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Manchester Plays Games: Exploring the Local Politics of Globalisation

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Summary. Using the example of Manchester's Olympic bidding process, the paper examines some of the links between globalisation and what has become known as the 'new urban politics'. The politics of the city's Olympic bids powerfully symbolise many of the supposedly transformative features of the new urban politics, British-style, as the old images of municipal welfarist (bureaucratic) politics have apparently been superseded by those of a dynamic and charismatic (entrepreneurial) business leadership. But while there are superficial similarities between these developments and those highlighted by analysts of US 'growth coalitions', the Manchester case reveals how they are as much about struggles over the role, meaning and structure of the state, as they are about urban growth. Manchester's Olympic bid committee resembles not so much a growth coalition as a *grant coalition.* This said, it is important not to underestimate the significance of the new urban imperative to *talk about* growth in order to get grants.

Introduction: Remaking the Local Welfare State

The world (or at least academic analysis) of urban politics has been dramatically transformed in the last decade or so. The 'new urban politics' has shifted attention away from the local state as a key site of 'collective consumption' (Castells, 1977, Dunleavy, 1980) or 'social consumption' (O'Connor, 1973; Saunders, 1984) towards a narrower interest in 'place marketing', 'urban growth coalitions' and 'urban regimes' (Cox and Mair, 1988; Kearns and Philo, 1993; Logan and Molotch, 1987; Stone, 1987; Jessop *et al.*, 1996). The 'old' urban politics was clearly located within a Fordist model of regulation, specifically within national welfare systems, and its crises were crises of national Fordisms, reflecting and exacerbating the fiscal crisis of the state. Urban social movements focused on issues of social *re*production. The 'new' urban politics has taken rather more elusive forms, reflecting the more elusive nature of the wider society in which it exists: the regulatory system remains *after*-, rather than *post*-, Fordist (Tickell and Peck, 1995).

It is in this context that the restructuring of urban politics in Britain in the 1980s, with its key slogans and implicit promises, took place. At its heart was a critique of the past which stressed the inability of traditional

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local government to respond to and deal with the pressures and demands of life at the end of the 20th century. From the right, elected local government was dismissed as being inefficient, bureaucratic and wasteful (for example, Adam Smith Institute, 1989; Audit Commission, 1989; Butler and Pirie, 1981), while from the left it was equally sharply denounced as being patronising, insensitive and inflexible (for example, Gyford, 1985; Hambleton and Hoggett, 1987; Lansley *et al.*, 1989). Politically, this led to attempts to redefine the very being itself. On the one hand, the right in *central* government sought to transform the local welfare state through tighter financial controls, moves towards marketisation and the creation and sponsorship of a remarkable array of unelected institutions of what has come to be called local governance. On the other hand, the left in *local* government began the 1980s looking for ways of transforming the operations of local government from the inside—through decentralisation, equal opportunities policies, the expansion of local economic development initiatives—while simultaneously campaigning against the policies of the centre. Local government ended the decade in a rather more ambivalent state, looking for ways of surviving and redefining its role in the face of continued national Conservative rule and the increased difficulty of sustaining traditional forms of service delivery.

Despite fundamental differences, the two sets of arguments came together around the need to find a way forward which somehow went beyond the local welfare state—or at any rate beyond traditional interpretations of the local welfare state as service deliverer. From both left and right, an increased emphasis on the need for economic growth and success developed and there is now a widespread consensus that local governments have to redefine their roles in a wider global context and, indeed, in the context of globalisation. A new stress on place-marketing has begun to emerge, with an emphasis on the need for local authorities to be entrepreneurial or pro-active (Cooke, 1990; Kearns and Philo, 1993; Tickell and Dicken, 1994). This has occurred alongside a growing emphasis on the role of business within regeneration, whether through public–private partnerships (on the left and centre), or through business leadership (on the right, but also more generally as an expression of the need for a renewed dynamism capable of bypassing the supposedly sclerotic institutions of the local state) (see, for example, Bennett and BitC, 1990; Christie *et al.,* 1991; Jacobs, 1992).

In these discourses, it is deemed necessary to mobilise key actors outside the state and to involve them in developing strategies for renewal and regeneration, implying a fundamental re-imagination of what urban politics is or might be. Although there has been a continuing history of local government involvement in promotional, economic development and planning initiatives (Ward, 1990), the post-war emphasis of British urban politics has always been concentrated around the activities of the local welfare state (to the extent that some commentators have even identified this as a *necessary* functional feature of the local state in its division of labour with the central state—see, for example, Dunleavy, 1980; Saunders, 1984). This has been replaced by a powerful mix of neo-liberal, conservative and even corporatist rhetoric, in which the different participants—from business, central government, local government, community groups and so on—have been able to identify their own agendas. While the right sees the new world as being one in which the state is both ceding responsibility to business and becoming more market orientated; the left interprets it as one in which a flexible, interventionist and pro-active state requires a new partnership between the public and private sectors (compare, for example, Bennett and BitC, 1990, with Jessop, 1994). It is, in other words, clear that something is happening, although the ways in which this should be interpreted remain unclear. Does the state have a new or expanded role to play within a more effective and extensive system of regulation which stretches across geographical scales? Are we moving towards forms of urban politics which are entirely dominated

by business? Are the changes little more than ideological froth on the surface of a fairly stable set of political relations?

This paper uses the example of Manchester's Olympic bid to illustrate some of the key features of this new urban politics, and in particular to unpack the nature of the coalitions of interests which underpin it. The politics of the Manchester Olympics bids of the 1980s and 1990s powerfully symbolise the changes which have been taking place. Bidding to present major global events such as the Olympics has become a key aspect of the local politics of place-marketing. In the case of Manchester, it also appeared that the bids were led by a buccaneering free spirit, Bob Scott, deeply rooted in the private sector. The old images of municipal welfarist (bureaucratic) politics were replaced by those of a dynamic and charismatic (entrepreneurial) business leadership. Unlike some other aspects of the restructured welfare state (for example the newly marketised and managerialised health service), Manchester's Olympic strategy was both populist and popular. Its promotional campaigns suggest that it has been able to mobilise both capital and people around glossy images of success. Alongside Glasgow (Booth and Boyle, 1993), Manchester has been Britain's great success story in Europe's place-marketing games, receiving widespread (if not unanimous) support from across the UK.

While Manchester and the wider North West region have been the site of frenzied public–private partnership formation in recent years (Burch and Holliday, 1993; Peck and Tickell, 1994b; Tickell *et al.*, 1995), more than any other initiative it was the Olympic bid which came to symbolise and to crystallise the new political forms. Indeed, the creation of these new political forms was enigmatically referred to in the city as the Olympic *process*. One objective of this paper, therefore, is to explore the institutional and political preconditions of Bob Scott's fabled attempt to 'sit in an office with a secretary pretending to be an institution', to ask how he was able to do this, and why others in the local power structure were inclined to join in the pretence. But, with the help of evidence from Manchester, we also consider some of the wider claims made for the local politics of globalisation—particularly questioning the extent to which local business interests are able to take the political lead through the formation of 'growth coalitions'. The paper starts by examining the construction of the Olympic coalition, asking which interests were—in the words of Manchester's first Olympic bid slogan—'driving the dream', before turning to an evaluation of what such Olympic (bidding) games mean for the politics of cities like Manchester.

Driving the Dream

> Bob Scott came to Manchester 25 years ago as a theatrical impresario. He dreamt of the curtain going up on the Manchester Olympics. Now he'd probably settle for the Commonwealth Games. Like a good entrepreneur, he understands hype, or as he puts it, how to sit in an office with a secretary pretending to be an institution. (David Dimbleby, introducing Bob Scott on *Question Time*, BBC TV, 17 March 1994)

> The Olympic bid was a people's dream, not just a dream of the affluent, and that's what we need to hold on to. Partnership is where we started and partnership is where we'll end up. Nobody can look at Manchester and say it isn't a city on the move, as long as it holds its nerve and guards against provincial complacency. (Bob Scott, quoted in *Business Life*, February 1994, p. viii)

In September 1993, Manchester failed in its second attempt to host the Olympic Games. The political imagery surrounding Manchester's Olympics bids involved a very clear identification with a single dynamic personality as leader, untainted by the traditional hurly-burly of electoral and party politics. In the process, Bob Scott, the private-sector chair of Manchester 2000, the city's bid committee, in many ways became

the personification of Manchester's Olympic strategy and indeed of the city itself. The nine years which Scott had spent in pursuit of the Games had seen him emerge as "Mr Manchester" (*Independent on Sunday*, 3 January 1993), "the man who gave Manchester a vision of gold" (*Business Life*, February 1994). "There may have been many helpers" the *Daily Mail* observed, "but Manchester's bid owed everything to Scott" (24 September 1993). The charismatic Scott undeniably played a key role in building Manchester's Olympic coalition, establishing himself as an indispensable figure in the city's partnership politics, one whose 'championing of Manchester' has been according to Law "near-inspirational" (1994, p. 230). In recognition of this personal contribution, Scott was "deservedly knighted" (Hill, 1994, p. 354) in the New Year's honours list of 1994.

As a schoolboy, Scott apparently described his hobby as "being in charge" (*Daily Star*, 14 September 1993). In Manchester's Olympic bidding process, 'being in charge' meant drawing together and energising a private-sector-led coalition of the city's movers and shakers, those with interests not *only* in sport but also in urban regeneration. A principal objective of what became known as the 'Regeneration Games' was, Scott explained, "rebuilding one of the great cities of Western Europe" (quoted in *The Guardian*, 24 September 1993). This process would occur both literally and metaphorically: in bricks and mortar terms, the city secured infrastructure spending to the tune of £200m (of which, according to *The Financial Times*, over £80m came from central government sources, 1 June 1995), while equally significant benefits were to flow from the less tangible legacy of the bidding process, measured in terms of a more positive image and heightened self-confidence. *The Daily Express* explained that there was, "a renewed sense of pride in the city" (24 September 1993), while an editorial in *The Guardian* reflected

> …it's not all about winning. Manchester lost the bid, but regained economic self-confidence in the process… Manchester's motives were economic—the regeneration of a post-industrial city-economy. Success would have been sweet, but failure can be a catalyst for continued change… No one knows a sure-fire formula for regenerating a city, but it has got something to do with clusters of creativity forming themselves into a critical mass to provide an infrastructure which attracts industry, services and the arts. The surge in enterprise behind Manchester's bid has already set that process into motion. In preparing its Olympic gamesmanship, Manchester has had a reflected glimpse of its nineteenth century pre-eminence. It rather likes what it sees. (24 September 1993)

This analogy with the 19th century may have been stretched, but it was frequently drawn on by those involved to define their approach, often referring to the 19th-century 'Manchester Men', those civic leaders who saw no distinction between the interests of business and those of the city (see Tickell and Peck, 1996). Yet, the popular emphasis on the role of Bob Scott as charismatic leader in developing and leading the bid coalition also suggested a rather more contemporary set of images, drawn from the US management literature and the search for urban 'movers and shakers' (Christie *et al.*, 1991; Peck, 1994). Stories of how Bob Scott first conceived of, and then constructed, Manchester's Olympic coalition have reached almost apocryphal proportions. According to the version of the story now told by Scott himself, the initial impetus came from a report on Radio 4's *Today* programme in February 1985 that Mrs Thatcher was in favour of bringing the Olympics to Britain. "The assumption" Scott recalled, "was London [but] I thought 'This is ridiculous… the one place in Britain where you can't hold the Games is London"' (*The Guardian*, 6 September 1993). His mind made up, Scott contacted the editor of *The Manchester Evening News* promising that a Manchester bid, complete with bid committee, would be in place by the time of the day's first edition. Scott then "rang six or seven of the great and good,

and asked them to join the committee" (Bob Scott, quoted in *Business Life*, February 1994, p. viii). By that very evening, Manchester was reportedly 'going for gold'.

A second key aspect of the process was that from the outset, Manchester's bid was presented as private-sector led: in the view of the consultants to Manchester 2000, KPMG Management Consulting (1993, p. 1), it was "a private sector initiative which has secured strong public sector support". According to one (private-sector) member of the bid committee,

> [The Olympic bid was] a totally private sector-led initiative... We've had to play a rather more sophisticated role, of combining the two sides of the public sector—a fairly strong socialist local authority with a fairly strong Conservative central government—even more reason in our situation for the private sector to lead. We've always been in the lead, I think.

The Manchester bid was soon being compared favourably with the more traditionally corporatist approach of the rival, Birmingham-based bid. While Birmingham's Olympic bid committee had been "full of city dignitaries and councillors,... Manchester's, as Bob Scott put it, contained 'players who feel easy with million-dollar games, achievers not talkers"' (Hill, 1992, p. 106; although see Howell, 1990). Indeed, after Birmingham's weak showing in the contest for the 1992 Games (in Lausanne in 1986, where it achieved fifth place in the International Olympic Committee (IOC) vote behind Barcelona), Manchester was to wrest the mantle of the British bid city from Birmingham. At the meeting which decided in Manchester's favour, it was claimed that Manchester's Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) could lever £2bn of investment during the run-up to the 1996 Games (*The Times*, 20 May 1988), and the British Olympic Association (BOA) was deeply impressed by Scott's vision of a Los Angeles-style 'private enterprise Games' (Hill, 1992).

Although Manchester failed in its bid for the 1996 Games (in Tokyo in 1990, where it was placed third behind Atlanta), it retained the position of British bid city for the 2000 Games. To do so, however, it was necessary to fend-off a poorly-organised counter-bid from London under the leadership of former Olympic athlete, and subsequent Conservative MP, Sebastian Coe (see Hill, 1992; LOCB, 1991). Now well-organised, professional and highly knowledgeable, the Manchester bid committee was considered to be much better placed to pitch for the 2000 Games. Not only had the committee become acquainted with the shadowy geopolitics of the IOC, it had also established itself within Manchester at the apex of the city's new governance structure, sitting atop the hierarchy of new business and 'partnership' networks which had flourished over recent years (on which see Peck and Tickell, 1995). The core of this élite network, known locally as the 'Manchester Mafia', was strongly represented on the Olympic bid committee.

> Today, the same names crop up on virtually every committee and board, the Plowrights, Gil Thompsons, Stringers, Glesters, Scotts, etc. These men—and they are all men—are highly successful and very powerful. They know people in high places. They have clout. In the late 20th century that is how things get done. The Manchester Labour Party swims with the tide, it is part of the 'establishment'... Local people don't have a say in Metrolink [the light rail system], the Olympics or Trafford Park [Development Corporation]—to name but a few—except through their (outvoted) councillors. (Editorial, *City Life*, 18 August 1993, p. 4)

> You see the links [between local business leaders]. They're on Bob's Olympic committee. Some of them are on the City of Drama committee. They're on the Hulme Regeneration committee ... You don't really know about party politics, [although] you could have a good idea ... There is a sort of collective ambition to do something for the area that is noticeable ... and generally put your shoulders back a bit, and stop walking around looking depressed.

> There's not much future in that ... [The Olympic bid] was a deliberate attempt to develop a chauvinist attitude. To stand up and stick your chin out and say, 'To hell with it. There is a problem, but there's no point in just going on being pessimistic about it, let's have a go'. (Olympic bid committee member, private sector)

In both the popular understanding and élite explanations, then, the Olympic bid symbolised a fundamental shift in local politics. With its new 'collective ambition', the business community had become more organised and more purposeful. The new circuits of power in the business community, however, were not linked to the traditional institutional bases of the Chamber of Commerce or the regional branch of the Confederation of British Industry, but instead were to be found within and between a range of organisations at or near the fringes of the state (such as the conurbation's six Training Enterprise Councils (TECs), two UDCs, the East Manchester Partnership, the North West Business Leadership Team, and the Olympic bid committee). Scott's self-image was one of a trail-blazer, (honest) broker and deal-maker. To borrow a phrase later adopted by the City Council as its new slogan, the new politics he symbolised had to be about, 'Making it happen'. This was portrayed as a common-sense and apolitical approach:

> I'm really a bit of an outsider, in a way that people who manipulate the Establishment often are. I think John Major is an outsider, and Mrs Thatcher and Edward Heath were. (Bob Scott, quoted in *Business Life*, February 1994, p. viii)

> Twenty years ago ... we were all more public-sector minded really ... we'd rather been scooped up into nanny's arms I think at that point. I think that's what's different now ... We have lived through a revolution. I think Mrs Thatcher was the person who led that revolution, and I think she did free certain private-sector forces, you know, to show the way and to encourage the managers to manage. (Olympic bid committee member, private sector)

This necessitated a renegotiation of the boundaries between the public and private sectors in terms of everything from committee compositions to project accounting, from discourses of development to goals of policy. It involved local actors on both sides of the public–private divide exploring what was possible in the new era of local authority marginalisation. As Scott put it, "learning how the public and private sector work [was] like playing with Lego" (quoted in *Business Life*, February 1994, p. viii). As with all games, however, there had to be losers as well as winners, and in the 'power player politics' of contemporary Manchester political voice has become increasingly restricted to a narrow, male-dominated élite of "*real* people... *real* decision-makers" (Olympic bid committee member, private sector).

The plethora of new 'partnership' bodies which has emerged in Manchester in recent years—from centrally imposed quangos through self-selecting business lobby groups to the more nebulous 'Manchester Mafia'—clearly take on a variety of institutional forms and pursue a range of specific objectives, but in their *modus operandi* imply a critique of traditional local power structures. On the one hand, they embody an alternative to (or at least a reaction to) the conservative and slow-moving Establishment, instead favouring more fluid networks of brash, new-moneyed players—the 'Disestablishment' (Lloyd, 1988; Paxman, 1991; Jacques, 1994). On the other hand, they represent a fundamental critique of (or again reaction to) traditional conceptions of bureaucracy, democracy and the local welfare state (Cochrane, 1993; Peck and Tickell, 1995). Bob Scott and his colleagues see themselves breaking the (political) mould and rewriting the (bureaucratic) rules:

> One of the problems in British life is the bogus antagonism between the Labour party in local government and the Conservative party in central government. Actually an effective leader can talk to either, and be an important conduit between people who otherwise can't engage in dia-

> logue. The most important role is that of the person who leaves the trench first and goes over the top between these great battalions. If the leadership isn't talking to each other, you have to enable them to do so. (Bob Scott, quoted in *Business Life*, February 1994, p. viii)

With unmistakable neoliberal undertones, the rhetoric of freeing private-sector initiative and reclaiming the right to manage—in this case, the right to *manage the city*—is clearly central to both the self-image and the public representation of the new urban politics. The image is one of nimble-footed, goal-orientated business leaders coaxing and cajoling their new-found partners—the tradition-bound Establishment élites, the dogma-bound local politicians, and the rule-bound bureaucrats. The movers and shakers of the business community are represented as the energisers of a tired and complacent local polity.

From 'Defending Jobs' to 'Making it Happen'

But such readings, infused as they are with business machismo, are wont to underplay the crucial *facilitative* role of the restructured public sector. Clearly, it takes two to quango (Robinson *et al.*, 1994) and the factor which is persistently underemphasised in private-sector accounts of the new urban politics is the shifting orientation of local government and the wider dynamics of central–local relations (which have helped to create a political space of unelected local government within which business can operate) (Cochrane, 1993, Peck, 1994). It has in fact been these developments which have been instrumental in opening up at the local level the discursive and institutional spaces into which business élites have stepped. It is significant, for example, that despite the presentation of the Manchester Olympic bid as unequivocally business-led (or even Scott-led), it was in fact predicated upon a fragile alliance of local institutional interests underpinned by the City Council.

To highlight the emergence of self-confident and self-conscious businessmen and business organisations, significant though these may be, underestimates the degree to which they have had to act in partnership and alongside existing public-sector institutions. The ground-swell of political consciousness and activity which has become evident in the business community since the late 1980s was a product of the ways in which the private sector organised to take advantage both of its new-found leverage over local authority priorities and of the newly available positions of influence on TECs, UDCs and other 'partnership' bodies.[1] Even two of the private-sector members of the bid committee, Peter Hadfield and James Grigor, who so impressed the BOA, were there by virtue of their respective positions as chairs of the Trafford and Central Manchester Development Corporations.

The structuring precondition in Manchester's new urban politics was not Bob Scott's shaving-mirror revelation, but the changing stance of the City Council, particularly after 1987. The 1987 general election was the crucial tipping point for the City Council which until that time had been pursuing a municipal socialist strategy (see Robson, 1988; Beynon *et al.*, 1993; Quilley, 1995). In comparison to its neighbours in Sheffield and Liverpool, however, Manchester's strategy was at this time rather more rhetorical than concrete. While Manchester used the *language* of municipal socialism, and like other cities did heavily rely upon a Labour victory in the 1987 general election, the City Council had been more conservative in terms of resource commitments and organisational changes. Accordingly, Manchester was able to respond to the return of the Conservatives through a rapid political re-orientation—with the help of leading officers as well as senior councillors—which (perhaps grudgingly) espoused the local boosterism promulgated by the third Thatcher government.

After 1987, the City quietly dropped its slogan which made a rhetorical commitment to 'Defending jobs, improving

services' and somewhat reluctantly embraced the politics of trickle-down by 'Making it happen'. As a senior councillor explained, the Olympics were, within the Council at least, seen within this context:

> The City Council is very clear about its aims for the welfare of the people of Manchester. We would like to have better education, better social services, better welfare services, altogether. Unfortunately, the government have taken a great deal of grant away from Manchester, so that means we can't provide as high a level of service as we once did. On the other side, we have a responsibility for the economic welfare of the city and the people of Manchester. What we are trying to do is create a city where less people are dependent on welfare, whether it's the government's welfare by the social security system, or whether it's the City Council's welfare services. So we're trying to create an economically viable city ... The Olympic Games and the various other initiatives that we're taking are trying to relate directly not just to jobs for anybody but jobs for people in Manchester, who if they don't get those jobs actually need the welfare services provided by the City and government. (Councillor, Manchester City Council)

This new pragmatism on the part of the City Council was inevitably seen in some quarters as a process of 'selling out' to central government. The Council's justification for its Olympic strategy—one which might be summarised as 'investment, growth and jobs first, (residual) welfare services later'—was clearly one which chimed very strongly with the government's approach. This apparent *volte face* entailed a wholesale discursive repackaging of the Council's development strategy. Whereas before 1987, political principle and the objective of job creation were tightly bound together in the language of municipal welfarism and *in opposition* to 'Tory cuts and the recession' (see Manchester City Council, 1984), after 1987 both political principle and job creation were increasingly redefined through a civic boosterism which allowed them to be *complementary* to the government's national stra-tegy of service cuts and competitive financing. Following the logic of place-marketing, welfare was re-interpreted in ways which emphasised potential gains from urban entrepreneurialism, rather than the effective delivery of welfare services (see Cochrane, 1994).

> We're fundamentally opposed to the direction the Conservative government is taking this country and the damage that they've done to local democracy and local services. However, it would be pretty churlish wouldn't it, if when you've got a government—albeit of a different political persuasion—prepared to put money into the city ... that will be good for jobs, will be good for the city's image ... if we said, no, we don't want to sit down and co-operate with you? So I wouldn't see that as support for the Conservative government. (Councillor, Manchester City Council)

The financial and political costs of this pragmatist turn have thus far been minimised by the city's relative success in playing the partnership game. There is always the risk—even the likelihood—that this success will be short-lived. Certainly, the current convergence of interests between the City Council and central government is a fragile one.

It is important to be clear about the extent to which agency is being exercised locally. While an experienced political leadership and a cadre of entrepreneurial officers may have enabled Manchester to exploit its new possibilities to the full, the parameters of the city's strategy were externally (and quite tightly) drawn. As the following comments from Council leader Graham Stringer illustrate, while the Olympics was seen to represent an unparalleled development opportunity for the city, there was also an important sense in which the Olympic bid was a game Manchester felt it *had* to play. Manchester may have opted for an Olympics-based development strategy, but

this was a choice made from a menu with few alternatives:

> Cities, like sprinters, can't stand still. They have to make progress or go into decline. The great days of heavy industry won't return. We have to find new ways forward. And that's where the Olympic Games come in. Our bid for the 2000 Games is no town hall fantasy. It's a calculated move capable of transforming Manchester. (Graham Stringer, *Manchester Evening News*, 17 February 1993)

> … about of dozen of [Europe's 40 or 50 second-tier cities] will become the cities where decisions are made … We have to try and get there, because the alternative is to gradually decline. It would be reprehensible and irresponsible for any politician to let that happen. It's happening at the other end of the Ship Canal [in Liverpool]. We're not letting it happen here. (Graham Stringer, *Manchester Evening News*, 1 October 1993)

There is an important sense in which Manchester's strategy—like those of Europe's other 'second-tier' cities—was prescribed, at least in its general form if not its specifics. Playing the regeneration game meant adhering to a set of (globally defined) competitive rules. What should be emphasised, however, is that in learning to play this game, the City Council's senior officers and political leaders were in effect transforming the *modus operandi* of local economic development. The new approach would be based on elite networking, opportunism and a more entrepreneurial approach both on the part of officers and the organisation as a whole.

> We set up a committee of the great and the good … and the rich and the powerful, who went about raising money to fund the bid … What we found was that structure was much looser [and had] freedom in a way that a large bureaucracy doesn't … It's not just become the model for the Olympic Games, but it's been a model for a number of other things that we've done. What we have found in Manchester is a way of co-existing with the private sector, where we use many of the strengths of the public sector and the private sector, not in competition, but by setting up bodies where we can use [those] strengths … rather than being in a sense confronting each other or separate from each other all the time. (Councillor, Manchester City Council)

> [The Olympic bid] was the catalyst. It is only really since that that you can see how important it has been. Because what it did, what it achieved in the city … was everyone working towards one ultimate goal. And it wasn't there before. The atmosphere was what really amazed me. People sat there and said, "We can't stop. We just cannot stop" … The private sector was saying, "We'll put money in. We have just got to keep this going". And I think without that catalyst to actually pull people together, you know, things like City Pride would just never have happened … [Other initiatives would not have happened] if it was not for the fact that those people trusted each other and were used to getting on and doing things … We have suddenly learned how to work together. A part of the trick is to let the private sector think they are running the show. That is very important. They have got to feel they have ownership and can make a difference … not just the council. (Officer, Manchester City Council, interviewed by Stephen Quilley, Manchester University, November 1994)

Notwithstanding this extension of élite networking and the new spirit of partnership, council officers and members tended, not surprisingly, to underline the fact that control over the new strategy remained with the local authority. While this may have acted as a useful corrective to those accounts which presented the Council as one 'captured' by private-sector interests, it is in many ways an equally unsatisfactory explanation of the city's new politics.

In fact there is a sense in which *both* partners—public and private—have limited

control over the development process. While at its most benign, this might result in a mutually beneficial local pooling of resources and influence, it may just as often create a situation in which the goals of both parties are undermined (whether being subordinated to the centre or being defined by the wider—global—rules by which the place-marketing game is being played). Focusing obsessively on the ways in which power and control are being redistributed *locally* may mask the extent to which the locus of power has already shifted away from these local actors, be they in business or local government. Despite this, in the new language of partnership, it must be presented as a process of local negotiation.

> It's very difficult, in some of the partnerships that we have, to say that the control is absolutely here [with the City Council]. You can say, if it comes to some of the schemes, that the control is with the Council, ... you can say that control is with central government, ... you can say it's with the people who are actually running the bid ... [In reality] they're partnerships where people have vetoes. (Councillor, Manchester City Council)

Few in the city were inclined (or indeed sufficiently knowledgeable) to question this informally regulated system of local checks and balances while the prospect of winning the Games nomination remained. Eyes were being firmly fixed on the big picture—the possibility of winning the Games and the imperative of retaining a unified voice during the bidding period—it being deemed counter-productive and even treacherous to question the politics or finances of the bidding process during this time of maximum global sensitivity. Any bid for the Olympics must, above all, be about 'feel-good politics' (see Hill, 1992). The Olympic bidding process consequently exerts a kind of local hegemonic discipline on urban political actors: it was taken as axiomatic in Manchester that the city's ability to 'deliver' the Games was predicated on the continued strength of its new 'partnership'. If there were skeletons in cupboards, they would have to stay there for the time being.

Politics of Spectacle/Politics of Regeneration

> The impact of holding the Games is far greater than simply the 17 days of the Games themselves. You get an incredible amount of work done in your city ... you get a world focus on you for a number of years—which are very helpful for the local economy ... and you really become the centre of the earth for a time in a funny sort of way. (Olympic bid committee member, private sector)

It has become a cliché that the modern Olympics is no longer simply about two and a half weeks of sport but instead has become a geopolitical spectacle of power, money and corruption (Simson and Jennings, 1992). The stakes are high, but so is the cost of playing the game. Bidding for the Olympics means submitting to the competitive rules laid down by the IOC: "Manchester naturally could not afford to behave differently from its competitors" (Hill, 1994, p. 347). Cities are consequently induced to engage in Olympic boosterism, to pledge higher and higher levels of local financial support, servicing and infrastructure provision, to trade concessions with the IOC (for example, concerning TV rights, merchandising or promises of subsidised places to athletes and official from poorer countries), and to lavish more and more generous gifts on junketing IOC delegates, simply in order to stay in the Olympic competition (Simson and Jennings, 1992). In so doing, of course, bid cities are through their own actions reproducing the very competitive structures from which they hope that success will allow them to escape. Significantly, the only recent exception was Los Angeles, which was the only contender for the 1984 Games and as a result was in a position to exercise an unusual degree of bargaining leverage with the IOC. In the mythology of the Olympic bidding process, however, the success of the Los Angeles

Games (measured of course in terms of profitability) has since been attributed to the agency of its energetic private-sector leadership, not the structural condition of the absence of competition for the Games (Reich, 1986; Hill, 1992). Heightened recognition of the value of the Olympic franchise has subsequently led the IOC to take steps to ensure that a vigorous—and ever more elaborate—competition is fostered amongst the bidding cities. Correspondingly, the cachet of even bidding for the Games means for participating cities that—in the words of the Olympic adage—taking part really *does* count.

Competitive localism within nation states is, of course, part of a wider process of seeking to ensure sites as attractive for mobile investment. Beneath the accentuation of the positive which is the hallmark of such urban boosterism—free and fair competition being of course another of the Olympian ideals—is the ruthless process of competition for global investment. Here, as in sport, the stakes are sufficiently high often to bring out the worst, as well as the best, in the competitors. The bidding process creates an opportunity to parade a city's strengths, but at the same time creates an imperative to deny its weaknesses, even if this comes to trading relative murder rates:

> A lot of people who are investing, whether it's pension funds or international finance, take people at the way they value themselves. And if a city has the confidence to go out and bid for the Olympic Games, then we will be of more interest to Japanese companies or North American companies who are likely to invest ... I think bidding for the Olympic Games will have enabled us to show all those strengths that there are in the Manchester economy to those people who can locate their newer industries anywhere they want. (Councillor, Manchester City Council)

> People say, we've got riots in Moss Side [an inner-city district of Manchester], and this is bad for our bid; and we've seen seven murders in the last few months, and it is dreadful. But if you actually think seriously that the Moss Side troubles are the equivalent of Tiananmen Square, I mean, it's a joke. You know, we are an incredibly peaceful society. Moss Side you can drive through easily and regularly. You can't drive through whole areas of Atlanta, and they were awarded the Games. (Olympic bid committee member, private sector)[2]

Manchester's bid committee claimed that the Games would provide an opportunity not only to draw new money into the city, but would also have the effect of shunting Manchester up the urban hierarchy. The Olympics has become the ultimate expression of 'place-marketing' (Kearns and Philo, 1993), allowing cities to join that small global élite whose names are recognised world-wide.

> If Manchester gets the Games, Manchester will be Britain's front door in the year 2000. Now, we're used to London having been Britain's front door for hundreds of years ... I think something as massive as the Olympic Games will actually shift the axis of the country slightly. (Olympic bid committee member, private sector)[3]

> A targeted and managed economic and social programme of urban regeneration linked to Olympic sporting and multi-cultural investment could bring Manchester and the region a handsome and irrevocable dividend in the next century. Indeed by 2001, Manchester has the opportunity to emerge and remain unchallenged as:
>
> —Britain's second city—the capital of the Northern region;
> —a European regional capital—a centre of investment growth not regional aid;
> —an international city of outstanding commercial, cultural and creative potential.
>
> Therefore, the Games should not be regarded as an end in themselves but rather as a vehicle by which Manchester can achieve its vision (KPMG Management Consulting, 1993, p. 2).

The Games were, therefore, always understood by the bidders as a means of driving change in—and improving the image of—Manchester, and most certainly not as 'an end in themselves'. The image-building was orientated internally as much as externally. Local politics was redefined in terms which made opposition difficult. They stressed the overarching notion of 'Manchester' as a place with an uncontested identity and shared goals through a powerful expression of urban entrepreneurialism (Harvey, 1989)[4] Journalist Dennis Johnson described a visit to Manchester in September 1993 as "an eerie sensation. All but the most case-hardened cynics in the city seem stunned and tongue tied" (*The Guardian*, 8 September 1993). All civic institutions signed up. In 1991, a local poll revealed that three-quarters of local residents were in favour of the Manchester Olympic bid (cited in Hill, 1994).

> [Opposition to the bid] is fantastically small. You actually have to search for opposition to Manchester's bid in Manchester. You may find scepticism, because we are a very sceptical race ... But actually, the consensus is very positive. (Olympic bid committee member, private sector)

This high level of support certainly reflects the attractiveness of the Games themselves and the region's deep-seated enthusiasm for sport, but it also reflects the successful campaign waged in the (supportive) local media and the fact that the bid was represented locally as an *addition to*, not an option in, the region's development agenda.

The goal of getting the Olympics meant that the bidding process was systematically insulated from politics-as-usual, while crucial long-term commitments which were being made at the time were effectively concealed from public scrutiny. A feel-good discourse was adopted (the Olympic bid slogan was 'We can win!'), which literally marginalised any dissent. At the same time, there was a sharp focus on the issue of 'new money' for Manchester. Olympic cash, the argument went, was new cash. As Hill (1994, p. 345) put it, "No poll tax money was to be spent ... for it was important that no section of the local population be alienated". The Olympic bid was never subject to the kind of political forces which would have been released had it been seen to be draining revenue from elsewhere in the city—for example, from the education budget. The discourse of 'new money' (in essence, *extra-local* money) effectively wrong-footed local opposition to the bid by (mis)representing the bidding process as one with no local redistributional consequences.

> What it did was absolutely secured the private-sector leadership, it secured [our] independence. We were able to say, listen, if we have a meeting at the town hall, we'll pay for the coffee and biscuits. This bid will cost the rate payers of Manchester not one penny ... and that has always been the case. And so there's never been the political dimension of can we afford this, is this a right way of spending of public money. That came later with a debate through central government. (Olympic bid committee member, private sector)

> Although we could see enormous benefits in marketing Manchester around the work in the bidding process, and immediate economic benefits, it would be very difficult [to direct local authority funds into the bid] when we've been going through a period of cuts, caused by the government removing grant ... When situations in our schools and elderly people's homes are getting worse ... it would have been terribly divisive, and actually would have damaged the bid process itself, because it would have given us an in-built opposition to the bid. (Councillor, Manchester City Council)

This was not, of course, entirely true. The City Council did incur costs in a range of "less noticeable ways, for a good deal of officials' time would necessarily be committed, and municipal land would be made available" (Hill, 1994, p. 345). Crucially, the City Council also took on liability for any

losses incurred by the Olympic bid company.[5]

The representation of the funding for the bid as 'new money', and the associated insistence that the benefits both of bidding and of winning would be *additional to* those which could otherwise have been expected, secured the Olympic bid a privileged position above, or more accurately outside, the local political process. The bidding team stressed that the Olympics would secure new money, foreign direct investment, additional visitors and extra business for Manchester and the North West region. In this process, rhetorics of regeneration were of vital importance but were, in themselves, insufficient. The bidders needed to provide 'concrete estimates' in order both to convince central government that the bid was viable (and consequently that the Games would not become a drain on public funds) and to underwrite local support. The bid committee commissioned the international management consultants KPMG to produce estimates of the costs and benefits of the Games. KPMG's estimates, which assumed great importance in the Olympic bidding process, suggested that the Games would cost £973m, of which £360m (37 per cent) would come from central government while the remainder would be raised from other (mainly private) sources (*The Financial Times*, 4 March 1992; KPMG Management Consulting, 1993).[6] A surplus of £92m was projected, though this was conceded to have "as much to do with politics as the IOC's decision in September" (*The Financial Times,* 23 June 1993).

Yet a significant paradox lay at the heart of the whole *entrepreneurial* imagery of the Games. Although presented as a private-sector initiative, it was fundamentally orientated towards the generation of grants from the government. It was an attempt to redirect public funding towards Manchester and, in particular, towards the re-imaging of Manchester. The 'new money' was not private-sector money but central government money, as members of the bid committee explained.[7]

> Although you hear a lot about spending cuts, the Government is absolutely stuffed full of spending programmes and if you come up with an idea, you've got to shape it to fit their programmes. For instance in the Olympic bid I never used the word 'sport' because you were then told to talk to the Sports Council. But we needed more money than the Sports Council spent in a year, and therefore we talked about urban regeneration, employment opportunities and reclaiming land. (Bob Scott, quoted in *Business Life*, February 1994, p. viii)

> Michael Heseltine... was an absolutely key supporter, but I have to tell you, with great respect, Michael Heseltine doesn't really know the difference between a bat and a ball, and he was not an enthusiast for sport. What he was an enthusiast for was the regeneration of a part of Manchester which had been wholly resistant to quite big sums of public money being showered upon it over the years. Suddenly he saw in Manchester's Olympic proposals ... the solution to one of the great urban problems of the north of England. I have to tell you, we're on the way to solving it, even before we know if we've got the Games. (Olympic bid committee member, private sector)

If the aspect of the Olympic bid which attracted the greatest publicity was the one associated with spectacle and promotional activities, the practical orientation was targeted rather more modestly towards the attraction of grants from a range of state agencies. In other words, the bid committee looks more like a locally based *grant coalition* than a US-style growth coalition (Logan and Molotch, 1987; Cox and Mair, 1988). The approach was not one which aimed towards freeing up areas for private-sector development, nor was it directed towards developing a strategy aimed at sustaining the position of existing local businesses. On the contrary, the aim was to use public expendi-

ture on a massive scale to construct new 'partnerships' between developers and 'sport' (i.e. generally state-subsidised sport). In a neat inversion of mainstream discussions of 'leverage' in local economic development (which stress the extent to which public spending can draw out private-sector investment), in this case—with the help of seed-corn funding from local firms and infrastructural support from the local authority—the aim was to lever money raised in the public sector into the private sector. As the consultants to the bid committee put it

> Alongside the partnership between the public and private sector in the Bid itself, many other partnerships are emerging on elements of the city's preparation for the Games. Such partnerships and future opportunities arising from the Bid offer an unparalleled chance to marry the provision of sporting facilities with urban regeneration. (KPMG Management Consulting, 1993, p. 1)

One consequence of this shift in emphasis was that, despite the emergence of what looked like a more vibrant local politics, Manchester's Olympic project was heavily dependent on the decisions of national political actors. Manchester's 'new money' was, of course, anything but, since it was top-sliced from urban spending programmes (Dalby, 1993) and Manchester achieved the unique position of having its own expenditure line in the Department of the Environment's published spending plans (DoE, 1993). Manchester's Olympic bid consequently needs to be seen as part of a wider re-organisation in the funding and delivery of urban aid, as part of what Stewart (1994, p. 143) sees as a competitively (and centrally) orchestrated "new localism [based on the] decentralisation of administration as opposed to the devolution of power and influence".

Conclusion: Playing Olympic Games

Many of the arguments around the Olympic bid built on appeals to Manchester's 19th-century glories, heavy with the symbolism of that era in which local economic power coincided with local political power, one in which the merchants and manufacturers of Manchester worshipped at the altar of (their version of) Free Trade (Redford, 1934; Briggs, 1963, Lloyd-Jones and Lewis, 1988). Yet while there may be superficial similarities between the 'Manchester Men' of the 19th century and the new élite of the late 20th century, it is the differences which really tell the story. Rather than helping to write the rulebook for global capitalist competition, the birthplace of the factory system and 'Manchester School' economics is now on its receiving end: Manchester has gone from global*iser to globalised*. The politics of the new business élite reflect not so much this 19th-century heyday, but rather the structural conditions facing such semiperipheral cities in the late 20th century: continuing economic decline coupled with the effects of the ongoing crisis of the British welfare state.

While individual business leaders such as Bob Scott have come to epitomise, both in popular discourse and in neoliberal rhetoric, the supposed re-emergence of a maverick urban business élite, their actions can better be understood as part and parcel of a much wider process of institutional and political restructuring (Peck, 1994). The new urban politics which have thrown the likes of Bob Scott to the fore cannot be reduced to stories about charismatic leadership nor to some grass-roots revival in corporate responsibility, even if they are often presented in this way. Rather, they are part of a contested political project, in the context of the twin imperatives of globalisation on the one hand and state restructuring on the other. The new urban politics should be understood as a dual process of 'élite localism' and 'local élitism' (Peck and Tickell, 1995), in which Bob Scott and friends occupy a discursive and institutional space opened up through struggles over the future shape and purpose of the state against the backdrop of powerful globalising and neoliberalising tendencies (see, for example, Peck and Tickell, 1994a). As we have seen, while local coalitions like this may talk

about growth and regeneration, they are typically involved in claims-making against the state.

More often than not, the business élite is spending (or seeking to spend) public money not private money, bidding for grants rather than boosting for growth. In British policy discourse, however, it has become necessary to talk about growth to get grants. It is this which makes it more appropriate in the UK context to think in terms of grant coalitions than growth coalitions. Such coalitions also help to redefine popular understandings of welfare in ways which stress the importance of competitive success rather than service delivery, the possibility of getting bread through the effective promotion of circuses. Since the old arrangements of municipal labourism are no longer able to deliver the welfare goods, the new politics of 'business' appear to offer a way forward, precisely because of their promise to deliver 'additionally'—extra resources and the vision of dynamic entrepreneurial growth (Cochrane, 1994; Jessop, 1994).

The politics of élite localism in contemporary Manchester can be seen, then, as a response to globalisation which involve struggles over the role, and meaning and structure of the state, as well as straightforward attempts to appropriate more public cash. But they are also a relatively unstable and fragile politics which rely on an extensive insulation from processes of public accountability and even from political debate. The politics of the bid were also about constructing a consensus around the high politics of 'the good of Manchester', rather than the low politics of cash and cuts which had come to dominate the language of municipal politics. It remains to be seen for how long this apparent 'transformation' in local politics can be sustained, or even if it is—in principle—sustain*able*. Although Manchester will host the Commonwealth Games in 2002, this is a very poor consolation prize. Life without the Olympics, or even the Olympic *dream*, is likely to be more complex, since the emergent 'movers and shakers' will no longer be able to hide behind the protective shield of a local hegemonic project. Redistributional issues will no doubt re-appear on the local political agenda, and the actions of local political actors will increasingly be brought into question, a harsh environment indeed for the fragile politics of élite partnership and Olympian unity. As Harvey (1989, p. 273) notes, the politics of the spectacle "is a fragile and uncertain tool of unification" not only because the illusion is often difficult to sustain, but also because it may help to generate its own problems: "to the degree that it forces the consumer to become a 'consumer of illusions' [it] contains its own specific alienations".

It is important to be clear about the results of the bidding process. Manchester *did* achieve some of the short-term objectives of its political leaders—in the shape of extra public-sector funding, partnership building and local state entrepreneurialism—but this has meant accepting the logic of neoliberal competition. Manchester may have benefited from taking part in the Olympic bidding process, but this was at the expense of other British cities in the short term and at the expense of the council's control over its development agenda in the long term. It is clear, then, that there will *not* be a return to local politics as usual. The partnership process that the Olympics so clearly symbolised is part of a major re-imagining of local governance. If the effect on local state functionaries and politicians, that they are both more prepared to accommodate with business and act in a less bureaucratic fashion, has been foregrounded in this paper, the effect on local élites has been no less profound. Although local businessmen were sponsored as an apolitical (read Conservative) alternative to the socialist local state, their experience of working with Labour politicians such as Graham Stringer has gone some way to reducing the vigour of attacks on the left as being fundamentally anti-business. Accordingly, it may have contributed to the rehabilitation of Labour as a party of government. But now that the (business) genie is out of the (Conservative) bottle, the future may be less predictable: as in all the best stories, the

genie will perform *its* magic in unintended and contradictory ways.

Notes

1. As another senior member of the North West Business Leadership Team, Sir Alan Cockshaw of AMEC also observed:

   The [business leadership] team is a group of good people pulling together. We always meet in the evening. At a personal level, it's amazing what opportunities and business flow from just knowing what we each do. Most of us had never met before. (quoted in *The Financial Times*, 23 June 1993)

   Similarly, as the Duke of Westminster, chair of both the BLT and the Olympic bid committee, put it

   A couple of years or so ago the prospect of the North West coming together and preparing its own regional economic strategy would have looked very unlikely indeed, and that is an understatement of almost British proportions ... Since that time there has been a quite extraordinary transformation in the way in which the region has come together, not only geographically but also in the sense of the public and private sectors working together in partnership. (quoted in Burch and Rhodes, 1994, p. 14)

2. Scott insisted that as "an Olympic city the old image of Manchester would simply evaporate" (quoted in Hall, 1994, p. 343), an oblique reference perhaps to Manchester's image as a "damp post-industrial city where it rains much of the time and there is a lot of crime" (Lynch, 1993, p. 9). Drawing on rainfall data for July/August, the Olympic bid committee sought to contest this prevailing image, emphasising that these (presumably highly oxygenated) conditions were ideal for record-breaking.
3. "The Games", it was also argued, "would ... help change the structure of Britain and the balance of economic power between north and south" (Hamilton Fazey, 1993, p. 3).
4. This was, however, contradictory and overlapping. Manchester claimed at the same time to be the 'Olympic City', the 'City of Drama', 'Information City', 'Environment City', 'City of Culture' and even, with the proposal of a themed leisure facility, 'Space City'.
5. In the previous bid, losses were underwritten by the trustees. The 2000 bid was legally constituted as a company, wholly owned by the City Council, but controlled by a triumvirate of the bid committee, the British Olympic Association and the City Council (Hill, 1994).
6. Key private-sector funders of the bid were Manchester Airport (the largest supporter), Kellogg's, National Westminster Bank, Norweb, British Gas, British Telecom, The Guardian–Manchester Evening News and the Duke of Westminster (*The Financial Times*, 23 June 1993).
7. Even this was reduced to individual broking: "You can't do anything as big as this without the government being absolutely on side ... One of the revelations to me in this process has been the impact of the Prime Minister's personal enthusiasm" (Olympic bid committee member, private sector).

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