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**Title: Urban Governance of Non-Mega Sport Events: A Socio-Political Discourse Analysis**

**Abstract**

Cities embark on hosting events to stimulate local economic development; claims which are not without criticism. This chapter investigates urban governance in the context of a non-mega sport event in a medium-sized city through the lens of urban regime theory. Democratic governance principles of performance, accountability, transparency and participation (Callahan, 2007) are examined by analyzing the socio-political discourse conducted in the city council minutes and the media. Residents' perspectives are also taken into account. Findings indicate a lack of transparency and strategic planning. City council expressed multiple expected outcomes prior to hosting, including economic, tourism and social impact, infrastructure development, and increased levels of physical activity. However, tangible KPIs were missing, making it difficult to measure performance effectiveness and efficiency. This makes it challenging for concerned residents to hold city council accountable. Future research should focus on how to measure local governance of a sport tourism strategy effectively through KPIs.

*Keywords:* Sport events; Urban governance; Urban regime theory; Media framing; Socio-Political discourse

## **Urban Governance of Non-Mega Sport Events: A Socio-Political Discourse Analysis**

More and more cities of different sizes are competing to host larger scale sporting events with the intent of capitalizing on this expanding industry. Most research to date has focused on mega-events in larger cities (e.g., Solberg and Preuss, 2007). Smaller-sized cities, however, are taking similar approaches in going after non-mega events that are relatively “big”, one-off, out-of-the ordinary, and requiring substantial resources (including tax payers’ money) (Taks, Chalip, and Green, 2015). These types of non-mega events are considered “major” in the context of the city (Agha and Taks, 2015). The primary arguments supporting these cities’ quests are that hosting events: generate economic benefits, provide opportunities to diversify the local industry, lead to urban and regional development, and aid in re-imagining the city (e.g., Misener and Mason, 2008). While these assumptions can be considered “goals” of political agendas, clear plans, let alone strategic plans are often missing in these contexts. Moreover, these claims are not without criticism. In order to maintain the legitimacy of their regimes, city councils become major stakeholders and embark on a top-down neoliberal approach wherein the government or regime prescribes what they believe is best with little input from the community. In this context, democratic governance principles of performance, accountability, transparency and participation come under scrutiny (Callahan, 2007). This is especially problematic when events are primarily financed with taxpayer’s money, making residents another major event stakeholder. In a democratic context, participation of citizens should be part of effective governance (Callahan, 2007), and the media, another important stakeholder can play a major role in framing public opinion (Sant and Mason, 2015). This chapter investigates urban governance in the context of non-mega sport events through the lens of urban regime theory. Urban governance is how governments and

stakeholders make decisions to plan, finance and manage urban areas within a community. The purpose of this study is to examine how a city council exercised its power to control, direct, regulate, and influence residents' perceptions for hosting a major, non-mega sport event to serve its public policy agenda, in the absence of a municipal policy for hosting events. Structures, mechanisms, and arguments are examined by analyzing the socio-political discourse employed in city council meetings and through media framing (e.g., Sant and Mason, 2015). The case presented here focuses on Windsor (Ontario, Canada), a medium sized city with 250,000 inhabitants, surrounded by 7 smaller municipalities, which together make up Windsor-Essex County (about 330,000 inhabitants), and a medium sized international youth sport event, the 2013 International Children's Games (ICG). The event was the first of this size that was strategically supported and organized by the local government with a broader urban development agenda in mind.

First, we briefly reflect on the perceived socio-economic impacts of major events. We explain urban regime theory as a form of urban governance in the context of hosting sport events. We emphasize the importance of residents' perceptions and support for hosting events which require a substantial amount of taxpayers' money. We elaborate on the mechanisms of a socio-political discourse and media framing to support a public policy agenda in the absence of an event hosting policy. After explaining the method, we examine key information from the minutes of the city council's meetings and the local newspaper articles that were analyzed prior, during and after the event. The results reveal a clear shift in emphasis in discourse as the political power trying to influence residents' perceptions, triggered a fierce reaction from people within the community.

## **Literature Review**

### **Perceived Socio-Economic Impacts of Events**

Sport events have been used by local governments to promote tourism and economic growth within the host region (e.g., Misener and Mason, 2008). Media often report most international sport events as having significant positive impacts (e.g., Wilson, 2006). However, the magnitude of the event's impacts, either positive or negative, are often dependent on the event's size (Agha and Taks, 2015; Taks, 2013). Negative impacts associated with small or medium-sized events may not be as apparent due to the relatively low cost compared to large events (Mondello and Rishe, 2004). Solberg and Pruess (2007) noted that an event's regional economic benefits are sometimes lost due to the large expenditures on event-related infrastructure. Sport event tourism could produce sustainable benefits if the events are consistent with the community's existing infrastructure and human capital (Gibson, Kaplanidou and Kang, 2012)

In Canada, the industry standard for measuring the economic impact of sport events is the Sport Tourism Economic Assessment model (STEAM; Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance [CSTA], 2013). The legitimacy of STEAM, which is based on standard Economic Impact Analysis (EIA), remains a point of contention (e.g., Kesenne, 2012; Taks *et al.*, 2011). The use of standard EIA is highly criticized, indicating that multipliers are often overinflated and that it is an ineffective method to analyze the impacts of events that are short-term in duration (e.g., Matheson, 2009; Kesenne, 2012; Porter and Fletcher, 2008). Sports economists strongly encourage the usage of a Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA), as it identifies which of the EIA's inputs provides a benefit (including residents' perceived value of the event; e.g., Barget and Gouguet, 2010) and which elements should be considered a cost (including opportunity costs) to the local population (Kesenne, 2012). For example, an EIA of the 2005 Pan-American Junior Athletic

Championships, a non-mega event in a medium sized city, revealed a net increase in economic activity with the standard EIA, whereas the CBA indicated a negative net benefit (Taks *et al.*, 2011). EIA is the standard method used by event organizers and politicians to convey economic benefits. Clearly, these numbers are more beneficial to persuade the community and gain its support to perceive the hosting of sport events as being beneficial to the local economy when in fact it may be detrimental.

In addition to economic and tourism impacts (both positive and negative), Chalip (2006) advocates that social impacts of sport events are equally important and have the potential to foster a sense of community. Sport events, however, should not be the basis of community formation, as they are short-term in duration. The collective support for and celebration of sport events can lead to the development of *communitas*: spontaneous, unstructured communities where social relationships are temporarily formed and strengthened (Ingham & McDonald, 2003). The development of sustainable communities requires time and on-going social commitment (Chalip, 2006; Ingham and McDonald, 2003). Local governments may misconstrue *communitas* as market demand to host more sport events and subsequently incorporate sport event hosting into their broader economic development strategy (Ingham & McDonald, 2003). *Communitas* may not represent all members of a community. Marginalized groups may protest sport events due to perceived negative social impacts. For example, multiple protests arose in the context of the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the Rio Olympic Games in Brazil (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZApBgNQgKPU>).

### **Urban Governance and Urban Regime Theory**

Theories of urban governance have developed with the onset of neoliberal policies. Urban regime theory is considered to be the most prominent (Misener and Mason, 2008). A regime can be defined as an informal and stable group that has the ability to maintain their governing

decision-making power due to their access to institutional resources (Stone, 1989). Urban regimes are used to describe the relationships between the public and private sector (Mossberger and Stoker, 2001). Stoker and Mossberger (1994) identified three types of regimes: instrumental, organic, and symbolic. Instrumental regimes are associated with a short-term project; organic regimes act to maintain a city's current state; and symbolic regimes objectives are based on economic growth and a perceived need for a city to re-image itself to attracting investment (Stoker and Mossberger, 1994). These regimes are formed through various groups who work together to achieve mutually beneficial policies or outcomes. Prominent politicians and business elites are usually regime members with the most power to influence resources and strategic development. Community development groups and representatives from universities can also be regime members, however they generally have less power over the allocation of resources. Rather these groups tend to have a strong connection to the developmental strategies and have a concern in regards its outcomes (Misener and Mason, 2009).

In the sport context, previous research examined the ways in which local regimes used sport as the focus of a wider community development strategy (Misener and Mason, 2006; Misener and Mason, 2008; Misener and Mason, 2009). Misener and Mason's (2009) cross-national analysis of three cities: Edmonton, Manchester and Melbourne, and the processes of using sport events as a means for development revealed strong linkages to symbolic regimes. Misener and Mason (2008) identified two sub-categories of symbolic regimes: progressive and urban revitalization. Progressive symbolic regimes are associated with economically stable and prosperous cities that use sport to increase tourism, investment and as a means to re-brand their image. For example, Edmonton, an affluent city, aligned the use of sport events with its branding as a "City of Champions" (Misener and Mason, 2008). Generally, progressive symbolic regimes support commercial interests and have weak connections with the community (Misener and

Mason, 2008). Urban revitalization symbolic regimes are connected to sport strategies that address cities that have suffered socio-economic degeneration (e.g., Manchester and Melbourne; Misener and Mason, 2008). The purpose of such a regime is to increase development within the city and to market the city with the hopes of increasing investment. Urban revitalization symbolic regimes are community-oriented; however, some regimes (e.g., Manchester) can adopt a top-down neoliberal approach to community development (Misener and Mason, 2009). For example, politicians and business elites dictate the development of the community. The regime is ultimately accountable to its stakeholders (e.g., the private sector and the public); thus, if a sport event is perceived to have a negative social or economic impact, the regime's decision-making power could come into question.

### **Residents' Perceptions**

Following social exchange theory (e.g., Inoue and Havard, 2014), public support for sport events will vary depending on whether the host residents' perceived event benefits outweigh the costs (Deccio and Baloglu, 2002; Waite, 2003). For example, local businesses (e.g., hotels and restaurants), run by residents may fully support hosting a large sport event as they could benefit financially (Ma, Ma, Wu and Rotherham, 2013). In contrast, other residents might oppose such an event as they may view the use of public funds best suited for other matters. Generally, residents may have high expectations of an event prior to it taking place due to the promoted benefits (Ma *et al.*, 2013; Martin and Barth, 2013). However, after the event, residents' perceptions may change as a result of over-crowding or underutilized event-related infrastructure. It is important for local governments to understand residents' perceptions to ensure a successful event and to develop event-related policy (Ritchie, Shipway and Cleeve, 2009).

### **Socio-Political Discourse and Media Framing**

In the context of sport events, the media's representation of the event can impact residents' perceptions and the resulting discourse (Entman, 2009). Analyzing the media discourse

for hosting events illustrates how acceptance for hosting is generated. It reveals the rhetoric that is used and reproduced to gain community support for hosting events, particularly when important financial contributions from the taxpayers need to be justified. The rhetoric used in these discourses is crucial for policy-makers, as it presents strong arguments to convince the community (and other stakeholders) that hosting sports events will greatly benefit the host community (e.g., Strittmatter, 2016), with the intent to gain their support. Rhetoric is an art of discourse and is defined as the effective use of language to convince, persuade, influence or please an audience (<https://literarydevices.net/rhetoric>). Or, to say it with Coaffee's (2012) words in the context of events:

What is noticeable about major event bidding documents [...] and Government rhetoric regarding the rationale for, and likely legacy successes of hosting major sporting events is the adoption of a set of almost uncritical, but standardized, justifications and perceived benefits that such events will bring. (p.296)

While framing studies are generally used to examine social and political issues, they have rarely been used to analyze major sporting events and their accompanying politics and economics (Jarvie, 2006). A variety of qualitative (e.g., content analysis) and quantitative methods (e.g., frequency analysis) are used in framing studies (e.g., Sant and Mason, 2015). Generally, news articles are gathered and read several times. Through inductive reasoning key themes are identified and analyzed. The history of the information is important as it provides a larger context to the story (Mishra, 2013). This contextualization enables to gain insight into the explicit and implicit reasons that are given to justify the hosting of an event. This study takes into consideration the characteristics of ICG and the host city's economic history.

## **International Children's Games**

The city of Windsor (Ontario, Canada) hosted the 2013 ICG from August 14-19 in partnership with Essex County<sup>i</sup>. The Games are thought to have acted as a springboard to accelerate the development of a \$78 million downtown aquatic complex and the pursuit of additional large watersport events (e.g., swimming and diving) as a part of an economic development strategy (City of Windsor, 2011, June 13).

ICG is hosted annually in various nations. The Games are recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and governed by an executive committee (ICG, 2013). The Windsor-Essex edition attracted 1,640 athletes (age 12 to 15) and coaches from 84 cities representing 23 nations, in addition to approximately 1200 local volunteers (Guthrie, 2013, November 25). The majority of media attention remained within Windsor-Essex County. The Windsor Star (newspaper), local CBC radio and CTV Windsor (television) are the main media outlets within the city and county. The Windsor Star was used as the primary news source regarding ICG-related information, because it is the main source of local news (including other media outlets) for residents.

## **Method**

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected from local media articles (n=89) and city council meeting minutes (n=33). In total, 122 documents were analyzed. Media articles were retrieved from the Windsor Star's online database by searching keywords such as: 'ICG', 'International Children's Games', 'Children's Games', 'aquatic center' and 'aquatic complex'. Aquatic center and aquatic complex were included as keywords since the aquatic complex was built as a condition to hosting the ICG. Only media articles published between April 20, 2012 and October 27, 2013 were selected for analysis. April 20, 2012 was chosen as this was the first article about the ICG; October 27, was

two months after the event, and by then articles about ICG became rare. Media articles within this timeline reflect the event bidding process, the construction of the aquatic complex, the event preparation and execution, the pursuit of future of events, in addition to the event-related social and economic impacts. All online media articles were converted into portable document format (PDF) format using ProQuest and archived for analysis. Of the 89 articles, 30 were collected before, 28 during; and 31 after the event.

Council minutes between June 7, 2010 and October 17, 2013 were retrieved from the City of Windsor's and Essex County's respective websites. Similar to the method used to retrieve data from the media articles, relevant information was found by searching keywords such as: 'ICG', 'International Children's Games', 'Children's Games', 'aquatic center' and 'aquatic complex'. Of the 33 minutes, 32 were from before, and one was from after the event (there were no minutes during the event).

### **Data Analysis**

All archived data from media articles and city council meeting minutes were uploaded into NVivo, a qualitative data analysis program. Data was coded into nodes and sub-nodes using a content analysis methodology. Several frames of reference based on existing literature were established in advance to assist in the identification of themes relating to: 1) political and public discourse; 2) social and economic impacts; 3) urban regime theory; and 4) future events. The content analysis identified the aforementioned themes based on the frequency of keywords and the context of source references in relation to the research questions. Nodes were classified according to the features of a symbolic regime (e.g., re-imaging, attracting investment and economic growth) and its sub-categories, such as progress and urban revitalization (e.g., urban enhancement, attracting investment and social development). Further emerging themes, such as volunteerism, event praise and event criticism were also classified. Other urban regimes (e.g.,

progressive, instrumental and organic) were not significant based on the content analysis. Sub-nodes were created if a distinction was required within a node. For example, sub-nodes were created for sources that could be categorized as pre-event, during the event or post-event. Data tables were created to organize the information and calculate frequencies of themes pre, during and post ICG within each node. The themes were then ranked from most to least frequent. The rankings enabled a greater understanding of what aspects of the ICG were emphasized within the media or discussed within city council. The rankings also prompted further qualitative analysis. For example, source references were re-visited within nodes and sub-nodes for deeper examination. Such practice contributed to the conceptualization of the results.

## **Results**

### **Evidence of Urban Regime Rhetoric**

Table 1 provides an overview of how often references to themes relevant to urban regime theory were addressed in the collection of 89 media articles and 33 city council minutes. It is important to note that sometimes a single article contained multiple relevant references to a theme. Evidently the city council and the media's representation of ICG aligned with the characteristics of a symbolic urban regime (n=297 references). Traits of an urban revitalization symbolic regime (n=163) dominated, as emphasis was placed on enhancing social development (n=76), increasing investment (n=60) and urban enhancement (n=27) by revitalizing the city through the construction of a downtown aquatic complex. Economic growth (n= 82), as a general trait of a symbolic regime, gains momentum post ICG, with the highest frequency (n=65). This is also true, be it to a lesser extent, for re-imagining the city (n<sub>tot</sub>=52 and n<sub>post</sub>=27). Similarly, attracting investment appeared quite frequently post ICG (n=37). Generally, the media referenced the ICG in a positive way, and supported the development of the downtown aquatic complex

(n=268); however more negative references were made about ICG after the event (n=40), compared to prior the event (n=0; see Table 2).

Table 3 provides an overview of the public discourse during city council in regard to the construction of the downtown aquatic complex, which was built primarily to host ICG. 32 positive references (n=15 from residents; n=17 from local businesses) and 17 negative references (all from residents) were recorded in the city council meeting minutes.

### **Prior to the Event (June 7, 2010 – August 13, 2013; n= 63)**

#### **City council minutes**

City council meeting minutes primarily focused on ICG project updates and the development of the downtown aquatic complex.

***ICG Bid Proposal.*** The earliest mention of ICG within city council minutes was at the June 7, 2010 meeting. The City of Windsor's mayor motioned city council to support a bid proposal to host the 2013 ICG, emphasizing that the Games would showcase Windsor-Essex to the world and that the resulting tourism would have a positive impact on the local economy. The motion was passed and the City of Windsor was subsequently awarded the games, on the condition it could build a 50-meter pool to host swimming events (City of Windsor, 2010, June 7).

***Support from near-by municipalities.*** On June 9, 2010, the City of Windsor's mayor attended Essex County's city council meeting to ask for the County's support in providing tourism activities targeted to visiting ICG participants and their families. During the meeting, the mayor indicated that no economic impact analysis has been done for the games, but he anticipated that ICG participants would stay extra days and spend within the host communities. A county deputy mayor suggested that the 50-meter pool be built closer to the county's

municipalities so that county residents could also benefit from the facility (County of Essex, 2010, June 9).

*Creation of an ICG Host Committee.* In 2011 at the January 17 meeting, city council establishes a budget of \$300,000 per year for three years to host ICG, funded through the city's capital budget. At the same meeting, an ICG host committee was created, with the Windsor mayor and an Essex County council member as co-chairs (City of Windsor, 2011, January 17).

*Development of the Aquatic Complex.* The public was provided two opportunities to share their opinions prior to the motion being put forward to build the aquatic complex. On April 6, 2011, delegates from Windsor-Essex Swim Team, in addition to the director of the Downtown Windsor Business Association appeared before council to express support for the aquatic complex. During the same meeting, a motion was passed that the aquatic complex be funded from the city's unallocated debt reduction levy funds; and that a \$2,126,395 placeholder for library renovations and the expansion of a community center be redirected towards this aquatic complex. A working group was then struck and directed to outline a critical path regarding the steps required for the proposed development of the aquatic complex, as soon as possible, to meet the ICG July 2013 deadline. A separate motion was also passed for city administration to look at repurposing existing related facilities that would be affected by the aquatic complex (City of Windsor, 2011, April 6). On June 13, 2011, the mayor appeared before city council to provide a brief overview of various examples of international aquatic facilities. Most residents present at the meeting were apprehensive with the city's urgency to build the aquatic complex, in addition to being concerned that the construction of the facility would result in the closures of smaller local pools such as Windsor Waterworld and Addie Knox (City of Windsor, 2011, June 13).

... [a] resident ... appears before Council to express concern regarding the proposed “new downtown aquatic family centre and library complex”, asking the question “why is this so urgent”, and concludes by stating that there are many other pressing issues that Council should focus on and that this proposed project is no different than those pre-existing projects/issues (City of Windsor, 2011, June 13).

A motion was later passed to proceed with the steps to construct an aquatic complex in downtown Windsor in addition to closing portions of Waterworld and Addie Knox, two existing and highly used pools, once the aquatic complex is operational (City of Windsor, 2011, June 13).

***ICG Human Resources.*** The recommendation to hire an ICG Event Coordinator was approved at the August 29, 2011 city council meeting. Furthermore, city council endorsed a secondment of city staff to provide administrative support to the ICG Event Coordinator in addition to their day-to-day responsibilities (City of Windsor, August 29, 2011).

***Increased Authority of Host Committee.*** In the city council minutes of December 3, 2012, the host committee was authorized to approve ICG budget allocations within the overall project budget based on demonstrated needs. It was also authorized to increase the overall project budget in cases where additional funding is secured (City of Windsor, December 3, 2012).

### **Media articles**

Media articles that were written prior to ICG discussed the bid process, the event’s costs and characteristics, the development of the downtown aquatic complex and how the event and the aquatic complex would re-image Windsor by showcasing its ability to host a large international sporting event.

You should be very proud of bringing the world to Windsor," said Schott. She called the aquatic complex "a healthy investment in (Windsor's) citizens (Schmidt, 2013, June 21).

The aquatic complex was referenced frequently leading up to ICG. It was believed that its modern architecture and technologically advanced amenities would revitalize the city and attract future aquatic events.

WFCU CEO and president Marty Komsa said the credit union has a vested interest in bettering the community and the aquatics complex is key to the revitalization of downtown (Wolfson, 2013, August 8).

Such events are believed to be necessary in order to stimulate an economic impact in Windsor, a working-class city that is recovering from economic degradation (Van Doelen, 2008, October 18).

Windsor's event was on track to be the largest International Children's Games yet, with 2,500-3,000 delegates and supporters coming to the area, and generating an estimated \$4 million to \$6 million in local economic impact (Pearson, 2013, July 30).

As the start of ICG grew nearer, media articles highlighted the social development aspects of the event. They emphasized the importance and need for local volunteers to ensure the success of the Games. Local competing athletes were also profiled. Media articles emphasized the potential positive social impacts of the event.

Without a doubt," the mayor believes the Games will motivate local kids and families to get more physically active and inspire them to learn more about other countries and cultures. "That's part of the experience that will be the most rewarding for the children who are participating in the Games: the friendships and relationships that they're going to take away with them (Evans, 2013, August 10).

ICG-related celebratory events, such as the ICG opening ceremonies and Passport to the World were also advertised.

As [the Mayor] puts it, this coming week is all about building memories and friendships that will last these child athletes a lifetime. That, and putting Windsor-Essex County on the map as one fine and worthy host community (Henderson, 2013, August 9).

Leading up to ICG, media articles also referenced “In Sport WE Are One,” a children’s health promotion initiative. The initiative was designed specifically as an ICG legacy for Windsor-Essex. Its purpose was to promote a healthy, active lifestyle through physical activity, healthy eating and mental wellness.

“In Sport WE Are One” is a one-of-a kind legacy program that taps into the Game's objectives of healthy living and volunteerism. The campaign enlisted the support and assistance of individual citizens, civic groups, private enterprise, volunteer organizations and local schools. (Windsor Star, 2013, August 8).

As indicated earlier, the majority of media articles that appeared prior to the games, framed both ICG and the development of the aquatic complex as positive. The only exception was criticism from a few individuals in the online comment section of the Windsor Star. They believed taxpayers’ dollars used for ICG and the construction of the aquatic complex would be better spent on other city matters. The city council minutes showed that only one city counselor was opposed to Windsor-Essex hosting the ICG.

#### **During the Event (August, 14 2013 – August 19 2013, 2013; n= 27)**

There were no city council meetings during ICG. The media articles discussed event schedules and results, the opening and closing ceremonies in addition to highlighting coaches, athletes and officials’ enthusiasm in regard to the aquatic complex and the overall event.

“We've never had something like this - beautiful,” ICG president Torsten Rasch gushed Friday inside the Windsor International Aquatic and Training Centre (Pearson, 2013, August 16).

The excitement of the crowds was also frequently referred to in quotes by the mayor, coaches and athletes.

Whenever a Canadian would jump in the pool people would be jumping up and down and screaming their heads off. You felt like a celebrity. It was amazing (Pearson, 2013, August 16).

Media articles framed the opening days of ICG as a success. They often quoted visiting athletes or coaches in regards to their perceptions of Windsor.

"It's completely different than Europe, but it's very nice," she said, wearing a jacket with the blue and yellow of the Ukrainian flag. "Everything is so clean, the parks and the streets" (Pearson, 2013, August 15).

As ICG neared its conclusion the mayor was frequently quoted. He emphasized the success of ICG, more specifically the community's overwhelming support and sense of pride. The mayor also described how Windsor's improved global reputation would open the market for future events.

"Our reputation has been established on the world stage," Francis said. "The only way to describe the last four days with the International Children's Games is simply awesome. Everyone has responded with incredible passion (Boyce, 2013, August 19).

Overall, during the games, the media's representation of ICG and the aquatic complex remained positive. Nonetheless, similar to the media articles prior to ICG, there was criticism in the online comment section of the Windsor Star in relation to articles that mentioned hosting future events. These individuals argued that taxpayers' dollars should be invested into other city projects.

#### **After the Event (August, 20 2013 – October 22 2013, 2013; n= 32)**

Media articles after ICG praised the community and volunteers for their role in ensuring the success of the Games. However, the primary focus was the mayor's claims that ICG had re-

imaged Windsor, induced a substantial economic impact on the local economy and as a result the city would be pursuing more events.

“For years, we've been trying to shed ourselves of that inferiority complex. We've shed it now; people enjoy the fact we can compete at that world level,” he said. Windsor's success over the past week helps “build the capacity” necessary for drawing more events, said Francis. “When you build to a certain level, events will start seeking you out” (Schmidt, 2013, August 19).

Windsor appears to be intent on diving right into an industry [sport tourism] that appears fun and healthy and a potential local economic driver (Schmidt, 2013, October 8).

### **Economic Impact**

Shortly after the mayor’s statements, the mayor and his pursuit for future events garnered criticism. The initial criticism came from a city council member who doubted the claimed economic benefits. He posted a blog on his personal website questioning the costs associated with the Games. The mayor’s reaction to the city counselor’s criticism was reported in a media article.

Despite an apology [from the counselor]..., [the] Mayor ... remains livid over earlier comments posted by the Ward 4 representative on a blog criticizing the cost of the recent International Children’s Games (Schmidt, 2013, September 16).

[The counselor] said he was voicing the concerns of those in the community who believe that “perhaps our money could be put to better use” (Schmidt, 2013, September 16).

Taks (2013, September 23), a sport management professor, stated in a letter to the editor that: “Events of this size do not create substantial economic or sustainable tourism benefits for host communities” (<http://windsorstar.com/news/local-news/economic-impact-versus-cost-benefit-analysis-of-sport-events>). Almost immediately following this article, the mayor’s office released

the ICG economic impact analysis report using the Sport Tourism Economic Assessment (STEAM) Model. The report claimed that the Games had a \$6.3 million impact on Windsor-Essex. Subsequent media articles promoted the sport tourism industry.

“Sport tourism”, said Traer, is a \$3.6-billion a year industry in Canada and “arguably the fastest-growing grassroots economic development initiative today” (Schmidt, 2013, September 25).

The professor was quoted in media articles arguing that the STEAM model does not effectively measure economic impacts.

Taks said the STEAM model does not consider the cost of new infrastructure built to host events like the ICG. In Windsor’s case, construction of the downtown aquatic complex was triggered by the city winning the bid to host the games (Schmidt, 2013, September 25).

Subsequent media articles written by columnists questioned the mayor’s pursuit for future events in addition to the economic benefits of ICG.

When residents learned the STEAM formula doesn’t even take into consideration infrastructure requirements needed to host an event — building that new aquatic complex, for instance — some felt they were being played for fools (Windsor Star, 2013 October 4).

The chief executive officer (CEO) of the Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance and the CEO of Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island both disagreed with the professor’s statements and defended the validity of the ICG economic impact report.

... he’s surprised by some of the negative commentary he’s been hearing. “In most cases, the taxes generated by virtue of the overall spend offsets any (municipal) investments,” he

said, adding those who suggest there are no economic benefits generated are “ill-informed” (Schmidt, 2013, October 10).

Likewise, the mayor defended the validity of the report.

[The Mayor] agreed ... about STEAM being widely-used and well-accepted. “The fact of the matter is, this is the model. Nobody else has a different model” (Chen, 2013, October 7).

The mayor of Leamington, a city in Essex County, which hosted some ICG events, was apprehensive with the results of the economic impact report. Media articles described that he was not convinced that ICG had a significant economic impact on the county. Thus, he was opposed to partnering with Windsor again for future sport events.

He said the lack of shared information on the ICG was a red flag. “No details about (the ICG’s) successes or failures have been shared with us at a county level (until tonight),” ... “even though we were a significant co-funder of the event (Kotsis, 2013, October 16).

In response to critics, the media quoted a supporter of large sport events in Windsor saying: “I don’t know what they’re not seeing” (Schmidt, 2013, October 10).

### **Future Events**

While the benefits of ICG were being debated, media articles frequently reported that the city was pursuing more events to capitalize on its existing event-related infrastructure and to develop its sport tourism industry.

[a city counselor] said because Windsor now has world-class facilities such as the WFCU Centre and the new Windsor International Aquatic and Training Centre, the city can concentrate on generating more sports tourism (Pearson, 2013, October 22).

The mayor appeared before city council October 7, 2013 to provide an overview of the proposed hosting of the Fédération Internationale de Natation (FINA) World Diving Series from 2014 to

2017 and the 2014 Ontario Summer Games (the latter did not include swimming events). The discourse focused on the cost of both events and the potential economic impact. The FINA World Diving Series was also described as having the ability to assist in the development of a local diving club. The mayor had already had discussions with FINA representatives prior to the city council meeting. Windsor offered to host the Ontario Summer Games when Niagara opted out for financial reasons, after initially winning the bid. The motions to host both these events were approved. Only one city counselor was in opposition.

“I think we’re starting to bite off a bit too much,” ... he felt the events come at too high a cost in financial and city staffing resources. In his discussions with citizens, “this doesn’t come up as a priority,” he added (Schmidt, 2013, October 7).

A media article also quoted the Niagara regional treasurer, who had some doubt in regards to hosting large sport events.

“That arrangement comes with financial risk that I don’t think should be borne by the taxpayer,” the regional treasurer told the St. Catharine’s Standard (Jarvis, 2013, October 8).

Another media article quoted a city counselor’s enthusiasm for the events.

Every time we introduce people to Windsor we are enhancing our economic development opportunities (Schmidt, 2013, October 7).

### **Legacy**

Post ICG, media articles referenced the potential legacies of sport events.

...hosting sport events can bring a variety of legacies and benefits to a community, including pride of place, volunteerism, facility construction/enhancement, promotion of a destination, healthy and active lifestyle, role models for our children and provide an

opportunity for our athletes to compete at home in front of family and friends (Traer, 2013, October 12).

As previously mentioned the Games were responsible for the children's health promotion initiative, "In Sport WE Are One". The aquatic complex was ICG's largest legacy. It attracted the FINA World Diving Series in addition to enhancing the swimming community. Consequently, the high costs associated with the construction and operations of the aquatic complex resulted in the closures of local smaller pools, such as Adie Knox and Windsor Water World.

In order to justify a business case for the aquatic centre, city council voted to close Windsor Arena, Windsor Water World, the Adie Knox Herman pool and the College Avenue Community Centre for an annual savings of \$1.3 million in operating costs (Hall, 2013, August 29).

Two of these pools particularly serviced seniors and community members with a low socio-economic status (SES). Media articles quoted residents questioning the reported success of ICG and the closures of Adie Knox and Windsor Water World.

How can we as a community share in this happiness and success when we know that this is all happening at the cost of closing Adie Knox and Windsor Water World pools? I personally feel sickened about this (Cooke, 2013, October 16).

The debate in regard to ICG's economic impact and the city's decision to host future sport events prompted media articles to reference the negative aspects of sport tourism. Moreover, the decision to close existing local pools provoked residents to voice their concerns through the local media. The frequency of criticism from individuals who questioned ICG's benefits and the aquatic complex increased in the online comment section of the Windsor Star.

## **Discussion**

### **Urban Governance**

References from media articles revealed the local government's intention to use sport tourism as a mode for economic development. However, in terms of transparency, prior to ICG there was no mention within city council minutes of the development of sport tourism strategy, and a policy to host sport events was absent. Rather meeting minutes and the media reflected an "if we build it, they will come" mentality, wherein it was assumed that hosting the ICG and building the aquatic complex would attract visitors and subsequently stimulate an economic impact; even though the mayor acknowledged that no economic impact studies have previously examined ICG. City council minutes revealed how public funds were hastily allocated to ICG and the development of the aquatic complex. Moreover, public funds were reallocated from existing projects (e.g., library renovations) and two existing pools were closed. There was little public consultation or participation, and an Essex County deputy mayor's suggestion that the aquatic complex should be built closer to Essex County's municipalities was ignored. The push to rapidly build the aquatic complex aligned with Hall, Ritchie and Adair's (2004) argument that politicians use sport events to accelerate developmental projects.

The media and city council's representation of ICG and the aquatic complex exemplified an urban revitalization symbolic regime (Misener and Mason, 2009). ICG and the aquatic complex were frequently referenced as being responsible for re-imaging Windsor, attracting future sport events, in addition to stimulating local economic growth. City council's performance was praised within meeting minutes and some media.

Windsor's local government's use of sport tourism as an economic driver represents a neoliberal top-down approach (e.g., the city of Manchester; Misener and Mason, 2009); wherein the mayor proceeded to bid for ICG and build the aquatic complex with little participation from

grassroots organizations, believing that the Games and aquatic complex were best for the community. The Windsor-Essex Swim Team, a grassroots organization, advocated for the aquatic complex, however, it is only one sport organization and not representative of Windsor's population.

### **Expected Outcomes as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**

The mayor and the city council expressed multiple expected outcomes prior to hosting the ICG. In the absence of a transparent public policy for hosting events or any form of strategic planning, these expectations can be considered KPIs. Clearly, the expected outcomes were formulated through city council minutes and the local media in an unsubstantiated, rhetorical form (Coaffee, 2012), such as: putting the city on the world map, revitalizing the city, stimulating economic impact, inspiring kids to be more active, building friendships, and so on. None of these expected outcomes were accurately planned, nor evaluated post event, making it challenging for concerned residents to hold city council accountable.

### **Economic impact**

Initial criticism of ICG occurred after the Games through a city counselor's blog who questioned the economic impact. The lack of an accurately measured economic impact was also questioned in a letter to the editor, stating that a more credible and realistic CBA (Kesenne, 2012; *Taks et al.*, 2011) should be used over a standard EIA (Sport Tourism Economic Assessment Model [STEAM]) to demonstrate the economic impact of the event. This incurred major criticism from the mayor, CSTA and other stakeholders. CSTA is considered the industry leader and expert regarding Canada's sport tourism industry and developed STEAM. Market demand for sport events is the core of their business. Questioning the validity of STEAM, scrutinizes the performance and legitimacy of the organization, as local governments may choose not to host future large sport events due to the potential negative economic impacts. City council, notably the

mayor, and CSTA were evidently regime members with the most decision-making power. Their comments in response to criticism regarding the validity of ICG's economic impact based on standard EIA may be explained by their need to defend their performance and preserve their legitimacy as a part of a larger agenda. The professor and other concerned residents' participation was an effort to hold city council and CSTA accountable. They were not necessarily opposed to hosting ICG; rather were concerned with the transparency of statements made by city council and CSTA in regard to the economic impact of the Games, the haste in which the aquatic complex was built, and the closure of other local pools. Clearly, in order to be successful, policy makers must ensure that economic impact studies are transparent.

### **Sport tourism as part of a broader economic development strategy**

Only after ICG, sport tourism became a part of Windsor's broader economic development strategy. City council's plan to pursue and capitalize on future events was based on the perceived success of ICG and the building of the aquatic complex. Ap (1992) argued that gaining public support is crucial in determining the success of an event. In the context of ICG, media articles that questioned the economic success of the Games risked changing resident's support for future events. The city council's decision-making capacity is dependent on public support. If residents no longer support future events, the city's economic development strategy in relation to sport tourism may become obsolete and moreover the performance of the city council (i.e., an urban regime) could be questioned.

Although the construction of the aquatic complex enabled Windsor to host other international events such as the FINA World Diving Championships and to some extent the FINA 2016 World Swimming Championships (25m), hosting these events came again at a very high additional cost for the city, without substantial economic return (Jarvis, 2016, December

15). An accurate cost-benefit analysis has not been performed, not for the ICG, nor for the subsequent events that were hosted as a result of building the aquatic complex.

### **The aquatic complex and urban revitalization**

The new aquatic complex is considered the most tangible legacy (e.g., Preuss, 2007) of the ICG. The facility looks good in the downtown core, but it is unclear whether it has positively impacted businesses in the nearby area. Moreover, the operational costs for the aquatic complex highly surpasses the estimations, negatively impacting the annual city budgets. This financial burden; with an unintended \$3 million deficit per year (Pearson, 2017, February 22), is yet another unexpected outcome. Furthermore, the closure of the two smaller local pools evoked outcry from low-income community members due to the perceived inaccessibility of the aquatic complex. The development of the aquatic complex may have prompted residents to question whether its “legacy” benefits the needs of the few over the needs of the many. Another noteworthy fact is that the library was never included in the new aquatic complex although the library budget was used to build the facility. Overall, cities have a better chance to capitalize on events if they rely on existing infrastructure.

### **Increased levels of physical activity**

The aquatic complex and the “In Sport WE are One” health promotion initiative were referenced as ICG legacies. City council assumed a self-fulfilling prophecy that hosting events and building an aquatic complex will make residents healthier. In the absence of a bench mark measure of the physical activity levels of kids and youth in the community, it is impossible to evaluate if the ICG inspired the kids to become more active. Studies on the impact of events on sport participation systematically show that the effects are very limited, and if apparent increases are evident, it is among existing participants, and not among new participants (Taks *et al.*, 2014 and 2015). No one has taken the time to evaluate if the well-developed legacy program for school

children in grades 7 and 8 (In Sport WE are One), has had any sustained effect. In short, there was no record of any person or organization that followed-up on whether residents have become more active as a result of ICG or the aquatic complex.

A local diving club has recently been established (since January 2016), but has received a preferred treatment over other community sport organizations. In 2017, city council approved a motion to waive aquatic complex fees up to \$75,000 over three years for the Windsor Diving Club, however it denied other swimming clubs the same request (Pearson, 2017, February 22). This triggered a hostile feeling of these sport clubs towards city council, as they struggle to afford the high rental costs of the aquatic complex's swim lanes, jeopardizing the viability of their programs.

### **Creation of “*communitas*” and social impact**

Prior to and during ICG most media coverage was positive, highlighting the development of *communitas* that celebrated the Games. It was framed from the perspectives of the mayor, various stakeholders and athletes who supported the ICG and development of the aquatic complex. Post event, media reported feelings of pride among residents, a feel-good-factor that is known to be short term (Maennig and Porsche, 2008). Whether friendships were created or strengthened during the event, is also something that has not been evaluated. It should be noted however, that the discourse about these intangible event benefits (i.e., social development), was consistent throughout the period examined (pre, during and post). This is in contrast with Sant and Mason's (2015) study on framing the event legacy of the Vancouver Olympic bid, where discussion moved away from economic impact pre-event, towards more social impact post event.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of city council meeting minutes and local media revealed the evolving discourse concerning the development of the aquatic complex, ICG and the pursuit of future

events. Public discourse is important in any democracy. Sport tourism became a part of Windsor's broader economic development strategy. Such a strategy evidently favored certain groups and disenfranchised other community members. The city sought to attract investment by re-imagining the city in alignment with Windsor's economic development strategy. Such tactics are representative of an urban revitalization symbolic regime. The media played an important role in legitimizing city council's performance to garnering support from the community. In this endeavour, the media was unable to enhance the city's accountability and transparency regarding the hosting of the event. Although residents had little decision-making power, the discourse post-ICG highlighted the residents increasing participation, more so their increasing awareness of the potential negative social and economic impacts of hosting sport events. Concerned residents' calls for accountability threatened the stability of the regime; thus, criticism was responded to with hostility. The media was essential in engaging community discourse, as it had the power to shape public perceptions (McCombs and Reynolds, 2009).

Our contribution highlights how city council relied on rhetoric, and did not establish any formal KPIs, nor did the city follow-up on its claims regarding the Games supposed positive legacies. City council assumed the Games were a success on all the assumptions it put forward, dismissing criticism and calls for accountability. Obviously, a series of consecutive events in the form of an event portfolio (Ziakas and Costa, 2011) has a greater potential to increase and sustain long-term benefits compared to a one-only event. Overall, local governments should focus on the strategic planning far in advance of hosting the events by:

- formulating long-term objectives for hosting events so performance effectiveness can be measured,
- developing tactics for implementation and execution,
- analysing the how human, financial, and physical resources were planned to be used, and actually used to measure performance efficiency,

- creating clear key performance indicators to measure the expected outcomes.

Cities would also strongly benefit from developing transparent hosting policies and to actively involve the community in these processes. These are essential steps to be taken by local governments to become more transparent and accountable in the context of hosting events.

### **Future Research**

This study presents an opportunity for further research of urban governance of international sport events within “medium sized cities”, an important and little understood area. Future research should focus on community stakeholders’ participation in the development of a sport tourism strategy, the media’s role in engaging discourse regarding a sport tourism strategy, the long-term social impacts of a sport tourism strategy, and how to measure local governance of a sport tourism strategy effectively through KPIs.

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**Table 1.** Urban Regime Categories and Characteristics: Frequency Analysis

<b>Symbolic Urban Regime</b>	<b>Pre ICG</b>	<b>During ICG</b>	<b>Post ICG</b>	<b>Total</b>
<i>Characteristics</i>				
<b>Urban Revitalization</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>163</b>
<i>Social Development</i>	29	25	22	76
<i>Increase Investment</i>	20	3	37	60
<i>Urban Enhancement</i>	10	3	14	27
<b>Other Symbolic Regime Traits</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>134</b>
<i>Economic Growth</i>	16	1	65	82
<i>Re-imaging</i>	13	12	27	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>297</b>

**Table 2.** Frequency of Positive and Negative Media Discourse: ICG and Development of Aquatic Complex

	Pre ICG	During ICG	Post ICG	Total
<b>Positive</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>268</b>
<i>Economic Impact</i>	13	1	32	46
<i>Social Development</i>	29	25	22	76
<i>Urban Enhancement (Aquatic Complex)</i>	10	3	13	26
<i>Attracting Investment</i>	20	3	33	56
<i>Re-imagining</i>	13	12	27	52
<i>Event Characteristics</i>	10	2	0	12
<b>Negative</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>
<i>Economic Impact</i>	0	0	33	33
<i>Social Development</i>	0	0		
<i>Urban Enhancement (Aquatic Complex)</i>	0	0	1	1
<i>Attracting Investment</i>	0	0	3	3
<i>Re-imagining</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Event Characteristics</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Facility Closures (e.g., Adie Knox, Water World)</i>	0	0	3	3

**Table 3.** Frequency of City Council Discourse: Development of Aquatic Complex

	Community	Businesses	Total
1.Positive	15	17	32
2.Negative	17	0	17

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<sup>i</sup> Windsor and Essex-County have a total population of approximately 330,000 inhabitants (<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-cma-eng.cfm?GC=559&GK=CMA&LANG=Eng&TOPIC=1>)