Intrinsically Modern**

Mega-events are profoundly modern phenomena. It could be put more directly; far from being ancillary by-products, mega-events – particularly expos and the Olympic Games, the most prominent and enduring examples of the genre – were and are intrinsically connected to modern industrial society, originating and developing in concert with it. One might even say the connection is genetic. This image of entwinement (even biological/structuring inseparability) is one I want to hold on to as I contemplate the NYC2012 bid, to keep in mind while analyzing the language and imagery of the bid.
book, and while sorting through the complex, deeply ingrained foundations of the
Olympics’ sentimental appeal as well as the grounds for protest against it.

As modernity developed, and as industrial modernization went about breaking up
unities in 19th-century Western society, major expositions organized and spectacularized
its wares, products and ideologies. The great expositions demonstrated an unprecedented
capacity to engulf space by the hundreds of acres, to consume and configure time by the
month, and to attract people by the millions. Physically speaking, these expositions were
typically marked by signature edifices, though by intent or fate the structures themselves
often vanished into memory and myth after the event. One of the most famous of these
lost structures was the Crystal Palace of the Great Exhibition in London in 1851, which
would be dismantled, relocated, and re-used before being destroyed by fire some decades
later. Another was the White City of Chicago’s Columbian Exposition of 1893; built of
stucco and illuminated by a new invention – electric streetlights - it influenced 20th
century American municipal architecture via Daniel Burnham’s neoclassical design, but
also burned down just a couple years after its expo. There was also the enormous *Gallery
Des Machines* of the Paris Expositions of 1889 and 1899, which likewise mirrored and
affected late industrial-age public architecture, beginning with the soaring iron arches
which were echoed in major train stations across Europe and North America. It was at the
1899 *Paris Exposition Universelle*, under the glass roofs of the *Gallery Des Machines*,
that the American patrician scion Henry Adams considered the powers of the Dynamo
and the Virgin upon the brink of the *fin de siècle*.

The literary accounts quoted above reflects the mixed wonder, anxiety and
uncertainty that great expositions could evoke among the people of the age. Even one
among them as distinguished and articulate as this – a Henry Adams – could be so awed by the cacophonous New as to think of doing (metaphorically, and we imagine a little facetiously) what people do when they are presented with objects of immense, mysterious, sublime power – to bow in prayer before it. Later in the essay, Adams gauged the rapidly accelerating pace at which society was changing in the last days of the 19th century, comparing what he saw in Paris with that at Chicago’s Columbian Exposition of 1893, less than a decade before: “In these seven years man had translated himself into a new universe which had no common scale of measurement with the old.” (Adams, 1918, p. 381)

While the *Gallery Des Machines* was being constructed for the 1889 Paris *Exposition*, another, even brasher expression of modern technology and style was rising above it. In some important senses it was a prototypically modern mega-structure, in that it was not completely connected to its eventual setting (it was originally proposed for the Barcelona exposition of 1888.) Furthermore it was not “monumental” in the eternal sense but instead a temporary icon, built to be demolished upon the expiration of its contract. This, of course, was Gustave Eiffel’s iron-lattice *Beaux-Arts* confection, the Eiffel Tower.

In the *Exposition* summer of 1889, somewhere in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower, a young French aristocrat named Pierre Fredy, Baron de Coubertin organized a conference dedicated to a new idea – mass physical education and international athletic competition. It was the first glimmer of what would become his life’s work and legacy and one of the major international cultural phenomena of the 20th century – the Olympic Movement.
The Olympics: A Relic with Appeal

My work centers on the contemporary Olympics and the case of a failed Olympic bid, not the great expositions and fairs of yesteryear or the tumultuous intellectual climate of the belle époque. Yet I begin this chapter far from New York City at the dawn of the 21st century, glancing instead over the landscape of the Age of Exhibitions because I think it is unwise to consider the Olympic Games and Olympic Movement as sui generis phenomena apart from the international expositions out of which they developed, with which they were at first closely (and unhappily) associated, and which influenced their physical and symbolic form. Nor do I think it is useful to contemplate the mega-event genre (of which expositions and Olympics are the paradigmatic modern examples) without reviewing the social and cultural conditions which acted as its womb.

Some look back at the late 19th century as a time of unprecedented faith in human progress and the anticipated rise of a rational, scientific, progressively perfected society. Simultaneously, no less an archaeologist of the time than Benjamin contemplated it as being hell. Whether the sketch of the period that has been drawn thus far is hellish or not, it is certainly chaotic, unsettled and unsettling. The late 19th century was a welter of competing, conflicting ideas – some more dubious than others from our contemporary perspective. Yet many movements and ideas of that distant, sepia-toned time remain part of our intellectual and physical worlds today, though we sometimes lose sight of that fact. Roche affirms this point: “It is a profound mistake about the nature of popular culture in modernity, to imagine that ‘consumer culture’ and the ‘postmodern culture’ it is associated with somehow emerged ‘ex nihilo’ in the dying decades of the twentieth
We should remain cognizant of this; we are not living in quite the new, post-everything world that some imagine we are, at least not just yet.

In their organization and philosophy the Olympics are in many respects a relic of the late 19th century, which appeals to the 20th and now 21st century. Acknowledging that that dated organization and philosophy remains operational and relevant almost a decade into the new millennium, it would be reasonable to start by going back to that time, to get something of a social-philosophical lay of the land. I am inspired to this approach by the historian of technology Beniger, when he states that the “Control Revolution” and information society are truly rooted not, as commonly perceived, in the 1940s with advances in computer technology and the development of information theory, but decades and even centuries before that. We must take the long view and look further back, in that case and in the case of modern mega-events and the Olympics, too.

It is apparent (sometimes comically so) that the fin de siècle, especially via the great expos emblematic of it, opened up new spaces for various congresses, societies, campaigns and other pomposities dedicated to the manifesting of spirits and ideals, especially among the great and good. That is more or less what happened with a paternalistic, ambitious do-gooder like de Coubertin; beginning with great energy and some gauzy, but deeply-felt social ideals, he leveraged what influence he had to interest a like-minded set of elites and pedagogues, and co-opted and formalized the “Olympic festival” idea that had appeared sporadically in Europe throughout the 19th century, permeating it all with his own concept of Olympism.
The figure of Baron Pierre de Coubertin looms gigantic in the modern Olympic creation myth. Often he is depicted as the far-sighted visionary who revived the ancient Greek games out of whole cloth; like all parts of the Olympic story this part of the mythos is jealously guarded by the literal keepers of the flame. de Coubertin’s voluminous writings on the Olympic movement serve to tell the story too, but only one part of it. The full story is far more complex, interesting and bound to the ideas flowing through the age. de Coubertin’s enthusiasm for such relatively new concepts as mass physical education and international sporting competition, attachment of exercise to moral, pedagogical and cosmopolitan principles, and adoption of ancient Greek aesthetic forms to give life to it all mark him as a man of his times. It may be arguable that he was the “great man” of Olympic establishment myth (seldom as we use that particular term anymore) but he does appear an important, strong-willed one, who had the right connections and sensibilities for the task. He was an impassioned, persistent driving force – and perhaps ultimately the right driving force at the right moment in history for the Olympics to be born.

Biographers point out that one source of de Coubertin’s interest in physical, spiritual and moral fitness was his childhood memories of France’s capitulation during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. Before he had reached the age of thirty, he was presenting himself as a force for social change in France; in his view, French society had become weak, too consumed by logic and too physically soft, too effete, urbane and urban to defend itself, much less lead the world. The root cause of the trouble was in the schools. “For a long time now, I have heard you complaining,” he wrote, “about the
situation imposed on French children. They are being stuffed with knowledge. They are
being turned into walking dictionaries. They are being overworked…” (de Coubertin &
Muller, 2000, p. 51)

In his view, the remedy lay across the English Channel. De Coubertin had
traveled to Britain both literarily and physically from a young age. As a boy he had read
the Victorian-era children’s classic *Tom Brown’s School Days At Rugby*, which depicts,
in contemporary critics’ views, a “distorted image of vigorous English
youths…disporting endlessly on the verdant English athletic fields.” (Lucas, Segrave &
Chu, 1981, p. 22) It made a strong positive impression on the young de Coubertin. Early
in his pedagogical career de Coubertin also wrote an impressionistic analysis of British
public schools, based on his travels to Eton, Harrow, Rugby and other incubators of the
British ruling classes. Rugby’s headmaster between 1828 and 1842, Rev. Thomas
Arnold, had made athletics and games a key element of the school’s curriculum and
extracurricular culture. Britain’s other elite public schools followed, so by the time de
Coubertin made his first journey to England in 1883 organized sports and athletics, as
well as the mores and philosophy supporting their value, had penetrated the British
education system. As a philosophically-inclined educational reformer de Coubertin could
have observed with admiration the spiritual ethos of *mens sana in corpore sana*, while as
a modern French republican he would have noted the utility of an Anglican “muscular
Christianity” in educating, as well as physically, mentally and socially conditioning those
going out to administrate the far-flung British Empire.
Idealism, Hellenism, Olympism

De Coubertin was not only a modernist French patriot but also an idealist, whose own views had been shaped by his privileged, learned upbringing in a world which prized classicism and humanism as both vessels of eternal verities and as character-builders in a progressive age. In that rarefied atmosphere:

The reverence for ancient Greek traditions and thought, revitalized during the era of Humanism and the Renaissance, expressed itself anew with the publication of numerous 18th and 19th century classics. These writers collectively inspired the optimistic and idealistic inclinations of the time. Their “romantic” reaffirmation of the worth and beauty of the human spirit owed much to classical Greek heritage. Like the ancient Greeks, these romantics conceived of human progress in terms of men of commanding physical and intellectual endowments, who through love of letters, art, science and administration, strenuously endeavored to cultivate the soul and the collective human community (Segrave & Chu, 1981, p. 3).

World peace and intercultural harmony were goals that played on de Coubertin’s mind, as was individual self-development. The path to fulfillment of each human being’s potential, and through that to universal peace, was to be traveled via the cultivation of values which by the late 19th century were popularly associated with the ancient Greek world: courage and moral purity, physical prowess, proportion and balance, aesthetic beauty, the disciplined body imbued with spirit.

The idea of a meeting of athletes inspired by the model of the ancient Greek games was not exactly new, either. Scholars have established the existence of local
sporting festivals (some even called “Olympics”) in 19th century Europe and North America, and the use of the word “Olympic” has been traced as far back as medieval times. A recurring sporting festival at Much Wenlock in Shropshire, England was particularly influential on de Coubertin; he visited its founder, William Penney Brookes, in 1890 and later credited Brookes as an inspiration for the revived Games (de Coubertin & Muller, 2000, p. 281). Greek independence in 1829, and the work of (primarily Germanic) archaeologists there had released a wave of Philhellenism across European and American society through the 19th century. The values of classical antiquity were in vogue, and the ancient Olympics took up a place in the public imagination even more so after the German archaeologist Ernst Curtius published articles on his excavations of Greek sites, including the ancient athletic grounds at Olympia in 1875.

De Coubertin’s ideology of Olympism was constructed out of this ungainly mix. The term constructed is important; athletic fervor may have been on the rise throughout Europe and North America, and Philhellenism may have supplied an important current of ideas and images to glue it together, but de Coubertin himself disputed the idea that Olympism was just waiting to spring into being, stating “it was born artificially.” (Lucas, Segrave & Chu, 1981, p. 25) That seems hard to dispute. The striking thing is how de Coubertin’s act of birthing Olympism and the Olympic Movement stands as an active response to the frenetic, topsy-turvy place and time he found himself living in – as compared, for example, to Henry Adams’s passive literary supplication before the dynamo.
Olympism Defined

What, then, is Olympism?

The first Fundamental Principle of Olympism in the latest version of the Olympic Charter, in force as of July 8, 2011, states:

Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example, social responsibility and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles (International Olympic Committee, 2011, p. 10).

This lays out what the Olympic Movement started from and what, in theory, it still goes by today. Preserved in it is the essence of de Coubertin’s thought: vestigial traces of neoclassical humanism; the importance of joy; the steadfast, almost antiquated belief that there could be anything like “universal fundamental ethical principles” and a unified “philosophy of life;” and the uncompromising faith that sports, culture and especially education were coterminous with each other and with a Socratic sense of right-living. This last conception of the properly-ordered modern existence, physical exercise spurring intellectual and moral achievement and vice versa, is especially powerful because of its novelty in the society of the time. Society would change to fit it. This ideal, crystallized and promoted by de Coubertin endured, was seized upon and developed further. A Swiss Olympian, Paul Martin, expanded on the Olympic Motto (“Citius, Altius, Fortius”) in a similar spirit:

Citius: fast not only in the race, but with a quick and vibrant mind, as well.
Altius: higher, not only toward a coveted goal, but also towards the uplifting of the individual.

Fortius: not only more courageous in the struggles on the field of play, but in life, also. (de Coubertin & Muller, 2000, p. 585)

Such a holistic ideal of the well-developed, all-around individual would have been rather idiosyncratic in, say, 1880. But it is something like the norm today – the establishment of physical education and the mass consumption of sports as entertainment being no small part of that. That is certainly a measure of what the Olympic Movement has helped to bring about in society; it also affirms the still slightly provocative idea that some pretexts of contemporary life have a lineage that reaches far back - and that some of those bloodlines have curious, contrived origins themselves.

To our contemporary minds this Olympism may be a quaint if not frankly weird mixture of modern internationalism and Hellenic-inflected moral-aesthetic idealism. It has been vehemently criticized and deemed obsolete, not just in the current age of host city bribery scandals, hypercommercialism and positive drug tests, but for decades – at least since the 1970s. By the early 1980s the editors of an academic anthology on the Olympic were able to state that, “despite the adamance and commitment with which the IOC adheres to its de Coubertinesque principles, the traditional Olympic philosophy has increasingly become viewed as an outdated and consequently redundant conception of athletics.” (Segrave & Chu, 1981, p. xix)

Yet Olympism and the event through which it is made manifest endure. Moreover, for all the hand-wringing done by academics, journalists and activists much of the world still seems to be relatively unjaded about it. When the torch-runner enters the
stadium just before the ceremonial lighting of the Olympic flame, or the victor weeps joyfully atop the medal stand, people watching – millions of them – experience real emotions and meaning. It would be churlish to denigrate and deny this. So why do the Olympics-as-event, and the ideas that it embodies still matter the way they do? Why does the world keep paying attention?

That is a rhetorical question, with no conclusive answer and yet several possible responses. Two such responses come to mind.

**Critical Views**

First, there is the conventional notion that people enjoy watching high-level competitive sports, and the Olympics are the absolute pinnacle of most sports, therefore the Olympics are bound to draw attention from both aficionados and casual fans around the world. The very best athletes will come to give their very best efforts. Were we to ask someone linked to the sports or media industries – an executive or a commentator from one of the major networks – she might give this rationale for the modern global popularity of the Olympics. Nothing is obviously false about such a statement, but there is something inescapably facile and superficial about it if we leave it at that. Why do millions of people take the time and effort to watch Olympic sprinters, gymnasts, hockey and basketball teams, etc.? Especially when, as is often the case, their nation’s athletes are not involved? It is not something innate or prevalent throughout history, and no single authority ever decreed that a society must follow spectator sports, or that a culture must build up around them.
A likely response is that the act of watching competitive sports is culturally constructed and socially determined, and that while people have turned out to watch competitions since the religious-athletic rituals of ancient Greece (thus we cannot say spectatorship is an entirely modern thing) it has been most intensively cultivated as a cultural practice since the mid-to-late 19th century, as part of a developing mass industrial society. This is a central tenet of the sociology of sport, and it makes a somewhat tautological point. The Olympics and other spectator sports are globally popular and meaningful today because the Olympics and other spectator sports – entangled in early industrial society as they were at their respective beginnings – have taught people how to value them and attend to them over the past century and a half. In turn modern society has structured itself in part around and through sporting events and spectatorship, culturally, economically and temporally (to name but a few ways.)

The other, more critical response to the question has to do with the immense political, economic and commercial power that the Olympic Movement and its organizers have come to wield, especially in the past thirty years. The Olympics represent a major economic force at the local, national and global levels; the event is “sold” on the promise of generating enormous amounts of money for the city and nation that hosts it (notwithstanding the infamous financial debacle of the 1976 Montreal Olympics, which took the better part of three decades to pay off.) The extended process of bidding for the right to host the event itself consumes and circulates tens of millions of dollars at sites around the world; the cachet of being a finalist candidate itself is an asset to be publicized and commercialized. I noticed this myself while in Chicago in the fall of 2006; various ads highlighted the city’s designation as official US candidate for the 2016 Summer
Games, or connected this or that corporation with the city’s candidacy. The PR machine swings into action years before the host city is named, much less when the torch is lit. The payoff for the chosen city is the opportunity to reshape its physical form and public image in a dramatic, globally visible and ostensibly profitable way.

Apart from the economics of hosting the event, the various national Olympic commissions and international sports federations that have accreted around the Olympic rings collectively command many billions of dollars, to say nothing of their political, patriotic and sports-related influence, which may be convertible for more liquid assets. The Olympic Games themselves are extremely valuable as media content (in 2003, NBC bid $2.2 billion for the right to broadcast the 2010 Winter and 2012 Summer Olympics Games.) Three weeks of constant worldwide television coverage is just the start; Olympic issues now garner coverage well outside the quadrennial festivities. Even when the Olympic Games are a year or more away, one can detect the slow build-up of both critical and effusive press stories, promotion and images related to the event, leading towards an orgiastic crescendo around the Games themselves. The Olympic brand resides in the highest echelon of global commercial properties; it is equally apparent that when multinational corporations pay vast sums of money to become official partners of the Olympics, they must squeeze every last drop of value out of the association, whenever and wherever they can. Thus the Olympics run year-round, every year.

The upshot is that the Olympics play a significant role in global economics, politics and trade, apart from anything that happens on the field of competition. Even if a large number of people decided by consensus tomorrow that the whole idea of the Olympic Games was obsolete and not worth continuing, the Olympic complex could not
just go away without leaving a huge void in the so-called “real world.” It is worth considering the lengths to which political, economic and commercial actors go to keep the Olympics in this key position, the maintenance of an economic as well as cultural organization that has stabilized and grown over the past century. The event, the images, the symbols such as the rings and the torch, the word Olympic itself all possess useful, malleable power.

A great deal of Olympics-based research and analysis, especially that coming out of the political-economic and neo-Marxist traditions, focuses on what is done with this material and symbolic power. This research tends to focus on the ways this power is used and maintained in service of political and commercial interests. These power games take place behind the scenes, cloaked in the inspiring, near universally-appreciated symbols and ideals of Olympism. In host city bidding scenarios, powerful interests crop up to deliver expert-sounding arguments on the event’s economic benefits. Typical analyses in the critical political-economic tradition look at how the courting of the Olympics (especially in the United States during recent Olympic cycles) is related to urban politics and growth coalitions in a postfederal era, to the cutthroat competition among entrepreneurial cities in a world of jousting, preening global cities and a borderless economy of signs and symbols.

These critical perspectives on the Olympics yield important insights. They show that it is a mistake to consider the Olympics as taking place outside or apart from the “real”, calculating world. It is not merely a sporting event, nor a mass spectacle that takes place on a separate plane of existence. In this age of sports-as-media-content it is not just a TV show. The images and the physiognomies of cities and nations are reshaped via the
Olympic Games. They can be, variously, political, economic, cultural, spatial and ideological instruments. Winners and losers are made. But who among the hundreds of millions in the Olympic audience and in the Olympic host city knows they are even in the game?

That is the question. An older, more vulgar strain of Marxist thought might have tagged all Olympic festivities and competitions as just another opiate of the people, while in more recent decades, “neo-Marxists and the New Left have condemned the Olympic Games as a capitalist and technocratic social phenomenon….Olympism has also been depicted as a bourgeois institution representing the interests of a capitalist and imperialist ideology and distracting the masses from their ‘genuine political aims in class struggle.’” (Segrave & Chu, 1981, p. xix) Underlying much contemporary critical work is the damning assertion that the Olympics is fundamentally about high-level games of power, manipulation and redistribution of resources (as in the case of Olympic-branded, corporate-oriented urban redevelopment). It follows that there must be those who get “played” and manipulated, and those losers – who enjoy the Games, who approve of, hope for, and celebrate the Games – must be us. It has been argued that common pro-Olympic consent is manufactured through a largely supine media, and that by consenting, audiences are duped into being complicit with the power game.

Of these two ways to make sense of the Olympics’ enduring appeal and its very existence, the flaccid, unexamined acceptance of the first approach fails to satisfy, but the all-negating dogmatism of the second lacks something, too. It is difficult to absorb quite so much negation, the bitter pill made even harder to swallow by the easy, sometimes glib juxtaposition of such a cold hard reality with the lofty old ideals of Olympism.
Taking this to its logical extreme (as is done by some critics) the most responsible act is to reject the Olympics completely.

Yet we observe that the Olympics are not rejected, even by many of those who are conscious of the various critiques which have seeped out of academia into the media, activist circles, and the public discourse over the past thirty years. That is one of the issues I will confront as I look at the bid to bring the Olympics to New York City – a city with a vibrant, contentious civic culture and tradition of grassroots activism, especially over the past fifty years in response to the sweeping plans of autocratic master planners like Robert Moses. The NYC2012 bid did not inspire massive waves of popular support across the city (far from it, and that was one major factor in its eventual defeat.) But that does not mean that it had absolutely no popular support and appeal, even among people that (we surmise, through the critical literature) had something to lose. That suggests that there is some inscrutable power at work.

To not account for the Olympics’ intangible appeal – to not take seriously their claim to real cultural resonance – is to be blind to this power and its reasons for being. In this work I intend to be critical of the Olympics, but not to reject the Olympics out of hand. Nor do I want to deliver a simple, condescending judgment upon people whose imaginations are fired by the Olympics, who enjoy the event for all its spectacle and commercial elephantitis – that they are dupes. If our analytical framework cannot come to grips with this, if that intangible ingredient remains beyond our ken, then we may as well think of the bid we are looking at as a cynical hegemonic scheme, and nothing more.

A third reason for the Olympics’ enduring appeal may be articulated – one which, via an awareness of history and culture, acknowledges the very real symbolic and social
value of the Games and Movement. Doing this, I believe, helps us identify the symbolic power that the Olympic movement has attained and maintains. Symbolic power is a key element of the bid package. It is always in the background and often the foreground, too. In the case of this research, much of the symbolic maintenance work is done by the text, images and narrative of the NYC2012 bid book. When the Olympic spirit is invoked in bid presentations (and in charm offensives aimed at the public), when image and text are produced to fix a city with all the symbolic power of the Olympics, what is actually going on? What chords – resonating with ideals of individual aspiration and harmonious society in a modern world - are being played? How does a text like the NYC2012 bid book resonate with and reaffirm ideals – of human development and education, joyous physical exertion, and especially cosmopolitanism – that harken back to de Coubertin's time?

The rest of this chapter addresses these questions.

**A Living Ideology**

When we see New York described as “a city that has embodied the Olympic spirit perhaps more than any other place,” (NYC2012, 2000, p. i) we may consider what this means, what the Olympic spirit and the modern Olympic games are being said to represent, versus their actual history. We might ask; what do the Games themselves embody? Such questions take us to the roots of de Coubertin’s conception of Olympism, as well as the Olympics’ development out of the expo genre and early, ill-fated association with turn-of-the-century expositions, through the fixing and popularization of its unique rites, symbols and practices around the inter-war period, to the point at which
the Olympic Games (along with other international sporting events) superseded the great expositions as preeminent global cultural preoccupation, in line with postwar social shifts and the rise of television. A significant part of this history is the development of the Olympic symbol system – the word Olympic as weighty adjective and lucrative commercial property, the five interlinked Olympic rings, and practices such as the torch procession and torch, whose lighting and extinguishing lends an almost cultic aesthetic element to the already-ritualistic pageantry of the opening and closing ceremonies.

Like many other “invented traditions,” the Olympic Movement has always pretended to timelessness, wearing its Grecian imagery and transcendent rhetoric heavily, starting from the moment that the ancient Olympic stadium was rebuilt for the first modern Games in 1896. It may have been vital for embryonic traditions to appear continuous with romantically-imagined historical precedents; de Coubertin wrote and worked for the Olympic cause with all the righteous assurance of one who possesses Eternal Truths. That element remains in the present age; if it resonated then, why would it not do so now? Looking at things today, we could say that the yearning for a lost golden age, as well as the desire to transcend political and cultural divisions, is no less strong now than it was in the late 19th century.

Yet it is also true that Olympism is a living or fungible ideology. While the conceit of transcendence (if not revelatory truth through international athletic competition) which de Coubertin invoked remains attached to the enterprise in a culturally appealing way, the Olympic Charter (among other constitutive parts of the movement) has been renewed, adapted, and ever so slightly changed over time, allowing for challenges from female athletes (women were explicitly barred from competition in
the first Olympics, and their participation was severely limited for many decades), from
the proletariat (a series of Workers’ Games, critical of the classism of the Olympic
movement, took place in the 1920s and 1930s), from professionalism, from
commercialization, from controversy, and from geopolitical turmoil.

A small but telling example of this is seen in the modern Olympic Charter, which
today asserts that “the practice of sport is a human right,” that every individual should be
allowed to participate “without discrimination of any kind.” (International Olympic
Committee, 2011) The language, if not the sentiment, seems expressly contemporary
(likely the tortured product of endlessly hashed-out semantics by a cabal of Olympic
insiders.) Such shifts must be made to stay relevant. The overall changes may be slight,
and Olympism as an ideology may be basically the same as always, but that is just it.
Organizations such as the International Olympic Committee are expected to be stodgy
and lumbering in such a way, but they cannot be totally static.

Others in the field of Olympic studies are better able to chronicle the historical
course-corrections of the movement and the glacial shifts of the ideology since the 1890s.
It is enough to note that while Olympism and the Olympic movement were forged out of
a motley combination of conservative and reformist values, it did not and has not
completely ossified. If it had, it likely would have not have attained the importance it did
through the modern age, much less retained its popular appeal today.

**Time and Development**

Time is a key factor, because both the Olympics and modern society have
developed in and over the course of time. The passing of time has allowed for
incremental change and development. The index of de Coubertin’s collected writings indicates how the Olympic Movement accumulated the formality of a secular cult or religion (as was his intention); there are entries for, among other things: the Olympic anthem, art, ceremonies, Charter, competitions, Congress, Constitution, Diploma, Flag, Flame, medal, Motto, Movement, Museum, Oath, Ode, philosophy, principles, program, protocol, Rings, Senate, site, spirit, stadium, symbols, torch, tribunal and values.

But that is not to say that all the developments of the Olympic complex have emerged evenly and continuously. Many of these symbols, documents and practices trace their origins to the Olympic Movement’s earliest years, when de Coubertin was most prominent in the movement. Others came slightly later, notably in the period between the two World Wars. The Olympic Flag bearing the now-iconic interlinked rings was conceived by de Coubertin himself in 1914 and debuted, along with the Olympic Oath and the practice of releasing doves at the first Games after World War I in Antwerp in 1920. Such parts of the Olympic complex that originated inside the movement – borne out of the minds of de Coubertin and the original International Olympic Committee – would be supplemented by those which emerged through a process also seen as the exposition genre grew, in which “ceremonial structures and practices (were) practiced by host nations but significantly standardized through competitive modeling and emulation.” (Roche, 2000, p. 98) In other words each iteration of the Olympic Games, especially in the first few decades of the century up to the start of World War II, meant the addition of new rites and symbols as a form of nationalistic drum-beating, which the next host in turn felt compelled to reproduce and embellish. Rather than evanescing away afterwards,
these were internalized and standardized until the event was largely fixed in the form we know it today.

The 1936 Berlin Olympics are the prototypical example of this process and its zenith. Throughout the inter-war period in which the Berlin games took place, modern society had been moving into what has been described as the supernationalist era of internationalism (Roche, 2000, p. 21), exemplified by the neo-imperialist totalitarian regimes in Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany. This movement towards this supernationalism was followed, fueled and made globally visible by:

…a wave of new communication and transport technologies, cultural industries and institutions connected with, for instance, radio, film, and cars…. [which] began to have a major impact on the structures and processes of modern societies in the social, economic and political reconstruction after the First World War. This wave of cultural technology offered supernational states new forms and levels of propaganda and surveillance. (Roche, 2000, p. 23)

Mega-events such as expositions (their primacy then beginning to wane) and the Olympics accomplished the same things to some degree. Expositions and the early Olympics had long benefited from official and unofficial forms of state support and sponsorship, with a reciprocal ideological (if not always financial) payoff for the host. The aggressive, preening ever-presence of Nazi supernationalism, and the incursion of media technology like radio, film and closed circuit television is what marks this event as especially significant. In 1936, the Olympics took a step up as a mediated, politicized event. It would never retreat. Hitler and his government understood full well that the
Olympics was now in a prominent position upon a global nexus of politics and public image; the hosts of the Games were put in the role of co-producers, developing and elevating this position, ostensibly to the benefit of the IOC and the host country. The event’s Nazi-connected organizers were particularly well-suited for the task. Few regimes devoted as much attention to image and symbol (and the mass-mediation of images and symbols) as did Hitler’s Germany. The Olympic movement’s guardians – the self-selected, cobwebbed clique of fin de siècle internationalists in the IOC – were by contrast naively or negligently lost as to their responsibilities. (Lucas, Segrave & Chu, 1981, p. 134) Roche comments that, despite rising international protests, “the IOC collaborated with the Nazi government in allowing what was predictably a major Nazi propaganda exercise to be staged, an event which would use and abuse the good name and reputation of the Olympic movement and its ideals.” (Roche, 2000, p. 119) Among the now-familiar features that debuted at the Nazi-conceived 1936 Games: the torch relay procession from Olympia to the host site, a purpose-built Olympic Village in bucolic surroundings, an immense (100,000+ capacity) stadium and complex of athletic facilities, and Speer’s searchlight-based “light architecture” spectacles, which presaged the expensive, special-effects-driven festivities now common around the Games. Following this final Olympiad before the outbreak of World War II, most of the event and the Movement’s symbolic and dramatological concrete was finally set. In terms of ritual, imagery and scale, the Olympic Games more closely resembled the event we know today thanks to Berlin.

There is something more profound to consider here, beyond the symbolic legacy of the Berlin Games. That is how these Games marked a phase shift in the evolution of the Olympics, as a threshold of sorts between the modernism they emerged from and the
postmodernism they would gravitate towards, especially after the second World War. Mass media were a primary factor. The facilities built in Berlin included a large media center for broadcasters and journalists – an innovation that is requisite now at all Olympic cities for the thousands of media personnel in attendance. Over 150,000 people in Berlin watched events on closed-circuit television, and the worldwide radio audience was estimated to be the largest ever to that point. Perhaps most infamously, the entire event was made iconic through Leni Riefenstahl’s fascist-tinged hymn to Olympic sport and the cult of the physique, *Olympia*. 1936 is the moment at which the Olympics became not just an international sporting competition or a mass festival, but a global media event.

It is only more so today. Real’s take on the contemporary Olympics as global media event holds the audience’s experience of the Olympics as myth/ritual up against the simultaneous experiencing of it as a consumption-oriented, postmodern media object – a confusing and complicated juxtaposition both then and now. Should we Olympic viewers soar on the transcendent, inspiring universalism of Olympism, its rituals and the athletic triumphs, or approach the whole thing actively, critically, negotiating the symbols and activities like we would any other program? We may do both at once. Of Real's analysis, Roche (2000) writes:

> When watching Olympic TV we participate as sports fans, or as otherwise involved and concerned viewers, both by behaving in patterned ways and also being receptive to and active interpreters of the meanings and symbols communicated in the broadcast. (Real) regards sport culture and sport fandom in general in contemporary Western society as providing important forms and occasions, both through live events and TV
spectatorship, through which many people, particularly males, attribute meaning to their lives. (p. 166)

A tension exists between “behaving in patterned ways,” according to ritual, and being active interpreters, and (it follows) consumers; the contemporary Olympic viewing experience is rife with tension and ambiguity. Berlin 1936 stands as a fulcrum, with the essence of de Coubertin’s 19th century Olympism on one side. The other, the side that tipped, led eventually to the late 20th century Olympism of Samaranch and Ueberroth, which are in effect the Olympics of today.

The Olympics and International Public Culture

De Coubertin had sought to inculcate athletic enthusiasm in his native France, spurred by a sense of patriotic (if not nationalist) duty. He realized, however, that it stood a better chance of catching on if it had an international character – a stance befitting a well-traveled young European possessed of a kind of enlightened cosmopolitanism. How did this cosmopolitan sense fit with the movement towards nationalism and tradition-inventing prevalent in that era – especially in a fledgling Third Republic France seeking stability – and how does it fit the world today?

In both cases, it fits very well. Nationalism does not make much sense outside the context of relationships between nations. The whole point of forging a distinct self-identity is that there is an us and a them to be distinguished. The more encounters there are between nations, the more necessary (and conscientiously manufactured through cultural policy-making) these distinctions become. Internationalism, or the political consciousness of the existence of other nations, is part and parcel of nationalism. An
international public culture was coming to be in the spaces created by events like the great expositions of the late nineteenth century. This culture was composed of four distinct elements:

– Public images of divers subordinate nationalities, ethnicities or religious groups held within any given nation…

– National publics’ images of and attitudes to other nations” (“foreigners,” difference, etc…)

– Images of “international society” and transnational universalistic principles and practices (such as human rights) held by the members of any given national public as part of their conception of their own civil society and public sphere…

– The sphere in which national governments foreign policies, intergovernmental organizations, international non-governmental organizations, and multinational capitalism corporations operate, particularly with respect to culture and communications...(Roche, 2000, p. 21)

Such a context of widespread, individual/societal national/international intra- and interactions, leading on to more complex international political and social structures, bloomed in the late 19th century and have been evolving ever since. Roche (2000) states that:

There are three forms of internationalism (or from another perspective, forms of globalism) which have occurred over time since the nineteenth century and which mega-events have been strongly connected up with and
expressed. These are liberal-imperialist international society, supernationalist international society and global society. The three forms of internationalization can be conceived as successive waves or layers, with the contemporary period being mainly influenced by the growth of global society, but also continuing to be influenced by liberal-imperialism...and also by supernationalism (p. 21).

The steady evolution of these forms of internationalism between the fin de siècle and today is very much the point. The structures and events of international society in a world dotted with empires and in the throes of industrialization and democratization should look very different from those visible in a digitally mediated, technologically advanced 21st century world, and they do. Particular versions of mega-events like World’s Fairs and later the Olympics were colored by the internationalism in place at the time (imperialism had been a foundational theme in the British and French expos of the 1850s and 1860s, only to become “an even more important theme in the expos of the 1880s and 1890s and thereafter” (Roche, 2000, p. 23). Some illustrative, appalling examples among many are the “native villages” of African and Asian colonial subjects living on-site and on display at the 1889 Paris Exposition.) Equally importantly, these events played a sizable role in the long journey from one form of internationalism to the other – not least because, as stated above, we consider mega-events to be media. On the individual, experiential level, to consume and take part in this “international public culture” is to be cosmopolitan.

What connections were there between the first, liberal-imperial form of internationalism developing in the rapidly industrializing 19th century European society
that de Coubertin came of age in, and the figure he himself was, the cosmopolitan ideas he held and brought to bear on the Olympic Movement? Though born of an aristocratic, royalist family de Coubertin was a modern, staunchly Republican Frenchman, “with one foot firmly planted in the closing days of the nineteenth century, the other in the earliest days of the twentieth.” (de Coubertin, Rioux & Muller, 2000, p. 23) Far from making him a stateless citizen of the world, his cosmopolitanism revealed a patriotic concern with the French nation’s welfare in a modernizing world. de Coubertin was motivated to keep France in the first rank of nations, as a model of modern civilization. This could not be done by withdrawing into the past. By improving herself, France could lead the world forward in a humanistic direction.

It is important to reiterate that de Coubertin’s standpoint was that of a pedagogue, that education – not to be confused with mere schooling – was the prism through which he saw the world (tangentially, the same could be said of Henry Adams.) de Coubertin had established ideas of education’s social and cultural role in the nation and in international society; this educative element is impossible to extract from his Olympism and from the Olympic Movement. His role was that of reformer, seizing upon his native country’s faults in developing its youth. In his early study of the English education system he wrote:

What I admire in our neighbors, too, is that they have remained true to their traditions. They understand them, and they are laying the groundwork for respect of those traditions by future generations. To the contrary, it is possible for a people, deceived, lost, blindly obeying some current of false ideas, to misunderstand its own nature, its destiny, its
needs….French education is not the art of making Frenchmen. In any case, it is not the art of making men, for men do not consist solely of an intelligence, and we act as though that were the case. (de Coubertin & Muller, 2000, p. 137)

For all that is modern and reformist about de Coubertin’s thought (note the argument that “men do not consist solely of an intelligence,” and the implicit call to change that attitude), here we also notice the value placed on concepts like tradition and the very existence of a people connected to its nation, not to mention the nebulous quasi-Hegelian talk of a current of ideas, national nature and destiny. The 19th century was still present in de Coubertin’s thought, and would never go away completely.

**Exhibitions Fade and the Olympics Rise**

The Olympics would supersede the other paradigmatic form of mega-event – the exposition – and eventually usurp the global consumer culture that expos had cultivated and spurred on through their heyday. The seed of the Olympic movement had been planted at an exposition, and the first Olympic Games took place in Athens in 1896, in the heart of the age of expositions. de Coubertin was an exposition enthusiast; MacAlloon has delineated some of the significant links between the expositions and the development of the Olympic movement, stylistically, ideologically and dramatologically. De Coubertin was “seduced by the exposition tradition,” (MacAlloon, 1981, p. 138) with his experience at the 1889 Exposition Universelle being especially influential on the future form of the Games. Of the symbol-laden opening of that expo, which de Coubertin attended:
Many of their elements were to reappear in the opening ceremonies of the modern Olympic Games, most notably the entry procession (though of athletes and athletic officials, not politicians and soldiers), the flag raising and anthems, and the declaration of opening by the head of state of the host nation….The 1889 exposition provided de Coubertin with his first experience of athletic games appended to an international festival/spectacle, devoted to the progress of science, art and industry, in which new symbols and rituals, for all of their “inventedness,” excited a sense of history such as no museum or book ever could. (MacAlloon, 1981, p. 137)

The second and third Olympic Games, in 1900 in Paris, and in 1904 in St. Louis, were both held in conjunction with expositions. Conjunction is an overstatement, as the logistical, political and personal strains of grafting the two incompatible mega-events together nearly strangled the fledgling Olympic movement in its cradle. Expos and the Olympics would diverge following 1908 – a somewhat more functional pairing of Olympic and expo events in London – and forever after. The Olympics have since risen to global preeminence while expositions have fallen by the wayside, the last truly great World’s Fairs retreating into the distant past.

Earlier I stated that mega-events such as expositions and the Olympics are both profoundly modern events, underlining their relationship to the specter of the modern, to “processes of homogenization and massification connected with the building of nation-states and nationally and imperially-based industrial capitalist economies as work-based societies.” (Roche, 2000, p. 66) However, as we think of it now, they tend instead toward
the postmodern, in line with the “processes of individualization and de-massification connected with the late twentieth-century reconstruction of the state and capitalism, towards multi-tiered political and regulatory institutions, information and services-based economies, oriented to consumption and animated by global and technological factors and forces.” (Roche, 2000, p. 66) Of the two paradigmatic types of mega-event, the Olympics today remain globally significant and popular (if not unconflicted) while contemporary expositions are something of a footnote. The reversal of order of prominence between the Olympics and expositions from that at the height of modernity is telling. The question this leaves us with is less “why were Olympics able to weather and adapt to postmodernity when expos could not?” and more “in the terms of cultural theory, what are the key characteristics of the Olympic event in a postmodern, global-consumerist age?”

**Touristic Consumerism and the Fabrication of Uniqueness**

There are three characteristics worth pointing out; media, tourism, and a hybridization of the two – what Roche calls “touristic consumerism”. The three are distinct but interrelated, and those interrelations are the important part. The Olympics, like all of the sports and leisure industry they are a part of, are linked symbiotically to the multibillion-dollar media and tourism industries. Already we are familiar with the idea of Olympics-as-media-event and lucrative media property in a world of instantaneous, ubiquitous digital communications. We also can think of the mega-event in general, and the Olympics specifically as a key node on a global calendar and map of tourist events, a way to orient ourselves culturally to specific places-in-time which will serve up
something predictably extraordinary. This is what it means to live in an “event ecology”; flitting from happening to happening, whether it be physical (i.e. the cultural traveler doing the rounds of summer European music and theater festivals) or virtual and mediated (the sports fan, organizing his life from football season to basketball tournament to baseball season via television). Ultimately, the dialectic relationship at work between media and tourism – time/space compressing media technologies vs. localized, time-specific events one “has to be there” for – is far less paradoxical than it might seem. “We, as touristic consumers, typically desire and address ourselves to the specificity of particular places, times and related experiences.” (Roche, 2000, p. 26) The closer the world gets through media, tourism and transnational corporate growth, the more important the uniqueness of places and events becomes.

The media and tourism industries both fabricate that uniqueness; mega-events are an excellent raw material for this fabrication process, and the Olympics among the most precious of such materials. Despite competing for the same consumers and their money, media and tourism are not at cross purposes but rather cooperative, or two sides of the same coin; media generates information and images from localized events then disseminates them widely in order to gain, while tourism draws people and money towards specific places at given times.

Partaking in and fueling both processes are touristic consumers. Touristic consumerism is the way in which “mass publics in the advanced societies both routinely travel the world in search of escapist pleasure and (occasionally) exotic difference, and also, when not touring, consume media images and goods and services evocative of touristic hedonism.” (Roche, 2000, p. 26) Nearly all of us in industrialized societies, as
well as many outside, are in some respect touristic consumers; technological and cultural shifts keep giving us more and more dazzlingly complex ways to live that way, to seek out and enjoy novelty, difference, spectacle and pleasure.

Such assertions help clarify the role of mega-events (especially the Olympic Games) in contemporary global society and help us understand in yet another way how the Olympics (and other mega-events) have insinuated themselves in contemporary society. Beginning in the 19th century, visitors to mega-events such as expositions, “whether or not they actually bought anything substantial, were exposed to a powerful new consumerist world-view, that is to the concept and potential pleasures of a life filled with an endless variety and supply of buyable commodities.” (Roche, 2000, p. 69) The Olympics have taken up that consumerist world-view, benefit from it and reinforce it continuously. Olympic spectators and viewers “buy in” to a host city – not simply in the economic sense, but also in the sense that they encounter, consume and refract the symbols, images, and rhetorical identity of an city aspiring to be Olympic.

Cities bidding to host the Games further fuel this cycle when they resort to lofty Olympian rhetoric while discursively constructing and presenting their cities to the IOC. Less interesting to us are the (relatively few) instances in which such Olympic rhetoric is put in a naked, unadorned way in bid materials such as the NYC2012 bid book; the bid book is written in the language of marketers for the consumption of a diverse audience of event organizers, press and the public, not by and for Olympic theorists and historians. But themes, images and language that resonate with the history and philosophy of the Olympics are there all the same, like the nine-tenths of the iceberg beneath the surface.
Often the assertions are just below the waterline, easily visible to those who look. In the NYC2012 bid book we find, for example, statements such as these:

NYC2012 is committed to using the twelve years leading up to the Games, beginning with the bid process, to promote youth development through sport and education initiatives (NYC2012, 2000, p. 11:10).

A major Olympic legacy will be the creation of youth elite sports training programs (NYC2012, 2000, p. 11:11.)

These statements express a promise to make a New York Olympics part of a long-term social/educational effort, invoking Olympism's roots in pedagogy and youth development through sport, descended from 19th century notions of moral uplift through physical exertion.

We also read that New York is “a gateway to the nation and a city of immigrants,” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 3:i) that the city:

...is not merely an urban center but a magnet for dreams, a place where people from around the world come to realize their ambitions, remake themselves, and fashion a life out of desire and determination (NYC2012, 2000, p. 11:i).

Such statements fabricate and articulate New York's uniqueness among American cities and global cities. It is saying that New York's singularity is based not just in its geography, history, cultural diversity or economic vitality. Rather, the intrinsic nature of the city itself is an attractor or “magnet for dreams,” so powerful that people the world over uproot their everyday lives to pursue it. The character of New York overlaps the
character of the Olympics themselves; determination, sacrifice, aspiration, joy in effort, self-transformation among the key shared traits.

New York's innate character (as NYC2012 depicts it) is also steeped in internationalism and cosmopolitanism, in the transcending (but not elimination) of national borders, and in the fostering of harmony between peoples and nations.

In the years leading up to 2012, New York will again apply the same energy and commitment (as it did to find a site for the United Nations in 1946) to bringing the world together (NYC2012, 2000, p. 2:30).

The traditional flag-raising for each country will take place against the symbolic backdrop of the UN...a reminder of the power of sport to transcend borders and promote international harmony. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 11:8).

Billions worldwide will be inspired by the sight of two great international institutions – the UN and the Olympic Games – saluting each other from across the river (NYC2012, 2000, p. 9:10).

An IOC session at the UN would represent a historic coming-together of the two leading international institutions – the UN and the Olympic Movement – dedicated to promoting peace and goodwill among nations (NYC2012, 2000, p. 11:8).

The Olympic Games’ scope and scale at various points in history has been determined by the state of modernity and society at that time, simultaneously influencing and spurring on the progress of international society and popular culture. It seems noteworthy that NYC2012 invokes New York's cosmopolitan character with repeated references to the United Nations, an institution that (like the Olympics) gestated in,
existed through and bears the traces of the 20th century's three different modes of
globalism (liberal-imperial international society, supernationalist international society
and global society.) The United Nations has sought to mediate internationalism through
politics, and the Olympics through sport; by the end of the 20th century both institutions
possessed global power and standing which was paralleled by criticism and questioning
of their mission's efficacy upon a shifting international playing field.

**The Cultural Power of the Olympics**

The objective of this chapter has been to contemplate the cultural power that the
Olympics possess today and how that power endures. It is based on a sense that mega-
events in general and the Olympics in particular are embedded deep in modern global
society. The arc-like relationship between the mega-event genre and modern society is a
sort of conceptual umbrella over the more specific development of the Olympics through
the 20th century, which in turn backgrounds New York's bid for the Olympics at the
dawn of the 21st century. The history of the Olympic Games and the philosophical roots
of Olympism enable insights into the appeals that suitors like the NYC2012 organizers
make in their bids; likewise, appeals made in bid materials such as the NYC2012 bid
book resonate with and reflect – sometimes overtly, but often subtly – the cultural,
political and philosophical principles and roots of Olympism.
CHAPTER 2: THE POST-1980 OLYMPIC LANDSCAPE

Crisis, Renaissance, Corruption and Reform

Analyzing New York City's bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games in-depth necessitates knowing a little about the Olympic Movement's developments and transformations over the past thirty years. Where the Olympics stand today as a sporting and cultural institution, as a media property, and as a prize to be won by cities is very different from where they stood before Juan Antonio Samaranch was voted head of the IOC in 1980. During this time period major changes have occurred which may very well have saved the Olympics, but surely altered the way they are awarded to cities, and presented and promoted within and outside Olympic cycles. Among these were changes in the way the international and the national Olympic committees are organized and funded, vast increases in the sums paid by broadcasters to air the Games and by corporations to be associated with them, and a stronger focus on the marketing and branding of the Olympic Movement itself, not only during the three weeks of competition but throughout the four years between Olympiads.

Key to this renaissance were the three Olympic Games that took place on American soil during this time period; the Los Angeles Summer Games of 1984, which successfully introduced a new paradigm of privatization, commercialism and spectacle to the Olympic Movement; the 1996 Atlanta Summer Olympics, where unrestrained greed aroused contempt from media and observers and appalled the IOC itself, renewing its attention on the cohesion between city governments, local organizers and Olympic
Movement, and the Salt Lake City Winter Olympics of 2002, which was less notable for its eventual, successful hosting of the games than for the bribery scandal surrounding its bid and the IOC. That highly-publicized scandal, which threatened to cripple the Olympics yet again, also provoked some important changes in the bidding process which were in force by the time New York City put forward its bid – among them a prohibition against IOC members visiting host city candidates as part of the selection process. Such visits, conventional before the Salt Lake City scandal, had proven too tempting an opportunity for a gaudy inter-city arms race of lavish treatment, if not bribes in the form of gifts and inducements. This chain of events offers food for thought. For prospective host cities, one significant byproduct of this new prohibition would be the increased importance of the bid book and other media such as video presentations to conceptualize and enliven their campaigns, to “sell” their cities. From my standpoint, the intensified use of media materials by host city bidders post-SLC offers further support and mitigation for my analysis here, if any were needed.

The primary point is that host city bids do not advance through a vacuum, nor are bid books crafted in one. There is an established procedure – formalized, but subject to change – that prospective host cities must submit to in order to be considered. Recognizing major historical, economic, social and institutional circumstances that bids like the NYC2012 bid circulate in – what we might call the landscape of contemporary Olympic bidding – helps us understand both the format and the content of those bids. In this chapter I will attempt a concise survey of the key features of this landscape, in order to cast some light on the NYC2012 bid that emerged upon it.
From Nadir To Los Angeles

The entire Olympic Movement lurched from crisis to crisis through the 1970s, and by the end of the decade it teetered on the brink of extinction. The Munich Olympics of 1972 had been marred by the assassination of 11 members of the Israeli Olympic team by Palestinian terrorists, while the 1976 Montreal Games were beset by both financial calamity (three decades passed before debts the city incurred by hosting the Olympics were paid off) and the first boycott in the history of the Games, led by African nations in a protest against competing nations' dealings with the apartheid regime in South Africa. Denver originally won the right to host the 1976 Winter Olympics, only to withdraw their bid after voters rejected a bond issue amid mounting costs – indicating the imbalance between the price for hosting the Games and their real or perceived benefits. The 1980 Moscow Olympics, boycotted by close to 50 nations in a United States-led protest against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, was the infamous nadir of the Olympic Movement, and called into question both the feasibility and the rationale for its continued existence.

As Michael Payne (2006), the former marketing director for the IOC stated:

It is difficult, today, to fully appreciate quite how close the world came to losing the Olympics in the early 1980s. With the world's greatest cities now falling over themselves to host the games; with media empires paying billions of dollars for the right to televise the event; and a roster of the world's most prestigious companies lining up to associate themselves with the Olympics, it is easy to forget that twenty five years ago, one of the great icons of global civilisation was very nearly lost due to lack of funding, political interference, and a general lack of interest. (p. 3)
Coming at this crucial and precarious point in Olympic history, the 1984 Summer Games returned to southern California, where they had been held once before, in 1932. Los Angeles, whose bid to host the 1980 Games had lost to Moscow, was awarded the 1984 Games in large part because no one else wanted them. Only Teheran displayed any interest in mounting a rival bid, and it too declined to do so in the end. The lack of competition meant that the Los Angeles organizers, led by corporate executive Peter Ueberroth, could dictate terms to the IOC on the funding and management of the Games without fearing much resistance. Los Angeles would be the first privately-organized and funded Olympic Games, partly by design but also out of necessity; the people of Los Angeles voted overwhelmingly against public funding of the Games. (Payne, 2006, p. 20)

The Los Angeles Games were the first entrepreneurial Olympics, built around some of the precepts of the “entrepreneurial city” and of “public-private partnerships,” which have become standard in the urban discourse of recent times. In the context of the changing paradigm of urban politics, specifically the Reagan-era defunding of inner cities and the rise of “growth regimes” as influential powers in cities, this makes much sense; mega-events on the scale of the Olympics were unlikely to be adequately funded by public means alone, least of all in a city still physically and socially scarred by violent riots of the late 1960s, and also gripped by the torpor affecting American metropolises through the 1970s and early 1980s. It appears that this period in US urban politics – the age of the urban growth regime – is coterminous with the renaissance of the Olympics-as-global-event. Only a private, unelected coalition informally comprised of local business and political figures would have the clout, capital, and synergistic corporate and media
connections to bring the Olympics off in such a large-scale, spectacular fashion – and that was called for if the Olympics were to be rejuvenated.

The linking of entrepreneurial-city politics/ideology with an Olympic Movement in flux may be framed in stronger, more direct terms than *coterminous*. Terms like *necessary* and *symbiotic* come to mind. Two factors in particular drive cities to pursue a mega-event strategy for development and renewal; “the first is the existence of an established growth regime in the city: the second is the desire to create or change the city’s image.” (Burbank, Andranovich & Heying, 2001, p. 7) Los Angeles in the early 1980s possessed both the growth regime and the desire, on the part of its urban elite, to strategically re-shape its image. The Olympics provided a ready vehicle for the strategy.

Divorcing the host city organization efforts from the city's political leadership (at least formally) and thus from public oversight had several important effects before and after the actual event. It gave the private Olympic organizers somewhat free reign to develop the event as they desired, unconstrained by the availability of public money or by fear of an unpredictable public will which may be converted into disenchanted voters and snuffed-out political careers; it enabled government officials to distance themselves from unpopular aspects of the bid, while basking in the reflected glory of the Games' success, if and when it came. And of course, in the long run the financial and operational success of the LA Olympics provided a new model for future prospective host cities. The genie of private, less-fettered Olympic organization came out of the bottle for good.

The LA Games were showcased to American and global audiences on a grand scale, taking advantage of its siting in a major world entertainment capital, home to an massive creative-artistic industry, within a region and a nation accustomed to melding the
corporate and the cultural through mass media – and a city that has historically been “a booster's paradise.” (Burbank, Andranovich & Heying, 2001, p. 58) Before the Games had even started, the torch relay – a Olympic tradition started by the Nazi organizers of the Berlin Games – was dramatized and turned into a media-friendly, celebrity-driven, cross-country spectacle by the LA organizers in concert with commercial sponsor AT&T.

United States TV broadcasting rights (by far the most lucrative rights package out of all the television markets worldwide) had been sold to ABC for a then-record $225 million, setting the stage for subsequent leaps in rights fees and a more intensive commingling of the interests of broadcasters and Olympic organizers. With hundreds of millions of dollars now on the line, networks like ABC and later NBC sought to push the envelope over this and subsequent Olympiads, squeezing every ounce of benefit out of their Olympic coverage and associations, thus turning it into a more spectacular and long-lived media event. Even without Eastern Bloc participation, the LA Olympics garnered record television ratings and took in half of the total advertising money spent on sports on US television in 1984. (Payne, 2006, p. 32)

Unlike some later Olympic efforts, the LA organizers did not embark on a sweeping campaign to build all new stadia and amenities, to reconfigure whole swathes of the city in the process of staging the Games. Most of the events were held in pre-existing facilities such as Los Angeles Coliseum (the only stadium to host the ceremonies of two Summer Games) and Dodger Stadium. Those facilities that were built especially for the Games, such as the Velodrome and the Swim Stadium, were funded not by Angelenos' taxes and municipal bonds but by corporate sponsors such as 7-11 and
McDonald's, in return for ample promotional opportunities and the public relations benefit that comes from looking like a patriotic benefactor.

Despite the uncertainty surrounding this new model of local organization, the shambolic recent history of Olympic host city financing (exemplified by the notorious Montreal debts and unknown, but much-speculated-upon Moscow debts), and the Soviet-led boycott that stripped the event of competitors and major East-vs-West storylines, the Los Angeles Olympics finished with a $250 million surplus. Its success pulled the event and the whole Olympic Movement out of its nessedive, stimulated new enthusiasm for bidding to host among cities and created a new template for how the Games would be organized, managed and presented. For his part, Ueberroth rose to national prominence, first being named *Time* magazine's Man Of The Year for 1984, then becoming commissioner of Major League Baseball until the end of the 1980s. The Olympics had neared rock bottom – symbolic and financial bankruptcy – only a few years before in Moscow. But after the success of the 1984 Los Angeles Games the Olympics were reborn as the preferred mega-event for cities in the U.S. and other parts of the world. The power of the Olympics’ global image (carefully tended by a newly brand-conscious Olympic executives) appealed to corporate sponsors and broadcasters, while leaders in “entrepreneurial” cities foresaw the Games’ potential as a catalyst for urban change.

**Modernizing the Olympic Movement**

Riding this positive momentum, throughout the second half of the 1980s and into the 1990s Samaranch and his executive team worked to stabilize and modernize the Olympic Movement on several fronts.
First, they sought to nullify the threat of future mass boycotts and politicization of the Olympics, while simultaneously raising the moral and political stature of the Olympic Movement so that it, and the Games especially, might be regarded by the global public and governments alike as being above the geopolitical and ideological fray. This meant that Samaranch had to position himself not just as a global sports executive, the ceremonial head of a quadrennial track meet, but as a diplomatic representative of global sport – a world leader in his own right, able to speak with heads of state on a collegial level. To do so, Samaranch embarked on an extended charm offensive, meeting with leaders of all the Olympic countries around the world. He framed the Olympics as a globally-loved institution of peaceful competition – with him as its representative, of course – and sought to convince them that politicizing the event could only have negative consequences for their country's global standing, as well as threaten the Games themselves. By forging personal connections and reinforcing the Olympics' significance as a global cultural force in need of their support, Samaranch “calculated that next time there was a crisis he might be able to speak to world leaders in person, or enlist their support before the situation escalated.” (Payne, 2006, p. 15)

At the same time, the IOC moved to separate the national organizations that put together the various national Olympic teams from government control. The boycotts of 1980 and 1984 occurred in part because the national Olympic committees (NOCs) of many nations were funded by, if not explicitly controlled by their respective governments. Political conflicts and maneuvering – President Carter's call for a boycott after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, affirmed and followed by dozens of allies – had proven capable of affecting ostensibly non-political events like the Olympics, even if the
quarrel did not directly involve the athletes. In many countries there was simply no money to send an Olympic team if its government was not on board, if its political agenda demanded such a move strongly enough (as it did in 1980 and 1984). A depoliticized Olympics could not exist as long as this remained the case. Structural changes were called for; the way to NOC independence from government funding and possible interference lay via increasing the financial base of the Olympic Movement as a whole, loosening politicians' grip on the purse strings.

This would be accomplished by a laborious, lengthy process of integrating the IOC's global revenue-generating and distributing abilities with those of all the NOCs in their own countries. The number of NOCs steadily increased during the 1980s and leapt upwards after the breakup of the Soviet Union; during the 1988 Seoul Summer Games 160 nations participated, while 8 years later in Atlanta, 197 nations took part in the competition. The IOC had to synchronize its modernization efforts with all of these and their respective agendas and projects, while toeing a narrow line between economic well-being and overcommercialism if it were going to succeed.

The two primary, interconnected sources of revenue which would ease this transition towards financial stability and away from government interference came through global corporate sponsorship and marketing deals, and worldwide television rights fees. Efforts to raise both began shortly after Samaranch took control of the organization.

As owner and guardian of the Olympic event and its symbols, the IOC controlled an enormous amount of brand equity, including one of the world's most recognized symbols in the Olympic rings themselves. Through the beginning of the 1980s it did very
little with this intellectual property, and in an amateurish fashion at that. For example, Payne notes a long-term agreement the IOC made to license the pictogram icons of the various Olympic sports in the late 1970s; within 2 years the agreement was in litigation, and a decade later the matter was finally settled out of court, with the IOC paying $2 million to its partner in the deal. (Payne, 2006, p. 12) Unfocused and lacking consistency, the potential global brand equity of the Olympic symbols and events was dispersed through the various marketing programs and agendas of the IOC and the assorted NOCs, all working their own territories with their own partners. There was also increasing concern about tactics such as “ambush marketing”; a constant danger at events spread over time and space such as the Olympics, this tactic came to the fore at the 1984 Summer Games, where official sponsor Fujifilm was “ambushed” by Kodak, whom many perceived as the actual sponsor. (Giannoulakis & Stotlar, 2006, p. 181) As long as the Olympic Movement lacked strong control of its brand and events, potential sponsors would be reluctant to risk their money or image.

Under Samaranch's direction and guided by a small group of global sports marketing executives led by Horst Dassler, scion of the Adidas shoe empire, the IOC decided to aggregate these programs under one umbrella, to eliminate the panoply of “official” sponsors and partners dealt with in individual deals made by NOCs large and small, in favor of exclusive sponsorship deals in major product and service categories. Making the Olympic marketing connection more profitable for corporate sponsors and the Olympic Movement alike meant fewer, but bigger, and more far-reaching partnerships. By amplifying the scope and the expense of Olympic commercial
partnership, only the world's largest brands – or those who aspired to be – would need apply.

This effort, which came to be known as the TOP, or The Olympic Partners program, was devised in the late 1980s by Dassler and IOC executives, with an initial list of 44 exclusive partnership categories. (Payne, 2006, p. 82) A company that joined the TOP program would have the sole right to call itself “Official Olympic Sponsor” throughout the world – in the United States and in the United Arab Emirates, in Britain and in Brazil. A unique transnational commercial opportunity in association with one of the world's leading cultural symbols was the promise; a few global corporations already known for Olympic sponsorship support, such as Coca-Cola, Federal Express, and Kodak joined TOP early on. Also among the first companies to sign on was Visa, then an upstart looking to knock American Express from its perch as the world's leading credit card company. By joining the TOP program in 1985, and broadcasting the advertising tagline “The Olympics don't take American Express” around the world, it was able to do just that.

But TOP's success was by no means a foregone conclusion. Critics saw it as an example of commercialism run amok, of the Olympic Movement moving further from its amateur ideals. Potential corporate sponsors – the global giants whom the IOC targeted to join the TOP program – were likewise wary; what was the commercial value of global Olympic sponsorship? How to quantify that? And so the TOP program nearly collapsed before it began – an outcome which would have threatened the IOC's attempt to consolidate its marketing strategy, and with it Samaranch's entire program to revitalize the Olympic Movement. The IOC had secured the cooperation of all the NOCs – taking
over their individual marketing programs in the process – by promising them each a proportionately larger slice of a much larger global pie, one that would be coordinated from the top down.

The initial TOP program did go forward, with nine sponsors paying around $95 million to the IOC to take part for the 1985-1988 quadrennium. (Payne, 2006, p. 86) This dollar figure was only a part of the equation; more significant was the fact that the mere precedent had been set, that most of the NOCs had been persuaded to fall in under a global marketing strategy, which the IOC could now develop in order to make the most of the Olympics' worldwide brand equity. TOP has succeeded in this. Revenues from TOP II in the early 1990s nearly doubled those of the first effort, and TOP III, which covered the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer and the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, brought in $376 million. TOP VI, covering the quadrennium which includes the 2006 Torino Winter Olympics and the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, generated $866 million through 12 TOP partners – a more-than tenfold increase over 20 years. (International Olympic Committee, 2008, p. 10)

This exponential increase in marketing and sponsorship rights went hand-in-hand with a concerted effort to increase the rights fees paid for television coverage around the world. The increased presence of marketing money aside, global broadcasting rights have been the single biggest source of revenue for the Olympic Movement over the last 30 years. (International Olympic Committee, 2008, p. 26) Rights fees are based in large part on projections based on past events; early in the Samaranch era, the Los Angeles games were broadcast in 146 countries around the world, generating $286 million in rights fees (International Olympic Committee, 2008, p. 26) This followed the nadir of Moscow,
when the future of the Olympics looked dim; of that sum, $225 million came from ABC, the host country broadcaster. (Payne, 2006, p. 33) Following Los Angeles rights fees rose dramatically, which indicates more than just an increase in the value of the rights themselves as the Olympics stabilized; it shows the overall growth strategy taking hold, as well as the effectiveness of a more formalized and structured television rights bidding process. It also shows the role of the Olympics in a television environment that has changed massively since the early 1980s, especially in countries like the United States. As channel offerings have expanded from a handful to hundreds, and television ratings have trended downwards across the board, the Olympics has remained one of the few events that can reliably attract mass audiences. In the US, the premium the Olympics gained in ratings over normal prime-time programming rose dramatically from a 7 per cent bump in Sarajevo to a 118 per cent bump in Salt Lake City. (Payne, 2006, p. 58)

By 2008, global broadcast revenues had increased over 30-fold to $3 billion for the quadrennium including Beijing 2008 and Vancouver 2010. Coverage of the Olympics more than doubled from 1980 levels to include over 220 countries, with a total global audience of close to four billion people.

In the early 1990s, the Australian broadcaster Channel 7 took a bold step forward by forging a multi-Olympic TV rights deals. NBC then swung a similar deal for the US market, and as other broadcasters and markets followed the Olympic media-marketing dynamic was changed. Once committed to broadcasting multiple Olympic Games, these networks had more of a stake in the entire event, and could extend and intensify advertising for it to the benefit of the Olympic organizers and sponsors alike – while at the same time the IOC locked up long-term revenue.
Competition for the rights to the Games has grown intense throughout this three-decade period – at times, so intense it threatened the symbiotic relationship between broadcasters and the IOC. As the figures climbed, the networks bidding to pay them began to question who was really the piper and who was calling the tune. There was also an issue of global balance; rights fees paid to the United States TV market had long made up a disproportionate amount of the overall fees paid worldwide, so part of the IOC’s media strategy was to bring other major markets, such as the European market, into line and up to speed.

But this posed other problems. As the IOC had been forced to negotiate the crashing rocks of pragmatic commercialism and amateur idealism when it came to corporate sponsorship – and chose to do so by consolidating its brand and attaching it to fewer, bigger, more lucrative sponsors – so it also had a serious dilemma to deal with in the global television rights market.

That dilemma had to do with its commitment to the statement that “television rights to the Olympic Games are sold principally to broadcasters that can guarantee the broadest coverage throughout their respective territories.” (International Olympic Committee, 2008, p. 21) This attitude towards television, and the whole paradigm of television rights fees had itself evolved since the beginning of the television age; through the 1950s, the very idea that TV networks should pay the IOC for the right to cover the Games was disputed by the broadcasters, and in turn the IOC gave television short shrift, as in the 1956 statement by IOC President Avery Brundage that “the Olympic Movement has done perfectly well without television for the last 60 years, and believe me, we are going to manage for another sixty.” (Payne, 2006, p. 291) Once it had finally embraced
the medium, the IOC prioritized keeping the Olympics on free television, so that the largest possible audience worldwide may see the games. It dealt primarily with state and mainstream over-the-air commercial broadcasters that any television owner in a given country could watch. But upping the rights fees for the Games to astronomical levels in the 1980s and 90s (especially in markets like the United States, Europe and Australia) had brought private, transnational cable/satellite networks such as those owned by Rupert Murdoch and Silvio Berlusconi into the running. These media entrepreneurs not had only the financial wherewithal to match or even outbid established networks – such as the consortium of European public broadcasters which held the Olympic rights across the continent – they also had shown a willingness to buy expensive sports properties like the NFL, English Premier League and Italian Serie A TV rights in order to jumpstart their networks. Would the IOC undermine its own populism and entertain going with a Murdoch or Berlusconi, or would it leave rights money on the table, if it came down to that?

It did come down to that in the mid-1990s when Murdoch, chastened by FOX's inability to outbid NBC on a multi-Games package in the United States, bid $2 billion for the European TV rights through 2008, dwarfing the $1.4 billion dollar bid tendered by the European Broadcasting Union. (Payne, 2006, p. 54) Yet the IOC turned down the Murdoch bid and accepted the smaller EBU offer. Decisions like this are complex and not easily made; while the IOC has the final say and may weigh the financial benefits of a network bid against its own professed guardianship of Olympic ideals, the fees it brokers are divided up among NOCs and the host city organizers – all with their own interests and budgetary concerns. Accepting a smaller bid package can (and in this case, did)
provoke serious controversy among those other entities. Yet in this case, and for the time being, the IOC's idealistic contention that the Olympic Games should be available to the biggest possible audience as something of a global cultural birthright held.

This influx of billions of dollars in television and sponsorship money has thrown a spotlight on the Olympics as spectacle, not only in the eyes of the crowds at the events themselves but to the hundreds of millions of viewers watching on television. The modernization of the Olympics involves finding ways to make the Games a more compelling, attractive television product, in order to boost ratings and give the networks and advertisers a return on their investment. Signature moments and figures of an Olympic Games – those things that are replayed *ad infinitum* on the news and talked about at the water cooler, that become part of Olympic lore – are often difficult, if not impossible to predict. One example of this would be when British runner Derek Redmond pulled up injured during the 400 meter race at the Barcelona Olympics and was helped to the finish line by his father – an image of perseverance and love which has been shown again and again over the years (eventually in Olympic-themed Visa commercials). If every Olympics offers up moments of glory-in-defeat like that, or even achievements like Michael Phelps's eight-gold performance in Beijing, they are difficult to construct and count on ahead of time.

But there is much about the Olympic Games that is not unreliable or the product of happenstance, less having to do with individual feats and more with overall impressions. A pervasive, carefully-crafted Olympic sheen is essential to setting the Olympic Games apart from other sporting events, and over the past 20 years the IOC has devoted more attention to managing it. The appearance and placement of the events,
ceremonies and the facilities holding them, the strict emphasis on Olympic symbols and logos only within the facilities, and other strictly-enforced venue and broadcast standards produce the surface veneer that binds the entire Olympic package together.

None of this is or was entirely new. Using host city features, architecture and ceremony to stir up a sense of drama and momentousness has always been a part of the modern Olympics, from the classically-styled stadium for the 1896 games in Athens, through the overbearing, fascistic pomp and pretension of the 1936 Berlin Olympics. Host cities have always looked for various fleeting and enduring ways to make a spectacular mark via their presentation of the Olympics, while showing their cities have been marked by the event as well. There are certain boundaries; Olympic tradition has also held that the fields of competition and the interiors of all Olympic venues be “clean,” unmarked by the commercial advertising that covers most other sports arenas. In fact, this rule against on-site advertising has been cited by Olympic advertisers as a positive; it reinforces the high-minded ideals of purity and amateurism that audiences associate with the Olympics (and with the sponsors, through the Games) while eliminating the kind of ad clutter that swamps other major sporting events.

From the mid-1980s onwards such efforts would be consolidated and coordinated according to an evolving brand strategy created by the IOC. What would come to be known as the Look Of Games – a set of official standards guiding the Olympics' visual identity – developed, like most Olympic conventions, over a period of time and through several Olympiads. At the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984, organizers used a five-color palette called “festive federalism” – magenta, vermilion, chrome yellow, violet and aqua – to subtly and cost-effectively create a sense of chromatic cohesion among Olympic
venues. By the time the Olympics reached Barcelona eight years later, the idea of a visual
standard for the Olympics had become more pronounced and systematic. Throughout this
time period and into the 1990s, the IOC:

…sought to develop a standards manual for the overall presentation of the
Olympic imagery at the Games, both within the venues and throughout the
city. The Olympic symbol had to be made “the hero” of the overall
presentation of the Games. In every picture and every television shot, the
Olympics and the host city must be clearly branded. (Payne, 2006, p. 180)

This now happens in various ways. Like many earlier events, the contemporary
Olympics have been marked by ornate opening and closing ceremonies, pivoting on
theatrical set-piece climaxes such as an archer lighting the Olympic torch via bow and
arrow in Barcelona, a trembling Muhammad Ali lighting the torch in Atlanta, or a torch-
bearing runner, suspended by wires and seeming to run in the air around the stadium
during the opening ceremonies in Beijing. Beginning with Barcelona, organizers enlisted
advertising executives and theatre directors to engineer not only these gala multimedia
performances, but also to make the athletic events themselves more dramatic and
memorable, by siting and orienting the facilities to take advantage of the city's vistas and
making the spectators in the background part of the spectacle. Drama became more of a
visual and televisual value, not just during the ceremonial portions but throughout the
entire event.

The focus within the Olympic Movement on visual identity, and the heightened
attention on spectacle, iconic backgrounds, and especially drama as it plays out both live
and on television has been important to the contemporary Olympic Games, and will be
especially important as we turn to analyzing the NYC2012 bid. What did the New York organizers make of their city's natural and man-made assets, and how did they intend to use them to convey feelings of momentousness and drama? That will be one of the main questions of my analysis. But first, we will note the other two US-based Olympic Games since Los Angeles, both of which, through tumult, influenced the contemporary Olympic event, bidding process and organization.

**Atlanta’s “Greed Games”**

How the 1996 Atlanta Olympics are remembered today depends on who does the remembering and the ways in which the event was channeled to them – whether it came through various media vehicles and/or firsthand experience. For many, these Games will likely always be associated with a hideous terrorist act – the Centennial Park bombing which killed 2 and injured 111. This is unfortunate; the Atlanta Olympics were indeed troubled in several significant and far-reaching ways, but that bomb attack was a random, isolated criminal act and, relatively speaking, not connected to the larger issues at hand.

Atlanta residents, by and large, approved of the planning and conduct of the Olympics in their city. (Burbank, Andranovich & Heying, 2001, p. 114) For sports fans, and for those whose business is broadcasting to, measuring and marketing to them, the Atlanta Games were a success. Over 8 million tickets were sold – more than in Los Angeles and Barcelona combined (Payne, 2006, p. 177). Records and memorable performances were set on the fields of competition and in the ratings books. Yet while the competition and spectacle presented to TV audiences around the world lived up to Olympic standards, a chaotic, crass orgy of commercialism around the venue and in the
city center left a bitter taste in the mouths of the international press. To them (and thus to
many of their readers) these were the “Greed Games” – a storyline which mortified the
IOC and backfired on the city, along with those who brought the Games there.

Atlanta had been a dark horse to host the Centennial Olympic Games in the first
place. As the bidding process entered the final stages in 1990, Athens appeared to be the
sentimental favorite, with Manchester, Melbourne, Belgrade and other cities also in the
running. Multiple voting rounds were needed before Atlanta emerged the winner. With
the LA Olympics just six years in the past, and Atlanta's reputation as an overly self-
 promotional corporate center being set off against the others' claims to cultural and
historical importance, the southern US city's selection over the Greek home of the ancient
and first modern Games surprised and even angered many, who saw signs that money
had trumped the Olympic heritage and values. The latter was epitomized by an ill-timed
distribution of Atlanta Olympic pins imprinted with the Coca-Cola logo directly after the
host city announcement, which led the Greek delegate Melina Mercouri to invoke
conspiracies, infamously stating that “Coca-Cola has won over the Parthenon.”

Unrestrained commercialism did foul Atlanta's Olympics and its city image, but it
had less to do with the machinations of locally-based corporate sponsors (Atlanta-based
Coca-Cola had long stayed aloof from the city's efforts to win the games so as to avoid
any appearance of home-team favoritism, which could affect its presence in other
markets) than with the way the Games were organized and funded, the power games that
were played by the organizing committee and city government in the run-up to the
Games, and the frenzied jockeying of financial and development agendas that resulted.
The Atlanta Olympics were the brainchild of Billy Payne, an Atlanta lawyer and entrepreneur. Beginning (as these events so often do) with a fanciful dream, Payne and his allies worked the city's many political, corporate and institutional players, including then-Mayor Andrew Young – the first of three Atlanta mayors to hold office during the city’s Olympic effort. Young (an esteemed and connected figure, well-known from his roles in the civil rights movement of the 1960s and as former US ambassador to the United Nations) would later join the bid campaign full-time, lending it vital legitimacy in the eyes of decision-makers at the national and international stages.

By the time the IOC awarded Atlanta the Olympics, no less than five organizations had been set up to play some official or quasi-official part in organizing the event. The Georgia Amateur Athletic Foundation (GAAF), which Payne first created to get the bid off the ground, was soon superseded by the larger, broader Atlanta Organizing Committee (AOC), with Payne as its CEO and Young as its chair. Because IOC regulations necessitated a body that was legally responsible for certain contracts and policies, yet which the Atlanta city government was constitutionally prohibited from assuming, the Georgia legislature established the semiautonomous Metropolitan Atlanta Olympic Games Authority (MAOGA); desiring a more closely-held organizing structure, the AOC incorporated and invested power in the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG), a private, non-profit organization composed of AOC members, USOC members and others from Atlanta's elite. The city of Atlanta, under new mayor Maynard Jackson, then incorporated the Corporation for Olympic Development in Atlanta (CODA), which was poorly funded but ambitiously charged with using the Games's momentum to revitalize poor neighborhoods within the Olympic Ring – an imaginary
line encompassing most of the central venues. The city, ACOG and MAOGA entered into a tri-party agreement ostensibly meant to keep everyone on the same page. (Burbank, Andranovich & Heying, 2001, p. 87)

Such an alphabet soup of public and private organizers and overseers illustrates the Byzantine complexity of the contemporary Olympics. The amount of politicking, compromise, glad-handing and horse-trading necessary to move an idea from one man's mind to the point where state legislatures codify new structures to clear the way for it is daunting to comprehend, and one can easily surmise that every player and group involved has its own agenda and interests. In the case of Atlanta, it is crucial to recognize that the business- and development-centered agenda of the privately-controlled ACOG soon took precedence over the civic-oriented agenda of the Atlanta city government and citizens' groups – a hierarchy of interests that was not accidental but by design, coming right out of the “entrepreneurial city” playbook. As Burbank, et al. (2001) stated:

At every occasion, ACOG leaders claimed the mantle of public purpose, when necessary they used public powers, and when possible they leveraged public dollars. When challenged, however, ACOG leaders vigorously asserted the prerogatives of a private organization to make decisions without public oversight and to withhold records from public view. (p. 116)

The city government dealt itself a weak hand from the beginning and played it weakly, being comparatively “reactive, undercapitalized, and unable to mount a coordinated effort to match ACOG's initiatives.” (Burbank, Andranovich & Heying,
Thus Atlanta politicians thus found themselves playing second fiddle to private actors in planning and running the biggest event in the history of the city.

After winning the bid came the issue of actually building for and pulling the event off. Unlike Los Angeles, Atlanta's plan involved a serious reshaping of the city core. Whereas the LA organizers had sought to keep capital costs low by using mostly existing facilities, Atlanta's plan hinged on the construction of new venues and facilities; seventeen facilities were built or renovated, at a cost of more than $3 billion. (Burbank, Andranovich & Heying, 2001, p. 87) Three major Olympic-related development projects in the heart of the city were planned: the 85,000 seat Olympic Stadium, to be built adjacent to and then replace 35 year old Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium as home of the Atlanta Braves; the Olympic Village, which was planned as part of a long-sought redevelopment of the massive New Deal-era Techwood/Clark Howell public housing projects into more attractive and lucrative mixed-income housing; and Centennial Park – 60 acres of open public space carved out of housing and light-industrial areas adjacent to Techwood/Clark Howell.

Each of these development plans touched off political fires, fueled by the politics of money, class and race that background development in the city. Terms like revitalization and renewal, employed rhetorically and legally to pave the way for the Olympic plan, were loaded with meaning for city residents. Such terms had also been used to justify the 60s-era razing of functional, primarily working-class African-American neighborhoods such as that which made room for Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium in the first place.
But the weight of the looming Olympics, and of not wanting to globally embarrass the city, helped Olympic planners push back the forces of neighborhood advocacy with minimal compromise. Techwood/Clark Howell was systematically depopulated until resistance all but dissipated. What money flowed into CODA was assigned mostly to cosmetic improvements and pedestrian infrastructure around the Olympic Ring area, instead of towards jobs and housing in the Ring's neediest neighborhoods. When the torch was finally extinguished, the Atlanta Braves would pay a cut-rate price for a lightly-used new stadium; a new, less-stigmatized housing development – Centennial Place – would stand in Techwood/Clark Howell's place, and Turner Broadcasting/CNN, Coca-Cola, major hotels and others would build heavily along the edges of Centennial Park. The pro-business, pro-development agenda would win out, to the benefit of Atlanta's major growth coalition players (including Billy Payne, who profited from land speculation (Burbank, Andranovich & Heying, 2001, p. 116)) and institutions.

The city would make a significant public misstep before the Games ever got underway, one that had much to do with its chafing at being made a junior partner in the Olympic dream. Cut out of the vast sums (upwards of $1 billion) that ACOG was accumulating through television rights and marketing deals, the new Atlanta city government, under recently elected mayor Bill Campbell, aggressively pursued Olympic sponsor and visitor dollars via its own marketing plan. The city contracted with Munson Steed III, a businessman aligned with Campbell, who pushed a scheme to lease space on city streets and in city parks for memorabilia kiosks, advertising signage and other advertising materials. Steed projected the leasing of up to 1000 kiosks and carts at up to
$20,000 per cart, forecasting $80-90 million dollars in revenue for the city, with $2.5 million in profits guaranteed.

But Steed's “no-risk” plan and hard-nosed negotiating tactics provoked a litigious as well as aesthetic fiasco. He did not account for – or did not care about – the merchants and sponsors who had made exclusive deals with ACOG, the USOC and the IOC, and challenged his kiosk-leasing plan in court. Plans to lease park space for a festival were blocked by city elites, and a deal to display advertisements on barricades along the marathon route ran afoul of the “clean venue” policy of the IOC, which states that no ads shall be seen surrounding the field of competition. Even after a settlement between the city and ACOG which reduced the scale of the marketing effort in return for some concessions, some four hundred vendor sites, five thousand street-pole banners, and other such commercial clutter remained to stir up a tawdry, flea-market-like atmosphere right in the heart of the city. To make matters worse, many small entrepreneurs lost big on their investments; the business Steed projected did not materialize, and nearly one-third of the vendors sued him and the city charging improper practices. (Burbank, Andranovich & Heying, 2001, p. 96) The political and legal blowback to come from the city's own marketing effort paled in comparison to the media reaction to it during and after the event; the international press castigated the city along predictable lines (especially in comparison to Barcelona's triumphant display four years prior) and that cast a shadow which would linger over both the Olympics and the city of Atlanta for some time after.

The Atlanta Olympics left several legacies; most importantly, the IOC recognized that its key possession (and thus its image) could not be held hostage by bickering organizers or overly “entrepreneurial” city governments looking for their piece of the pie.
Meanwhile, as those who dreamt up and privately organized the 1996 Games profited handsomely from them and succeeded in reshaping a swath of the urban core to suit commercial and financial needs, the event's potential to also achieve civic and social objectives – a key point in selling the city on the Games in the first place – was largely unfulfilled.

The mega-event strategy of urban development is based on the idea that the linking of a city with an Olympics, a World Cup, or other such global cultural event can yield economic and social revitalization, while raising and invigorating the images of both city and event on the world stage. Atlanta became a cautionary example of how, even when successful, mega-events can damage city reputations worldwide, too.

**Scandal in Salt Lake City**

Only six years after the Atlanta Games, the Olympics returned to the United States – this time, the Winter Olympics descended upon Salt Lake City. The Rocky Mountain metropolis, capital of the state of Utah and seat of the Mormon religion, won the right to host the 2002 Winter Olympics after a string of unsuccessful bids going back to 1972. While a considerably smaller city than either Los Angeles or Atlanta, it sought to hold the Olympics for many of the same reasons that those and other cities have done so in recent decades; to bolster its commercial and cultural image in the eyes of the world, to encourage tourism, and to reshape the city core in the face of a slow wave of urban depopulation going back to the 1950s. The forces behind its various bids reflected Salt Lake City's unique composition, being a political and religious center, business-oriented (as opposed to labor-friendly) city, and leisure destination. The bid for the 1972
Games was headed by downtown business officials angling for publicity to draw tourists, while later bids would be taken over by the rapidly-maturing ski and resort industry nearby. Standing in the background of all these bids (as it does in virtually all local and state affairs) was the Mormon church, which wields its power less through any direct intervention in political affairs than through the soft power of its property and commercial holdings, as well as the spiritual and cultural influence it has over much of the area's citizens, including leaders of its business community.

By the mid-1980s the conditions for an entrepreneurial-type bid by Salt Lake City for a mega-event like the Olympics had been set. A coalition of business, political and real estate leaders, leavened by the uniquely Utahn presence of the Mormon Church, was in place and drove the city's development; within that coalition was the desire to refashion the city's image from that of sleepy mountain city and home of an enigmatic religious sect to that of modern, cultured, global leisure destination. Out of this coalition emerged another public-private effort to bid for the Olympics – but as in Los Angeles and Atlanta, the lion's share of the organizers' funding came from the private sector, and the bid committee was reorganized into a corporate model in which business leaders and development-oriented boosters took the reins, enabling it to resist high-level participation by lightly-funded community and environmental interests while using political momentum and public relations campaigns to build and maintain mass support.

Salt Lake City competed for and in 1989 finally won the right to be the official US host city candidate for both the 1998 and 2002 Winter Games; the victory came in part because the Salt Lake organizers had helped ease through a statewide public referendum which approved of the diversion of sales tax monies to build top-class,
permanent winter sports facilities such as a bobsled run and speed skating oval, even if the USOC or IOC did not pick the city as host. (Burbank, Andranovich & Heying, 2001, p. 130)

The city's bid for the 1998 Olympics reached the final stage of the IOC’s host city selection process, which was decided in 1991. This first Salt Lake City bid was technically strong and well-supported by local politicians and citizens, but was narrowly defeated by the bid from Nagano, Japan. Yet this defeat only represented a bump in the road; with general public support, legislative approval of funding for Olympic facilities, and the 2002 USOC host city candidacy already in hand, Salt Lake's bid committee had little to do but regroup and focus on winning the IOC’s decision-makers over the second time around.

“What put Nagano over the top?” was the question the SLC bid organizers asked themselves. The answer that they arrived at was that the Nagano organizers had cheated (despite the improbability of two consecutive Olympics being staged in the same country, as would have been the case if Salt Lake had followed the 1996 Atlanta Games), or at least that the Nagano bidders had played the lobbying game better – lobbying taken here to mean the wining and dining, gratifying, enticing, enriching, sponsoring, contributing-to and supplication of individual IOC members on their individual site visits and in their home countries – as well as the IOC in general. Between 1991 and June 1995, when they were finally awarded the 2002 games, Salt Lake City's Olympic organizers played this game with as much skill and diligence as other cities' organizers had played it before them. Then came the scandal.
In November of 1998, a Salt Lake-based television station obtained and reported on a letter from the organizing committee to the daughter of a Cameroonian IOC member, stating the SLOC would be discontinuing the tuition assistance it had been providing her. A minor furor ensued, but what might have remained a localized story with little resonance exploded into the global media when Marc Hodler, a Swiss member of the IOC, faced the press (assembled there to cover the meeting of the IOC Executive Board and an unrelated TOP-related media event) and unleashed an impromptu assault on the bribes and culture of corruption that he claimed now permeated the host city bidding process. It was a shocking indictment of the IOC from within, delivered by one of the oldest, longest-serving, and most respected members of the organization. Payne (2006) describes the scene as Hodler spoke (without Samaranch's knowledge or approval) in the lobby of the IOC headquarters in Lausanne:

Rather than waiting for the full report from Salt Lake, Hodler immediately started talking of bribery and corruption. He was not sure, he said, whether other Olympic cities had been elected cleanly – and talked of agents and secret encounters. “The cities have been the victim and not the villain,” he insisted, pointing the finger of suspicion firmly in the IOC's direction. Within five minutes of Hodler starting his ad-hoc press interview, the journalists had a lot more than mere gossip to report – they had the makings of a global front page story that would stop the presses and run for months and months. (p. 228)

Hodler's exposé put the Salt Lake controversy squarely in the spotlight; with that, the entire host city bidding process and the IOC's integrity came under fire. Questions
were raised not only of what ethical and legal lines the SLOC had crossed to win the Games, but also what past host cities had done and given. The entire Olympic Movement faced another existential crisis less than twenty years after the Moscow boycott, while Salt Lake City's Olympic dream, as well as its civic reputation, was cast in doubt.

Spurred on by a press corps that gleefully documented the shortcomings of a host city identified with clean living and moral rectitude, the IOC, USOC and the SLOC’s own ethics panel all investigated the bid committee's conduct, while the U.S. House and Senate held hearings related to the tax status of Olympic organizations and the allocation of federal aid for US cities hosting the Olympics. Utah's attorney general, as well as the US Department of Justice, also conducted investigations. (Burbank, Andranovich & Heying, 2001, p. 148)

In Salt Lake City, the scandal's effects were profound in some ways, minimal in others. Two high-ranking members of the SLOC’s hierarchy – president Frank Joklik and Senior Vice President David Johnson – promptly resigned. The scandal was framed by the SLOC's ethics committee report in such a way as to contain the wrongdoings – “payments to relatives of IOC members, arranging jobs or lucrative consulting contracts, expensive gifts and travel, free medical care, etc.” (Burbank, Andranovich & Heying, 2001, p. 148) – making them out to be the abuses of a few in the know (primarily, Johnson and SLOC executive Thomas Welch). The SLOC was immediately restructured. A few political careers were truncated, as local officials associated with the bid such as Salt Lake City Mayor DeeDee Corradini, chose not to run for re-election. Others, ironically, became prominent and politically relevant via their postscandal roles – most
notably, Mitt Romney, the Boston-based businessman who took over presidency of the SLOC and guided it through a successful and profitable event.

But area residents never soured on hosting the Olympics nor lost all faith in the SLOC. Polls showed that “overall the pattern of support (for hosting the games) remained similar to the prescandal period.” (Burbank, Andranovich & Heying, 2001, p. 151) By the time the Olympic torch was lit in the winter of 2002, the worldwide scandal that their city catalyzed and was identified with had retreated to the back of Utahns' minds.

The fallout around the Olympic Movement and the IOC was somewhat more severe and brought on internal reform amidst public consternation. The Olympic host city bidding process was long considered to be opaque and questionable, the province of a class of international elites with little oversight – all by design, according to critics. As was the case of the siting processes for other, comparable major mega-events such as the World Cup, murmurs lurked around the edges about the endemic cultivation of votes by any means – be they quid pro quos, favors, or outright graft. The Salt Lake scandal, worldwide media furor and various official investigations tore the cover off this, threatening not only Samaranch's legacy but his leadership of the IOC and perhaps even the Olympics themselves. The corporations that had come on board as part of the decade-long project to cement the Olympics' financial and political independence – global brands anxious to be associated with the Olympic Movement's sporting and moral ideals – fell back and reconsidered their sponsorship. Simultaneously, politicians (led in the U.S. Congress by Senator John McCain) began talking about legislation that would tackle corruption in the host city bidding process, bringing more of the IOC's activities under the aegis of national politics and law – an outcome the Committee wished to head off.
In the end, both the Olympics and Samaranch's IOC presidency survived the Salt Lake bribery scandal crisis, though only after both substantial institutional reforms and a reconsideration of the way the IOC handled media scrutiny of its affairs – before the scandal, it “did not really have” a functioning full-time communications department (Payne, 2006, p. 233). Corporate partners were retained and the IOC avoided becoming ensnared in national legislation, or losing the Olympics altogether to another international non-governmental organization (as the idea of the United Nations taking over the Olympics had been mooted in the early 1980s.) The IOC's most far-reaching action following the Salt Lake City crisis was its establishment of an eighty-member commission, comprised of figures inside and outside the IOC, to study and suggest organizational reforms. Known as the IOC 2000 Commission, its recommendations included changes in the composition of the membership as well as term limitations based on age (pre-scandal, IOC membership was for life.) One key IOC 2000 Commission recommendation stated that “…visits by IOC members to the candidate cities are not necessary. It is also not considered necessary for representatives of candidate cities, or third parties acting on their behalf, to visit IOC members.” (International Olympic Committee, 1999, p. 28) Following these recommendations, only a designated IOC evaluation committee would be allowed to visit the finalist host cities to ensure they meet minimum standards.

Ending the practice of site visits by individual IOC members and host-city representatives' junkets to members' countries removes some, if not all, of the margin for corruption, though we should not be naïve enough to think that all such abuses – or at least attempts at abusing the system to gain an edge in a high-stakes global contest –
have been wiped out. The de-emphasis of site visits by individual IOC members does lay more importance on the primary source of information members do have now – the official bid book put together by each host city. Media become essential as a substitute for presence; this thick, carefully-assembled text now not only gives facts and projections, it must convey the flavor, color and excitement of a city that firsthand experience might have suggested. It must imagine, construct and communicate the candidate as an Olympic city. How this increasingly-important text attempted to do that, in the case of New York City's 2012 bid, is the primary subject of my analysis. How New York City's 2012 bid came to be must be described first.

The NYC2012 Bid Begins

Like many origin myths, the story behind the idea of an Olympics in New York turns on a somewhat obscure figure’s leap of imagination and call to action. The seed for the city's Olympic bid was planted in the middle of another major sports mega-event, soccer's World Cup, which was held in the United States for the first time in 1994. In the case of NYC2012’s genesis, that figure was financial executive Daniel Doctoroff, who hit upon the idea of bringing the Olympics to New York City while attending a semifinal match between Italy and Bulgaria at Giants Stadium in New Jersey.

“I was struck by the nationalistic fervor," [Doctoroff] says. "I thought, you could play this game with any two countries and the feeling would be exactly the same because New York is the most diverse city on earth. I wondered, ‘Why hasn't New York ever hosted an Olympics?’” (Lieber, 2004)
Doctoroff was at best a casual sports fan and an unknown in city political circles. Nor was he even a native New Yorker, but a Michigander. Yet the notion of a New York Olympic Games seized him, and over the next two years he prepared the ground for a bid. Like the (purportedly solo) driving forces behind other U.S. cities’ bids – Billy Payne in Atlanta and Tom Welch in Salt Lake City – Doctoroff had no real political power, only some tenuous connections to the city’s power elite via his place in the financial community (as Managing Partner of Oak Hill Capital Partners, a New York-based private equity firm), as well as other informal links. Working these connections to drum up enthusiasm, his vision captured the imagination of city politicians and the business community, all the way up to the Mayor’s office. Mayor Rudy Giuliani (no stranger to high-profile New York boosterism) was supportive of Doctoroff’s idea, without pledging direct city support beyond that required by the IOC. New York City had bid for the 1984 Olympics at the tail-end of the 1970s, but that effort was trumped at the national phase by Los Angeles’s successful bid; typical of those made before LA’s transformative privatized bid, this earlier, seldom-mentioned New York bid was imagined by and designed to be municipal in nature – city-funded and city-run. NYC2012, like all competitive post-LA ‘84 bids, was privately-organized and funded instead. That meant the lion’s share of the support a fully-fledged Olympic bid would need – logistics, organization, media backing and high-profile endorsements – would have to come from outside the political establishment.

As the torch was extinguished at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, local media figures such as *New York Daily News* columnist Filip Bondy publicly wondered why New York, then at a cultural and economic apex, shouldn’t step forward and bid for a future
Olympics. Indeed, some of the reasons that Bondy gave for bidding – New York’s status as a world city and tourist mecca with more to offer than cities like Atlanta, and an urgent need for more athletic facilities in the city – would be echoed in the NYC2012 bid. “Our city would not give shamelessly give itself over to the Olympics....(un)like Atlanta, New Yorkers aren’t particularly desperate to prove ourselves. The world knows who we are.” (Bondy, 1996) While Bondy admitted “there is no reason to rush headlong into an Olympic bid,” he also termed the upcoming 1998 Goodwill Games (a smaller Olympic-type competition, first organized by Ted Turner during the Cold War) as “the perfect dry run” for a possible future bid.

The probability of an American bid for the 2008 Games winning was considered low at that point, given the just-completed Atlanta Games and upcoming Salt Lake City winter Olympics, but in early 1997 the USOC considered allowing American cities to press ahead with a long-shot bid. New York’s team led by Doctoroff was among those from eight interested cities – Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Baltimore, Washington, Seattle, and Houston the others. (Sandomir, 1997) A few months later the USOC chose to defer any US bids for the 2008 Games, considering them expensive and likely futile propositions. Doctoroff and the New York team expressed disappointment in this decision; “The time for New York, I believe, was now. Crime is at its lowest level in 30 years. The quality of life is improving. There is a supportive political establishment. Most of all, I think there is a new, emerging spirit that says we can dream again, we can do big things again.” (Longman, 1997) Nevertheless, the groundwork done by Doctoroff and the New York committee for 2008 would cement their will to bid for future Games. In November 1997, the USOC announced it would name a national candidate city for the

But before the decade had ended, the Salt Lake City bribery scandal would nearly bring down the IOC and the entire Olympic Movement. Reform measures enacted in 2000 changed the host city bidding game. The bid competitions that followed – including that for the 2012 Summer Games – would hinge less on lavish site visits by IOC members (which had facilitated so much corruption and graft), more on promotional/informational media like the bid book and video presentation made to the IOC. Still, the costs to bid would be daunting; competing for the USOC’s nomination was estimated to cost a city around $12 million. If successful, that city could expect to spend another $20 to $30 million trying to win the IOC’s nod. In various prospective bid cities, observers and editorialists questioned whether all this effort and expense was worthwhile, even if the bid were successful. As the headline for a Washington Times piece on the 1998 Nagano Games asked, “Why would any city in its right mind want to host this?” (Loverro, 1998) Lingering negative publicity from the SLC bid scandal, the sight of many empty seats at the Nagano Olympic venues, and most significantly, an IOC rule that cities bidding for the Games must agree to assume responsibility for any financial losses (a response to the flea market-like atmosphere of the Atlanta Games) were seized upon by skeptics. Still, organizers from the eight US bid cities were not fazed.

The ambitious scale of NYC2012’s plans to bring the Olympics to New York synced up with the political moment. By 2000 the Olympic bid plans had become a key part of the city's political agenda. With less than a year left as mayor and looking to
cement his legacy, Mayor Giuliani kicked off the new millennium by proposing numerous major development projects; among them, a long-imagined rail-freight tunnel under New York Harbor, new parks and recreation complexes on the East River and other parts of the city, the extension of tax credits to spur business growth, and most notably an enormous new retractable-roof stadium over the railyards on mid-town Manhattan’s Hudson River waterfront – the soon-to-be controversial West Side Stadium. The stadium promised to be many things – a linchpin of a prospective Olympic bid, an extension of the Jacob Javits Convention Center, a new home for the NFL’s New York Jets, a state-of-the-art architectural and “green” showpiece. For years the site known as Hudson Yards had been eyed covetously by developers, sports team owners and city leaders, and watched nervously by local politicians, environmentalists and neighborhood residents; past efforts by the Yankees to develop a new baseball stadium on the site, among other projects, had been repulsed. Now the NYC2012 Olympic effort appeared, to development advocates and foes alike, as a wedge with the potential power to drive development of the neighborhood, for better or worse.

NYC2012’s campaign for the Olympics began in earnest with the presentation of its plans to the public at City Hall in March 2000. There the basic scheme was unveiled; the Games would take place in a mix of new and existing facilities across all five boroughs, Long Island and New Jersey. The Olympic Village would be constructed on a parcel of land on the Queens waterfront directly across from the United Nations. The city’s existing mass transit lines would transport athletes to the venues so that, as Doctoroff boasted, “we could get virtually all athletes to their events without ever going on a road” (Lueck, 2000) Private and corporate funding, rather than public money, would
be used throughout the bidding process. Backing the NYC2012 plan (without directly linking the city to it) Mayor Giuliani stated that “No event could better cap New York’s remarkable resurgence than hosting the Olympic Games.” (Lueck, 2000) Much was still tentative, and the bid organizers took pains to say that some of their plans for venue sites represented a “wish list.”

Through 2000, Doctoroff and the Olympic dream were alternately hailed and condemned in the city media. Numerous factors were posed as obstacles to success – the costs of staging the event, the other US and foreign bid cities, political roadblocks – but the bid pressed on. Neither the early protests of borough politicians and local activists, nor New Jersey’s withdrawal of its cooperation, just weeks before the bid’s submission to the United States Olympic Committee (a consequence of New York’s attempts at luring the Jets away from the Meadowlands to Manhattan), would derail it. On December 15, 2000, NYC2012 formally submitted its bid to the national selection committee. The bid book that I am analyzing in this dissertation is the principal document that was put before the USOC at that time.

The NYC2012 effort had begun before the end of the millennium, while the city was riding high economically, culturally and in terms of its global perception and reputation. But between 2000 and its selection by the USOC in late 2002 it would also be inextricably connected, for better or worse, to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent downturn and general climate of anxiety that hung over the city, nation and world. Those events indelibly marked the city; NYC2012’s bid was deliberated and ultimately decided upon in the “post-9/11 era,” a period in which it was argued, “everything changed.” But how significantly had everything changed for New
York’s prospects? It is inconceivable not to mention 9/11 here, given the fact that the bid effort spanned the attacks and their aftermath. However, we should resist overstating the impact of the terrorist attacks, of jumping to the conclusion that the attacks either aided (by stirring sympathy) or destroyed the New York Olympic bid’s chances of success. The NYC 2012 bid book itself was produced and distributed before the 9/11 attacks, and so does not address them or their aftermath directly – it was simply not a part of the bid book’s narrative. Security during the Games and the threat of terrorism was just another part of the calculus which would have to be addressed; since the massacre of Israeli Olympians at Munich in 1972, the security of athletes, spectators and facilities has been a major concern to the IOC and all host city candidates.

A change in City Hall shortly after 9/11, from Rudy Giuliani to Michael Bloomberg, did not hamper NYC2012’s efforts either. The Bloomberg administration continued its unofficial support for the bid, in fact drawing the bid effort closer towards the levers of power; Daniel Doctoroff’s journey from visionary outsider to insider was completed in 2001, when he left the helm of NYC2012 in order to become Deputy Mayor in charge of Economic Development under Bloomberg. Now Doctoroff coordinated the Olympic bid effort from inside City Hall.

In August 2002 New York and San Francisco were named as the two American finalists; on November 15, 2002, the USOC chose New York to represent the United States. The IOC’s July 2003 deadline for host city bids passed with nine cities tendering bids. Besides New York, the other contenders were Havana, Istanbul, Leipzig, London, Madrid, Moscow, Paris and Rio de Janeiro. In May 2004, those candidates were then narrowed down to five; London, Madrid, Moscow, Paris and New York. Following a
series of formalities, briefings, and the payment of a $500,000 candidature fee, these
cities’ candidature files – including their bid books – were submitted to the IOC in
November of 2004.

Effects of the Three Post-1980 American Olympics

Politicized and marred by a major boycott, the 1980 Moscow Olympics marked a
low for the Olympics after a decade of tragedy and decline. The 1984 Los Angeles
Games may well have rescued the Olympic Movement; less arguable is the notion that
they introduced a new model of organizing the event along more privatized,
entrepreneurial lines than seen before. Renewed, the IOC worked through this time
period to restructure itself and consolidate its resources, becoming both much more and
somewhat less commercialized, both more dependent upon and more important to global
media networks and sponsors. The other two Olympics to occur in the United States since
1984 have also been important to the story of the Olympics at the end of the 20th century
and the beginning of the 21st. Atlanta and Salt Lake City’s relative successes were
mitigated, however, by the pitfalls of overcommercialism and corruption, which tarnished
the image of those cities and the Olympic Movement. New York’s Olympic bid, which
began developing shortly after the Atlanta Games and continued through the middle of
the next decade, should be considered in this context. It also must be related to the
contemporary history of the city itself.
A Parallel Competition

In the first chapter I came to terms with the “mega-event” genre, probed its paradigmatic forms, and placed it in space and time, relating the mega-event to modern society and modernity in general, from the genre’s origins in the middle of the 19th century through the chaotic inter-war apogee of industrial modernity. I then turned to the Olympics in particular, and contemplated the collective psychic purchase that the Olympic Games and movement has upon society. This issue interests Olympic observers not just because millions attend and watch the Games every four years; after all, spectating is a relatively low-impact activity. There is a more materially and academically profound parallel competition, in which cities pull out all the stops to host future Games despite the potential inconveniences and startling costs, and even despite the growing public awareness of those inconveniences and costs in this day and age. The grip of the Olympics upon global society is evidently firm.

Thus far I have suggested that the mingling of Olympism and the Olympic spectacle with contemporary popular culture, and their shared emphases on sporting achievement and celebrity, national competition and international harmony can be thought of as following a narrative that runs along the same lines – that they have “grown together.” But accepting this narrative notion with an uncritical, wholly-approving frame of mind is also troublesome. In fact there is something crucial missing if we depend on this notion alone; by using such metaphors of origin, growth and morphology there is the
chance that the whole process seems like the outcome of natural forces or the weight of history alone, something moved without an initial mover or conductor along the way. This imperils analysis. We cannot criticize what we cannot see, and in any blithe “grown together” account we are blind to which way the levers of power and control are being manipulated intentionally, because we are not looking for the hands on them.

But there are hands at work there, especially but not exclusively at the highest levels of political and economic power. Agency, in the form of individual and collective choices, has had a large part to play in the development of the mega-event genre, the construction of Olympism and the Olympic event, and just about any other large-scale socio-cultural movement (i.e. the development of modern cities) that we can think of. If there is agency – evaluation, calculation and choice – what guides, influences and constricts that agency?

Answering, or at least considering some possible responses to that question is the goal of this chapter. Beyond the cultural and historical reasoning for the significance of the Olympics in contemporary global culture, I am interested in the larger ideas, assumptions, and active forces that surround the city and those who manage it. The focus shifts now to the place and function of the Olympics in actual cities and in an emergent global city-system, of which New York City is a prominent part. A grasp of the situation that cities and their leaders find themselves in, in specific cases and in general, can help us understand why the Olympics are sought (stressing the intentionality and agency connoted by the term sought.) Or to put it more nakedly, it can help us understand what use the Olympic event is to the contemporary postindustrial city. This understanding, in turn, underlies my analysis of the NYC2012 bid.
Contemporary Urban Discourses

Cities are ceaselessly dynamic places which change and respond to both internal factors and external influences – regional, national and international politics, economics and finance, culture, technology, shifting flows of population and information, and not least, other cities. City living, or urbanism as a way of life, has been trending upwards for at least two hundred years; recent estimates have put the number of city-dwellers in the world’s population above that of rural folk for the first time in recorded history. The city remains the geographic, political and social unit in which the Olympics take place. By convention an Olympic Games could not be held in an empty forest, or in a tiny provincial village (the small resort towns in which some Winter Olympics have taken place notwithstanding), or even in multiple cities at the same time (though nowadays certain events may be held in neighboring cities for logistical reasons). Because the Olympics are an urban thing, any serious examination of the spatial character and consequences of the modern Olympic event – which tends to reveal itself on a medium-term meso-level, as opposed to the extended macro-level of world-historical shifts (the scale of centuries) or the micro-level of the event proper (the scale of days and weeks) – must engage the discourse of the contemporary city.

But which discourse of the contemporary city? The city has been studied from all angles for many years. The onset of modern industrial urbanization itself precipitated social sciences that studied its features and effects such as sociology, as well as urban-inflected branches of economics, politics, communications, anthropology, and so on. The sheer abundance of theory and interpretations of the city and urbanism past and present,
from all schools, is daunting. This examination must be limited to those concepts which connect the *urban* and the contemporary Olympics.

Some theoretical concepts relate to urban form, politics, economics, culture, psychology and lived-experience at various levels from the local to the global. Acquaintance with these concepts gives a sense of the current critical urban discourse, flowing from academic and professional circles to media and everyday culture then back again. Doing so also illuminates specific critiques of the global political-financial-cultural complex, which now play in the background of any contemporary Olympic host city bid. Such widely-dispersed perceptions and critiques of urban realities may affect Olympic bids long before they reach the competition and contestation phase (that phase in which plans are publicized, whereupon politicians, the press and the public argue with each other that the event will be either a milestone or a millstone for their city.)

Two such themes essential to contemporary urban discourses are:

- The general notion of deindustrialization as a social, economic and labor phenomenon, which drives a contemporary transition towards *informational capitalism* and *network society* in a world of *posts* (postindustrialism, post-Fordism, postmodernism).
  - The conceptualization of a world system of cities, dominated by a small clique of *global cities*, which are constantly in competition with each other and jostled by upstarts and pretenders who seek to join them or else carve out their own niche.

We may expect the crafters of bids to reflexively assume and adapt to these critiques and priorities, and that bids (such as NYC2012) will have internalized features of contemporary discourses of modern/postmodern urbanism from the very beginning.
What Is A City? What Is The Image Of The City?

What is a city? If we play word association, does city make us think of yesteryear’s booming New York City or today’s desolate Youngstown, 15th century Florence or 21st century Dubai? Classic and classic-sounding definitions of the city and of urbanism abound. Urban theorists have theorized and poets have waxed poetic on the subject, but settling on a unified theoretical definition of the city is not nearly so important (in this instance, we may get away with saying “I know it when I see it”) as is understanding the various processes going on in and around cities in general. Since the dawn of the industrial epoch in the early 19th century, cities have become sites of intensive individual and collective production and consumption, interaction and communication. At this point in the early 21st century, all these activities are exponentially intensified.

A couple concurrent processes have helped produce this modern urban world. One is urbanization – the movement of people from rural places to urban places, which has produced great increases in the financial, economic and cultural power of cities. This movement takes and has taken place on multiple levels over the past two centuries; nationally (towards the national capital or industrial center), regionally (towards the regional mega-city) and globally (from South to North). This process, like all processes taking place in various political, economic, cultural and physical settings (not to mention points in history) proves to be uneven instead of universal. In parts of the world that were heavily industrialized between the mid-19th century and the first two-thirds of the 20th century (such as the United States and much of Western Europe), mass population
movements into dense urban environments has often been followed by a movement back outwards, leading to what is commonly called suburban sprawl. This historical progeny of urbanization, suburbanization, has so often been framed as anything from a fulfillment of the individualist-consumerist dream to a socio-cultural scourge (as depicted in popular critiques decrying the “geography of nowhere” [Kunstler, 1994] and the “malling of America.” [Kowinski, 1985]) On the other hand, some such as Bruegmann (2006) have recently argued that sprawl is not so unprecedented or evil after all, but rather an inevitable result of the growth of cities which is reflected throughout history, going back to early major conurbations like Imperial Rome.

We in the 21st century Western world are urban people in a literal and an experiential sense, regardless of the specific place we inhabit. However, one could claim that many of us have missed out on much of the industrialization-phase that goes with the concept of “industrialized societies.” The character of urbanism has changed with the waxing and waning of industrialism. Like urbanization, industrialization is another process that has been essential to the formation of the modern world and the modern city, affecting its economics, society, culture, politics and form and setting an image of the urban that lingers.

How much of the image of that stereotypically industrial city and urban world, though – the giant factories spewing clouds of smoke, the rivers of laborers flowing into them, the bustling sidewalks, the massed collective public – seems a little obsolete now? Of course, it depends on where one stands. Avoiding a sticky and interminable discussion about the definition of cities which is better left for urban theorists; we note the discrepancy between the images we associate with the bygone city of industrial
modernity, and the places we live in today, which are still nominally urban. Suburbs, ex-
urbs, edge cities, megalopolises – all are in fact “city enough.”

I invoke personal experience and subjective impressions of a touchstone urban
place here because it may be the easiest, most visceral way to grasp a complex point
about cities (as all points about the city must be complex and qualified.) There is a
discrepancy between the conventional, conventionally-organized, conventionally-
imagined modern urban place which was – the city of industry – and those urban places
that make up much of our late 20th/early 21st century experience.

Deindustrialization As Key Feature of Contemporary Cities

Always in flux, the definition, the visual, cultural image and the form of the city
are now in sweeping transition. This is an epiphenomenon which seems to follow the
phenomenon of fundamental change in the economic and political structure of cities.
What has happened to the city in the United States and other modern industrial nations?
From the perspective of economists at least, deindustrialization is the core issue and key
feature of contemporary urbanism. The causes of deindustrialization in the West have
been examined and theorized ad infinitum via concepts such as the Maturity Thesis, the
Trade Specialization Thesis, and the Failure Thesis. (Byrne, 2001, p. 47) I am less
concerned here with dissecting the phenomenon of deindustrialization, and more so with
establishing it as the primary catalyst for the visible spatial phase-shift in cities like New
York, as well as others mentioned above. Deindustrialization has been and is the single
most important factor in the ongoing reconfiguration of urban space.
Over the past half-century or so, the economic cores of many American industrial-era cities have been largely hollowed out, fragmented, and scattered around the world. The factories, mills and docks of the early 20th century city have been shuttered and demolished, or perhaps later turned into chic, pricey loft dwellings for the “creative classes,” (Florida, 2002) the jobs they once provided having been sent overseas or done away with completely. Alternatively for some cities which have boomed after WWII (i.e., in the American Sunbelt and Southwest, and the new towns of Southeast England to name but a few) the question of making a difficult shift from organization around the production and distribution of material commodities (cars, steel beams, widgets) to the production and distribution of information, signs and services is mostly moot, for these later-developing cities possess far less obsolete industrial infrastructure to begin with. Many of these cities may focus more directly on being hotbeds of services (call centers, producer services, finance and banking), cultural production (entertainment, art and advertising) and/or leisure and tourism without so much physical, economic and social reconfiguration.

This reconfiguration is notable as it happens (or does not) because changes in the character of space are “contagious,” so to speak – they affect other spaces, especially when the forces of economics and regulation (or deregulation) are let loose and consolidate in some sort of spatial regime. Space is finite and to some extent contingent in a zero-sum kind of way – I cannot expand my physical space without taking some from someone or something else. Thus what affects one urban space is bound to affect other spaces adjacent to it (i.e. its suburban and rural surroundings). In modern nation-states, these contingent spaces – socio-spatial systems, to be precise – have operated with
and against each other in complex systems, ostensibly limited inside national and regional boundaries. The great global advance of recent decades has come via contemporary technological and ideological movements which have extended this system; there is digitization and liberation of information, plus the rise of a mobile, web-linked global populace on the one hand, and the triumph of neoliberalism’s agenda of deregulation and global free trade on the other. Now all, or at least most, places are on the same unlined field, in the same unbordered system. Increasingly, all compete with and against all.

As the most visible signs of industrialism disappear from our somewhat privileged view (from the cityscapes we view), we are presuming it dead. But before following this line, we should think about what we are saying, and be especially wary of going overboard vis a vis the changing city.

It remains viable to state that “the industrial production of commodities remains at the core of urban life.” (Byrne, 2001, p. 24) One way of qualifying this statement would be to consider services and experiences (“knowledge work”) as industrially-produced commodities, much the same as a widget – a semantic tack that counters the currently-accepted dialectic which holds material objects in strict opposition to less tangible services and cultural products. Why insist upon that distinction? They are all things, and they are still being produced in cities, deindustrializing processes in effect or not. As Byrne (2001) notes:

A commodity is a commodity is a commodity and that commodity can be an answered call, or health care, or the emotional labor of a bartender or PR person, just as much as it can be a sack of wheat, or a loaf of bread, or
a sack of coal, or the electricity coming down the wire, or raw cotton, or a shirt. (p. 26)

The steel mills and shipyards which built up Pittsburgh and Newcastle may have closed, but those cities have retrenched as industrial producers of commodities like health care services or cultural objects such as public art and pop music.

Another, rather different way of moderating or sophisticating the way we conceive of deindustrialization is to retrain our sights upon the global urban level, to glance over the realities of urban work and urban living that go against the western-centrism implicit in blanket assertions of postindustrialism, as if we were all beyond that. Car factory workers in Brazil, seamstresses in Vietnam, ship-breakers in Pakistan – a great majority of the world’s urban population, which now may be considered the majority of the world’s population – would probably dispute the idea that classic industrialism is a thing of the past. They would likely dispute that the dirty, dangerous, back-breaking work of making physical things has somehow disappeared from the face of the planet (yet we have so many manufactured gadgets to buy!), taking with it exploitative relations between labor and capital, and the social and health perils that Marxists described before falling out of fashion at the so-called “end of history.” That brave new world of the information society and knowledge economy, of workforces producing services, signs and experiences instead of material goods, which underpins our current thoughts on cities like New York, London, Frankfurt or Las Vegas seems a little naïve when we look past the top echelon.

But then again, that knowledge work and economy, along with the socio-cultural fabric, urban processes and lived disparities that come with it, develop and operate
simultaneously around the world, too. In a global city system it is not the same old bipolar story of rich, hegemonic North and poor, underdeveloped, dependent South, but something much more complicated and harder to cleanly analyze. China boasts a burgeoning, technologically savvy and well-off urban elite – the largest, fastest-growing middle class in history; their social, economic and cultural worlds, while certainly locally distinct, may be nearer to those in similar social strata in cities around the world, further from those of their peasant-migrant urban co-habitants. With increasingly similar socio-economic disparities and growing, if not complete connections to the global free markets and free market logic that Western societies have laboriously adapted to over the past few decades, it is not surprising to see postindustrial processes like the lucrative gentrification of old industrial lands and working-class neighborhoods (associated with the dis-invested inner cities of the US) evident also in mega-cities of the developing world like Shanghai and Mumbai; following the defeat of the latter city’s textile unions in a mid-1980s labor dispute, “the sites of the textile mills are being redeveloped for commercial and high-value residential uses in the same way as former docklands have been redeveloped in London.” (Byrne, 2001, p. 60)

The view being sketched here contains something to refute every blanket argument that the world is industrializing or deindustrializing, growing more disparate and desperately riven or less – and it becomes apparent that a portion of socio-economic theory established during the 20th century runs aground because its tendency towards strict dialectics and polarities maps awkwardly onto the contemporary global urban situation. Rich-poor, developed-undeveloped, North-South; these binaries reflect real, important differences in operation, but ultimately no traditional analytical framework –
be it class, race, gender, education, geography, political system – is robust enough to contend alone with the hyper-fragmentation brought on by simultaneous worldwide industrialization and deindustrialization, mobility of finances, labor and data, and a steady gravitation towards a deregulated global free market, especially since the fall of the Soviet Union.

Though all these factors may be interrelated, this last point is especially important because it reminds us that all things in the world happen in time, as well as in space and society, and that certain moments in time are decisive. The fragmented, deindustrialized contemporary city and the urbanism that comes with it has been in the making for decades – the global telecommunication lines, transportation networks and institutions that enable its existence did not spring up overnight. Where to pick up the start of it all is an open question, and likely an unanswerable one. At the Industrial Revolution(s)? At the dawn of the computer age and the formation of an Information Society, following World War II? In the social and political turmoil of the 1960s, or the financial and political shifts of the 1980s? These are all likely significant points and factors. Whatever the case may be, an important structural breakpoint was reached, a phase shift made more possible if not probable, when the alternative posed by state communism more or less vanished after 1991.

Capitalism is said to have won that long battle in the last years of the 20th century, but what has gone forward globally is a certain kind of capitalism, markedly different from earlier varieties. It is capitalism that:

has undergone a process of profound restructuring, characterized by greater flexibility in management; decentralization and networking of
firms both internally and in their relationships to other firms; considerable empowering of capital vis-à-vis labor, with the concomitant decline of influence of the labor movement; increasing individualization and diversification of working relationships; massive incorporation of women into the labor force, usually under discriminatory conditions; intervention of the state to deregulate markets selectively, and to undo the welfare state, with different intensity and orientations depending upon the nature of political forces and institutions in each society; stepped-up global economic competition, in a context of increasing geographic and cultural differentiation of settings for capital accumulation and management.

(Castells, 2000, p. 1)

In Castells’ terms this capitalism that we are living with now is “informational capitalism” – capitalism primarily organized not around ownership of property or industrial productivity, but the systematic processing of information and application of knowledge upon knowledge. It is a system that has been emerging since the restructuring-amid-crisis that went on in capitalist societies through the late 1970s and 1980s (we shall see that this time period was, not at all coincidentally, a nadir for New York City.) It is capitalism associated with, bound by, and enabled by the information technology revolution which took hold in the early 1970s, as opposed to earlier forms of capitalism which formed around mass industry or corporations. Namely, it is “profoundly different from its historical predecessors…it is global, and it is structured to a large extent, around a network of financial flows.” (Castells, 2000, p. 471) Here we may note that these particular characteristics of informational capitalism – globality, the fragmenting and
blurring of clear distinctions between labor and capital, ephemerality and volatility as a consequence of being attached to mercurial, unpredictable financial flows – lines up nicely with the picture of hyper-fragmented, chaotic global urbanism described above.

Informational capitalism – capitalism based on the action of knowledge-upon-knowledge – is the economic basis of what Castells (2000) calls the network society. Emphasizing the significance of networks to contemporary life, he states:

Networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power and culture. (p. 469)

Also:

Networks are appropriate instruments for a capitalist economy based on innovation, globalization, and decentralized concentration; for work, workers and firms based on flexibility, and adaptability; for a culture of endless deconstruction and reconstruction; for a polity geared towards the instant processing of new values and public moods; and for a social organization aiming at the supersession of space and the annihilation of time. (p. 470)

Networks scale and interconnect. They may be small, on the neighborhood or interpersonal or subcultural level; simultaneously they link up together to constitute regional, national and supranational networks. The internet – a network of networks – is a technological expression, a driver, and a symbol of this near-total, yet profoundly uneven state of interconnection.
Castells states “our societies are increasingly structured around a bipolar opposition between the Net and the Self.” (Castells, 2000, p. 2) But we might describe it as something more dynamic than just opposition. Now that this overall state of global-local interconnection has been identified and noted at all levels, from the individual tracking her popularity on a social-networking website, to the theorizing of academics, to the commercial imagery produced by and for the techno-corporate sphere, self-reflection of a sort is possible. Such reflection enables the self, or the city (embodied in the selves of its managers) to grasp the presence of a complex interconnected system surrounding and spanning it. More than that, it enables a self or a city to figure its own place in that system; but more than that, it enables it to strategize and act in order to maintain or improve that position amidst turbulence and flux. This noted tension between the overarching system and the individual cell, between the universal and the particular, is relevant to urban development strategies because the questing-after and hosting of a mega-event like the Olympics is one element in the repertoire of actions available to the postindustrial city when it reflects upon and attends to its regional, national, and global position.

Returning to the city, the thing to consider here is that these networked processes of “production, experience, power and culture” must be grounded in place. Part virtual – invisible information and currency flows dashing around in the ether – but also part concrete, the network (or networks) must be made of nodes that are physically somewhere, and so they are. Where those nodes are, physically, becomes more, not less important with the advent of digital technology and personal and corporate mobility. Investment in all sectors of business and life depends on the connecting points or
switches between them and the dominant global meta-network of capital movements, “enacted by information networks in the timeless space of financial flows.” (Castells, 2000, p. 472) Physical place does not lose relevance in a network society, fueled by informational capitalism. On the contrary, competition to be at a switch or chokepoint is intense. Conversely, to be off the network, unimportant to it, or unrecognized by it is crippling.

What this leads us towards is a view of cities in a complex globally-networked system.

**Cities-as-Systems in a Global System**

Cybernetics-derived terms such as *phase-shift* inspire further consideration of urbanism and complexity, of how we might conceive of the city as a complex system composed of multiple complex social, economic and cultural systems, nested inside a global complex city-system. The abstract idea of the city as a system, or organism, or mechanism is not particularly new. Cities have been conceptualized as organic and mechanical systems carrying out sociological and economic functions through history.iv Nor is it particularly ground-breaking to think of the various systemic effects and influences cities have upon each other regionally, nationally, or even in a world divided along ideological lines, as during the Cold War. The new feature here is to note how developments in geopolitics, technology, international law, and media and culture have made it possible for us to think of this ecology or system of cities in global terms, making almost no political or geographic exceptions.
The “global city” paradigm, describing a hierarchical system of cities around the world communicating and competing with one another has come to the forefront since the early 1990s. New York, London and Tokyo were established as prototypical global cities, while subsequent scholarship has plotted other cities into the system according to various criteria; i.e., whether they are “well-rounded” or occupy a specific niche (whether their primary systemic role is cultural, economic, political) as well as their systemic influence.

The idea of a “global city” is somewhat different from that of a “mega-city,” since the latter refers more explicitly to sheer population and size, while the former refers to and implies systemic positioning and relationships of kind as well as scale. Global cities may still be mega-cities, of course, and often they are. But beyond the New York-London-Tokyo axis, they often are not; comparatively less-populated cities such as Brussels and San Francisco fulfill important political and cultural roles in the global city system, for example, and may be notched high in the order. Of the ways to categorize and order global cities, those revolving around economics and finance may be the most clear-cut, quantifiable and relevant for political economists. The order may be made by quantifying the number of major bank headquarters in each city, the proportion of the workforce employed in producer services, or by summing the capital invested in various cities’ stock markets. These economic metrics, however, are not the only ways. There are in fact multiple sets of global city criteria, multiple other ways of categorizing and ordering the global city system, among them “illegal trafficking networks in people, drugs, stolen goods; immigrant personal and business networks; art biennales; the art market; tourism patterns and activist networks.” (Sassen, 2002, p. 3) Such pluralism
implies that the powers-that-be in a self-reflexive city might strategize and calculate in order to enhance their city’s position, taking advantage of various innate and engineered advantages. All that being said, economic might is not nullified. In fact it may yet be emphasized, smaller cities in the global North (such as San Francisco and Brussels) being disproportionately placed in relation to more populous, but less nodal cities in the global South.

Cities are important sites of analysis in an age of globalization because they compete for and house the nodes of the global financial and communication networks that drive informational capitalism, with the analysis itself taking the form of the global city discourse. This discourse of global cities (no matter what criteria we use to order them) focuses our attention on how the nebulous process of globalization is concretized and directed, how it “comes to ground” out of the abstract ether in global urban centers.

Globalization has come to ground over the past thirty years in an environment of structural and ideological flux, which has helped to shift the plates beneath it, producing further structural and ideological changes. The structural shift has come through a diminishment of the nation-state’s power as sovereign entity and economic force, in favor of units both larger than the nation (international governing bodies, cross-border alliances) and smaller (sub-regional polities, cities, and transnational corporations). It is not that the national unit has been completely superseded by other socio-spatial/political units and actors, or that nations have necessarily ceded all sovereignty. Rather, as some scholars argue, global cities increasingly serve as conduits between nations and a networked global economy; as Sassen states, “a growing number of cities today play an increasingly important role in directly linking their national economies with global
circuits….This in turn contributes to the formation of new geographies of centrality in which cities are the key articulators.” (Sassen, 2002, p. 2)

In a more or less parallel process, there has also been an ideological shift regarding the role of urban government, from its being a provider of civic services and goods to its being a facilitator of corporate economic growth and accumulation. In the United States, this ideological shift may be traced to the urban politics of mid-to-late 20th century; in fact its seed was sown and fertilized in the postwar period and through the Great Society reforms of the 1960s. This timing is notable. The notion that a city’s government bore responsibility for a wide array of civic needs beyond the basics of policing, utilities and infrastructure (embracing needs such as public housing) was itself novel, encouraged by the social programs enacted and maintained from the 1930s onward. For some time the idea held, albeit unevenly and against the assaults of conservative ideologues intent on rolling back any intrusion of statism.

Through the late 1960s and early 1970s the situation changed drastically through a complex set of factors. Massive urban renewal projects disfigured functional, if poor neighborhoods and helped to institutionalize cycles of poverty. Pent-up social unrest and inequities exploded in race riots. Subsequent “white flight” from urban centers, together with the political prioritizing of middle-class suburbs (to which many minorities were still barred entrance via ownership, covertly or overtly) and the first tidings of mass deindustrialization meant the sapping of a cohesive urban political base. By the mid-1970s, the federal funding that cities had come to depend on to supply services and carry out projects was in decline, thanks in no small part to national-level politicians committed to an ideology of letting cities fend for themselves. But many American cities, weakened
by structural decay, economic hardship and social unraveling could not fend for themselves, turning into ready-made case studies of the failure of the welfare state. The decline of the American city became a self-fulfilled prophecy.

Despite the wrenching, large-scale socio-spatial and economic restructuring that took place during this period and continued through the 1970s and 1980s, place – urban place – remained then and remains now “a market commodity that can produce wealth and power for its owners.” (Logan & Molotch, 2007, p. 50) In fact we may look to this nadir to find the seed of the postmodern city. The urban crises of the 1960s, 70s and 80s, detonating scattershot from Newark to Los Angeles, Detroit to New York, Boston to Chicago, may be seen as cementing the hold that loosely confederated elites in their respective cities – “growth coalitions” – already had upon local politics. With the affirmation of their influence came the growth-first orientation identified with these elite groups.

These growth coalitions, to use Logan and Molotch’s term, are made up of the elite rentier classes – large-scale real estate owners, developers and speculators – as well as the local politicians with whom they are locked in a symbiotic relationship. Attached to a particular urban place and to each other because of their landholdings and/or political careers, the power players in these classes form local coalitions. Their chief position and strategy reads something like this: urban growth – meaning a growing population and intensified land use, leading to a rise in property values is not just good, it is the first and foremost good for the landlord, the politician, and the city as a whole. “Elites use their growth consensus to eliminate any alternative vision of the purpose of local government or the meaning of community.” (Logan & Molotch, 2007, p. 51)
In this contemporary growth-oriented city, other local institutions and groups, such as universities, small business owners, professionals and multinational corporations tend to play a subsidiary but important role, approving the strategies and tactics of the powerful. A special, magisterial role is reserved for the press and for utilities, which are conventionally thought to be above the fray. This supposed disinterest allows them to play the role of moderators and adjudicators of disputes between growth advocates and critics. But in reality, institutions such as the media and utilities depend on the expansion of the city for their own economic wellbeing as well, even if they are ultimately less concerned with the precise direction or distribution of that growth.

This idea of a city’s political, economic and social actors (sometimes all in the same person) emphasizing financial, territorial and population growth above all other goals for the city is not new. Cutthroat competition between cities for business investment has gone on for decades, if not well over a century; for example, Logan and Molotch cite Boorstin’s chronicling of city boosterism and competition throughout the settling and development of the American West. But the game of inducing companies to place new factories and plants (“smokestack chasing”), so prevalent throughout the 20th century, has ultimately morphed with deindustrialization into cities doggedly pursuing more mobile banking and financial services, high-tech and computer firms, and artistic and symbolic workers (musicians, actors, advertising and marketing executives) who bring with them not only financial but cultural capital.

Two key shifts in contemporary urban political economics can be underlined here; first, that in recent decades, the kind of institutions and workforces that are courted have changed, in line with a shift from the industrial to the service-oriented, mobile, flexible
and dematerialized. Secondly (but just as important) the playing field, as alluded to above in discussing network society and a global-city system in the wake of statism’s decline, now spans almost the whole world.

Cities must then become more innovative, aggressive and pliant to hold on to what symbolic and material wealth they have, and to draw in more. With growth constantly the goal, they must become entrepreneurial, to use a term associated with the cultural geographer David Harvey. Harvey’s work on the “entrepreneurial city,” which has been followed by that of other scholars tracing the changing policies and patterns of today’s cities along similar lines, frames urban entrepreneurialism as the ways in which city governments are influenced by, partner with, and commingle with private enterprise. This entrepreneurial city concept usefully encompasses all the urban-historical phenomena, factors and effects talked about to this point in this chapter: the deindustrialization of cities in the developed world and increasingly worldwide, along with subsequent/concurrent economic, social and manufacturing crises accelerating the shifts; the post-Soviet emergence of a network of global cities, interconnected through high-speed transportation and communication networks and in constant competition with each other; scenarios in which the largest of these global cities bypass their state’s control and exert power as city-states proper, extending their own political, economic and cultural influence worldwide; and a sweeping ideological transition from Keynesianism to neo-liberalism which sets off a cascade of attitude and policy shifts at all levels of government, from the national to the municipal.

The entrepreneurial city is the guiding narrative of urban politics, economics and spatial organization at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century.
For the entrepreneurial city as for the entrepreneurial person, growth is paramount. And 
urban entrepreneurialism and growth in turn is strongly linked to image-based strategies 
such as place-marketing.

**NYC2012: Needs and Networks**

New York is a proud but imperfect city. Even the city's advocates must 
acknowledge that it suffers (grievously, in some cases) from the problems faced by all 
modern cities – at least if those advocates wish to be taken seriously. Those bidding to 
bring an Olympic Games to a city like New York would want very much to be taken 
seriously, and so however fervently they might laud, prop, preen, burnish and sell the 
city, they must stop short of denying its many shortcomings. What good would it do to 
deny that New York, like any other place, has some real problems? Because it is the 
nation's largest city and a global center of media, advertising, finance, and tourism, great 
numbers of people in the U.S. and abroad (IOC members among them) are likely to have 
experienced the bad as well as the good of the city. Such experiences may come directly 
or indirectly, via the media. Congestion, crowding and gridlock, physical decay and 
systemic breakdowns, glaring socioeconomic disparities, pockets of malaise, crime and 
other dysfunctions cannot be concealed or ignored. Even the city's boosters cannot 
pretend that New York is Utopia or anything like it.

What good would it do, instead, to carefully *use* selected, manageable faults or 
weaknesses of the pre-Olympic city to say “this is a very, very good city, worthy of your 
vote now. With the Olympics to inspire and propel its growth, it can be a truly great 
one”? That is a different story. Assertions like this may allow the Olympic Games and
the figures heading the Olympic Movement to take on a magnanimous, quasi-heroic role. The NYC2012 bid book framed New York as a city with certain needs – such as the need for a modernized transportation infrastructure, more office and convention/event space, more and better-developed open space, parklands and amateur/public sports facilities. By depicting these needs as due (at least in part) to the city's renaissance and booming growth that the bid book also frames and narrates, the bid narrative suggests that hosting the Olympics would help New York reach a new stage in its development as a city, at the same time that New York would offer the Olympics a stage unlike any it had had before. Working together, the city and the cultural institution could each meet their own needs.

The second element of the “needs and networks” in this chapter's title (and the secondary focus of the chapter itself) invokes a broader systems thinking approach – a way to conceive of complex entities made up of complex entities, nested in larger complex entities. It involves some cognizance of the real, material networks and systems that New York is composed of, which require constant maintenance and improvement. This means its transportation and communication networks, as well as systems of parks, open public spaces, community recreation facilities and sports stadiums, and other things that contribute to a city's functioning and quality of life. At the same time, it also invokes the larger, typically more abstract networks that New York is part of, greater networks and systems that demand constant work so that it may stay among the vanguard. Among these are the networks (however conceptualized) of “world cities,” the dynamic, part-hierarchical, part-rhizomatic systems that determine regional and global economic, cultural, political and financial leader-cities.
Addressing Concerns (Before They Are Concerns)

Each candidate city is appraised by selectors from the International Olympic Committee at various points in the host city selection process. The greatest concerns of the host city selectors in the early phases obviously need to be addressed in the materials (such as the bid book) which will inform the final decision. For example, various candidate cities may appear to lack adequate hotel space, financial wherewithal to build facilities, or political stability.

In New York's case, traffic topped the list of the IOC's preliminary concerns. This is not likely to shock anyone who has spent time in the New York area. Because such concerns seldom surprise those who know the candidate cities as well as bid organizers do, they may be pre-emptively mediated and even nullified through the bid materials.

Perhaps this occurs via a process loosely akin to Barthesian inoculation; in Mythologies (1957), Roland Barthes described the rhetorical maneuver by which an entity's or product's weakness is converted to its strength. In a typical example, he refers to margarine producers “inoculating” consumer audiences skeptical of that product's quality compared to butter by deliberately, carefully injecting a contingent “evil.” This occurs via a carefully weakened suggestion of margarine's inferiority, just as homeopaths inject a diluted portion of a virus into a patient to make them immune to the virus. Once inoculated in such a way, Barthes argues, audiences react less strongly to the original, more damning perception. An Olympic bid book is in part a place-marketing document, and we can expect those producing one to use tricks and tactics from the advertising and marketing arsenal such as the tactic Barthes analyzed. In the Olympic context, this means that a city's perceived shortcomings or weaknesses, such as heavy traffic or sparse,
inadequate athletic facilities thus can become assets to the bid. Instead of being denied
outright or elided, they may be recognized and described as correctable exigencies.

This tactic, I suggest, is at work in the NYC2012 bid book. Some of New York
City's most pressing needs – for modernized, forward-thinking transportation and
communications infrastructure, more public open space and recreational facilities, and
state-of-the-art sporting venues – are linked with what the IOC expects and demands of
contemporary host cities. In order to bring New York up to the standard of and keep it in
the vanguard of world cities, it can be argued that such things require fixing or reforming.

Remedying these problems can be made to look entirely possible – especially in
the seven year time-frame between host city selection and the lighting of the torch in that
city. The remedy itself would be Olympic-branded. Thus, the Olympics can be positioned
as something much more than a fleeting spectacle; they can be framed as a wedge, a
catalyst for much-needed and desirable improvements and progress – leading to the
Olympics as putative urban hero. It becomes not just a case of what New York City can
do for the Olympics, but what the Olympics can do for New York City. For the Olympic
movement's keepers, the IOC, this can be turned into a useful and gratifying appeal.
There is much criticism that the modern Olympics exploits (or else allows allied powerful
interests) to exploit the Olympics' cultural and historical weight towards their own
narrow ends, such as stadiums and mega-hotels. Against these jabs, the Olympic name,
symbols and imagery could be associated instead with more positive developments and
changes benefiting a wider range of city residents. But a great deal of discursive care is
required all the same, given the contemporary scrutiny of the improvements and progress
that Olympics and other mega-events bring to cities.
**Transportation: the Olympic X**

The NYC2012 bid book lays out the vision of a transit-based games. Virtually all event venues lay along what is called the “Olympic X,” a pair of perpendicular axes running north-south and east-west across the five boroughs of New York City. The east-west axis would be a special Olympic Rail train service running on Long Island Rail Road and Amtrak tracks from Flushing Meadows-Corona Park in Queens to Penn Station on Manhattan's West Side, then on New Jersey Transit tracks to the Meadowlands complex. According to the bid book, nearly all of the necessary rail line already existed before the bid began, a short track extension to the Olympic Village the only part to be added. The north-south axis of the Olympic X was to be not road or rail but marine-based, the main branch a ferry route stretching from the northernmost event venues (Baker Field at the northern tip of Manhattan, Pelham Bay Park in the Bronx) to Staten Island, the southernmost borough and site of events like mountain biking races and equestrian competitions. Branches of the Olympic ferry network would extend in multiple spokes to reach event venues, as well as far as JFK Airport to the southeast, La Guardia airport to the northeast and Newark airport to the southwest.

Transportation's integral role in NYC2012's Olympic bid deserves reiteration; since so much of my analysis focuses on the rhetorical gambits, narratives and messaging of the bid book; the Olympic X is *not* just a rhetorical gambit or pretty design tacked on after the fact. It is designed-in – a load-bearing structure, so to speak. I have termed the bid book both a blueprint and a sales brochure. Here I admit that I am less qualified to read blueprints than brochures; therefore I want to separate the logistical qualities of the
Olympic X design (an analysis best left to urban planners, economists and transportation specialists) from the ways in which the Olympic X was described and promoted in words and images. In this work I look primarily at the latter; that said, one does not need training in regional planning to assume that any large-scale transportation plan – especially one that plots some degree of reorientation away from roads, after nearly one hundred years of auto-centric urban development, towards rail and waterways – would have far-reaching consequences. Is the Olympic X such a large-scale transportation plan? I believe the answer is “large-scale enough.” The Olympic X was proposed specifically to make a three-week-long sporting event function, but the investments of time, labor and money to put it all together deny the idea of a fleeting, contingent network to be packed up and thrown out after the torch was put out. Instead, I believe that the Olympic X network, in some form, would have been anything but temporary. The Olympic X is not to be compared with (for example) a special bus route from a city center to an outlying fairgrounds, used once a year and thus not altering the spatial fabric of that city very much. The design and building of terminals and stops, the subsidization of and inducements to ferry operators to acquire and run new boats on new routes, and the re-training of city residents to understand and use a new, alternative network, to re-conceptualize ways of getting around the metropolis would all be wasted if their sole reason for being was the Olympic Games. Once in place (probably long before the Olympics actually began) it would be subsumed into the city's collective spatial functioning.

Underlying the transportation plans of NYC2012 is reassurance – a soothing set of words to head off concerns among IOC decision-makers and city residents alike that
New York traffic might paralyze the Games, or that Olympic traffic would paralyze an already bustling, crowded New York. That “worry not” aspect is soft-pedaled. However, the sounding of several positive notes is overt and continuous wherever the Olympic X transportation plan crops up in the bid book; the Olympic X will be fast, secure (only athletes and team officials, members of the Olympic Family, and the media will have access) reliable, traffic-free, and perhaps most importantly, green.

### Green Water

In millennial New York a couple of relevant phenomena or developments were both emerging and converging. One was this broad cultural-technological-economic striving (especially in design and architectural circles) for environmentally-friendly, low-impact solutions – “going green.” The other was a renaissance of alternative modes of local public transportation – among them, waterborne transportation. The two might be linked, if not causally connected – and both were key to the Olympic X plan.

Eco-consciousness began gestating in the hopeful yet alarmist atmosphere of the 1960s and 70s; by the 1980s the concept of sustainability was being articulated not just by dreamy idealists, but high-ranking politicians and United Nations officials. (United Nations, 1987) By the 1990s it had infiltrated public policy and urban design. This concept of sustainability often appeals by holding out the prospect of moving progressively into the future by going back to the past. The quandary of how to improve and even add to already densely-developed cities like New York at the end of the 1990s would lead innovative planners and architects to look not just at new technology, but at history. Influenced by some post-postindustrial weariness, they ask: can we adapt past
customs, methods, materials and life-ways to modern situations, in order to lessen environmental impacts and redirect society towards a more enlightened future? The irony that this often involves modernizing and industrializing past ways of doing things, or reclaiming, in the name of progress, things that had been abandoned in the name of another era’s “progress,” should not be lost.

A fundamental geographical point; New York City is surrounded by water. New York's harbors and waterways figured prominently in its growth as a regional and international shipping, trade and immigration center. Historic images of 18th, 19th and early 20th century New York show large dock and warehouse facilities lining the lower Manhattan and Brooklyn waterfronts. Dense traffic covers the water; ferries, clippers, trawlers, tankers, battleships, ocean liners and various other craft dot the harbor. But by the end of the 20th century, much of that traffic and activity had disappeared. The highways, tunnels and bridges of Moses-era New York changed the transportation patterns and urban spatial-cognitive maps of contemporary New Yorkers, while global economic and technological changes changed much of the waterfronts from industrious, if dangerous zones of shipping and transportation to dank, desolate burned-out hulls. The waterways of New York have been thought of as many things through the past and through the present day; barriers, borders, recreational areas, environmental assets, aesthetic properties. At the end of the millennium, one principal way to see the waterways – as a conduit or avenue for intra-urban transportation – was just starting to be remembered, after a long amnesiac period.

That remembrance was coming through the second important development at the time of the bid's creation – the renaissance of the city's ferry system. Here is one major
example of looking to the past for present and future solutions, especially those that can be tinted “green.” Ferries had once linked the city's boroughs and neighboring New Jersey, at a time when the city was less sprawling and populous. After decades of obsolescence, in the mid-1980s trucking magnate Arthur Imperatore Jr. parlayed some old industrial land on the New Jersey side of the Hudson and a single boat into the New York Waterway ferry company; by the turn of the millennium this company had established itself as an important addition to the city's transportation system. While New York Waterway dominated the revived industry, carrying over 90 percent of travelers on its fleet of over fifty boats and generating over $70 million a year in revenue by 2003 (Bagli & Flynn, 2003), other companies, also privately-run but partially subsidized, entered the fray.

Ferry transportation was on the rise at the time of the NYC2012 Olympic bid. Like the Olympic bid itself, it was an amalgam of public and private interests; privately controlled, but utilizing public resources (through government subsidy) while impacting the lives of all the city's citizens. In the 1990s and early 2000s ferries became entrenched as a key part of the city's transportation infrastructure, especially as a connection between the financial district of lower Manhattan and New Jersey (as an alternative to already crowded highway tunnels and PATH trains, especially after the 9/11 attacks damaged the PATH station under the World Trade Center.) Once entrenched, the ferry companies leveraged municipal money – less in the form of operating subsidies, but more in taxpayer-funded improvements to facilities like terminals and docks, as well as more and faster ferryboats. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey's de facto investments in alternative forms of transportation like ferries broke with the modern concept of public
transportation as something run by government, opting instead to follow the trend of increasing privatization of essential city services. Though in fact, this harkened back to the earliest days of urban mass transportation, when many ferry, train and bus lines were built and operated by private companies.

Who would operate the waterborne part of the Olympic X is open to conjecture, as the bid book does not go into depth on these contingent details. But it can be safely assumed that one or more of the major existing private ferry companies would take the lead, as opposed to a state or city-run company that did not exist in the early 2000s and showed no sign of being created between then and 2012. As with other parts of the Olympic plan, from the Olympic Village to renovated parks and facilities, the question of who or what interests would benefit in the long run is an important one to ask, if a difficult one to answer. Who, in this case, may benefit from the construction of docks and terminals in newly developed waterfront locations for the Games, the subsidized purchase of more boats (necessary for the Olympics, but easily reassigned to other routes afterwards) and other such things? It is logical to conclude that one of the major private ferry companies would have benefited handsomely from this Olympic-fueled development (not to mention the prestige and commercial benefits of being known as the operators of the Olympic Ferry) long after the event was over. With the Olympic X plan central to NYC2012’s bid and the north-south water axis essential, drastic changes to its emphasis on water transportation are hard to imagine. Whoever would have been awarded the Olympic Ferry contract would have won a plum prize indeed. But in re-orienting metro New York area residents back towards the water in grand fashion, we
may at least speculate that all the ferry companies may have benefited in the end. A rising tide could well have lifted all boats.

Language, Imagery and the Olympic X

The Olympic bid book is a corporate marketing document and not a novel, so we should temper hopes of it advancing the cause of good prose. Throughout the document, various words, phrases and themes crop up again and again. These phrases crop up less as poetic tropes, and more to drive home key selling points. Once seized upon, a term or idea is often used and re-used within an inch of its life. Part of this is due to the standards and requirements of marketing writing, not to mention the abilities of and demands on those producing the book. Where imaginative, unconventional language and structures could have been used, the bid book's writers instead retreat to vapid adjectival phrases and boilerplate description: high-speed ferries are always “gleaming”; vistas are consistently “grand.” The rigid structure of the bid book also plays a part; each event has its own chapter, in which things like the event venues, schedules and other particulars are discussed. With several venues hosting multiple events, the same descriptions of sites and legacies are cut-and-pasted from chapter to chapter. For example, there is no variation in the description of the Queensbridge Athletic Center in the Badminton chapter from that in the Track Cycling chapter. They are simply repeated wholesale. Lovers of fine – or just varied – writing may find it tedious. It is. But the repetition of certain words, phrases and ideas is also useful for this work, as I look to draw out and analyze prominent themes.
The introductory chapter of the NYC2012 bid book includes a section entitled “Glimpses of The Games.” It is a slightly imaginative departure from the oft-repetitive boilerplate style of the subsequent chapters. Via a series of vignettes, it depicts the run-up, operations and lasting effects of a New York Olympic Games. These sketches are exultant and personalized, drawing us into the minds and sensibilities of Olympic visitors. An Italian journalist and her mother arrive in New York's newly renovated JFK Airport; once in the city, the journalist explores the state of the art media center she will work in and her accommodations with their “stunning views,” while her mother goes to an Italian neighborhood in the Bronx to meet family members with whom she will stay. Members of the arriving Russian contingent gaze from a ferry at the flags and banners flying over Brighton Beach, a Russian enclave. In the Olympic Village, “athletes and coaches stroll along the water, intermingling in dozens of languages.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. xvi) The Opening Ceremonies begin with a dramatic parade of ships through New York Harbor; athletes' families are welcomed into neighborhoods and homes of compatriots living in New York; a cultural Olympiad occupies the city alongside the sporting contests. The event is a spectacular success. All the figures in this narrative are suitably awestruck at the celebration that New York has put on for them. Years after the Games are over, New Yorkers who were children in 2012 have become aspiring Olympians, and “the physical improvements created for the Games proved the spark for immense urban transformations.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. xxvii) Such breathless, if tension-free sketches seem intended to stir the imagination of the bid book's readers, to conjure up and excite a sense of What Could Be.
The Olympic X is a key part of this section, and wherever it is referred to, its key characteristics – speed, convenience, security and greenness – are integrated into the idyllic narrative and played up. Thus, in the weeks before the torch is lit, logistical preparations are running smoothly, and the finishing touches are being put on the network's Olympic finery:

The special trains of the Olympic Rail that will carry athletes to the east-west venues also start their test runs. Throughout the sprawling subway system, cars have been refurbished, stations painted and renovated, and platforms enhanced with colorful Olympic pennants and maps. (NYC2012, 2000, p. xii)

There is no frantic rush here to finish construction (as in Athens and other Olympics), no last minute snags, no encroachment by tacky vendors upon Olympic-branded public space (as in Atlanta). Once the Games begin, there is also no doubt that the transportation system is up to the task. “This system of special trains and ferries, with precise schedules and rapid travel times, avoids traffic congestion and delay.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. Intro.: 30) Travel times are quoted to drive the point home; “from Olympic Village in Queens, 24 mins to the northern tip of Manhattan by ferry; 18 minutes to the Javits Center by rail. (NYC2012, 2000, p. Intro.: 30) Convenience, reliability, security and environmental friendliness are bound together in the form of this dedicated network. Tailored to the needs of athletes and closed to the general public, it need not be built at great cost and ecological impact but simply formed out of existing infrastructure and natural assets.

Besides those elements of the Olympic X plan, another motif can be identified in the bid book – one especially conducive to the excitable prose of the Introduction
chapter. A New York Games built around the Olympic X would be a festival of pleasant, even soul-stirring experiences. The bid books Introduction makes it clear that this will be a water-based Olympic Games, reiterating the focus on the city's most abundant natural resource and that resource's aesthetic potential. First and most prominently, the typically mundane experience of site-to-site travel would be heightened and spectacularized by use of the waterways. Nearness to the water also brings sweeping views of the city skyline from competition venues and the Olympic Village, the events taking place on the bright blue waters of the Atlantic Ocean, the renovation and re-purposing of urban waterfront areas, among other things.

The bid book repeatedly evokes the aesthetic beauty, excitement and tranquility of a New York Olympic Games. “High-speed” ferries “shine” and “gleam” as they carry athletes from the Olympic Village to the competition site. The Olympic Village’s waterfront site is imagined offering “peaceful promenades, an unusual combination of grand vistas, clean air and cool water breezes, and extraordinary security.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. xv) Prospects of an Olympic celebration spread far and wide and munificently over the city even makes for unexpected juxtapositions of place and image, as in the depiction of the sparkling beaches of the Bronx where the modern pentathlon events are to be held.

This “Glimpses” narrative extends beyond the time-frame of the Games themselves – a year and then nearly a decade into the future. In the year 2020, the infrastructural legacy of the 2012 Games endures:

The physical improvements created for the Games proved the spark for immense urban transformations....The high-speed ferry system has
become a way of life for tens of thousands of New Yorkers living and working along the once-neglected waterfront now lined with parks and recreation facilities, newly-constructed housing, and offices, grouped together in lively residential districts at the waters’ edge. (NYC2012, 2000, p. xxvii)

A growing city's future transportation needs are depicted as not just being met but exceeded, the city and its residents transformed by an Olympic-inspired solution.

A new high-speed ferry system would connect the network of parks and sports facilities – as well as Queens West – and would make the coastline an easy commute (NYC2012, 2000, p. 1: 29).

The Williamsburg Waterfront Park athletic center will be a cornerstone of a revitalized, public East River waterfront. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 10: 33)

Today, the Olympic X plan may be consigned to a curious scrap heap marked “abandoned visions of the future.” But the idea of a water-based metropolitan New York transportation network not only endured, but grew after the NYC2012 bid failed in 2005. Through mid-2000s, new routes were developed, both along the lines sketched out by the Olympic X and beyond. Sports venues like Yankee Stadium in the Bronx, and shopping areas like the IKEA store in Red Hook, Brooklyn were made reachable by ferry from downtown Manhattan. Many of these routes failed in relatively short order; a New York Waterways route serving the Rockaways was shut down after a few years due to a lack of ridership; another ferry route up the Hudson River to Yonkers, meant to stimulate a redeveloped waterfront and encourage waterborne commuting from Westchester County was discontinued as well. Meanwhile, New York Water Taxi’s development of terminals
in Brooklyn, Queens and Manhattan have survived less because of their utility to commuters, and more as part of a strategic re-orientation towards leisure and entertainment. Mainly, the construction of Water Taxi beaches (where no swimming is allowed), waterfront areas for young urban residents to drink and party at on summer nights.

The irony is that despite the Olympic X not coming into being, the general development of alternative modes of transportation like ferries, in a general hub-and-spoke pattern (as sketched out in the Olympic plan) continued anyway – with mixed success. Perhaps there is a lesson to be learned in this, a lesson that would be learned, Olympics or not. What that lesson is may be debatable: that ferries are not a solution to New York's transportation issues; that ferries in a hub-and-spoke, Manhattan-centric pattern, as traced out in the Olympic X, are not a sustainable approach; or maybe that high-speed ferries are less “green” than advertised.

**Parks and Athletic Facilities**

Along with transportation and communications infrastructure, another major need addressed in the NYC2012 bid book is for more athletic facilities, parks and public space – especially green spaces and community access to reborn waterfronts. The idea that bustling, densely-built-up cities must be leavened with areas for recreation, relaxation and communing with nature has influenced urban thought and planning for more than a hundred years. New York City exemplifies this thinking; it is not just a city with a few sprawling, grand city parks like Central Park, Prospect Park or Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, but a city of thousands of other parks, athletic fields, and other recreational
facilities large and small. Today the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation is the steward of over 29,000 acres of city land, or 14 percent of the city (NYC Parks & Recreation Department, 2012).

People typically consider parks to be good things – morally, physically, aesthetically and economically uplifting. It is hard to find many who will fight against a park (contests over uses of and alterations to parks is a different story.) Seldom are “NIMBYs” roused to combat the construction of a new park nearby. In fact, parks and green spaces are more likely to be seen as medicine for the sick city; the “lungs of the city,” or a natural retreat from the “urban jungle.” In The Death and Life of Great American Cities, Jane Jacobs wrote, “Conventionally, neighborhood parks or park-like open spaces are considered boons conferred on the deprived populations of cities.” (Jacobs, 1961, p. 89) That was in the early 1960s, and Jacobs was writing critically against the tendency of urban planners (especially early-mid 20th century urban planners, indebted to icons like Le Corbusier and his Radiant City ideal, as well as the Progressive notion of the Garden City) to implant or reconfigure parks and other open spaces as a standard cure for urban ills. In her view, parks do have salutary effects on their neighborhoods and on cities as a whole – sometimes. They can also have the opposite effect. Jacobs cautioned that parks are volatile places, which “tend to run to extremes of popularity and unpopularity,” with as much potential to turn into “dispirited city vacuums” (Jacobs, 1961, p. 89) as bucolic greenswards amidst the concrete hustle and bustle.

Terms like “urban fabric” were taken seriously by Jacobs, and readers can discover in her key works a systems or ecological approach to thinking about cities,
though she did not stress those exact terms. After Jacobs' death in 2009, Witold Rybczynski wrote that her legacy included “a more evolutionary, humanist, and small-scale approach to city planning,” (Rybczynski, 2006) against the modern orthodoxy of large-scale, top-down plans and planners. We may want to believe, like Goldberger, that this Jacobsian perspective and Jacobs' ideas – especially on the value of economic, spatial, cultural and social diversity – have won sympathy if not ascendance in urban thought and planning over the past fifty years.

The NYC2012 bid book proposes numerous major park and recreation projects. The Olympics would catalyze enhancements and new construction in areas across all five boroughs, including:

155 acres of the Staten Island Greenbelt
19 acres on Brooklyn’s waterfront
17 acres of Queens West
29 acres on Manhattan’s West Side
Over 2000 paved parking spaces in the Bronx’s Orchard Beach
260 acres of Flushing Meadows Park, where two deteriorating lakes will be cleaned up (NYC2012, 2000, pp. 4–45)

Parks and open green spaces (as seen in tranquil artists' renderings), as well as athletic facilities play a prominent role in the bid, yet we note that they are all designed, installed and controlled from the top-down – products of yet another grand plan. There is little sense that Jacobs' systems-oriented way of urban thinking influenced the NYC2012 bid book's approach to parks. Nor is there much regard for urban fabric or nuanced distinctions between different types of parks. Throughout the bid book, parks and other
recreational facilities are “sorely-needed,” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 1: 29) though it is not really explained why. They just are. A quantitative increase in parkland, especially when that increase comes as part of some reclamation project, justifies itself in the context of the Olympic bid book:

The Olympic Games would leave New York with over 600 acres of new or enhanced parkland. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 4: 37)

Perhaps this need for more and better parks stems from the unexamined assumption that parkland, open space and recreational facilities are all self-evidently good and the more of it that there is, the better – the very idea that Jacobs criticized. Or perhaps it is energized by a more pragmatic and economically significant argument. The nearness of an urban park has long been claimed to increase property values in a neighborhood; this “proximate principle” held sway through and supported the golden age of city park construction (between the 1850 and the 1930s) though precise measurement of parks' effects upon real estate values was sparse for much of that era. Recent studies indicate a positive relationship between parks and real estate values (Crompton, 2005) but that only reaffirms a belief that many people – especially developers – already believed and acted upon for many decades. The language used to describe the current state of neighborhoods and areas to-be-developed for Olympic sites is another point of interest. Throughout the bid book words like deteriorating, underused, undeveloped, barren and aging, (what may be called a “vocabulary of decline”) crop up to describe areas targeted for Olympic development. For example:
The largely barren East River waterfront would once again become the Main Street of America’s premier water metropolis. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 1: 30)

Such terms help make a case for this development by creating an exigency, and the image of a revived Main Street carried along by these terms can be culturally powerful in a contemporary American context. Yet it is surprising to see these terms so freely used, as they connote another age and its political-social-spatial agenda – that of mid-20th century large scale urban renewal. The massive redevelopment associated with this era of urban renewal – entire neighborhoods divided or demolished, functioning, if gritty working-class and racial/ethnic minority districts “improved” by the imposition of highways, public housing, industrial and cultural complexes, stadia and other top-down projects in their midst – has been criticized, especially by urban political thinkers, as crude, short-sighted and heavy-handed, if not deliberately biased along racial and ethnic lines.

An associated discursive legacy of mid-century urban renewal may be urban scholars' and city residents' heightened sensitivity to ostensibly-positive, yet loaded terms like improvements and enhancements, advantages and benefits, especially when they are trotted out by high-ranking politicians, boosters and developers. It is not that all improvement or progress is bad per se. Rather, there is simply too long and ingrained a history of such benefits accruing to an elite strata, while local working- and middle-class residents are marginalized, their interests downplayed or suppressed, to be ignored. Yet here those loaded words (or rhetoric that closely matches them) appear in the bid book,
often in the same breath as words drawn out of that above-mentioned “vocabulary of decline”:

Improvements on the West Side and at Queens West will help New York take fuller advantage of underused areas of the city – without relying on the automobile. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 4: 45)

Whose improvements? Underused from whose perspective? Who is and is not reified in the New York the writers have in mind? These are words liable to set alarm bells ringing.

The waterfront once used for shipping and manufacturing has been gradually reclaimed for recreational use, as new parks and promenades replace aging piers along the water’s edge. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 5: 52)

Reclamation means “taking back,” though whether it is taken back from the rivers via the creation of new land upon fill (the conventional land-use sense of the word) or from marginalized residents of deindustrialized zones is, in this case at least, open to interpretation. Reclamation may not necessarily always be a bad thing. Much of coastal Manhattan, for example, was reclaimed – built out upon fill centuries ago. Nor are stagnancy, dilapidation and disuse goals worth striving for. It is not that areas and facilities do not age or require renovation and reconfiguration as time passes – they may well need it. Yet one cannot help thinking that terms like “aging,” applied here to downcast industrial areas, connotes one set of images and then suggests the proposed Olympic-driven solutions. Sites of a similar age and condition in other urban environments (for instance, in an august upper-class neighborhood) may instead be termed historic, vintage, or early – the resonances being completely different. When
places are framed as such and thought of in the latter way, they may more often be preserved or at least built around, not reclaimed or redeveloped by outside interests.

Semantic choices like these do important work; they prevail upon the reader to visualize a place in terms of what can and should be done with it. The language describing NYC2012's proposed event sites consistently suggests that these places have been and are in the throes of decline and deterioration, and that the Olympic effort poses the optimal way to spruce them up and catalyze a rebirth. Present-day urbanites whose study and attention has led them to understand rhetoric's utility in the hands of powerful interests – or who need only call upon their own experiences and memories of urban renewal from the not-too-distant past – may be counted upon to interpret terms like “reclamation” as broadly and critically as possible. It should not be surprising if such terms touch nerves or touch off resistance.

To look at the NYC2012 bid's approach towards supposed needs like parkland and public space, it is as if the bid book's producers largely ignored or dismissed the last half century or so or urban thinking – especially the concepts advanced by Jane Jacobs and her followers, which eschewed grand designs and sweeping prescriptions in favor of a more subtle, holistic, human-scaled conception of a city as a system comprised of systems. To look at the language that frames the potential development sites, it is as if the NYC2012 organizers were either blithely or deliberately ignorant of the skepticism and resentment that greets the innocuous-sounding language of revitalization and benefits. After decades of slum-clearing, urban renewal and gentrification, many city residents harbor little patience for the seemingly innocuous.
Win-Win Promises

The NYC2012 bid organizers promised more than just much-needed parks and green space. To anticipate the demands of the various interests and stakeholders in a New York Olympics, the bid book producers weave a web of win-win relationships to come from all this Olympic-oriented construction and redevelopment. The narrative being spun in the NYC2012 bid book is one in which these diverse formal institutions and informal interest groups – the IOC, the USOC, the international and national federations governing various sports, the city itself and its residents – all stand to gain from the Games coming to New York. There is something for everyone here: the Olympic movement would benefit from a high-profile event in one of the world's media, financial and cultural centers; the USOC and various international sporting federations would gain a new foothold in New York, with the city becoming both a training hotbed and a site for future championship events; the city and its people – especially its hopeful young athletes – would gain from all the new facilities available to them – some of them in sports and disciplines they would not have had the chance to compete in before. All these gains (predicated, of course, on an unquestionably successful event) would endure long after the torch dimmed.

The bid book connects a narrative of the city's hallowed past with the history of the Olympic Games. Sidestepping the fact that New York had never actually hosted the Olympics before, it points out that the city is not only the birthplace and home of many famous American Olympians, but that it was important in the growth and popularization of many Olympic events in the United States.
Of the 28 Olympic Sports, New York played a vital role in the American development of at least 17 (NYC2012, 2000, p. Intro.: xi)

In some cases, the history invoked is archaic or obscure. The Astoria Pools, NYC2012's proposed site for the Olympic swimming events, are said to possess a distinguished Olympic history, since it hosted the US Olympic trials in 1936 and 1964. New York, as “the home of the fencing national championships every year from 1892 to 1938...is a natural city to showcase fencing” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 10: 135) Some historical Olympic connection is better than none, but it still seems like a thin argument, oriented around nostalgic images rather than substance. What a series of fencing championships held in New York in the early 20th century do to prove New York's suitability as an Olympic host in 2012 is unclear. It is a reach at best. But this represents the best case NYC2012 had to make to many long-standing Olympic sports, especially ones like fencing, which lay on the fringes of the sporting and cultural life of the city.

The term “natural” in that statement is also worth a closer look. Terms like natural and innate are used repeatedly by the bid book producers to describe the basic character of both the city (as above) and its people, aligning it to the Olympic movement and Olympic spirit:

New Yorkers have always been passionate about sports....But hosting the Olympic Games would catapult this to a new level. (NYC2012, 2000, p. Intro.: xi)

An essentializing argument is couched in statements like this and throughout the bid book. It is being assumed that New York as a city and New Yorkers as a vast, diverse collective group share some fundamental essence or traits; secondly, that this essence can
be isolated and identified and has been identified by NYC2012's organizers, and lastly, that love for sports or competitive passion is part of that essence or core character.

How can such arguments or statements ever be proven or demonstrated? They cannot be, of course, but that does not stop the bid book producers from attempting to define such a civic identity, any more than it has stopped others who have sought to capture and communicate the authentic nature of a place or people. Efforts to do so are not unusual or especially striking, now or in the past. Beyond just place-marketing, they are a part of place-making. Politicians, boosters, corporations and their advertisers, artists, writers and other cultural producers, and citizens themselves are among the many groups and interests that have worked and/or work to capture the essence or spirit of a given place. The NYC2012 bid organizers' attempt to define the nature of New York and its people is just one more among many such efforts.

What is noteworthy about the way the NYC2012 bid book narrative does this is how a civic, political and cultural history subtly (yet necessarily) goes along with the constructed civic identity. There is a motif of historical rise and fall and rise throughout the bid book – decline that has been going on for a long time, but that is not inevitable, that is finally being recognized and confronted and can be transformed into renewal. According to the bid book narrative, New York's proud Olympic history, as well as its tradition of strong youth sports have gone downhill in recent decades:

While New York is still home to major, world-class athletic events, Olympic sports competitions have become a mere shadow of what they once were. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 1: 27)
The Games would make a dramatic contribution towards reversing the
decline of youth sports in the city. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 1: 29)

The particular causes of this decline – what caused Olympic sports to fall in in the
eyes and minds of New Yorkers? Why are New York youth athletes not making the
same mark that they did in the past? – are not discussed. But the reader may connect the
dots if she chooses and attribute the fading of New York's Olympic heritage to the
deterioration of community sports facilities and lack of high-quality training programs –
facts which the bid book introduces and maintains: “Currently New York lacks
community facilities capable of supporting 5-7k spectators; this facility will thus be in
high demand.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 10: 54) If that is the problem, then the solution
suggests itself in the form of the forthcoming Olympic bid and its promised
developments. These developments include new rowing and canoeing facilities in
Flushing Meadows Park, a new aquatic complex and badminton and track cycling
facilities on the Queens waterfront, a public park and athletic complex along the East
River in Brooklyn, and mountain biking and equestrian trail complexes on Staten Island.
Other, already-existing in-use facilities, such as Pelham Bay Park in the Bronx and the
369th Regiment Armory in Harlem, would be renovated and reconfigured as Olympic
sites.

It is a lot to ask of a city and its people, to let a private organization build upon or
specify and design sweeping changes to so many of its buildings and public spaces and
buildings – especially when so many of the sports and activities have a tangential
relationship at best to most New Yorkers. Arguments based on economic impacts can be
made, but such a strategy can come across abstract, distant and perhaps even a little crass.
“Yes,” an ordinary city resident might say, “some people in the city, or even the city itself, could make a tidy profit off hosting the Olympics. But not me or anyone I know.” To anticipate this, to persuade or “sweeten the pot,” the bid book maintains that the New York Olympic Games will only last three weeks, but the city and its people will experience other positive effects for years, even decades afterwards.

This is done via the language of enduring concrete assets, resources, benefits and legacies. In some parts of the bid book those words are used explicitly; in many others, they are implied through similar words and concepts. Beyond the generic, usefully vague descriptions of underutilized places being transformed into “asset(s) for the community and for the region,” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 10: 125) which crop up throughout the bid book, the bid book states that the city will take possession of newfound or at least newly-optimized assets after the Games, opening up new possibilities and/or ensuring that venues and programs will survive and thrive:

The substantial improvements made by the Olympic renovation project will modernize the (369th Regiment Armory) facility, making it more flexible in its ability to host various types of sports and guaranteeing its use far into the future as a regional and community asset. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 10: 167)

The bid book promises that the city's existing or latent natural and manmade resources will be built-upon imaginatively and sensitively, fully developed, and made more accessible to the community via the Olympics. The proposed Modern Pentathlon venue at Pelham Bay Park in the Bronx, for example, “will build upon the outstanding resources of one of the city's most scenic waterfront parks.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 10: 195)
Concrete benefits will spread across all parts of the city and into all its citizens' lives. This is communicated both in a general way:

Renovated and upgraded recreational facilities at parks in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Manhattan, and upgraded sports facilities at high schools and colleges in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens. Used as training venues for the Games, these facilities would benefit local communities afterwards. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 1: 28)

And with regard to more specific venues and projects:

By creating a world-class boating facility in Flushing Meadows Park, New York will establish itself as a national rowing and canoeing center. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 10: 209)

Where space, opportunities or facilities are lacking, the NYC2012 bid book promises that Olympic-related development will bequeath high-quality venues. For sports and activities which have not yet connected with New Yorkers, new leisure and competition possibilities will bloom. At the same time, those sports' governing bodies (whose interests also need to be considered) will also see their respective events grow in popularity regionally, nationally, and globally, thanks to a newfound identification with and focal point in New York.

The Williamsburg Waterfront Park athletic complex will strengthen the sport of archery in New York by providing a permanent, securable field. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 10: 33)

As for the New York Olympics' legacy (this word is used explicitly; a “Legacy” sub-section appears at the end of many bid book chapters) it will last far into the future,
the Olympics seamlessly becoming part of the city's sporting heritage and cultural life. Thus, the newly-developed Olympic Marina in the Breezy Point section of Brooklyn is projected to become a mecca for local sailors and a draw for world-class competitors, as well as a neighborhood benefit and a citywide legacy:

Regional, national and international competitions could be held in the waters off the marina, taking advantage of the best wind conditions in the region. Located in one of New York City's premier recreational boating centers, the Olympic Marina will become a public legacy for the neighborhood as well as the entire city. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 10: 320)

Abstract terms like asset, resource and benefit reflect the sense of a holding, possession or quality. In the context of a city and its citizens these things are often difficult to define or measure, yet the NYC2012 bid book's language urges readers to think of such things as very real. Similarly, the term legacy suggests the growth and preservation of tangible and intangible holdings over a long time-frame, a collective, conscious decision from the people of one historical epoch to another. The bestowing of a gift from one generation of New Yorkers (along with the Olympic family) to future generations becomes real through repetition in the bid book – as real as the innate characteristics of New York and New Yorkers that the bid book also claims to define. The NYC2012 bid book narrative suggests that the New York Olympic Games will be more than just a spectacle that excites the city and focuses the world's attention for a few short weeks, and more than just an economic boon. They will be a spectacle that responds to long-standing civic needs, catalyzes a city-wide sporting renaissance and contributes to the future of New York and its citizens.
What This City Needs Is A “Great Hall”

Each Olympic Games centers on a main Olympic stadium, which is either built or configured to hold the opening and closing ceremonies (as well as competitions in the case of the summer Games.) Often gargantuan and architecturally-striking, Olympic stadia like those in Berlin, Rome, Los Angeles, and Munich have become iconic sites. Many of them are still in frequent, high-profile use decades after holding the Olympics. NYC2012 proposed the construction of a new Olympic stadium for the 2012 Games, rather than the adaptation of an existing facility (or, perhaps more innovatively, a modular/temporary stadium). A few factors played into this. The prestige and excitement of the new is a primary reason (it is hard to imagine the IOC waxing enthusiastic about the Games taking place in a secondhand stadium, unless the renovations were especially striking and/or the place connected with past Olympic history, like the Los Angeles Coliseum, used in 1932 and 1984). An argument could also be made that none of the existing stadia and arenas were suitable for the Summer Olympics, due to size, geography or other concerns. There was certainly no shortage of large venues already in use in the area. In the early 2000s, the greater New York City area boasted six major stadia for its local professional sports teams: two baseball stadiums, Yankee Stadium (1923; renovated 1973-74) and Shea Stadium (1964); three basketball/ice hockey arenas, Madison Square Garden (1968), Continental Airlines Arena (1981) and Nassau Coliseum (1972), and one football/soccer/concert/special event stadium, Giants Stadium (1976) All of these buildings remained functional, if not cutting-edge at the start of the new millennium. Other arenas slated for Newark and Brooklyn were on the drawing board. But the most
compelling reason for NYC2012's plans to erect an enormous stadium/Great Hall on the West Side of Manhattan was that just such a facility, in that place, surrounded by new commercial development, was already on the agenda of city elites. The plan pre-dated the Olympic bid and was not even contingent upon its success (at least that was the official line); its construction was pushed as hard (if not harder) by various city politicians and developers (while others pushed back.) At stake, among other things, was the opportunity to reshape Manhattan's real estate landscape, perhaps re-orienting one of its focal points in the process – a central preoccupation of New York developers, moguls and politicians from Robert Moses to David Rockefeller.

The back-story of the West Side Stadium is inextricable from the history of stadium development in the city, as well as the ways in which the New York press has traditionally covered stadium development. This history stretches back to the 19th century, when New York stadium development revolved around its professional baseball teams. The Giants, Dodgers and Yankees built multiple small ballparks in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as both they and the sport grew. But until the 1920s, the New York newspapers curiously tended to ignore stadium issues, neither criticizing nor celebrating the structures much. The opening of Yankee Stadium – a colossus that helped launch the Yankees from also-ran status to that of the city's number one baseball team – changed this somewhat. But even the relocation of the Dodgers and Giants to California in the late 1950s – moves induced by issues of stadium and urban development, as well as political and private control – did not make stadium matters a consistent concern for the New York media. The loss of those teams did worry politicians. In 1970 the city offered to subsidize the purchase and renovation of privately-owned Yankee Stadium, in
order to keep the Yankees and Giants from moving to New Jersey. That project far
overran the city's projected costs at the same time that the city neared bankruptcy. At last,
stadium issues moved closer to the public consciousness through the media, and not for
positive reasons.

The New York stadium discourse over the past forty years has been disputatious.
The sting of lost teams mingles with memories of financially-disastrous handouts to
wealthy team owners; pride in local teams mixes with fear of those teams being lured
across the city, or worse, to the New Jersey suburbs. Politicians, team owners, fans, the
press, and local residents all play hands in a high-stakes power game, with the nation
serving as a (perhaps unwilling) audience via the New York-centered media.

Coverage tended to be a cyclical and pro-growth, and pro-stadium voices still
dominated New York's mainstream press during this period, even if city residents were
ambivalent at best about committing public monies to sports stadiums. Where to build?
also remained a question. Suitable land for mega-structures is scarce in New York.
Population distribution and the spatial goals of the powerful go into the mix too. The
development of Flushing Meadows Park was spearheaded by Robert Moses, and owed
much to how he aligned infrastructure projects with suburban-oriented growth throughout
his time in power. Yet in direct opposition to Moses' vision of expanding Greater New
York outwards to the east, the subterranean railyards leading into Pennsylvania Station
from the west, known as the Hudson Yards, became coveted in the late 20th century.
Citing traffic, attendance and profitability concerns, New York Yankees owner George
Steinbrenner broached the idea of moving out of aging Yankee Stadium, first to New
Jersey in the 1980s, then to the West Side in the early 1990s (this, despite the expensive
city-subsidized renovation of the stadium less than two decades before). Rupert Murdoch also proposed a large mixed-use commercial development there during the same time period with his News Corporation setting an anchor. Enter the NYC2012 bid, which served city officials eager to claim the area for a complex that would bring the NFL's New York Jets back from New Jersey, draw sports mega-events like the Games and Super Bowls, expand the city's capacity to hold major conventions, and become a site for extensive commercial development.

The Olympic Stadium plan included the development of a new football stadium and expanded Jacob Javits Convention Center, two major new hotels, a new broadcast center, and new transit connection, via a subway spur – essentially, a new focus of traffic, commercial and media activity. Stadium backers hoped to break ground in 2005, with the stadium completed by 2009 – in time to host the 2010 Super Bowl, which the NFL had provisionally awarded to the Jets and New York. What is notable about the NYC2012 bid book's description of the Olympic stadium is how little it says about the stadium being a stadium, and how softly it says even this.

In his account of the 2002-2005 period in which bid organizers, politicians, local activists, rival arena owners, and the press tussled over the fate of the West Side stadium, Trumpbour discusses how NYC2012 and city officials, especially Daniel Doctoroff, painstakingly avoided the use of the word “stadium.” That word had seemingly become “radioactive” or a “third rail,” to use two common journalistic metaphors; an emphasis on the sports stadium aspect of the plan could risk raising alarms among many potential opponents.
This strategic dictate also appears to have guided the way the NYC2012 bid book framed the Olympic Stadium and Plaza complex. Better to highlight the neighborhood revitalization aspect, the convention center aspect, the public space aspect, the transit aspect, the green-building aspect – anything but to stress that an enormous sports stadium was a key part of the development, and a pivotal part of the bid. The word stadium does appear in the bid book, though often in a secondary fashion:

Built largely atop exposed rail yards, the complex will include an expanded Jacob Javits Convention Center, whose southern portion would serve as an open-air Olympic Stadium, two new hotels, and an ultra-modern Olympic Tower broadcast center. (NYC2012, 2000, p. Intro.: ix)

Elsewhere, the stadium is hidden or disguised in euphemistic terms like “Great Hall”:

New York's bid for the 2012 Games is one of the catalysts for creating a new exhibition and sports Great Hall in the nation's largest urban center. Greatly improved mass transit and a new public park – Olympic Square – will forever change the landscape of New York City and enhance its reputation as a center of amateur and professional sports. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 10: 46)

Or simply and generically, “center”:

The presence of an exciting center for conventions, entertainment, recreation, and sports, coupled with abundant transit connections, will provide the critical mass to spark the neighborhood’s revitalization (NYC2012, 2000, p. 1: 30).
Statements like this blur exactly what the “center” is or will be; the stadium itself, or the Olympic Plaza, a “focal point of Olympic festivities and celebration” formed via the redevelopment of 8.5 acres of Manhattan’s West Side. Rhetorical strategies and themes noted earlier, from the redevelopment and renewal of under-used land, to environmental consciousness, to the creation of a future Olympic legacy also crop up in relation to the Olympic Stadium and Square development:

A centerpiece of the Games will be the new Hudson Yards complex, planned for an under-utilized site along the Hudson River. (NYC2012, 2000, p. Intro: ix)

The extensive use of existing facilities will reduce the consumption of energy and resources for construction, while intelligent post-Olympic uses for the new facilities will ensure that the resources used in building these facilities will permanently benefit the city. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 4: 46)

With the benefit of hindsight, we may say that NYC2012's apparent strategy of minimizing the stadium aspect of the Hudson Yards development was wise, if not very successful. Many observers have since blamed the failure of New York's Olympic bid on the West Side stadium issue. That it became popularly known and referred to as the West Side Stadium, instead of Hudson Yards or Olympic Square or even the Javits Center expansion indicates just how attempts to obscure the issue failed. The stadium remained the most visible part of the project and the main bone of contention. Stadium advocates like the NYC2012 organizers, the Mayor's office, the Governor's office, the New York Jets and the National Football League could not outflank the project's many critics and opponents, especially in the crucial 2004-2005 period when the issue came to a head.
Strange bedfellows were made in the fight against the stadium. Cablevision, which owned nearby Madison Square Garden as well as the cable television franchise for the city, became the most visible opponent of the development, launching a media war against it (spending $7.6 million in 2004 alone) and thus against the mayor, the Jets, the NFL, and NYC2012's Olympic bid. This put the unpopular multibillion dollar cable television conglomerate on the same side as Hells Kitchen activists, anxious that their neighborhood's character might be permanently damaged while they had little say in the matter. The Regional Planning Association expressed skepticism over sunny economic projections for the city and region upon the Jets' return from New Jersey, while real estate analysts noted that the Hudson Yards plan projected millions of square feet of new commercial space over the next 30 years, at the same time that massive office developments were planned in the financial center of lower Manhattan in an attempt to revive it.

Played out in public, the fight was politically and financially daunting – especially given NYC2012 and the mayor's desires to minimize use of public monies. In the end, a crucial bit of political maneuvering – a state committee vote on funding the platform over the railyards – fell apart just a month before the IOC met in Singapore to select the 2012 host city. NYC2012 scrambled to unveil a Plan B – an Olympic stadium in Queens, which would be reconfigured as a baseball stadium for the New York Mets. But the wind had gone from the sails of the New York Olympic effort. Paris and London had long been the front-runners to win the bid, and the New York bid's misfires and seeming lack of public and political will had already all but condemned it. The revised NYC2012 bid,
minus the West Side stadium (a major component of the Olympic X scheme) limped into fourth place, beating only Moscow.

Ironically, the political fortunes of Mayor Michael Bloomberg – a fervent West Side stadium supporter – surged after the Hudson Yards complex and then the NYC2012 Olympic bid were defeated. With these controversial projects off the table his poll numbers recovered, and he easily won re-election in 2006.

A Global City's Needs: Transportation, Technology and Media

A mega-event like the Olympics can reshape a city in many concrete, physical ways; its design and use of public space, its neighborhoods and parks, its leisure facilities and sporting venues. Another important, if secondary consideration is the effect an Olympics can have on a city's transportation and communication networks. The Olympic X is one good example of the former. Though the amount of new transportation infrastructure to be built was minimal, and the “X” itself was specific to the Olympic event, NYC2012's plan involved a shifting of urban travel patterns amidst a reorientation of the entire city towards its waterways. This reorientation towards the water was deliberate, progressive and ongoing, in line with Vision 2020, New York City’s waterfront plan, which was emerging as a civic priority then and remains one now. Like all the other elements mentioned in this chapter, the plans for transportation, communications and media technology found in the bid book can be looked at as a particular group's (NYC2012's) response to both the city's intrinsic qualities and resources, and its needs – especially its needs as it strives to remain in the first rank of global cities.
Chapters 14 (Transportation) 15 (Technology) and 16 (Media) of the NYC2012 bid book address these issues directly. These technical elements of the bid may be less splashy than parts dealing with stadiums, events and pageantry, but they remain important. The Olympics bring hundreds of thousands of spectators from around the world; the IOC needs assurance that the city has the capacity to welcome and host these visitors comfortably. The Olympics are also a massive media event; thousands of broadcast and new media workers descend upon the Games, and audiences tune in and log on by the hundreds of millions. The IOC must know that host city has the infrastructure and technology to accommodate all of this.

The NYC2012 bid book producers are charged with putting the city's best foot forward. The bid materials must leave little doubt that the city can handle the influx of Olympic athletes, officials, and spectators, and that multimedia coverage of all events will go off without a hitch. At the same time, confidence should not give way to boastfulness. It is better, perhaps, to not emphasize that New York has everything needed in place and ready more than ten years ahead of the Games. Instead, the bid book narrative suggests that New York is intent on developing one of the most advanced transportation and communication infrastructures in the world circa 2012 as part of its Olympic effort. The bid book suggests that one of the Olympics' greatest legacies to New York, if it is chosen to host the Games, will be an infrastructure that helps it keep pace with other first-rank global cities in 2012 and for decades beyond.

The local/urban transportation element of the NYC2012 bid is focused upon the Olympic X scheme, the athlete-centered “system of special trains and ferries, with precise schedules and rapid travel times, (which) avoids traffic congestion and delay.”
Comparatively less attention is paid to the travel needs of Olympic spectators and city residents, who are expected to utilize regular subways, city busses and automobiles during the Games. The bid book briefly mentions an Olympic Information Network which links together the region’s mass transit and road systems, alleviating traffic delays and waiting times; “During the Games, lane closing will be publicized on an ongoing basis, with real-time information on traffic conditions available via the Internet, personal digital assistants, and other modes of wireless communication.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 14: 58) It is logical to assume that this system would remain in place after the Olympics, adding a new level of information and control to the urban fabric. A second part, having to do with international travel and New York's status as a key global destination and port of entry, is addressed in Chapter 14 – Transportation. This chapter plays upon New York's role in transportation innovations from Fulton's Folly onwards, “from subways to suspension bridges, packet ships to parkways” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 14: 46) but most importantly as a gateway to the nation and a city of immigrants. The emphasis is on the New York area's national and international connections – primarily, the capacity of John F. Kennedy International in Brooklyn, LaGuardia in Queens and Newark Airport in New Jersey to link the city to the nation and the world. Reachable by direct flights from 88 cities in 59 countries, New York is, the bid book states, “one of the most accessible cities in the world” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 14: 47) and colorful maps and tables are included, listing cities from Athens to San Pedro Sula. More quantitative figures are presented: at the time of the bid book's publication, the three airports together were processing more than 86 million passengers a year; among US airports, JFK and Newark rank first and fifth in the number of international passengers; the New York-New Jersey area’s airports
process more cargo than the airports of any other metropolitan region in the country. Yet much more capacity is on the way; “the Port Authority and various airlines are undertaking major redevelopment efforts at JFK, Newark and LaGuardia Airports, which are expected to serve well over 100 million passengers by 2012.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 14: 49) It is made clear that these building and infrastructure projects – totaling over $10 billion – have been ongoing, are not contingent upon or attached to the Olympics, and are expected to be completed years before the 2012 Olympics.

New York is strongly identified as a center of media and communications production and consumption. This is an important point given the tight relationship between global mass media and the Olympics; while this relationship can be called symbiotic, the Olympics' dependence on the media is deep, and so the IOC and bid candidates must work especially hard to accommodate and anticipate the media's needs. The bid book emphasizes the major newspapers and magazines, radio and television, and new media companies headquarteried there, the city's status as the largest media market in the United States, and its highly developed communications infrastructures. As the bid book notes: “For television expertise, experience and infrastructure, an Olympic Games in New York City will not have to look far.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 16:77)

In its bid, NYC2012 proposes the construction of an International Broadcast Center (IBC) in an Olympic Tower skyscraper adjacent to the Olympic Stadium, and a Main Press Center (MPC) in the expanded Javits Center. Among the media-friendly aspects of NYC2012's plan, according to the bid book, are the IBC's centrality in relation to the events (being especially close to those taking place in the Javits Center) and the
siting of television studios in the Olympic Tower overlooking Olympic Square, with crowds and festivities in the background.

The NYC2012 bid book characterizes New York as “perhaps the most telegenic city in the world,” suggesting that the Games taking place against the Big Apple backdrop will “offer uniquely memorable sports images.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 16: 77) Repeated invocations like this – of the image-value of jubilant crowds, the iconic monuments and city skyline – are one of NYC2012's strategies for promoting New York as Olympic host city. That potential for positive image construction and association is held out as a benefit to the Olympics. It is also logical that several weeks of consistent world-wide image production and distribution – in this case, happy crowds milling around an Olympic-festooned site in the middle of New York City – would benefit New York as well.

The bid book is less strong on technological details and particulars, preferring broad strokes and hyperbole. Sometimes this is well-warranted; the bid book promises that the most advanced communications technology will be in place while being careful not to commit to particular standards, structures or devices too far in advance. Who in 2000 could have predicted the success or failure of technologies like wireless internet, smartphones, tablets, streaming video, RFID tagging, and other such technologies that may have been on the horizon? It is chancy enough to place bets on what the technological landscape will look like a year or two in the future, much less ten years. In other places the bid book's effusive language topples over into strange conflations or non sequiturs – as in this statement, where high-quality journalism is somehow linked to the open, spacy floor plans projected for a building which has not even been designed yet:
Top-Notch Reporting: The Main Press Center will have high ceilings and broad, open floor plates, allowing for maximum flexibility (NYC2012, 2000, p. 16: 77)

The bid book also notes the planning of two new 1200-room hotels in Olympic Square, “which will provide members of the media with first-class accommodations just steps from the MBC and IBC.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 16: 78) While the comfort and convenience of media workers during the Games may be the conceit here, outsized projects like this help feed some of the more critical takes on Olympics-related development. A critic might simply note how crucial the media are to the Olympic event, to the extent that media accommodations take up such a central, significant place in the overall plan. Another, more far-reaching perspective might say that (as with the other facilities and large developments proposed) the Olympic redevelopment plan for the West Side of Manhattan – massive stadium/convention center, towering media building, fancy hotels – is really about the long-term reorientation and redevelopment of key parts of the city, linked to the needs and desires of powerful developers, property magnates, international corporations, sports industry tycoons and urban politicians. They are the ones who will acquire, control, use and benefit from these places long after the Olympic torch goes out.

Intense, Unending Competition

It seems no coincidence that the demands of contemporary “world cities” and the demands of the 21st century Olympics have converged. Environmentally-conscious, yet innovative and striking architecture, high quality office/work space for businesses
(especially those in the media and communications sectors), accommodations for large numbers of highly mobile workers and tourists, and a wide variety of leisure/entertainment/cultural facilities are key elements of the deindustrializing modern city, just as they are necessary to pull off a globally-mediated, profitable Olympic spectacle. State of the art, dependable, flexible transportation and communications networks are also fundamental to both. New York's boosters could certainly point out that its sports stadia, its hotels, its international transportation connections, its communication infrastructure and so on was of a very high standard before the Olympic bid began. They were. But, like the Olympic Games themselves, the contest to stay in the top echelon of global cities (financially, culturally, politically) involves intense, unending competition among a wide range of rivals. Standing still, relaxing, failing to look forward and keep developing – these are luxuries that neither a world-class athlete nor a world-class city, even a New York City, can afford.

At the same time that its Olympic bid book trumpets New York's assets, resources and history, and the essence and nature and spirit of New Yorkers, NYC2012 suggests and describes a set of future urban needs which an Olympic Games can and will help it meet, so that New York can continue to be in the first rank of global cities. The bid book narrative leaves little doubt that long after its Olympics are over, New York will have been transformed in significant ways. In the Introduction chapter, the “Glimpses of the Games” section rhapsodizes over how the Olympic legacy will endure to 2020 and beyond:

The physical improvements created for the Games proved the spark for immense urban transformations....the high-speed ferry system has become
a way of life for tens of thousands of New Yorkers living and working along the once-neglected waterfront now lined with parks and recreation facilities, newly-constructed housing, and offices, grouped together in lively residential districts at the waters’ edge (NYC2012, 2000, p. Intro.: xxvii).
CHAPTER 4: NEW YORK HISTORY: RENEWAL AND RESURGENCE

Historical Roots

Since the late nineteenth century the Olympics have developed mass appeal and a key role in global popular culture. The past few decades have also seen critical arguments and grassroots activism against the Olympics emerge – especially those critiques focusing on the Olympics-as-urban-development-strategy. Contemporary Olympic bids bring these two opposing forces into conflict with one another, centering the battle upon a particular place, time and situation. Los Angeles, Atlanta and Salt Lake City's Olympic bids played themselves out in political, economic, cultural, and class- and race-based social contests specific to each of those cities. New York's bid for the 2012 Olympics fared no differently.

Some interesting firsts are attached to New York City's bid for the 2012 Summer Olympics. It was the first bid from a US city to reach the finalist stage following Salt Lake City's hosting of the Winter Games in 2006, and the first US bid to be mounted following the bidding process reforms enacted by the IOC. It was also the first significant bid from New York City – a city which not only had never hosted the Olympics, but rather surprisingly had never reached the international finalist phase.

Though (unlike some other cities) New York City was not a serial host city bidder with lots of experience to fall back upon, its bid for the 2012 Olympics appeared to be a legitimate and strong one. Many Olympic bids begin as long-shot dreams in the mind of a single visionary; of these, some remain vague pieces of magical thinking even as they
draw local boosters, money and the attention (if not the vote) of national selectors. New York's bid, on the other hand, developed into something strong and serious. It was not a shoddy, ill-conceived endeavor, but garnered the financial and political backing necessary to win the USOC imprimatur, as well as to merit the IOC's consideration. Given the financial, political and creative resources available, this is not especially shocking.

But for all its merits and sources of support, NYC's bid fell short. Because this defeat came, at least in part, because of a lack of political will and public support for the bid and its projects (especially its centerpiece, the West Side Stadium), it is worth identifying the historical roots and conditions of such resistance and apathy, embedded as they are in the history of New York itself. Such resistance, if not outright antagonism, could not spring out of nowhere; a climate as much as a movement, it had to develop over time. The widespread critical response to the NYC2012 effort demonstrates how recognition of the costs of Olympic hosting had escaped from the domain of academia, activists and skeptical journalists, reconstituting itself as a common concern, a reason for ordinary citizens to question, if not resist, the opportunity for their city to host the Games. This understanding has long been developing, intensifying and spreading through time and space, from city to city and bid stage to bid stage.

Such an understanding flows into and joins the stream of New York's history, especially its history of urban development and major events (as an Olympics would add to both.) It jibes with ingrained collective memory, which recalls the excitement and mass exaltation over World's Fairs, major sporting events and spectacles such as papal visits, as well as the dissensions, upheavals, controversies and fights. This has become
ever more acute over the past few decades, as economic, social and political shifts have catalyzed the clearing of neighborhoods, demolition of cherished landmarks, and politicking and power-playing over precious urban real estate in the city. We may only speculate how strongly Olympic-skeptic civic agita resonated in the same key as, and fed off of, widespread and long-held popular notions that “they” (the politicians, the businessmen, the rich and powerful – whoever “they” are, a decidedly small and self-serving group) make all the important decisions in and about the city, and they don't care about “us.” Such a stance is not new or unique to New York City, but it certainly exists there.

Analyzing Cities and Mega-Events

The mega-event theorist Maurice Roche has written that analysis of cities and mega-events should proceed by looking at four points: describing the type of city, examining the nature of citizen participation in urban planning and mega-event planning, looking at the nature of urban leadership, and identifying the urban regeneration and re-imaging strategies being used. In this chapter I will address the first three points, and look at one re-imaging strategy in particular: New York as a resurgent city, recapturing its athletic tradition and building a legacy for the future by hosting the Olympics.

We may understand something of the type of city New York is, as well as the nature of its citizenry and urban leadership by looking briefly over its modern history. This historical approach serves two purposes. First, it embeds the NYC 2012 bid in a history of the city's grand projects and events, especially those which rode into comparable squalls of controversy. Among such projects, there are the great railroad
stations, bridges and other major infrastructure erected at the turn of the century, the visions of the Regional Plan Association, the World's Fairs of 1939 and 1962, the development of buildings/sites like the Empire State Building, Rockefeller Center and the World Trade Center, the massive mid-century public works, highways and urban renewal plans of Robert Moses, efforts to stem the perceived decay and decline that had set in, figuratively and structurally during the 1970s and 80s, and of late, the redevelopment of the WTC site. Through this history, some understanding of the city's political culture and civic attitudes towards development at different points in time may be gained.

Secondly, a background history of the city may be compared to the more purposive historical narrative that the New York Olympic bid itself delivers. The producers of the NYC2012 bid book delivered their own historical narrative of New York City. The bid text offers accounts, evaluations and claims of how the city came to be what it is, of what its innovations and inhabitants have meant to the nation, to sports, and to the world. Obviously the NYC2012 bid committee sought to put the brightest, most positive shine on the city. The bid book is a sales brochure of sorts, and we shall see that history is summoned and framed in order to back up the organizers' main selling points. Moreover, we can observe how the NYC2012 organizers presaged and pre-empted resistance from inside and outside the Olympic Movement. If recent history is any guide, had NYC2012’s bid won then this resistance would have consolidated and sharpened over the subsequent years, instead of melting away. However, elements of the bid book – namely those that construct a narrative of the city and of its Olympic plan – seem designed to blunt if not nullify such critical jabs.
Building New York City: Immigrants and Immigration

The history of modern New York City – a densely packed center of commerce, shipping, manufacturing, population and culture, as it has been painted for the past century and a half – may begin around the 1820s with the first mass migrations from Europe. The immigrants that made up these early waves, principally working-class Irish and Germans at first, changed the face of the city's Dutch and English-influenced culture, society and politics while opening the door for subsequent waves of immigrants from around the world. After the Irish and Germans, English, French and Scandinavians that first flooded into New York in the mid-19th century came Italians, Austrians, Hungarians, Balkan and Slavic peoples, as well as Russians and Poles – not least, persecuted Jews from those countries.

Some would journey inwards to other parts of America, but a remarkable number, “city dwellers by background or choice” (Allen, 1990, p. 238), did not; Manhattan's population doubled between 1870 and 1900, while the population of the neighboring counties almost tripled through the same period. The relationship between this burgeoning, but largely impoverished immigrant class and the city's politics and development is important, not least before the creation of state welfare systems later on; these would help make redundant the patronage that urban political machines were especially good at doling out. The Democratic party machine located in and associated with Tammany Hall, its power base the metropolis's expanding Irish immigrant population, ran city politics for much of the 19th and part of the 20th century, with the heyday of its power running from the 1850s through the 1920s – approximately the same period that the massive influx of immigrants arrived through New York's harbor.
The NYC2012 bid book draws explicit parallels between the role immigrants played in building and stimulating New York's past growth, and the ways in which immigrants continue to enliven and renew the city in contemporary times. Such a parallel suggests that the halls of Ellis Island have been replaced by the terminals at JFK and Newark airports, but the essence remains. Among the first images seen in the bid book's first chapter is a pair of photos set against each other – the first is in black and white, showing a woman and three children who appear to have just debarked from a steerage compartment, laden with bags and haunted looks – a stereotypical image of the early 20th century immigrant experience. The second shows three beaming young Asian women in some modern setting; the context is not apparent from the close perspective (there is nothing that even identifies it as being in New York), but it could be a cultural festival, a pageant or a show. The caption reads:


Just as the bid book works to draw lines between New York's openness to immigrants in the 17th, 19th, and 21st centuries, so it also makes a rhetorical bid to connect the city's immigrant heritage – and its symbolism – with the ideas and symbolism of the Olympics in sometimes grandiose fashion:

More than 17 million immigrants streamed into the port of New York – past the majestic, torch-bearing Statue of Liberty in the harbor “whose flame,” the poet Emma Lazarus declared, “is the imprisoned lightning and
her name, Mother of Exiles.” Just as the Statue stands as the most enduring symbol of New York's historic role as a gateway for all peoples, so would her torch echo the Olympic flame in welcoming the Games of 2012. (NYC2012, 2000, p. Intro.: iii)

At the beginning of the 21st century, New York embraces a diverse and vibrant international culture mirroring the Olympic Movement itself. (NYC2012, 2000, p. Intro.: iv)

In New York, the spectacle of athletes and visitors exploring their own and each other's culture will come to stand as a lasting testimony to the power of the Olympic ideal – a shining moment when all the people of the world come together in a single place – in a city that celebrates them all. (NYC2012, 2000, p. Intro.: iv)

The last quote, in particular, neatly captures the bid book producers' tactic of conjoining New York and the Olympic movement; in the reader's mind's-eye, an image is suggested of a “shining moment” in 2012 in which the Olympics beseeches the world to converge on that “single place” – New York – that “celebrates” all people.

New York’s Growth

Between the end of the Civil War and the first decades of the 20th century, New York swelled in population, wealth, size (Brooklyn and its nearly 1 million residents joining the city as one of the five boroughs in 1898) industrial capacity and influence. Its role as a center of trade and industry extended regionally and nationally, playing off its advantageous position upon river and sea, between the factories and mills of New
England and the agricultural heartlands to the west and south. The NYC2012 bid book’s second chapter starts with a brief account of this pivotal role via the development of the Erie Canal in the 19th century, concluding that “all America now met in New York. Linking the city to the nation, and the nation to the world, the region had pulled together to accomplish great things – as it has so many times and as it will for the 2012 Olympic Games.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 1: i)

Thanks to these newfound mercantile riches, the city’s appearance underwent a dramatic shift in the last three decade of the 19th century. Allen (1990) describes a panoramic photo of Manhattan taken from the then-uncompleted Brooklyn Bridge in 1876:

Anyone looking at the panorama today is bound to be struck by something that in hindsight almost seems like an omission: there are no high buildings. The metropolis that has already become one of the most powerful cities on earth presents a skyline in which the tallest structures are still church steeples. Thirty years later the view had changed radically. A snapshot taken from Brooklyn in 1906 reveals a Manhattan in which no church steeple was visible. All have been masked by a high building.

(p. 231)

New York was becoming, along with London and Paris, one of the key metropolises of the modern age. In line with its outsized power, population and ambitions, the city built big. Major construction projects through the Gilded Age and fin de siècle included much-needed additions to the city's transportation infrastructure, which connected the city to itself and to the regions beyond. Among the most prominent of
these were the Brooklyn Bridge (1883), the digging of the Hudson River and East River train tunnels leading to the McKim Mead and White-designed Pennsylvania Station (1910), and the building of the rival New York Central's Grand Central Terminal (1913). Even in the 1890s New York City land was at a premium, and so mega-projects such as the building of new rail terminals in the middle of Manhattan, for example, necessitated careful politicking, acquisition of land, and the greasing of the right wheels. Jonnes (2007) chronicles the struggles of the Pennsylvania Railroad to clear land for, much less actually build, its landmark station and connecting river tunnels. It meant, among other things, dealing with a political machine whose leadership “clung to an almost feudal worldview that concerned itself purely with raw power,” presiding over a city that was “the nation's largest city and the world's most important port, growing at an unprecedented rate but beset with wrenching woes: impoverished immigrants, disease-ridden tenements, overwhelmed transit systems, poorly maintained piers and docks, and inadequate sanitation.” (p. 102) But the four-block area of Manhattan designated for the station, in a vice district known as the Tenderloin, was acquired piecemeal and construction eventually proceeded. Aside from the almost-defiantly corrupt (but buyable) political establishment and some rabble-rousing journalists, the big projects of public and private actors ran into few intractable obstacles. An emboldened citizenry that not only questioned big plans but also could organize effective neighborhood-level, much less city-wide resistance to them was not a feature of those times.

Nor were grassroots activists able to do much to halt New York's massive building spree of the decades on either side of the turn of the century. There were relatively few interested in or capable of doing so, anyway, even in the so-called
Progressive Era. When the court of public opinion was called into session and the masses’ ire aroused, it was more concerned with visceral issues of public safety, corruption or sensational knavery, as in the press-fueled uproar following the 1902 Park Avenue train tunnel crash (which led to steam trains being banned from the city and the building of Grand Central Terminal.) The building of modern New York went on, and up. Along with grandiose, classical-inspired terminals, bridges and other infrastructure that spread the city's influence wide, boisterous magnates made New York a battleground of ego, capital and building technology by building ever higher skyscrapers. Or, as the NYC2012 bid book puts it; “And then the city seemed to erupt and roar straight into the sky.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. Intro.: v) Among the most significant skyscrapers built during this era: Pulitzer's New York World Building (1890), the American Surety Building (1895) the Park Row Building (1899), and the Woolworth Building (1913), which was the tallest building in the world for the next 17 years.

The 1920s and 30s saw a wave of Art Deco-inspired skyscrapers erected, punctuated by a competition between the builders of the Bank of Manhattan Trust Building (1930) and the Chrysler Building (1930) to nab the title of world's tallest – a race ended by the completion of the Empire State Building (1931), itself built on the site of a 19th century mega-building – the 1000 room Plaza Hotel. In the NYC2012 bid book, the construction of the Empire State Building is recounted and invested with civic meaning:

From then until today, the Empire State Building would stand – along with the city's other heroic achievements, from Central Park to the Brooklyn
Bridge – as a symbol of pride in the city's capacity to band together to accomplish the seemingly impossible. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 19: 1)

Such buildings – such building – may illustrate several things about the New York City of that time, that relate to the city of this time. A confidence verging on arrogance took material, architectural form in the emergence of modern New York. If critics invoke psychoanalytic theory to note something expressive, even phallic in the building of skyscrapers, then the bustling, building energy of early twentieth century New York was more than just freewheeling, it was positively orgiastic. The physical limits of Manhattan Island – where most of the building was concentrated – may have multiplied and compounded that energy in some metaphysical sense, but it had more concrete economic and political effects too. The scarcity of space made what land could be built-upon more valuable. What had already been built-up for one purpose (docks and factories along the shoreline of lower Manhattan, for instance) was eyed covetously for other, more aesthetically or ideologically attractive purposes. The crowding of the urban core catalyzed growth in New York’s outer boroughs as well as further out, on Long Island and in New Jersey. In turn the city’s powerful and interested (especially politicians, corporate heads and major landowners) deliberated over the long-term shape of the city and region, since this kind of untrammeled development within and outside the city threatened both their urban landholdings and, as it sprawled, their suburban and rural retreats. vii
Regional Plans

Thus while many of New York’s early 20th century buildings were conceived of and built in isolation, a greater order based on planning and zoning was soon established. The rise of the industrial metropolis through the late 1800s and early 1900s had forced urban planning to coalesce as a discipline, and urban planner became an increasingly powerful profession in the decades that followed. New York’s 20th century planning regime would become especially influential.

In popular lore Robert Moses gets much of the credit for this, along with the bulk of the credit and blame for the shape of modern New York City. Travel any of the major highways snaking into and through the city, cross bridges like the Whitestone or Triborough, or play on Jones Beach or other city parks, and you participate in Moses’s creation. The fact that Robert Caro’s *The Power Broker* (1974) serves not just as the seminal Moses biography, but as a central work in the canon of 20th century New York City and State history indicates how closely Moses’s career and New York’s development were intertwined; it would be ridiculous to talk of one without the other.

Via that biographical work as well as the latter-day appreciation of his grassroots nemesis, Jane Jacobs, a popular narrative has taken shape: Moses, the Enemy of the City. Moses, impudently ignoring the people as well as his putative bosses in the mayor’s and governor’s offices as long as he could get away with it. Moses, like a mad woodsman with an ax, cutting highways through the midst of functioning working-class city neighborhoods. Moses, designing the bridges on the Southern State Parkway to be too low for buses, ensuring that the working-classes and minorities could not reach the parks and beaches of the Long Island shore.
Fitch, among contemporary historians critical of this narrative, has argued that this particular demonization of Moses misses the mark; that Moses did not run amok reshaping Gotham in some sort of seething one-man anti-urban rage, but was dwarfed by, and occasionally even tempered the excesses of New York’s Regional Plan Association, which despite its official-sounding title, operated through private funds in the service of private interests. In this reading the Plan, not the man, was more influential in shaping contemporary New York City.

The RPA was formed in 1922 and issued its first Regional Plan in 1929. The first Regional Plan was a plan for decentralization, channeling future growth in industries like manufacturing and shipping outwards, away from Manhattan. Emulating Burnham’s Chicago Lakefront Plan (the two plans shared key backers), it was a plan for consolidating and expanding the downtown Central Business District while reducing the influence and footprint of heavy industry and shipping – the latter being quite a tall order when New York boasted the nation’s most vital shipping port and one of the most important ports in the world. But this – the diminishment and removal of the port from lower Manhattan – was indeed planned and eventually carried out, the port facilities ending up on the New Jersey side. The first Regional Plan turned on recognizing and playing to the changes being wrought by things like mass automobile ownership, as well as the living, working and cultural tastes of those who would work in the office buildings of the CBD, instead of the factories and docks. Part of the Plan, at least according to critics such as Fitch, was to precipitate those changes.

The first Regional Plan set a precedent for large-scale, future-oriented metropolitan New York visions composed and vetted by a coterie of bankers, financiers,
landowners and businessmen, their research, press support and legitimation provided by reformists, charities and foundations, academics and the media. Other comprehensive plans followed – and the NYC2012 bid proposal may be looked at in this context, as one of the latest (albeit smaller and unconsummated) in a line of visionary statements on the future shape of New York City. But seldom are these visions carried all the way to fruition. The legacy of the First Regional Plan illuminates this point; less than forty years after it was issued, a new generation of well-connected urbanists were already organizing a change in strategy. While adhering to the same basic objectives, the Second Regional Plan of 1969 aimed to undo the unevenly-completed work of the First, while backtracking on the planning tenets that had fallen out of favor since the 1920s, by encouraging recentralization of a sort – a systemic reconfiguration with industrial sectors organized around regional subcenters: Newark, Jamaica, downtown Brooklyn, and Fordham Road in the Bronx (Fitch, 1996, p. 115). Slum clearance, under the guise of urban renewal, was still an active issue in the late 1960s, before it too, fell out of favor.

The need for a new Plan was apparent, at least to those who could identify ongoing changes in the city’s racial, ethnic and class composition, the urban labor market (including a long-term decline in manufacturing which had begun in the late 1950s), office space vacancy rates, the role of the New York City in the national and world economy, and of course, land values. That is to say, it was apparent to elites but not hoi polloi, to the man in the ivory tower or corner office but not to the man on the street; analyses of data like this is grist for the mills of economists, social scientists, civil engineers, real estate developers, financiers and others who look at and tinker with the
big picture, with an eye to reshaping it, while putting in place new levels and layers of authority.

The new generation of planners behind the Second Regional Plan was cut from the same basic elite cloth as their predecessors. One consistent presence, from the beginnings of the RPA to the mid 1960s was the Rockefeller family. Individually or through family-run foundations, they had built or supported the building of numerous major projects in the city, including Lincoln Center, the United Nations, Rockefeller Center, Chase Manhattan Plaza, Rockefeller University, Morningside Heights and the World Trade Center. The Rockefellers also wielded immense financial and political power between the 1960s and 70s via family scions like David (president, chief executive and chairman of the city’s largest bank, Chase Manhattan Bank, and head of the Downtown Lower Manhattan Association) and Nelson (Governor of New York from 1959-1973; Vice President of the United States from 1974-1977).

What emerges from this perspective is that the high and mighty – from the landed, well-bred and well-financed to the educated and influential urban mandarinate – have had a disproportionate role in shaping New York City over the past one hundred years, especially through groups like the RPA and the grand plans and appraisals they have issued. Another such appraising vision, *New York Ascendent* (issued by the Koch administration in 1987) looked ahead to New York in the year 2000 from the perspective of the mid-1980s, focusing on issues such as immigration, poverty, education and transportation – putting them on the agenda (as all these plans do.) A Third Regional Plan, forebodingly titled *A Region At Risk*, was released in 1996; this third RPA plan
followed in the footsteps of previous regional plans, while injecting new issues like social equity and environmental responsibility into the urban planning equation.

**The Nature of Urban Development and Politics in New York**

Historically, conflict has always been part of the ongoing dynamic by which groups assert themselves, compete in New York's political sphere, and ultimately establish their place in the city's civic, political and economic life. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 1: 14)

Is there some conventional perception today (epitomized by this assertion in the NYC2012 bid book) that New York City has been and intrinsically is a bustling hive of near-spontaneous, democratically-driven development, effective grassroots advocacy and neighborhood activism, and up-from-the-streets resistance? Critical examinations of the role of planning in 20th century New York offer a corrective to that idea, illuminating (as Roche puts it) the nature of urban leadership and the nature of citizen participation in urban planning in the city and region over the past century. What such critiques underline is the extent to which modern New York’s development has been top-down, not bottom-up. To this effect, Fitch (1996) quotes the leftist organizer and writer Saul Alinsky, who wrote in the 1950s that, “New York has the least citizen participation, the least effective local democracy, and the individual has the least degree of individual self-determination that is to be found in any major city in the United States.” (p. 247)

Unintentionally reinforcing this sense of modern New York developing from the top down and according to the interests of power is the introductory vignette for Chapter 2 of the NYC2012 bid book, Legal Issues. Here is a small account intended to show New
York’s profound collective will to reshape and rebuild itself, which describes the Rockefeller family and the city government cooperating in 1946 to site the United Nations headquarters in Manhattan, drafting a proposal “in just 96 hours” to develop an East River site “occupied by slaughterhouses, packing plants and cattle pens.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 2: i) The intended message is that New York “gets things done” when it is for the greater good – and will surely get things done for the Olympics, as well. But what of those whose livelihoods depended on those slaughterhouses, packing plants and cattle pens, literally and figuratively?

In terms of citizens’ role in urban planning, the top-down tendency may well have been true for much of the 20th century, and vestiges of that pattern remain today. How pervasively? How much has this tendency changed? To the extent that New York’s citizens have collectively organized, acquired and refined advocacy skills, tactics and strategies, and supported the creation of commissions and laws to preserve the urban landscape, and to the extent that institutions like the media took notice of threats to the urban fabric posed by untrammeled development, these are developments from the early 1960s onwards – a relatively short period in the history of the city. The condemnation and demolition of Pennsylvania Station in 1963 is, from today’s perspective, one of the most visible turning points; it signals the loss of a landmark so central, monumental and cherished that even the establishment press voiced its stern, if toothless disapproval. The public campaign to save Penn Station was too little, too late. Those who lost the battle to save it – those who made up pressure groups like the Action Group for Better Architecture in New York (AGBANY) – were not the masses, but a fairly small group of young architects, writers, activists and artists, future luminaries like Jacobs and Robert
Venturi among them. But they were becoming active around the same time that small neighborhood activist groups in places like Brooklyn Heights and Greenwich Village (Jacobs, again, the resonating voice) started amassing victories against Moses and the planners on projects like the Lower Manhattan Expressway, the Mid-Manhattan Expressway and Westway. These grassroots activists would win a larger, longer campaign in the political arena and in the hearts and minds of the public, thanks to a growing communal distaste for plowing under swaths of the city’s fabric and history. By 1965 New York had historic preservation laws in place, which saved numerous city landmarks (such as its other great rail terminal, Grand Central) from a similar ignominious fate. Such laws would be challenged, but reinforced in court through the 1970s. Attitudes towards unrestricted, feckless development, even (or especially) when backed by the slick, yet often-empty assurances of developers and politicians changed swiftly; in the decades ahead, greater scrutiny of and resistance to grand plans would become the norm, if not necessarily dominant.

**From Nadir to Postindustrial New York**

Just as Chicago was central to nineteenth century urban industrialization, and the founders of modern social science studied it to understand these processes, New York can be viewed as central to understanding the late twentieth century postindustrial transformation. (Mollenkopf & Castells, 1992, p. 5)

The 1970s are often considered grim times for New York City. The social, racial, political and economic turmoil afflicting many of the nation’s inner cities – especially its
older industrial cities – did not spare the nation’s largest and most prominent metropolis. In fact its size, historically high profile, and status as a media capital inevitably cast New York as a kind of urban standard bearer, and so its woes could be seen as symbolic of the decay – material, financial, moral or otherwise – afflicting America’s cities.

Perhaps this was only to be expected, for New York had traded successfully upon its self-conferred status as America’s biggest, richest, most vibrant and important city almost since the birth of the nation. As the mass media age dawned, and especially with the early 20th century rise of visual media – motion pictures, newsreels and photojournalism – New York’s identity became ever more bound up with its imagery and geography; its bustling city streets, the ways of orienting oneself (uptown and downtown no longer New York-specific, but terms used to understand and make meaning of cities all over) or the skyscrapers that constituted its signature skyline. Then as now the skyline and streets of New York (Manhattan, to be precise) could be seen in countless films, with TV shows, photographs and other media establishing not just the New Yorkness of the subject, but conveying urbanity itself, with all that entails, good and bad. The NYC2012 bid book puts it this way: “Today, New York's streets and place names have become part of the national experience. Wall Street, Broadway, Madison Avenue, Times Square, Park Avenue, Coney Island, the Bronx, and Harlem are almost as well known outside New York as in it.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. Intro.: v) But it is worth nothing that the bid book does not comment on whether those places are “well known” in positive or negative ways.

A negative image of New York rushed to the fore in the 1970s, even if many of the causes had been bubbling under and developing since at least the 1950s, when a
fundamental transformation of the city had begun taking hold. This transformation can be associated with a large-scale shift from industrial to postindustrial economics.

Unemployment became an ever more acute issue during this time period (and continues to be through to the present day) because manufacturing and industrial jobs – the driving, sustaining force in the rise of 20th century New York – were in retreat. Such jobs were being lost overseas, lost to automation, or simply pruned. This shortage of good-paying, steady manufacturing jobs was felt keenly by the city’s newcomers, who, even when lesser-skilled (as many were) had traditionally been absorbed into and prospered in industry. Though it had not been wracked by race riots like those that inflamed places like Detroit, Newark or Los Angeles in the late 1960s and early 1970s, social tensions were already running high as the face of New York changed with new waves of immigrants from Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean – especially Puerto Rico. These newcomers altered the balance of languages, customs, traditions and interests, contributing much that was positive. But their arrival also set off new rounds of inter-ethnic anxiety and strife. If agitation between new and long-established ethnic communities was a typical, perennial New York story, it was only exacerbated from the 1970s onwards by competition over declining blue-collar work opportunities.

On the economic front, the city’s near-bankruptcy in 1975 shook the faith of its citizens and the nation, giving birth to an infamous New York Daily News headline – “FORD TO CITY: DROP DEAD.” For many, that line summarized federal government attitudes towards the cities, urban life and urban politics, and underlined the precarious existence of American cities in the face of ideological shifts and social changes such as changing immigration patterns, shuttered factories and white flight after nearly three
decades of rampant suburbanization. In the eyes of others, the reaction was justified. Budget shortfalls had been waved away by accounting sleight of hand for years. The high level of benefits and services long offered by New York City to its citizens – from top quality public hospitals to a free college education for all residents – as well as organized labor’s power were seen by some as practically unsustainable, if not ideologically abhorrent. The situation grew more dire as manufacturers and the middle-class fled, taking a chunk of the city’s tax base with it. Structural and ideological accounts of New York’s breakdown lagged far behind easily mediated clashes and failures. A city-wide blackout and subsequent riots in 1977, and swaths of “urban jungle” deterioration only made parts of the city, such as the South Bronx, nationally synonymous with harrowing danger and chaos – the stuff of Scorsese movies and TV cop dramas.

By the early 1980s New York was on the upswing again. But a new, deeper split between the city’s high and low, ultra-rich and desperately poor was emerging, as depicted and dramatized in New York-set works like Tom Wolfe’s The Bonfire of the Vanities and Oliver Stone’s Wall Street. The concept of New York as a “dual city” starkly bifurcated along economic, class, racial and ethnic lines with distinct and disparate under- and overclasses took hold in sociological circles, though this has been criticized as too simplistic and limited a metaphor to be useful. (Mollenkopf & Castells, 1992, p. 13) Nevertheless real disparities between the city’s diverse populations grew as the foundations of the city of the city shifted. As with all the things in modern New York City land and jobs were central. In line with the developed world’s long shift towards a postindustrial orientation, the FIRE (Financial Services, Insurance and Real Estate) sector swept into the void being left by manufacturing and shipping, changing both the labor
and real estate landscapes of New York. Beside the Wall Street firms that had long been a
dominant force in lower Manhattan, an ever bigger array of sub-industries associated
with them – financial and legal services, back-room administrative and technological
support – accumulated and spread throughout the city and region. One example is
Brooklyn’s MetroTech Center, a complex intended to catalyze the early 1990s
redevelopment of downtown Brooklyn, which now houses a variety of financial,
educational, media and non-profit organizations – symbolic of a broader reconfiguration
from industrial to postindustrial urbanism.

Parallel to this shift was the rising concept of the *knowledge economy*, and with
that the concept of data as a commodity or a resource possessing intrinsic value, which
could be collected, analyzed, manipulated, bought and sold globally. There are concrete
consequences to conceptual shifts such as this. A knowledge economy has different needs
than an industrial/heavy manufacturing economy; mobility of human, financial and
technological, as well as material resources, and robust global communications and
transportation connections are paramount to its success. It also demands a different kind
of workforce. Efforts to attract and keep knowledge workers, or what would come to be
called the “creative classes” (Florida, 2002) increased through the 1990s, especially as
New York became a focal point of the decade’s dot-com boom as well as a global
financial, media and cultural center. Attracting highly mobile top-level workers, not just
from around the region but around the world meant focusing on certain urban
characteristics. It meant enhancing the city’s image and its tangible and intangible
potentials; its leisure and consumption opportunities (restaurants, bars and shops; its
“scene”), its environmental and social climate (“green” and tolerant, open to innovation),
its economic wellbeing, and its overall quality of life.

Rudolph Giuliani’s tenure as New York’s mayor (1994-2001) is associated
(among other things) with efforts to enhance the city’s quality of life by cleaning it up –
from the sanitizing of places like Times Square, where chain restaurants and Disney
musicals replaced peep shows and street preachers, to a zero-tolerance policing policy
founded on the “broken window theory” of urban sociology. (Kelling & Coles, 1996)
Zero-tolerance enforcement of laws against long-overlooked petty offenses like graffiti,
public drinking, panhandling and squeegee men was applauded by some, lamented by
others who saw the poor and minorities being scapegoated and some of the city’s flavor
being polished off along with the grit and menace. It was roundly criticized when police
heavy-handedness led to terrible incidents such as the shooting death of Amadou Diallo
and the abusive sodomy of Abner Louima.

Spatial change as a result of these converging economic, political and social
forces was perhaps inevitable, the gentrification of traditionally working-class and ethnic
neighborhoods the most visible result. Gentrification itself was not especially new; the
conversion of industrial spaces to lofts, as Sharon Zukin (1989) has shown, was itself a
catalyst of the postindustrial city going back to the artists of the 1950s and 60s who lived
and worked in warehouses and lofts out of necessity if not bohemian style. Zukin noted
that as New York became a center of the global art market and New York-based artists
gained fame and cachet in the mid-20th century, old industrial space became prized not
just by the bohemian set, but by developers looking to convert them into chic high-priced
residential developments. Deindustrialization made more of these spaces available, as did
market pressures; an influx of empty-nesters, young professionals, creatives and other urban revivalists increased demand. Once an unfashionable neighborhood was “colonized” by artists and other pioneers, its old warehouses, flats and storefronts renovated piecemeal, a succession of restaurateurs, shop-owners, and real estate developers tended to follow, the end result being a thriving boho neighborhood too expensive for many of its erstwhile residents – the working-class and urban-pioneer artists – to live in anymore. Thus neighborhoods like Brooklyn Heights and Park Slope, Washington Heights and Harlem, Astoria and many others transformed with the city as a whole. New York’s 1990s boom did not start, but accelerated the process.

By the end of the 1990s, as the NYC2012 team was assembled and its bid was being formed, New York City was a similar, and yet very different city compared to 1900 New York, or 1950 New York, or even 1970 New York. One assertion many (including those composing the bid) might have made at that time was that as the new millennium started, New York’s trend-line pointed up; the city had come almost all the way back from the brink. Almost.

**Narratives of Rising and Falling**

The economic, political and social failures of New York in the 1970s, and its renaissance through the 1980s and 1990s have invited much analysis from academics, policymakers and chroniclers of urban society. Explanatory narratives and metaphors that have developed and proliferated since then are worth noting, both for what they say and what they do not say. One way to conceptualize New York (as well as other cities) is in a quasi-natural periodic or cyclical sense; was New York simply given to boom and bust
cycles which its politicians and citizens could do little to avoid? If one fully accepts this (and repeats it), then there seems little for anyone to do but ride out the lows and wait for the good times to return, as they will eventually and “naturally.” In this view the pain of the 1970s was counterbalanced by the boom of the 1980s and 90s, and the doldrums of the late 2000s will be relieved by another resurgence just over the horizon.

In a somewhat related sense, another angle of inquiry might be; were there inscrutable, irresistible, larger forces at work, which the city and its people just could not respond to? Again, this implicates an invisible hand or hands – technological and social, regional, national and global macroeconomic machinations playing the part of a *deus ex machina* which can hardly be resisted, only (perhaps) moderated. Various readings of New York’s decline seem to imply the work of such unseen forces – movements without any mover. For example, Allen (in a typical work of popular history) writes that as early as the 1950s, “New York was losing its factories. New York’s prosperity had in the past been due at least as much to its role as a manufacturing center. But starting in the 1950s its manufacturers began drifting away.” (Allen, 1990, p. 293) Empirically speaking, this is hard to argue with; it is a fact that heavy and light industry left New York beginning in the 1950s and that by 1970s manufacturing was in full flight out of the city. But how does a city simply lose its factories? Did manufacturing really “drift away,” like water naturally finds its way down a slope, or was it invited, coaxed and forced by conscious intent and the work and policies of men?

In the same passage, Allen (1990) recites several more of the now-conventional explanations for the difficulties that beset New York following the exodus of its industry
– factors which we now recognize as key to a shift towards the postindustrial city that New York was becoming, following its 1970s nadir:

The high cost of labor in the city, which in turn was due to the cost of housing, transportation and many other elements; the increased use of automation; the higher cost of space, driven up by higher land values and the expense of construction; high city taxes that came from a high level of municipal services and benefits, and urban congestion. (p. 293)

The issue in this example is not the factors themselves, but the language used to deliver them. Language, after all, influences the political and historical imagination, ultimately shaping collective understanding of what happened and what to do in the future. Here we see the typical language of passivity (if not inevitability) of things-being-done-to the city as if by magic; ways of life that just changed, economic foundations that just shifted, places that just turned over, things that were just lost.

I would assert that this is a common way of describing and understanding changes that took place in New York as well as other American cities through the last third of the 20th century, not just in history books but in other realms of formal and informal discourse such as the NYC2012 Olympic bid book. It is in stark contrast to more critical, political-economically-oriented views, which assign names, motives, objectives and actions to developments; “essentially, over the last three generations, the city has had a real estate strategy – expand the CBD/shrink manufacturing – which it has presented as a jobs strategy.” (Fitch, 1996, p. 49) These are not just idle academic observations; Fitch argues that New York’s Regional Plans (at least, from the second Regional Plan onward) proposed solutions to problems – specifically, the core problem of unemployment –
which regional planning itself had brought into being quite deliberately. The need for job creation became an exigency with which all future Plans, visions and policies put before the public had to contend. To what extent would this be true for another future vision of New York City – the NYC2012 Olympic bid?

**Renewing New York and its Olympic Tradition**

New York City is undergoing a spectacular resurgence in nearly every area of life. A decade ago, few would have predicted this. (NYC2012, 1:1)

The thirty years or so preceding the bid – from the 1970s until the start of the new millennium – is a key historical time period for the narrative put forward in the NYC2012 bid book. Themes of decline and resurgence, decay and renewal are attached to the city through these decades. The story of New York (in this reading, at least) is one of past crises, a nadir, and an ongoing renaissance. The city, NYC2012 says, is once again on the rise socially, economically, culturally, and environmentally. But the summit has not yet been reached. An Olympic Games, unlike any other event, would crown this renaissance and revitalize yet another New York tradition; its role as a great sporting city.

In Chapter 1 of the bid book, NYC2012 contrasts two *Time* magazine features on New York City which appeared ten years apart around the end of the 20th century. The first piece, published in 1990, depicts a city in decline, wracked by drugs, crime, neglect and despair. The magazine's cover, which is reprinted in the bid book, laments “The Rotting of the Big Apple,” with the heart in the city's famous “I (Heart) New York” slogan broken and an artistic rendering of a gray, glowering cityscape. The second *Time* cover article, published in 2000, features a photograph of a vibrant, glowing Times
Square during the millennial celebrations. As the bid book says, “New York City represented the epicenter of celebration....The dark days of a decade before could hardly have seemed more distant.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 1: 3) This becomes one of the clearest and strongest themes of the bid book; that the New York of the past, associated by many with danger, torpor, poverty and squalor has been washed away and replaced by a bright, welcoming, ever-more-modernizing city.

In the last ten years New York has risen like a phoenix....Today, in striking contrast with 1990, New Yorkers are proud of where they live.

(NYC2012, 2000, p. 1: 6)

The reasons for this recent rise, according to NYC2012, were centered on the city's efforts to stop crime, improve quality of life and reinvigorate the city's economy. The growth of Silicon Alley, a section of the city in which numerous dot-com start-ups and technology firms were headquartered, is also mentioned as a driving force in this economic boom. A deep sociological or economic tract it is not; claims are made, statistics are offered to affirm the city’s upward trajectory, and that is that – this is place-marketing, not a critical work on why the city has revived itself, or the policies and ideologies behind it.

New York's putative renaissance had not just affected its social, economic, and cultural spheres, nor only the quality of life of its citizens. The IOC now designates the environmental impact of the Olympics as a key concern and so one chapter of the NYC2012 bid book addresses the past, present and future of the city's environment. Here, the Hudson River, once choked and fouled by pollution and industrial activity, is another symbol of New York's renaissance; now it is “cleaner than anyone would have imagined
in 1966,” when the movement began, “thanks to the efforts of public and private sectors alike.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 4: i)

At the same time, the bid book notes that “New York is facing its worst housing shortage in decades.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 1:13) Even this is given a positive sheen and linked to the city's rise; immigrants arriving to take advantage of the welcoming city's new opportunities and an ongoing economic boom are named as partial causes for the lack of housing. By the logic of the narrative of the NYC2012 bid book it follows that a New York Olympic Games, which would spur development (starting with the Olympic Village in Queens) and bring attention, revenue and tourism to the city would be just the solution. The NYC2012 bid book's producers, like the boosters of many major cities, insist on claiming that New York remains “the world's largest collection of villages,” and that in 2012, “the city's newest community, Olympic Village, will recall its oldest, New Amsterdam: a compact waterfront settlement filled with people from everywhere – the ultimate urban village in what has always been a city of villages.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 12: i) As the Olympic X could be an Olympic-branded remedy for New York's traffic and infrastructural issues, which would remain after the Games concluded, so (it is implied) the direct and indirect investment in development for the Olympics would alleviate the city's housing issues into the future.

The NYC2012 bid book depicts the city as being on an upward trajectory, rising from the ashes like a phoenix. But the New York described in the bid book has not yet soared to its peak. Having rediscovered or recaptured its traditional roles as a national and world leader in economics, culture and other spheres, the next thing to be recaptured via a New York Olympic Games would be its sporting tradition.
Of the 28 Olympic sports, New York played a vital role in the American development of at least 17. (NYC2012, 2000, p. Intro.: xi)

New York's sports history and culture is difficult to deny, at least in terms of major American team sports like baseball, football, basketball and ice hockey. Likewise, the city, its citizens and media regularly turn their attention to major events in sports like tennis (the U.S. Open), running (the New York Marathon), and other, less-celebrated but still significant events. It is also true that the city is the birthplace and/or home of many Olympic athletes, and that many Olympic sports, from track and field to swimming, soccer to boxing claim fervent followings and burgeoning participatory scenes throughout the city. Still, when the bid book asserts (as it does several times) that:

New York has a glorious Olympic sports heritage

And that throughout the city:

Olympic sports competitions have become a mere shadow of what they once were. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 1: 27)

It is worth questioning, 'How deep, wide and glorious was this ostensible New York Olympic tradition?' The bid book's accounts of and claims to New York's "Olympic heritage," linked to numerous events like the 1936 US Olympic track and field trials or Annette Kellerman's underwater ballet at the Hippodrome (a show-business precursor to synchronized swimming), appears tenuous and disconnected. A city the size of New York, in a nation which has dominated the Olympic Games for much of their history, would be expected to boast many Olympians among its natives and citizens, and so it does. The NYC2012 bid book's claim that this glorious Olympic heritage is an essential part of New York's history, or even the sporting-cultural aspect of its history is
less than convincing. The city had never hosted the Olympics, and had never before made a significant bid to host the Games. If anything, it appears that NYC2012 deliberately conflates New York's strong *sports* tradition with its weaker, fragmented *Olympic* tradition. A reference, for example, to New York's role in the development of baseball in order to suggest the city's “traditional” connection with the Olympic sport of baseball seems disingenuous. Professional baseball has been essential to New York culture for over a century. But Olympic baseball hardly makes any impression in New York or in the United States as a whole; in fact, baseball is rarely more than a minor sport in the Olympics in general. In other words, New York is a baseball town – but its level of interest in Olympic baseball has never risen above infinitesimal. It is difficult to connect New York's links with and love of baseball with the Olympic version, and call it part of a tradition.

Still, NYC2012's message is consistent; a New York Olympics would help reverse a region-wide decline in interest in Olympic sports and leave behind a physical legacy of facilities and venues, while rejuvenating the youth sports culture of the city from community leagues to the elite level. Implicit in this narrative is the idea that New York's modern renaissance parallels in many ways the renaissance of the Olympic movement itself over the past three decades. The Olympics would crown New York's return from the brink as a great city, while catalyzing the rebirth of its Olympic sports tradition. Despite how nebulous and specious the notion of this “New York Olympic tradition” may be, the bid book narrative depicts this last part as being a clear process and outcome, something easily marked with rhetorical flourish, even if it is never quite so direct and simple in real life. In the comparatively lyrical “Glimpses of the Games”

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section of the Introduction chapter, NYC2012 looks forward to July 2013. Just one year after the Games have left the city, “New York has recaptured its Olympic sports heritage.”

**The Recent Past as Prologue**

The history of New York, from its beginnings as a trading center in the 17th century to its rise and boom through the Industrial Age, fills in our understanding of the city's civic, social, cultural and political life throughout the 20th century up until today. But in terms of the NYC2012 Olympic bid, the recent past is an especially important prologue. Understanding New York during the period between the 1970s and the end of the millennium as well as the way it has been framed, its history made into a narrative is important to my work for two reasons. These years mark a key time in the shift towards the postindustrial era worldwide, during which manufacturing and industrial activity dwindled in places like New York City, while service activities and sectors boomed, and cities turned from centers of production and distribution to centers of service, consumption, leisure, entertainment and spectacle. The New York that Olympic bid organizers worked in and with at the beginning of the 21st century was already assumed to be postindustrial. Nothing about the bid plans nor its supporting narrative goes against that or seeks to amend that trajectory. On the contrary, it continues it.

More fundamentally, it is recent and relevant history because it is apparent how relevant the narrative of urban decline and rise was from the perspective of the NYC2012 bid organizers. New York history is woven into the Olympic bid. Various events and eras in New York’s past are evoked, but no part of this historical narrative is more relevant or
emphasized than the thirty years or so preceding the bid’s presentation. The prevailing theme of NYC2012’s bid was that the Olympics were the perfect capstone to New York’s long rise back to the pinnacle of world cities.
CHAPTER 5: PLACE MARKETING AND “DRAMA”

The Endlessly Dramatic City

Contemporary scholarly research on Olympic host city bidding in the postindustrial era highlights the ways in which events like the Olympics are part of urban growth strategies. Much of this research takes a particularly strong critical view towards the tendency of political and corporate power-players to use Olympic bids calculatedly and instrumentally, reshaping urban space according to their needs and priorities. In tandem with these growth strategies, urban image creation and place-marketing becomes increasingly significant in a world linked by high-speed and mobile communications technologies, post-Berlin Wall consumer capitalism and globalized popular culture – a world of time-space compression.

With economies of signs and symbols playing an ever larger role in the world-system of cities, a city aiming to create or refashion its image finds value in attaching that image to prestigious brands and symbols, such as the Olympic symbol (and all that it connotes.) Urban and cultural theorists have posed questions such as: who produces these vital image(s) of the city, and for what audience(s)? What key techniques and stratagems are involved? Throughout my dissertation I have addressed these questions via an examination of significant themes in the NYC2012 bid book and the historical, social, political and cultural conditions to which they are linked. In this chapter I conclude with an examination of a final theme – “drama” – in two parts. First, I will discuss the concept of urban image creation – specifically, the role that place-marketing plays in cities and the contemporary “post-“ city in particular. Secondly, I will look at how the NYC2012
organizers depicted drama as being a prominent element of New York City within the bid book narrative. New York is a dramatic city and a New York Olympics would be endlessly dramatic; these ideas are both frequently invoked and deliberately emphasized in the bid book. What drama seems to mean in this context, and why it is chosen as a signature urban characteristic merits discussion.

**Place-marketing and the “Post-“ City**

Cities and other human settlements have long built, maintained and spread images and narratives as a way of promoting themselves to both internal and external audiences. They are after all “willed artifacts,” (Rykwert, 2004, p. 5) consciously created by human minds as much as they are built by human hands. The creation myths of ancient cities like Rome, which conferred divine origin upon the place, the centuries-old association of cities such as Paris, Heidelberg and Salamanca with their universities, of cities such as Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostela with their pilgrimage sites, and of any number of royal capitals with their access to court power are just a few examples of the proto-place-marketing that was taking place long before the age of mass media and carefully-crafted, multi-layered marketing campaigns. Fluid but definable, the image and reputation of a city has always been important to its citizens, to its rulers, to those who would travel to it and to those who would do business with it.

Place-image was perhaps especially important when it came before the actual building of the place itself. For example, from the 18th century onwards, dazzling descriptions and illustrations of an unspoiled Eden produced and circulated by landholders launched adventuresome settlers and idealists towards the New World, where
they sometimes founded new communities upon the place promised but often as not
found themselves stranded in a hostile jungle, a fetid bayou, or a windswept, pestilent
plain.

By the 19th century, the fledgling fields of advertising and public relations had
started fashioning the imagery of cities and places with greater sophistication and
purpose, especially in the United States. Expansion and urban development across the
American West was fueled by technological advances such as the railroads, by political
and economic interests (land speculators and civic politicians in the new territories – who
were often one and the same) and by the image-makers in their respective employs. As
Boorstin (1961) noted, emerging cities angled, fought for, and politicked their way to
significant positions on the railroad network, understanding that those on the line would
grow, while those off it would likely wither and die. Image played a key role in this;
railroad companies seized on and dramatized the natural and man-made assets of places
on their routes, from national parks and natural wonders to the vibrancy of the new
western cities in order to stoke up business among pleasure-seekers and entrepreneurs.
From these roots, and driven by the impetus to draw both tourists and capital investment
to new places, we detect the beginnings of the modern place-marketing industry.

The closing of the American frontier just before the end of the 19th century meant
a beginning, not an ending to the construction and commodification of place, especially
in the then-popular form of the mega-event. Just as expositions and exhibitions in Paris,
London and other European cities had trumpeted those places as centers of technology,
education, commerce and imperial power, so expositions on either side of the fin de siècle
in cities such as Atlanta, New Orleans and San Francisco built and reinforced their images as new commercial and cultural centers, new gateways to opportunity.

Today the spectacular one-time event has largely given way to the year-round, professionalized image-making effort. No modern city worth the name is without a place marketing apparatus. Most possess integrated multimedia branding strategies engineered by specialist consultants. The more forward-thinking, globally-inclined among cities – New York being an obvious example – reaching out nationally and globally to promote the city as a place to produce television programs, commercials and films.\textsuperscript{x}

Cities and other places exist discursively and imagistically as well as physically. Their citizens have constant contact with those discourses and images. More than that, their dwelling-places are carefully bundled up to fit a prescribed image. The latter point underlines one of the major differences between the historical examples of fairly informal city-imaging (as noted above) and the modern, structured practice of place-marketing; the practice of place-marketing “clearly has implications not only for how the external consumer sees places but also for how those people who constitute place are able to participate in the making of their collective and individual identity and the structures which sell place.” (Hall, Hodges & Roche, 1998, p. 96) Here image takes on (or is given) a life of its own and affects individual and collective urban life. Image may precede history (as it often does – we may observe host cities touting themselves as “Olympic” years before their games actually take place.)

Byrne (2001) speaks to the power of image while stressing three post- terms that are significant to the development of the contemporary city: postindustrialism, post-Fordism and postmodernism. While the first two are more related to material phenomena
described above (deindustrialization, etc.) postmodernism, as we know from its use (or profligate abuse, some might say) involves an overriding concern with image, artifice and surface, as well as the dissociating of image from function and often from history. The speed and ease with which individuals, businesses, and capital can move between cities in the age of post- makes image-craft a critical issue, not least to the entrepreneurial powers-that-be.

With all other things being equal, and with many other differences (of technological capability, political system, socioeconomic ideology, etc.) being diminished, it may be claimed now that imagery and rhetoric (“Pennsylvania is open for business”; “Kansas City – An All-American City”; “Cork – 2005 European Capital of Culture”) are among the highest-value properties or resources a city possesses, and thus of paramount importance to an city’s growth coalition as it competes with other cities.xi

**To Shape a Place-Image**

Generally speaking, a collective view of a place, a shared sense of city-image – be it one’s own city or not – shows a degree of group self-awareness and perhaps a consensual vision of social-spatial linkage among a civic population; i.e., “this is our city. This is who we are.” Such a collective awareness backgrounds life in a place. To the extent that it is background, it is not consciously thought about or worked on by individuals in a systematic way. It just is.

Yet that city-image is not just potentially malleable and maneuverable, it is constantly being grasped, maneuvered and re-engineered. By whom and to what end?
Urban political economists like Logan and Molotch and Harvey have argued that it is primarily the work of the property-owning and developing, rentier classes of the growth coalitions, as well as other followers of the growth ideology such as transnational corporations – to the exclusion of other urban denizens and groups and their goals, needs and desires. This basic argument underlies much modern criticism of the entrepreneurial city and its strategies – especially the mega-event strategy typified by the courting and hosting of the Olympic Games:

The hosting of mega-events is now often deliberately exploited in an attempt to “rejuvenate” or develop urban areas through the construction and development of new infrastructure, including road and rail networks, airports, sewage and housing. This has been used to revitalize inner city locations that are regarded by government, municipalities, and business interests as requiring renewal. (Hall, Hodges & Roche, 1998, p. 98)

Such critiques are often extended to claim that the modern Olympics, particularly over the past 30 years or so, have been transformed into something less an athletic and cultural celebration, even less a global orgy of crass commercialism, and more a useful Trojan horse to advance the economic and political interests of the powers-that-be in potential host cities:

The motivation for seeking to sponsor such events has less to do with the promotion of sport or culture than with the pursuit of economic advantage, although, of course, sport and culture may be used to justify or complement such pursuit… (Hall, Hodges & Roche, 1998, p. 98)
The identity of these “powers-that-be,” the decision-makers behind a place’s image, as well the key strategies that the decision-makers turn to and put in motion to remake image, and how those strategies cohere with the ulterior interests of the decision-makers appear deeply intertwined because they are. Contemporary cities – at least in the United States – tend to be run by loosely-synchronized, growth-obsessed coalitions of private enterprise and politically powerful interests who produce place-marketing imagery and rhetoric with the power to shape places discursively as well as materially.

It is less clear just how profoundly individual citizens and small-scale urban groups might be able to influence or re-shape their discursive and material cities against such amassed forces – in other words, it is less clear if and how they are to have a significant role in the branding of their own places. Place-marketing demands money and other kinds of resources (planning, media connections) which are beyond the capacity of most ordinary citizens or neighborhood collectives to muster. It requires sustained, coordinated campaigning which is hard to drum up, craft and maintain from the grass-roots level – especially in the interest of starting or promoting plans (such as place-marketing initiatives) instead of stopping them. This tendency towards organizing for resistance, not advocacy, has long been a feature of urban grass-roots planning movements, as architectural critic and historian Paul Goldberger has noted; “for most of the middle decades of the twentieth century, into the seventies – the notion of public participation in planning seemed synonymous with the idea of protest. People became involved to stop projects, not to get them started.” (Goldberger, 2004, p. 109)

There is often, if not universally, something local, narrowly-defined and negating about activism on the neighborhood or citywide scale. That is understandable, accounting
for the number of movements which began among small groups of people personally invested in a single goal – to stop the highway, stadium or landfill that could directly affect their lives and homes. On the other hand, we may surmise that the decisions to change or re-create a city image exhibits a global self-reflexivity and strategic purposiveness on the part of those who drive the city forward, not to mention a facility with branding that comes from having image-makers, consultants and disseminators on retainer. It exhibits consciousness not just of the city itself and its particular public image, but also of the larger systems both it and its ephemeral image circulate within – a global city-system and a global “economy of signs and space” (Lash & Urry, 1994) respectively.

The hierarchy of global cities is paralleled by a hierarchy of global signs and symbols such as events, logos, corporate-brand and celebrity images which are always in flux, in relation to each other. Just as a thoroughly brand-conscious company like Nike raises and maintains its corporate image (or sign) by aligning itself with other culturally powerful signs (the persona of Michael Jordan, a philosophy of transcendence through athletic effort, or even a “sign” of a city such as the legendary playground basketball courts in New York’s Rucker Park) so necessarily brand-conscious cities may raise their profile by strategically maneuvering through the dynamic sign-economy. In either case, “the name of the game is to invest one’s logo with recognizability and cultural desireability.” (Goldman & Papson, 1998, p. 18)

In part because of its long-term cultural significance and in part via its extensive mediation in recent decades, the Olympic Games and its array of symbols, from the five rings to the anthem to the ceremonies and rites, make up one of the most dominant and
appealing sets of signs in the world’s sign-economy. So appealing, in fact, that Olympic
bids may stir up positive popular sentiment among expected and unexpected quarters of
urban citizenry; among the merchants and landlords who stand to profit from a
reconfigured city and city-image, and the ordinary people who stand to gain little or
nothing, but support the idea based on appeals to their interests (promises of job and
wealth creation) and their sense of city pride.

It is this class-spanning popular sentiment, cloaked in the Olympic rings, that bid
organizers (allied with urban powers, if not one and the same) seek to stoke, guide and
ride to victory. Were it all to proceed so smoothly and unchallenged as that, the
momentum of this sentiment could hamper, if not override rational civic discussion of the
positives and negatives of hosting the games (much less ideologically-centered
opposition). But it seldom works that way. As entrepreneurial urban powers have
discovered the utility of mega-events like the Olympic Games for growth and
redevelopment purposes, so grass-roots forces have progressively mobilized to question
and resist being manipulated; the academic’s and activist’s understanding of the mega-
event strategy has leached out towards and fused with the innate sense of ordinary
citizens that the powers-that-be are trying to put one over on them.

Drama!

The word drama or a variation on it (dramatic, dramatically) appears 60 times in
the NYC2012 bid book. Few terms resonate more strongly throughout the document; few
ideas are driven home as enthusiastically as the idea that a New York Olympics would be
a dramatic Olympics. The bid book's Introduction chapter, and Chapters 9 (General
Sports Organization) and 11 (Cultural Legacy) in particular play up the centrality of drama to the event and the city. Other bid book chapters, while focusing on individual events and facilities, also use the promise of dramatic scenes, backdrops and events to stir the reader's imagination of the Olympics in New York.

But what is drama? Philosophers, artists and critics have defined and redefined the concept for thousands of years: Aristotle's authoritative theorizing of poetics and drama centered on the comic and tragic forms, breaking the drama down into its component parts (Plot, Character, Diction, Spectacle, etc.) Since then, dramatists influenced by these ancient principles have both worked within the art and further theorized and developed the concept; Dante, Cervantes, Moliere, Diderot, Goethe, Brecht and Sartre among them (and that is just among the most famous Western dramatists; virtually all cultures have some dramatic tradition.) Lines from drama itself, such as Shakespeare's “All the world's a stage...” resonate in culture, epitomizing the view that life itself is akin to drama, that real-life places can be both stage and gallery while we are all both “playing roles” and also spectators.

One standard modern definition of drama says, in part:

1) a composition in prose or verse presenting in dialogue or pantomime a story involving conflict or contrast of character, especially one intended to be acted on the stage....4) any situation or series of events having vivid, emotional, conflicting or striking interest or results. (“Drama”)

One might add that drama generally involves a sequence of actions and scenes structured (often, but not always) to convey a story, archetype or narrative, but always to attract the audience's attention and activate its emotions.
These classic and modern definitions of drama are interesting enough to mention here, but beyond that the history and theories of drama are only incidental to this analysis. Drama in the contemporary sense sprawls well beyond the spheres of performing arts and literature and the definitions germane to them. Free-floating, it also connotes excitement, conflict, spectacle and affect (among other things.) Perhaps a better question would be, what did NYC2012 mean – or intend – when it employed the word drama in the bid book?

The frequency of the word drama in the bid book text signals, I believe, the centrality of the concept of drama to the NYC2012 bid committee. By extension, it indicates how drama figures in marketing the contemporary city, by making it (and all that it connotes) part of the urban experience. A deeper understanding of the word and its facets may help us with both.

However, attending to the word drama can be a complicated endeavor, given how easy it is to be drawn off-course from it, towards the rocky shoals of heavily-freighted, oft-used words like spectacle and all that entails thanks to decades of (sometimes loose) critical theorizing. John MacAloon has written much on the game, festive, ritual and spectacular aspects of the Olympic Games over the past three decades, and in recent work renewing this theoretical framework (2006) calls attention to unproductive conflations and expansions of the word spectacle until it becomes a “master metaphor for every conceivable manufacturing of power, and critical terms old and new...(these) are if anything more conflated in today's ‘discursive world.’” (MacAloon, Tomlinson & Young, 2006, p. 16) Like him, I think this is a pitfall to avoid. Thus in this chapter I call upon MacAloon's game-rite-festival framework, while attempting to preserve the
distinction between the idea of drama that I am talking about, and a nebulous notion of spectacle which encompasses almost everything and explains almost nothing.

Beyond the semantics of drama itself, I will examine the various ways and contexts in which the NYC2012 bid book proposes drama to be a feature of and a frame for a New York Olympic Games. The key way involves drama as an innate quality of the city itself; the most visible manifestation of this is the city skyline. The skyline projects drama; as a stage-set or backdrop (a word used repeatedly in the bid book) it provides an immediate aesthetic experience for athletes and spectators; simultaneously, it is accorded global media value; the bid book underlines the iconic, dramatic views of the city, which would background the drama and competition of the events themselves, and emotionally affect television audiences around the world. Other evocations of drama are more abstract and perhaps more wishful, as when the NYC2012 proposes an International Olympic Committee meeting at the United Nations, dramatizing the symbolic association of international institutions – but are worth noting all the same.

New York as a naturally dramatic city

Few landscapes can provide as romantic, thrilling or familiar a backdrop for the 17 days of Olympic glory. (NYC2012, 2000, p. Intro.: vi)

The Introduction chapter of the bid book depicts a New York City that is naturally and historically dramatic, due partly to its geography, partly to its citizens' responses to those conditions over the years, due partly to the legacy of major events that have happened there. “With the city surrounded by water, as New York grew, its residents were forced to improvise.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. Intro.: v) What exact set of historic
events or adaptations this refers to is hazy. Central Park and the Brooklyn Bridge are breezily invoked; while they are landmarks and New York signatures, “forced to improvise” implies some degree of urgency, and it is hard to figure just how those landmarks exemplify unique improvisation in the face of adversity. All the same, the bid book’s readers may be able to summon up some sense of how New York has been built around and within its natural constrictions, utilizing its diversity, ingenuity and urban spirit. Events, celebrations, gatherings and milestones that have occurred throughout New York's history, especially those that took place in the age of mass media – ticker-tape parades for heroes like Lindbergh and the Apollo astronauts, wartime victory celebrations, Worlds' Fairs, sporting and cultural events – are referred to in words and images. The New York City of the bid book is an accumulator and generator of dramatic moments which mark and shape the city like a palimpsest, lending momentousness and significance to all that takes place in it.

On an emotional level, the melding of romance, thrill and familiarity in modern New York, as depicted in the quote above, is worth examining. How can these three quite different concepts be linked? Often, what is romantic is romantic because it is mysterious, unknown, unfamiliar to the person experiencing it. Likewise, what is familiar can (and perhaps should) lack thrill, but makes up for it in recognizability and comfort. Is such a claim paradoxical, contradictory, or simply hyperbolic? It may be all of these. But that does not necessarily make it invalid. Any city has manifold aspects, and a city as large, complex and mythologized in media as New York probably does conflict with itself in infinite ways. Millions of people who have never been to New York would find the novel, the unknown, and the exciting (for better or for worse) if they ever visited the
city. But they would also find much that they already “know” indirectly, through media; buildings, landmarks, streets, views, characters, accents, archetypes, even experiences.

The difficult issue of a city’s nature or essence crops up again. If a city is so full of every quality and characteristic, does it really possess a nature or essence at all? How can we know what those possessed qualities are, what that particular essence is? Just as the city’s vast, complex, contradictory history is given a dominant reading by those who tell histories, so the bid book producers take on the role of discursive city-builders by selecting and emphasizing certain traits (like the three mentioned above) out of the many: drama, produced out of the combination of romance, thrill and familiarity is the basic formula. NYC2012 makes a claim for the prevalence of these traits, just as others past and present have made claims for other traits.

The overarching focus of my analysis – how New York was discursively constructed by the NYC2012 Olympic bid – takes concrete form here.

Some traits, experiences, and shades of the city are unlikely to find many advocates, but attain a level of veracity and salience anyway – perhaps through collective experience. There is much about New York, for instance, that is anything but dramatic; there are countless banal and pedestrian, bland, unexciting, and workaday sides to the city. Likewise, there is much that is thrilling or unexpected in undesirable ways. Drama, too, comes in many forms, not all of them positive. The thing about drama is that it often involves danger or uncertainty. But NYC2012 was not promoting, or even acknowledging, those particular aspects of drama.
A Consumable Drama

The aspects of drama that NYC2012 referred to directly some sixty times (and many more times, implicitly) are those which would make it most attractive to the packagers/marketers/commodifiers of place and the consumers of place – to those engaged in “touristic consumerism.” Touristic consumerism (as discussed in Chapter 1) is the way in which “mass publics in the advanced societies both routinely travel the world in search of escapist pleasure and (occasionally) exotic difference, and also, when not touring, consume media images and goods and services evocative of touristic hedonism.” (Roche, 2000, p. 26) The concept of touristic consumerism asserts that despite appearing to work against each other – one transporting people virtually, the other transporting them physically – the mass media and tourism industries function cooperatively. The former generates information and images from localized events then disseminates them throughout the world, while the latter draws people and money towards specific places at given times. Both industries benefit symbiotically.

The closer the world gets through media, tourism and transnational corporate growth, the more important it is (at least from the perspective of place-marketers) that cities, places, events, sites and moments be unique, inimitable, “signature” in some recognizable way. The media and tourism industries both produce images and messages of uniqueness attached to place and event, in order to play upon them. Mega-events in general, and the Olympics in particular convey a powerful sense of uniqueness upon a place. They occur seldom but regularly, are broadcast to enormous audiences the world over, and are a blank slate for the inscription of emotional affect. After the Games are over, an aura of momentousness, history and almost sacred consecration may linger over
sites associated with great Olympic moments, either explicitly (the Olympic Stadium) or in a more sublime, ghostly sense (“This is where so-and-so broke multiple world records in 19__.”) Conversely, many former Olympic sites are quickly repurposed, knocked down, or even left to wrack and ruin.

It helps if the city or place already possesses its own markers, sites and icons of significance. New York City – perhaps the ultimate urban embodiment of the touristic consumerism concept, a profoundly mediated and touristed city – possesses an abundance of these markers, and none looms larger than its skyline.

**New York's Skyline, in Person and via Media**

About ten years ago, I lived directly across the Hudson River from midtown Manhattan, in one of the densely-packed urban communities atop New Jersey's Palisades cliffs just before they descend down to the river near Hoboken and Jersey City. The entire West Side of Manhattan spread out panoramically before my eyes. There, about a mile away, were thousands of buildings, millions of people, countless twinkling lights at night. In some lights the buildings blended together into one indistinct whole, like a jagged mountain ridge with one peak around the Financial District, which then sloped down through Greenwich Village, the teens and 20s, rising again at Midtown, before bottoming out over Central Park. At other times, such as during the photographer's “golden hour” just before sunset, whole swathes of the “front range” – the near facade of the skyline – were beaming, iridescent. That place's greatest asset was scenic; the most valuable real estate, along the cliff's edges, derived its value not from what it stood on, but what you could see from there – the view of New York City's skyline.
New York's physical landscape – especially its skyline – is highlighted in the NYC2012 bid book. It is depicted among other ways as an urban asset, the by-product of the city’s essence, and a spectacular stage-set for the IOC and its media partners. The bid book depicts the skyline as a true New York signature. The idea of the modern urban skyline-as-popular-icon probably does originate with and is most identified with New York City. This is probably not a result of its architectural primacy (Chicago is considered by many to be the nation's architectural capital, New York being, at least in this contest, the Second City) but because of New York's longstanding eminence in mass media.

Generally speaking, skylines are strange systems – dynamic, yet fixed enough that they can be iconized and made recognizable to people near and far. They are largely unplanned and unregulated. The buildings constituting the skyline are typically independently-owned, autonomous entities which may be raised, razed, reshaped or redeveloped as each owner wishes. But the agglomeration of these independent entities, buildings and other structures adds up to something more than the sum of its parts, and are viewed, experienced as an ensemble. Further adding to its strangeness, a skyline belongs to and is identified with the part of the city that constitutes it, yet the visual effect of the skyline is usually experienced best from some distance. You can get a sense of the Manhattan skyline while on the island itself, but the best skyline views (if we take best to mean most panoramic, recognizable, famous) are found outside – from the rivers and bridges, from nearby New Jersey and the outer boroughs, or even from the air, as in the airborne establishing shots of the New York skyline familiar from so many movies and television shows.
The Manhattan skyline (because when we talk about the New York skyline, we are invariably talking about Manhattan) is continuously, incrementally changing. Yet – the terrorist attacks of 9/11 notwithstanding – the skyline is stable enough that people around the world readily recognize it. Different photographic and artistic renderings of modern New York at different times from different vantage points all tend to possess enough core elements of the skyline – the Empire State and Chrysler Buildings, the World Trade Center (before 9/11) and other such signature towers – to be recognizable.

New York was not always a city of towering buildings. Its upward growth began shortly after the Civil War; as late as 1890, the tallest building in Manhattan was Trinity Church, whose steeple reached the great height of 281 feet. Within thirty years, skyscrapers at the southern tip of the island had sprouted up to dwarf that steeple (“cruelly overtopped,” in the words of Henry James) as well as all the other pre-modern buildings in the city, which topped out at five stories. As Thomas Bender (2007) has written the New York skyline is even today both a horizontal and vertical thing. It holds in dialectical tension the bias towards urban grandeur being something horizontal which predominated in New Yorkers’ collective perceptions through the early 20th century, and the reaching, aspiring, swaggering vertical aesthetic which took over with the dawn of the age of skyscrapers.

The skyline that we look at today – and which NYC2012 proposed as an ideal Olympic backdrop – is a congealed accretion of time-bound dialectical relationships very much like the Olympics themselves. Bender discovers in the history of modern New York the symbolic alignment of old-style horizontal massiveness (the A.T. Stewart Department Store, the old Pennsylvania Station, Grand Central Terminal) and cultural
augustness and civic virtue in conflict with an aesthetic linkage between tall skyscrapers and modernism, technology and corporate capitalism. The latter movement towards height and verticality came to the fore in the early 20th century – right at the time that the modern skyline emerged. But that modern, towering skyline did not conquer completely. Instead of ever becoming a pure city of skyscrapers envisioned by modernists like Le Corbusier, or made manifest in places like Sao Paulo, New York remains a city of tension between horizontality and verticality and what those planes represent.

It is worth recognizing how the NYC2012 bid book makes use of the city skyline – which of the skyline's qualities and functions the bid book producers focus upon. If the horizontal plane broadly connotes a kind of pre-modern cultural and moral rectitude, and the vertical plane an ambitious techno-capitalist-centered swagger, then the buildings, landmarks and sites that are mentioned and emphasized, and the way the skyline as a whole is depicted becomes important. Each of these elements possesses an aesthetic history and meaning, so we may look for a broad emphasis upon one set of elements or the other, reflecting a tendency towards one orientation or the other. Can we detect if the NYC2012 bid book emphasizes one or the other?

A few skyline-related themes stand out in the bid book; first, the effect of the skyline upon spectators attending and athletes participating in the Games. For those on-site at waterfront venues in all the boroughs, the impact of the skyline as a whole will be dazzling, soul-stirring, inspiring. “Athletes will enjoy striking views of the city's skyline” from the Olympic Village in Queens. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 9: 10) Spectators and competitors at the archery events at the Williamsburg Waterfront Park athletic complex
along the East River will take in “the photogenic Manhattan skyline” and enjoy “a unique waterfront experience.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 10: 25)

Another pair of interconnected themes – the telegenicity and marketing value of the skyline – are also in play. The bid book is not reluctant to crown New York “[p]erhaps the most telegenic city in the world” before putting that quality to use; successful precedents in the mediation of the Olympics are invoked – “like Barcelona, NYC will offer the world uniquely memorable sports images.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 78) The 1992 Barcelona Olympics are regarded as one of the first to position the crowds and the city itself as a backdrop to the games; Barcelona’s organizers employed prominent advertising executives to heighten the theatrical qualities of the venues, both for spectators on-site and worldwide television audiences. This city-as-backdrop theme is reinforced throughout the bid book, with the vertical aspect – the towers of the skyline – being emphasized: “Sports that take place along the riverfront will be set against the backdrop of Manhattan’s glinting skyscrapers, one of the world's most recognizable urban vistas.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 9: 11) Expanding on this idea, the bid book claims in Chapter 18 that “[s]et against the backdrop of instantly recognizable landmarks like the Brooklyn Bridge, the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building, Times Square, and the Manhattan skyline, a New York City Olympic Games will be perhaps the most telegenic ever, enhancing their visibility and, in turn, the value of Olympic sponsorship.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 18: 108) Here the NYC2012 bid book arranges a marriage between the image of New York City and the image of the Olympics, nodding to the needs and concerns of marketers and global television executives.
A lesser theme in the bid book, but one that is evident all the same: a New York Olympics will not only play off of, display and benefit from the skyline and other parts of the built environment, they will add to it, too. The proposed Olympic Tower skyscraper, which would overlook the Great Hall/Olympic Stadium and contain the International Broadcast Center would be a “dramatic addition to New York's iconic skyline.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 16: 82) (Note that it is the Olympic Tower, not the adjacent Great Hall, which is imagined as adding to the skyline.) Other newly-built Olympic elements are envisioned as adding to the city and its viewscape on a smaller scale; reconfigurations of Flushing Meadows Park for the Flushing Meadows Regatta Center would include the construction of a new road bridge over the water course, whose “graceful structure will provide a dramatic backdrop to the starting line and stand as a permanent architectural monument to the Olympic Games.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 10: 202)

**Dynamic Drama**

It is tempting to fixate on the bid book's evocation of the skyline, upon its spotlighting of landmarks like well-known monuments and skyscrapers (I have quoted just a couple) as the epitome of urban drama. It is tempting to draw out of the bid book's narrative an emphasis on verticality and all that that may embody, conjuring up a simple, if deeply-laid link between the private-corporate-capitalist roots of NYC2012 itself and the city's towering corporate edifices. It is equally tempting to note that institutions like the IOC and its partners in global corporate media seize upon these particular aspects because they are most marketable and alluring to its audience (it is not hard to note this, since the point is plainly stated) before trying to soothsay some subtle but important
ideological resonance there. I wrote above of my own appreciative experiences of the New York skyline while living in New Jersey, but I am also self-conscious enough to recognize that my tastes and feelings towards the skyline, my own structures of perception are, like anyone's, not purely objective but the product of growing up in a certain time and place. These reflections are socially and culturally conditioned as much as anything else. One almost wants to zero in only on this horizontal-vertical dialectic, then to note a bias towards the vertical-corporate in rhetorical and visual references to the city's skyline, and consider the matter settled.

But the NYC2012 bid book's depiction and envisioning of drama is not restricted to an emphasis on its most famous tall buildings or even upon the iconic skyline as a whole. Via the bid book narrative, drama is all at once a more fluid, fragmented, wide-ranging, extensive and spectacular part of the urban experience. New York City itself – not just the stage-set facade of its photogenic skyline – constitutes and contains an Olympic spectacle that is spatially and temporally dynamic – and thus dramatic – in various ways:

The dynamic drama of movement. Movement through time and space hides and reveals, illuminates and obscures; there is ample potential for drama in any experience of getting from one place to another. The Olympic X transportation plan is not only the most obvious travel-related component of NYC2012's bid, it is central to the bid. The organizers imagine that for Olympic athletes and other members of the Olympic family, travel on the ferries and trains of the Olympic will be a dramatic experience in itself. This experience “capitalizes on the drama inherent in New York City, the metropolis that has captured the world's imagination for generations…The Olympic X, in short, takes
The advantage of New York City's remarkable physical landscape to showcase the Olympic Games.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 9: 11) Another aspect of travel – that of the Olympic-event-in-motion – is more ritualistic; NYC2012's proposed parade of athletes to the Opening Ceremonies. While the ceremonies themselves would take place in the Olympic Stadium (much as the Games in any other city), the bid book presents a narrative in which the festivities would be preceded by a parade of tall ships and ferries carrying the athletes from the Olympic Village in Queens down the East River and around the Battery to the banks of the Hudson at midtown. Such tall ship parades, if not exclusive to New York, are certainly associated with it in modern times; images of New York Harbor filled with ships for the Bicentennial celebrations of 1976 or the rededication of the Statue of Liberty in 1986 quickly come to mind. The image of a similarly sprawling, colorful city-wide dramatic spectacle – this time for the Olympics – is painted; “Millions will line the shoreline, cheering on these Olympic heroes with even greater fervor than greeted the 1969 parade welcoming home the Apollo astronauts, etc...”. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 11: 4)

*The dynamic drama of the City as Art.* Another way that New York shifts, performs and transforms dynamically is via art. Like many cities it possesses formalized places and institutions for creating, displaying and performing all kinds of art and cultural expression, from fine arts to performance to design, fashion and architecture. Thanks to this established art world, along with a critical mass of artists, designers, dealers, donors, curators, collectors and markets operating within it, New York is perceived as the nation's (if not the world's) art capital. But this is only one level of the relationship between cities and art. Equally (if not more) vital is the urban ecology of informal art, decoration and expression; street art, theater and performance, and untethered, often subversive or illegal
creative acts – an ecology which exists in relationship to the more formal art world, fueling and catalyzing it. The NYC2012 bid book acknowledges the centrality of art to New York city life, as well as the city's artistic preeminence; “already a 'cultural epicenter,’ NY stages a Cultural Olympiad every day.” (NYC2012, 2000, p. 11: 1) The term Cultural Olympiad is notable. Since the days of Coubertin, there has been a place reserved for artistic expression and cultural performance in the Olympic Games. The festivals of culture envisioned by those Olympic founders have since been broadened and expanded.

It is one thing to refer to the city's cultural scorecard – all the museums, galleries, concert halls and ateliers it has – in order to prop up its reputation as an arts capital. It is another thing entirely to talk about and imagine New York in the terms that the NYC2012 bid book does when it summons up the idea of:

The city as art, the backdrop for monumental dynamic expressions of urban creativity. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 11: 2)

What does this mean? One might interpret it like this: that in response to both the aesthetic triumph of Barcelona '92 and the much-criticized flea-market atmosphere of Atlanta '96, and presaging contemporary trends towards public art and performance, officially-sanctioned and unendorsed displays, shows and installations, NYC2012 envisions a kind of continuous, all-permeating metropolitan art-spectacle. Distinctive elements of the skyline...will be illuminated in dramatic sweeps of light by artists and lighting designers. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 11: 2)
At night the dramatic glow of the roof, set against a background of New York's illuminated bridges, will provide one of the iconic images of the Games. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 10: 232)

On the buildings in Times Square....seven “zippers,” or electronic message boards will be the “canvas” for an electronic literary dialogue among poets, playwrights, novelists and journalists “conversing” with each other through their historical and contemporary works. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 11: 3)

Whether the spectacle described in the last quote really amounts to a “conversation,” any more than the gigantic advertisements that already fill Times Square “converse” with the city and its denizens is debatable. Nevertheless, the modern Olympic host city, conceived thusly by NYC2012, would apparently be more than just a site for commemorative concerts and Olympic art exhibitions – and certainly not a setting for garish or tawdry commercial spectacles – but an indoor/outdoor, public/private environment for the display and showing of dynamic art, literature, design, food, fashion and architecture. This may be an overly idealistic reading – but it also anticipates the way that New York was aligning itself with art small and gigantic, and with artists famous and unknown in the first decade of the 21st century. This alignment with art and artists ranged from city programs coordinating with street musicians in subway stations, to the “Gates” project of Christo and Jeanne-Claude in 2005. The latter, which saw the French conceptual artist pair install massive fabric banners around Central Park, brought attention and tourism to the city while “improving and enhancing the unique New York
City experience,” in the words of Mayor Bloomberg. In a letter commemorating the project, Bloomberg wrote:

Impressive and imaginative works of art have enhanced New York City’s public spaces throughout history and have greatly contributed to the City’s status as the cultural capital of the world. (“The Gates - Letter from Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor, City of New York”)

The dynamic drama of international ceremony and symbolism. The modern Olympic Games are built upon internationalist rite, ceremony and symbolism. The Olympic Games themselves are, of course, a revival of ancient ceremonies and rituals. Upon that, layers of carefully constructed symbolism and myth, which have been invested with the gravitas of secular religion over the past century anchor what might otherwise be mere athletic contests in something deeper and more timeless. In Chapter 1 I discussed the intertwining of the modern Olympics with modern society and culture – not least with the main forms of internationalism which have evolved over the course of time (liberal-imperialist, supernationalist and globalist). The NYC2012 bid book narrative imagines that the cosmopolitanism of the Olympic Movement would be made visually and symbolically dramatic by association with one of the other primary institutions of modern internationalism – the United Nations, which is headquartered in New York. Such association could be take the form of symbolic communications to the Olympics' global audience (and ostensibly the United Nations' global polity as well).

The traditional flag-raising for each country will take place against the symbolic backdrop of the UN...a reminder of the power of sport to
transcend borders and promote international harmony. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 11: 8)

An IOC session at the UN would represent a historic coming-together of the two leading international institutions – the UN and the Olympic Movement – dedicated to promoting peace and goodwill among nations. (NYC2012, 2000, p. 11: 7)

Such a conjoining of the Olympics and the UN could, of course, only take place in New York. Unlike other symbolic events which NYC 2012 proposes – an Olympian ticker tape parade up the “Canyon of Heroes,” for example – these dramatic signature events would also be unprecedented.

Drama, Theatricality, Spectacle

What did NYC2012 mean – or intend to mean – when it employed the word drama so prolifically in the bid book?

I would suggest that while the word NYC2012 used so often was drama, what NYC2012 meant in an ideational or conceptual sense was theatricality. We may discern a little of the difference between the words theatrical and drama, in order to avoid the appearance of playing semantic games with synonyms. I do not think of the two words as pure synonyms; the word theatrical (in my view at least) goes beyond the more theoretical and performing-arts connotations of drama; the concept of the theatrical may be linked to big scale, impressive effects, excitement and emotional affect. It connotes histrionics and extravagance. Think theatrical, and a long train of associated terms could follow; diverting, epic, sweeping, outsized, colorful, characterful, and affecting. More
words may quickly spring up; grandiose, grandiloquent, portentous, bombastic, artificial, and perhaps most importantly, spectacular. All these terms can connect, one way or the other, with the Olympics and the Olympic event.

If theatrical is the concept behind the NYC2012 bid book's ubiquitous drama, this last word/concept – spectacle – tags along with and encompasses both those terms. It is also a word that we (as cultural critics and especially students of the Olympics) ought to be careful around and with; one might say it means almost nothing anymore. Hemingway once wrote “all our words from loose using have lost their edge”; in writing about the Olympics as game, rite and festival, MacAloon (2006) underlines a similar loss of precision with regard to the term spectacle, not least among the intellectual elite. For him, spectacle has become an “encompassing trope for the decaying public sphere” and “a loose, imperial trope for everything dubious about the contemporary world” in the last decades of the 20th century (p. 15). He notes that the cultural critiques of Daniel Boorstin and Guy Debord – two influential thinkers with little else in common ideologically or otherwise – converged on the point of the “spectacle” and its place in contemporary life; “their critiques of contemporary alienation and manipulation were nearly identical in emphasizing the triumph of pseudo-realities and pseudo-events.” (p.15) In short, the word spectacle has lost its edge through loose using, and this has (among other things) blurred productive examination of modern mediated mega-events like the Olympics.

The Olympic Games is a construction, a fluid assemblage of live and mediated real and pseudo-events and pseudo-realities. It is surely spectacular in many senses. In the NYC2012 bid book it is framed and promoted as being endlessly, powerfully dramatic. There are differences to be delineated here. The point where the concepts of
drama and theatrics overlap with that of spectacle – where we choose to make the concepts overlap – is worth keeping in focus, the differences worth preserving.

MacAloon's game-rite-festival framework (1984) is one attempt to rigorously analyze the Olympics as complex cultural performance, to address the very different experiences and perspectives that athletes, volunteers, live spectators, global media audiences, officials, organizers, local citizens, and others may possess and value through the Olympics. Whereas earlier scholars (such as MacAloon's own mentor, Victor Turner) tended to subsume all these experiences and forms under the umbrella of ritual, MacAloon's stance is that “a single paradigm of the ritual process cannot interpret very diverse performance genres.” As he put it, “maintaining distinctions among different performance genres, including spectacle, permits recognition, characterization and correlation of different experiences among cultures, social segments and power layers within the Olympic Movement.” (MacAloon, Tomlinson & Young, 2006, p. 17) In later work, MacAloon states that spectacle also “ought to be considered as a performative genre in its own right” – an analytic endeavor still needing to be fully carried out.

The objective is a finer-grained sense of the Olympic event as a whole – of the “nested and ramified performance forms” and genres which coordinate and interact with one another, and allow for varied experiences and ideas of what the Olympics are about. MacAloon argues that this sense demands an ethnographic approach, rather than pure theorizing-at-a-distance. Proceeding from this approach and via fieldwork at numerous Olympics, he has concluded that “all Olympic encounters for most people, around the globe, and some Olympic encounters for everyone involved transpire in small-scale, intimate settings – anything but spectacular.” The Olympic torch relay, in his eyes, is the
ultimate anti-spectacle; available to tens of millions for free and without a ticket, up close and personal, imbued with the symbolic meaning of the flame and the emotional investment of those who guard and carry it to its destination. It may well be ritualistic and dramatic, but far from spectacular in the critical sense.

**Does the IOC Even Value “Drama”?**

One of MacAloon's most interesting observations as a result of his Olympics fieldwork concerns a general disregard for the popular festival aspect of the Olympic event among the Olympic elite – IOC, NOC and international sporting federation members, VIPs and other functionaries. Olympic elites – preoccupied with securing high-level access (which correlates with prestige) and protected by a *cordon sanitaire* as a result of ever-stricter security measures – experience a wholly different event than regular live spectators and host city residents, much less the global viewing audience, who “have little reason to suspect the existence of the popular festival genre.” (MacAloon, Tomlinson & Young, 2006, p. 21) The sometimes-spontaneous, carnivalesque festival does not touch them, or rather, they tend not to enter it – and thus not to value it. Along with much of the broadcast media, “the dominant discourses of (the Olympic elite) contain little reference to or concern with the popular festival....the local Organizing Committee Of Games are the only institutional actors who pay attention to the festival experience.” (MacAloon, Tomlinson & Young, 2006, p. 21) Put plainly, most of the Olympic institutional elite does not care much about the popular, colorful multinational street party going on outside the stadiums and exclusive parties, and in fact would just as soon it was de-emphasized. As MacAloon (2006) pointedly notes, IOC members have
been pleased to bask in the aura of popular festival after it was deemed a success at the Olympics, but “many of the same officials vigorously opposed festival plans at the design stage.” (p. 21)

As the festival dimension of the Olympic event varies in relevance and emphasis depending on the subject or group, so drama does too – or at least it stands to reason. I am trying not to conflate *festival* or any of MacAloon's genre-forms with *drama*, which I would consider more like an emotional valence. That said, drama (or theatricality, as I have tried to conceptualize it), however subjective it may be, shares much with the concept of *festival*. A multivalent sense of drama was energetically highlighted and promoted by host city organizers working to bring the 2012 Olympics to New York – arguably, a natural extension of New York's self-created and maintained image as a dramatic place where things are always happening. Yet the drama of the Olympics may not connect with all actors, groups and interests in the same ways. Some types or conceptions of drama may not be important or even welcome. It may be that some forms of drama (perhaps its most subjective, collective forms) were and are not equally valued by IOC decision-makers, making New York's “dramatic appeal” – all other things being equal – a relative non-starter.
CONCLUSION

The End of the Bid

On July 6, 2005, New York City's bid to host the 2012 Summer Olympics ended. At a selection announcement which took place at the IOC's 117th Session in Singapore, the 2012 Games were delivered to London instead. The surprising nature of the announcement had very little to do with the NYC2012 bid; in the parlance of the games, New York did not even make the podium, finishing a distant fourth behind not only the British capital but also Paris (the pre-emptive favorite going into the meeting) and Madrid. Only Moscow, a longshot all along, finished lower among the finalist cities.

It was not a memorable moment for New York's bid organizers and supporters. Even supposing that the sporting cliché of “moral victories” has any real merit, no moral victory could be drawn from this result. Competing in a coronation rite that has become a global media spectacle itself, against a set of upper-echelon global cities for the right to host the world's premier mega-event, the self-proclaimed “Capital of the World” was easily outpaced. New York City had been the locus of a great outpouring of national and worldwide sympathy and admiration following the 9/11 terrorist attacks less than three years before the Singapore decision; now it was an also-ran.

Those who followed the immediate post-9/11 public discourse surrounding the symbolic identity and future of New York City may also recall the rounds of mediated self-examination, affirmation and celebration that led towards a general exhortation to rebuild. Not just to replace, but to rebuild bigger and better. To shrink from that mission, one heard people, was (to use the overwrought cliché of the time) to “let the terrorists win.” Emblematic of that urge to show some communal resilience, mixed with
tremendous uncertainty of how to go about it, the question of how to rebuild Ground Zero became a contentious flashpoint for the better part of a decade after. I would argue that such a wave of collective spirited defiance seemed to demand more, or be suited to energize more than a single site, however significant. It seemed to invite something bigger, more universal, and in an important sense, more ephemeral – something like a mega-event.

From that standpoint, it seems possible to suppose that the NYC2012 effort, already well underway by 2001, could have been locally and even nationally galvanizing. But this did not happen, at least not to any significant extent. On that July day in Singapore, the imagined perfect retort to those intent on driving wedges of fear and hatred between cultures and nations, those who would atavistically, suicidally attack multicultural society, Western culture and finance at its base – a first-ever New York Olympics, the torch burning above a new stadium – was summarily denied.

By the summer of 2005 that denial was not unexpected. This effort to bring the Olympic Games to New York had begun long before the events of 9/11, and the leitmotif of a city resurgent in the face of immense tragedy was very light indeed in the final reckoning. Ultimately NYC2012 fell very far short. But why? For all highflown Olympic virtues of diversity, brotherhood and competition, the story of resilient, cosmopolitan spirit that post-9/11 New York City had constructed for it by NYC2012 was hardly sufficient, on its own, to win the Games. Much less was simply being New York City, an established world cultural, economic and symbolic center with no little sense of itself or self-aggrandizing gusto enough to pull in the required votes. In fact, media observers speculated that whatever sentimental favorite status New York may have had was likely
nullified in the ultra-politically-aware IOC environment by a rising tide of anti-
Americanism following the start of the Iraq war in March 2003.

In the immediate aftermath of the IOC's decision, local press attention focused on
postmortem evaluations of the NYC2012 bid. Where was it critically flawed? Was a fatal
misstep made at the outset, when the bid's success was banked upon the construction of
an enormous new stadium without securing sufficient community support and political
will? Was New York's Olympic plan, at a projected $3.2 billion, too expensive and
ambitious? What was the real cost to the bid of it coming from the most famous city in a
country waging a globally-reviled war? Did corruption and graft prevail? Was the bid
simply inferior? Such questions reiterate the immense complexity that permeates the
process; there is a significant degree of opaqueness, a large “black box” aspect to it.
There is no clear-cut answer here, only much to surmise and speculate upon.

A tangled knot of internal and external factors play a part in the final reckoning of
an Olympic bid, but as a student of communications I have sought in this work to
emphasize and analyze the media components; specifically, the way in which an Olympic
bid book mediates and discursively constructs a city, its qualities and assets, its history,
its people and their nature, its story. The NYC2012 bid book is, as I have stated earlier, a
blueprint and a marketing brochure; as far as the latter goes, it is a media text which
contains multiple themes and narratives. Some are overt and others are suggested. The
themes that I have focused in on and expanded upon – New York's cosmopolitanism, its
potential assets and needs as a modern global city, its recent resurgence back from the
brink, and its inherent drama are articulated, then integrated with or mapped on to the
history, philosophy and mythology of the Olympic Games and movement. How that
articulation and integration happens is the key point of interest to me, distinct and separate from whether a given bid wins or not. It is not possible or proper in my eyes, to claim that this bid (or any bid) failed solely because the themes were slipshod and buckled. But the failure of NYC2012's bid must be chalked up, to some inestimable degree, to a failure of representation.

That being said, I want to conclude with a few thoughts on the future of themes, narratives and critical readings of Olympic bids.

**Olympic Critique Out in Public**

Public awareness of the Olympics' inconveniences and costs continues to grow. At the beginning of the 21st century many, though far from all people recognized that the Olympics can bring harm as well as good (however disparately distributed) to a host city and its constituents. The ongoing Greek economic crisis (which critics have linked in part to Athens' hosting of the 2006 Games) and the persistence of global citizens' movements like the Occupy movement have only intensified popular concerns over corporate-run mega-events. We may observe a now-typical scenario play out in many cities where a potential Olympic bid emerges, a scenario in which (alongside some popular support) some citizens and institutions equivocate while others actively resist the idea. It has become increasingly difficult for prospective Olympic bidders to frame the Games as a pure festival of sport, a celebration of civic and national identity, or a proven economic benefit. It seems to be increasingly difficult for prospective Olympic bidders like NYC2012 to successfully invoke stable narratives of the kind that they did, in the way that they did. Each of these themes and narrative has come under fire as critical attention
has coalesced, and that in turn has affected how the Olympics may be sold to a less acquiescent public. Moreover, it reflects a simmering antipathy towards any themes and narratives created and deployed by the perceived elite and powerful.

This reflects a qualitative change – a product of, among other things, the experience of past Olympic cities being analyzed and communicated, of social movements and activism, experimentation in recent decades with participatory democratic forms and practices, and the development of digital communication networks and something like a technologically-mediated public sphere. While we may express doubt that ordinary citizens and the grass-roots can significantly shape the marketing of their place in the ways that growth coalitions can, the spoiler role that a resistant public plays is significant, especially in the eyes of an institution like the IOC, whose guardians promote the Olympic Movement’s universal support and avoid choosing cities riven by bid-related conflict.

These spoiler elements have factored in more and more recent city bids. There was possibly some grassroots and ideological contestation and resistance to the Olympics before the 1960s, but it was not so widespread or so much a part of public and mediated discussion as it has been in recent cycles. The epiphenomenon of Olympic criticism and contestation (as a type of localized democratic resistance) has given birth to organized, coordinated and sustained resistance, whether it be through neighborhood associations or international pressure groups.

The modern Olympics have gone on for over a hundred years, but the character of both the event and the organization has been fluid, with the last thirty years or so being especially important to that institution. The financial calamity of the 1976 Montreal
Games, the US-led boycott of the 1980 Moscow Games, and the game-changing entrepreneurial commercialism of the 1984 Los Angeles Games are key milestones in the actual shifting towards a new phase of the Olympic event and movement. These events and changes within the Olympic movement are important, but I want to underline here the concurrent, parallel growth of a critical Olympic discourse. Employing different methods, theories and foci, and working towards different objectives, over the past fifteen to twenty years, scholars, investigative journalists and local activists have constituted a small but influential movement analyzing the realities and the myths surrounding the “privilege” of hosting the Olympic Games, among other mega-events. Even if few of these scholars or activists are household names, I would contend that the ideas and arguments they have developed and circulated now echo louder in the public consciousness, resonating with an innate suspicion of authority and thus subtly influencing public attitudes towards host city bids.

Not only does this type of research and analysis shine a light on the crucial role that media organizations play in the acquiring and hosting of the Olympics (and to what purposes they do so) but – in reference to my point above – it reveals that by being a vehicle for the proliferating accounts of citizen activism and resistance, media may unintentionally encourage and support the formation of new activist groups and energize more informed, critical citizens (alternatively, it has also fueled the rise of the phenomenon known as NIMBYism).

Furthermore, in some obscure yet discernible process, these scholarly works themselves contribute to the overall growth of critical awareness across time and space. Analysis of how and why Torontonians resisted their city's past Olympic bid, for
example, may inform the strategies of activists in another city later. Their experience could in turn be analyzed and communicated. This strand of academic research and critical perspective on the Olympics begets more scholarship and investigative journalism, and we may imagine it also resonating with a fermenting suspicion of big plans, projects and the stories told by the powers-that-be among ordinary people. All this has fostered the slow growth and spread of this critical Olympic discourse in the halls of academia and in the city streets alike.

Again, this emergent critical Olympic discourse should be contextualized in relation to larger theoretical movements – such as those in political economics which read the role of mega-events in “entrepreneurial city” strategies. It should be related to the lurid exposure of greed and corruption inside the Olympic Movement in recent decades by both academics and journalists. It should also be related to the rise of urban community activism which has been going on for some decades now. As Goldberger (2004) wrote in *Up From Zero*, his account of the World Trade Center site’s acrimonious and unresolved redevelopment after the 9/11 attacks, as long ago as the late 1960s a marked change had occurred. The World Trade Center, emblematic of the urban mega-developments and reconfigurations of the Robert Moses era, was in its way the last of a breed:

> If you were seeking a project that represented the absolute opposite of Jane Jacobs’s worldview, you could not do better than the World Trade Center – and it was Jane Jacobs who had won the battle for the hearts and minds of most New Yorkers, not Minoru Yamasaki. It was Jacobs’s view
of the city…that eventually prevailed in New York and in much of the rest of the country. (p. 35)

By winning this battle for hearts and minds, the Jacobsian worldview – and the grassroots activist structures which she and others participated in and inspired along the way, beginning in the early 1960s – has won a voice and influence in the direction of many contemporary cities, if not veto power. This is especially the case in a city like New York, whose vibrant tradition of community activism and challenges to “master builders” and their plans has grown profoundly in the past fifty years. The legacy of urban renewal and swath-cutting, of the destruction of Pennsylvania Station and the near-destruction of southern Manhattan for an expressway in the 1960s, is not only a now-massive historic preservation movement, but active, vocal, activist citizens, associations and neighborhoods – a culture of urban stakeholders. Importantly for the story of NYC2012, this culture would have staying power; the forces that assembled to deter George Steinbrenner from building a new stadium in Manhattan in the early 1990s were ready to stand up to those Olympic organizers envisioning and promoting an Olympic Stadium on the West Side, alongside an array of other Olympic projects.

The question lingers: what about challenges to “master storytellers” like those who put together the themes and narratives of the NYC2012 bid?

To have any chance of popular support, which appears to be a necessary precursor to even the chance of eventual victory – the NYC2012 bid would have needed to work within this framework of heightened awareness and skepticism and address it credibly. For many (if certainly not all) Olympic bids that came after NYC 2012, failure to do so would open the bid to the unkind exegesis of critics and a hard-nosed public, all attuned
to the ulterior agendas behind big plans like Olympic host bids – understanding derived from both theory and experience.
ENDNOTES

i Other critical analyses of bid materials as constructors of city image, time and space, and of media and civic responses to bids and bid imagery include Haugen (2005) on time and space in Beijing’s Olympic bid, Waitt (1999) on Sydney’s marketing of itself for the 2000 Olympics, Hall and Hodges on the politics of place and identity in the Sydney Games, Cochrane, Peck and Tickell (1996) on the relationship between local politics and globalization in Manchester during that city’s failed attempt to host the 2000 Olympics, France and Roche on issues of citizenship and exclusion in Sheffield’s World Youth Games hosting experience, and Tomlinson’s (2005) general survey of cities, corporations and Olympic commercialism in recent times.

ii A patriotic Frenchman, de Coubertin explicitly denied that he was an “anglomaniac” – a term that is still commonly attached to him; “That is a term used as a shield by all and sundry, as though one cannot appreciate anything at all from the other side of the English Channel unless one’s mind is distorted or one’s viewpoint slanted….We hate the English, and they hate us…. (but) it is always useful to study one’s neighbor, even if that neighbor is an adversary, for imitating the good in him, one can correct it and do even better.” (de Coubertin & Muller, 2000, p. 53)

iii Towards the end of the NYC2012 bid campaign, Doctoroff stated that the 9/11 attacks changed him, motivating him to take on a political role he had declined before: “‘The Olympics have transformed me,’ Doctoroff says. ‘Before, everything was about me; my life was very narrow. This is the first time I’ve looked beyond myself. I’m living proof that anybody from anywhere can come to New York to pursue their dreams and be better for it.’” (Lieber, 2004)

iv Organized mainly around the mass production and distribution of commodities, the industrial-urban system of the mid-19th to mid-20th century has been described as
something like a machine for turning peasants into industrial workers (Byrne, 2001, p. 24). Byrne follows this formulation with a provocative question: when there are no more industrial jobs, why not keep them peasants?

v “In a postmodern world, city-states may soon overtake nation-states, and competition between city-states may determine the new world geopolitical order.” (Dear, 2000, p. 8)

vi In the summer of 2010, I took part in River Summer, an educational program conducted aboard a research vessel in New York Harbor and the Hudson River. In a conversation about the practicalities of plying the waters, the boat’s captain noted that, among other issues, “high-speed” equals higher consumption of fuel. The environmental and economic consequences, especially in an age of rising fuel prices and unpredictable ridership, may have sealed the fate of a more extensive high-speed ferry network.

vii “A New York City purged of its manufacturing, and stripped of its port, was the dream of the Regional Plan’s directors – Morgan bankers, Rockefeller Foundation executives, New York Central and Jersey Central railroad directors, outer borough real estate developers. Residential housing in the outer boroughs would replace manufacturing. Industry would lose its disturbing proximity to Wall Street. The port, the prime source of the disturbance, with its trucks, cargo and longshoremen would be transferred to Elizabeth, New Jersey. And thus the railroad interests on the RPA board would have the best possible of all worlds. The New York Central could concentrate on collecting rent on its west side property rather than freight cars. While the Jersey Central, represented by Jersey Central director and RPA chairman Robert De Forest, would get the benefit of increased traffic at its terminal in Elizabeth.” (Fitch, 1996, p. 37)

viii As Fitch noted in the early 1990s, each of New York’s regional visions to that
point – in 1929, 1968, and 1987 – has been issued just before or upon major regional
economic downturns. (Fitch, 1996, p. 58)

ix "Any city gets what it admires, will pay for, and, ultimately, deserves. Even
when we had Penn Station, we couldn’t afford to keep it clean. We want and deserve tin-
can architecture in a tinhorn culture. And we will probably be judged not by the
monuments we build but by those we have destroyed." (New York Times, 1963)

x For example, in 2008 New York opened an office dedicated to the marketing of
the city in Mumbai (Office of the Mayor)

xi Something worth noting besides these strategies is the attitude that surrounds
contemporary place-marketing. It is ironic that for all the talk of the clout of emergent
global cities and of the bypassing of the nation-state in the post-modern world, that
jostling cities must adopt a posture of supplication. “As supplicants, they go in
competition with each other: cities and localities are now fiercely struggling against each
other to attract footloose and predatory investors to their particular patch.” (Morley &
Robins, 1995, p. 117) Even the urban powers must shuffle forth hat-in-hand, humbly
beseeching transnational economic and cultural institutions like investment banks,
national museums, and sports mega-events to invest money and sign power in their city.

xii For that matter, one might argue that modern media and advertising have spent
the past one hundred and thirty-plus years training the public's aesthetic tastes, teaching
them to see drama in the skyline.
REFERENCES

http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/drama?s=t


