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# URBAN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE 2018 FIFA MEN'S FOOTBALL WORLD CUP: MUTATED MOBILE POLICIES IN THE PERIPHERIES

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## Abstract

Planners, politicians, boosters and other elites often use mega-events like the 2018 FIFA Men's World Cup as a strategy for urban development. This was also the case with the World Cup, hosted in eleven Russian cities and designed to modernize Russia's peripheral host cities. While the idea of developing cities through mega-events is common, the Russian experience displays much that is new.

This paper examines urban development in the World Cup as an example of mobile policy, exploring how this mega-event was imported from abroad and how this policy mutated as it was implemented on the ground in Russia. The specificities of the Russian experience were due in large part to the ways in which the World Cup organizing committee was created and operated as an extension of the central government in Moscow. What appeared at first to be a way for Russian peripheral host cities to differentiate themselves through urban development in a form of inter-urban competition, turned out to be a reestablishment of the central state in regional spatial planning. In this way, even as certain material conditions in the host cities were improved, the World Cup represented not an expression of regional democracy, nor even a strategy for inter-urban differentiation, but rather one more instance of development dictated from the center and from afar.

**Key words:** policy mobilities; urban development; mega-events; World Cup; Russia

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## Introduction: Developing World Cup host cities

One year before the 2018 FIFA Men's World Cup in Russia, Volgograd regional governor Andrey Bocharov gave an interview in front of the new stadium under construction. Standing next to deputy prime minister Vitaly Mutko, who had flown in from Moscow for an inspection, governor Bocharov explained the value of preparing the city for the World Cup:

The World Cup will bring a lot. There are many works that will remain as a legacy for the Volgograd Region, for the hero city Volgograd, for residents, and for visitors. We are absolutely confident that the World Cup will give extra opportunities for development [...]. Volgograd residents know that large-scale work is occurring on public utilities. [...] These are facilities that are not immediately visible, but they will give an entirely different quality of life. And the most important thing is that all this will become a foundation for our development [...]. And everything will serve the people [*Volgograd24, 2017*].

In this statement, governor Bocharov gave voice to one of the dominant rationales behind hosting the World Cup, linking the football tournament to a wide-ranging plan for urban and regional development. Primarily targeted at improving the material conditions and socio-economic profiles of Russia's peripheral cities, the planners of Russia 2018 continued the global trend of using mega-events for reasons other

than sport [Horne, 2017], particularly in terms of urban development [Smith, 2012]. Seen from this perspective, the Russian World Cup was the latest expression of a mobile policy that has travelled the globe, touching down and transforming urban planning strategies in host cities worldwide [Lauermann, 2014].

One of the problems with these development strategies, however, is that mobile “off-the-shelf” policies seldom work as advertised when they are implemented in new contexts. In other words, as effects on the ground often diverge from what planners imagined, mobile policies are understood to be prone to mutation [Temenos, McCann, 2013]. This has led to a growing body of literature where scholars worldwide have attempted to trace not just the paths of mobile policies, but also the ways in which they mutate in different contexts [McCann, 2011; Peck, Theodore, 2015; Ward, 2011]. Following this, the World Cup can be explored along two dimensions: first as a form of mobile urbanism tied particularly to mega-events, and second in terms of the mutations that occurred between planners’ stated intentions and actual results on the ground in the host cities.

At first, the rationales expressed by World Cup planners seemed to fit both the remit of mega-event-driven urban development mobile policy and the infrastructural needs of the peripheral host cities. Unlike Moscow and St. Petersburg (and to a lesser degree Sochi and Kazan, both of which had previously hosted mega-events), the majority of the host cities for the World Cup required substantial infrastructural investment not only to meet requirements established by FIFA (the owners of the World Cup) but also, and more importantly, to provide adequate quality of life for residents. Before being selected as hosts, these cities suffered from poor and insufficient municipal services, such as inadequate water and power, and unacceptable transit infrastructure such as broken roads and aging, under-capacity airports and train stations. From this perspective, hosting was intended to improve material conditions in the host cities over the long term through the mechanisms of satisfying FIFA requirements for the World Cup. This is what governor Bocharov was referring to, above, when he spoke of the value of hosting. He explained Volgograd’s preparations not in terms of a football tournament but rather as a project to develop municipal infrastructure in order to improve the quality of life for residents over the long term. To be sure, nearly 8 million visitors during the World Cup arrived in the host cities in newly constructed or renovated airports and train stations and traveled to the games on freshly expanded and repaved roads.

More broadly, these infrastructural improvements were tied to the idea of increasing each city-region’s investment potential, as noted by President Vladimir Putin in a meeting of the 2018 World Cup organizing committee:

We are talking not only about stadiums, but about creating modern infrastructure that will, for many coming years, work to improve the socioeconomic development of the territories. This will in large part determine the attractiveness for investment, and simply improve the lives of the people [Sverdlovsk Gubernatorial website, 2015].

In the context of the World Cup as an urban development program, organizers intended these infrastructure improvements to increase investment in the host cities and their regions. In this way, hosting the mega-event was a strategy for differentiation within a framework of urban entrepreneurialism and inter-urban competition [Hall, 2006; Lauermann, Davidson, 2013]. As I argue in this paper, policy mutations occurred during the importation and implementation of these plans, which led to outcomes that diverged from what was promised. I demonstrate that these mutations occurred not only due to the nature of mobile policy, but also because of the specificities of how the Russian World Cup was organized and deployed. Despite much of the rhetoric from organizers, the 2018 World Cup was less a bottom-up strategy for inter-urban differentiation — as could be expected from listening to the rhetoric from organizers — than it was a reentry of the central state into Russian spatial planning [Golubchikov, 2017]. This represented a form of paternalistic extraverted urbanism [Hall, Hubbard, 1998; Lauermann, 2018] crafted and managed at the federal level and distributed to the peripheries, and accompanied by the mutations that typically occur with mobilized policy.

The material presented here comes from a multi-year, multi-site research project on the 2018 World Cup, centered primarily on the host cities of Ekaterinburg and Volgograd but also including work in other host cities as well. It is based on expert interviews and conversations with 2018 World Cup organizing committee members, FIFA employees, sports business executives, municipal authorities, and urban experts, as well as a study of planning documents, event contracts, government decrees,

and media reports. To take stock of the ways in which policy was implemented on the ground, I conducted extensive site visits and informal interviews with residents in a number of host cities and from a variety of different backgrounds, including urban activists, academics, small business owners, journalists, students, and market sellers.

### Policy mobilities and mega-event urban development

There are a variety of reasons why nations aspire to host mega-events — defined here as “ambulatory occasions of a fixed duration that (a) attract a large number of visitors, (b) have large mediated reach, (c) come with large costs, and (d) have large impacts on the built environment and the population” [Müller, 2015a, p. 3]. Commonly these rationales include an economic argument, as mega-events are said to bring significant financial benefits [Malfas, Theodoraki, Houlihan, 2004; Preuss, 2004]. Mega-events are also said to increase employment and tourism and serve as a means for hosts to broadcast or reframe particular conceptions of the nation to a global audience — an especially alluring proposition for emerging economies outside of the Global North [Black, Westhuizen, 2004; Cornelissen, 2010; Grix, 2014; Hiller, 2000]. Underlying all this is a conception of hosting mega-events as a strategy for urban development [Chalkley, Essex, 1999; Coaffee, 2010].

The paradigm of this strategy originated during the Barcelona 1992 Summer Olympics and has since spread around the globe as the so-called “Barcelona Model” of mega-event-driven urban development and renewal [Degen, García, 2012; Essex, Chalkley, 1998; Marshall, 2000; Qu, Spaans, 2009; Zimbalist, 2016]. Within the context of the 1992 Summer Olympics, and inspired by the requirements of the mega-event, host city authorities enacted the Barcelona Urban Renewal Plan. This initiative successfully refashioned the city’s semi-derelict industrial waterfront into miles of world-class beaches, shops, bars, and restaurants, and demonstrated to a worldwide audience of policymakers that mega-event hosting could be leveraged to accomplish ambitious urban transformation projects [González, 2011].

As it became mobilized into globally-applicable policy, this model spread beyond the confines of the Summer Olympics to attract host cities for other mega-events, including the Winter Olympics, the FIFA Men’s Football World Cup, and a variety of other less prestigious but nevertheless significant mega-events all around the world [Black, 2008; 2014; Koch, Valiyev, 2015]. It should be noted, however, that in the intervening years, the Barcelona Model has become hyperbole, commonly presented as a miracle cure for a city’s development ills. The boosters of this mobile policy commonly neglect to communicate that because of the ambitious urban development plan, the Barcelona Olympics cost between 200% and 400% more than originally promised [Brunet, 1995; Flyvbjerg, Stewart, Budzier, 2016], to say nothing of the fact that not every potential host city has the latent capacity to draw tourists like the famous Catalanian capital. In this light, the current study should be understood not as a comparison with Barcelona itself, but rather as an example of how the model of mega-event-driven urban development, originating in Barcelona, has been mobilized to Russia and articulated on the ground in Russian host cities.

Still, despite its drawbacks and the often-exaggerated presentation, the fact remains that the Barcelona Model has come to serve as one of the most recognizable legitimation strategies for investing in hosting mega-events. Decades after its origin, the continued propagation of the Barcelona Model across the globe, and into a variety of different national contexts, lends itself to analysis through the policy mobilities literature. This body of scholarship endeavors to map the geographies of fast, travelling policy as it is imported from elsewhere and applied, often experimentally, in new contexts around the globe. Scholars have explored the transformations engendered by diverse neoliberalisms [Peck, Theodore, 2015], investigated the ways in which mobile policies constitute the urban [McCann, Ward, 2011], and — most importantly for this study — traced the paths of mega-events as they reshape the socio-material fabric of host cities across the globe [Cook, Ward, 2011; Lauer mann, 2014; Oliver, Lauer mann, 2017; Salazar et al., 2017; Temenos, McCann, 2013]. Crucially, these scholars highlight the mutable nature of mobile policy, emphasizing how the relational and heterogenous spaces of policy invention, circulation, translation, and implementation inevitably affect the policy itself as well as its outcomes. This is key for understanding how a Barcelona-style mega-event-driven urban development plan might produce outcomes that diverge from what planners promised or expected. In other words, it is not enough to note that the Barcelona Model has been mobilized into diverse environments across the globe, but also to note how that implementation has mutated from the expected or promised results when articulated in a specific locale.

Even aside from the Barcelona Model, there has been a tendency among planners, politicians, and other mega-event boosters to overstate the benefits of hosting mega-events, as promises of an economic bonanza often are exaggerated or distributed only to a narrow segment of the population [Abelson, 2011; Matheson, Baade, 2004], while employment opportunities commonly turn out to be short term and low pay [Horne, Manzenreiter, 2006; Malfas, Theodoraki, Houlihan, 2004]. Generally, the literature shows that mega-event-related urban development plans are rife with deleterious consequences, including uneven development, gentrification, and litanies of unfulfilled promises [Andranovich, Burbank, Heying, 2001; Gaffney, 2010; Pillay, Bass, 2008; Watt, 2013]. It is here, at these moments of adverse or unanticipated outcomes, that a focus on policy mobilities and mutations comes into play. The mutational perspective through a policy mobilities lens allows for a more nuanced reading of mega-event-led development and a richer analysis of how various policy promises go awry.

In certain cases, it is possible to home in on the reasons why mutations might occur. In terms of mega-event policy, one of the fundamental challenges with hosting relates to the ways in which the needs of the mega-event may conflict with the needs of the city. Often, under the pressure of inflexible event-related deadlines, mega-event priorities outweigh other concerns and, in processes of infrastructural, financial, and legal seizure [Müller, 2017], the mega-event plan becomes the city's plan. Among other effects, this can result in social exclusion and other marginalizations, various forms of gentrification, seizures, or evictions, uneven development, and costly, unnecessary, and overcapacity infrastructures — a far cry from the supposed tourist paradise suggested by the dreams of the Barcelona Model.

Within these studies, there is a notable trend to focus on cases within the Global North, or if they stray outside of this territory, then the tendency is to remain limited within a North-South dialectic. In contrast, this paper contributes to a strand in the Anglo-American academy that endeavors to theorize the urban from the Global East [Edensor, Jayne, 2012; Müller, 2018]. This lack of research in, of, and from the Easts is found in the literature on both mobilities and mega-events, though with the spread of mega-event hosts beyond traditional territories, scholarship has begun to appear in this gap, however partially. For instance, Salazar et al. [2017] edited a volume situated at the intersection of mega-events and mobilities, within which Girginov [2017] examines mega-event transformations and mobilizations in a comparison of the 2012 Olympics in London and the 2014 Olympics in Sochi. This study valorizes the East and places it in broader conversation with the world, but does not address policy mobilities specifically, instead employing a broader conceptualization of mobilities framed within an exploration of how hosts attempt to leverage mega-events to accomplish political or economic goals. Similarly, Lauermaun [2017] provides a critical and much-needed analysis of the mechanisms and economic geographies of policy transfer as materialized in mega-event preparations, but he does not discuss the Easts. Müller [2015b] focuses on mega-events and policy mobilities in regard to the failures of the sustainability agenda in the 2014 Sochi Olympics but does not highlight the urban. Finally, Oancă [2015] works at the intersection of mega-events, mobile policies, and the urban, in her analysis of the attempts to lobby for the European Capital of Culture in Perm, Russia, though she highlights policy actors more than urban materiality.

The present study is situated among these works and aspires to complement them, offering an analysis of the articulation of the 2018 Men's Football World Cup in Russia, from the perspective of policy mobilities, and grounded in the urban. It begins from an understanding of the World Cup as an urban and regional development plan for Russia's periphery that was inspired by the Barcelona Model and enacted primarily by Moscow authorities, intended as a means for spatial modernization and differentiation within the context of inter-urban competition, despite its reliance on centralized authorities. Finally, the paper unpacks some moments of mutation within the articulation of this particular World Cup, contingent on local, regional, and national factors, while identifying infrastructural outcomes that diverged from what was promised or intended, and exploring some reasons underlying those mutations.

### **Why host the 2018 World Cup?**

The rationales for hosting a mega-event can be discerned through a combined examination of the bid books that were used to win hosting rights, the discourses produced by organizers, and the plans actually enacted by authorities. This triangulation provides a foundation of (mostly) public information that can shed light on the goals underlying the mega-event. This perspective emphasizes the stated goals of hosting, rather than providing an investigation of underlying political or business motivations. This is not intended to steer discussion away from investigations of other, less public motivations, nor to diminish the importance of protest and civic action against the corruption and



inequalities that almost always accompany mega-events (see for instance [Dart, Wagg, 2016; Lenskyj, 2012; 2016; Transparency International, 2016]). Rather, in this paper, I work with the official rationales for hosting — as stated by organizers and decisionmakers — because I am concerned here with the overlaps between mega-events and urban development strategies. I do not intend with this perspective to suggest that other hosting rationales did not exist; instead, I employ this perspective with the understanding that the official rationales exist among many potential others.

The Russia 2018 World Cup bid book, submitted to FIFA in 2010, is a logical place to begin searching for the explanatory rationales that launched Russia's aspirations to host the World Cup. The bid book was exhaustive: split into three volumes and totaling over a thousand pages, it covered everything from Russia's history and political makeup, long-term development plans for each host city, detailed layouts for each stadium, and more. Within this wealth of material, organizers also explained why they wanted to host. Focusing only on domestic aspects, the key idea was to use "football as a mechanism for societal, cultural and economic development" [Russia 2018 World Cup Bid Committee, 2010, vol. 2, p. 108], a clear reference to the idea of leveraging the mega-event to accomplish goals not necessarily associated only with sport [Girginov, 2017]. This was later broken into three goals: to boost the quality of national football, to impart new skills to Russian citizens, and to modernize, expand, and improve the quality of urban infrastructure. This final goal was targeted specifically at peripheral host cities and was intended to make good on FIFA's stated goal of using football for development.

Russian political-economic developments have long been analyzed through the lens of the core-periphery model (among many others, see [Chase-Dunn, Hall, 2019; Helf, 1996; Nefedova, 2008]). This analysis has functioned at multiple scales, viewing the nation itself as peripheral or semi-peripheral within a broader world system [Wallerstein, 1979; 1984], as well as internally within Russia, at regional levels [Honneland, Blakkisrud, 2018; Liven, 2008]. Political-economic power is commonly understood to reside primarily within Moscow, as a function of the hierarchical command structure suffused with informal relationships that is sometimes known as the power vertical or *sistema* [Ledyayev, 2008; Ledeneva, 2013]. This view elides the economic power generated by Russian regional cities, the nuanced political games played by actors at various levels, and the hegemonic role that regional capitals themselves play within their regions. A city like Volgograd can be seen as central when viewed in relation to the context of the Volgogradskaya region, but also peripheral when in relation with Moscow, to say nothing of foreign cities. These multiple perspectives on core-peripheral relations have implications on the way that the World Cup was planned and articulated throughout Russia.

Overall, the World Cup was legitimized by organizers with the rhetoric of making Russian cities and citizens more competitive on global scales. Put another way, one of the aims of the World Cup was to take peripheral host cities like Volgograd or Ekaterinburg, and place them in conversation with global cities, minimizing their relative peripherality by positioning them as host cities of a globally prestigious mega-event. Further, this positioning was assumed to bring socioeconomic benefits and result in an improved quality of life. I do not intend to analyze the value proposition of these plans, nor to criticize the trickle-down ideologies invoked by organizers. Rather, I am interested in how organizers linked hosting to socioeconomic benefits through the improvement of material infrastructures, under the assumption that these improved infrastructures would lead to increased investment, expanded tourism, and reduced peripherality. In other words, I am curious to examine how neoliberal state rescaling was articulated through the idea of leveraging the mega-event to promote host cities above the national state. And finally, in line with a policy mobilities approach, I am curious to explore how these plans were (or were not) actually enacted on the ground.

The narratives of neoliberal rescaling and implicit trickle-down benefits to the population are standard fare for mega-event organizers around the globe; the enduring popularity of the Barcelona Model is testament to the potency of mega-event hosting as a strategy in inter-urban competition. What was noteworthy in Russia 2018 was neither the infrastructure plans nor the rhetoric — both of which are routine worldwide — but rather the ways in which this mega-event was conceived and managed from the central government and dispensed to the regions. What makes this unique is that this centralized policy was wrapped in the familiar discourses of urban rescaling, as though the city were following the traditional neoliberal mega-event playbook, except that in actuality central authorities in Moscow were firmly in control.

Some government involvement is common in the organization of most mega-events — these are projects of national importance, after all — but Russia 2018 stands out for the degree to which this mega-event was controlled from the highest levels of the central state. By way of contrast: going back to the founding of the Barcelona Model, the Barcelona 1992 Olympic Organizing Committee (COOB '92) was composed of a consortium from the Barcelona City Council, the Spanish Olympic Committee,

the Catalonian Generalitat, and the Spanish government, among others. Figures from the municipality and the national Olympic Committee dominated at all levels of the COOB, with the mayor of Barcelona serving as president of every board, and the Olympic Committee president serving as vice-president [*Barcelona 1992 Olympic Organizing Committee, 1993, p. 19, Vol. 2*]. Only thereafter did figures from the Catalonian and Spanish governments make appearances. Even in the COOB General Assembly — the supreme decision-making organ of the Games — members of the municipality and the Olympic Committee outnumbered Catalonian and Spanish government figures two to one. This structure shaped how Barcelona 1992 played out, as the various assemblies and boards voted to determine how developments should take place. Since municipal figures held comfortable — but not overwhelming — majorities, local interests were less at risk of losing out to regional or national plans. Though not without its problems or deleterious outcomes, managing Barcelona 1992 was an exercise in locally-grounded decision-making and coalition building, involving members of government at all levels (though skewed in favor of the local instead of the regional or federal), as well as individuals from the private sector. Barcelona was far from unique in this composition: typically, organizing committees are composed of similar mixes of various levels of government alongside non-governmental figures, and certain mega-events have taken place without much government participation at all. For instance, the organizing committee for the 2006 FIFA Men's Football World Cup in Germany was mostly composed of former football players, sports officials, and businessmen, with only a handful of political figures involved in any capacity [*Frankfurter Allgemeine, 2015; RP Online, 2005*]. This emphasis on private actors has become the norm in the articulation of neoliberal mega-events [*Raco, 2013*].

In contrast to these examples, Russia 2018 was a remarkably centralized affair, oriented around and managed from the federal capital. Despite the fact that the World Cup took place in eleven cities across European Russia (see *Fig. 1*), and as such could be expected to reflect a diversity of local and regional concerns, the planning and delivery of this mega-event displayed a high level of consistency across the host cities. This uniformity was visible in multiple domains, from the rhetoric repeated by authorities at all scales, to the language employed in regional planning decrees, to the sites of infrastructural intervention, and the ways in which these projects were managed. This was a testament to the power of Moscow authorities in governing the World Cup, but it is also noteworthy because of the contradictions inherent in deploying a centralized event accompanied and legitimized by the rhetoric of bottom-up entrepreneurial urban governance.



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**Fig. 1.** Map showing all 11 host regions and cities for the 2018 FIFA Men's Football World Cup in Russia. This study focused primarily on Volgograd and Ekaterinburg, but also conducted work in Sochi, Kazan, and St. Petersburg

Source: original author Morwen, modified by author.

## Organizing the 2018 World Cup

The involvement of the centralized state was a key factor of the Russian World Cup project from the start, even before hosting rights had been granted. Creating and managing the bid was an organization known as the Russia 2018 World Cup bid committee, comprised of figures in the Russian federal state apparatus. At the center of bid committee were Chairman Vitaly Mutko and Chief Executive Officer Alexey Sorokin [Borbély, 2017]. Together, Mutko and Sorokin hatched the plan to host the World Cup in Russia and assembled the bid. Both men were in the top tiers, working at Russian Football Union (RFU), the governing body of Russian football and the Russian representative in FIFA. Mutko was president while Sorokin served as CEO and General Secretary.

Both Mutko and Sorokin came from state structures. While RFU president, Mutko also served as St. Petersburg's representative to the Federation Council, before being promoted to Sports Minister for the Russian Federation. He performed both roles until president Medvedev decreed that sports federations must be run by professionals instead of government officials [RIA Novosti, 2009a; 2009b]. Alexey Sorokin, meanwhile, had worked as a diplomat in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and then served in the Moscow city government before joining Mutko at the RFU [Kominsky et al., 2018]. President Medvedev's attempts to separate state and sport did not seem to apply to the World Cup bid, as Mutko leveraged his position in federal structures to garner official support from the highest levels of the government [Borbély, 2017].

In 2009, then-prime minister Vladimir Putin issued federal decree 1469, placing the full weight of the federal government behind the World Cup bid. He appointed First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov to the bid committee, ensuring that all three top men in the bid committee hailed from the state apparatus [Gazeta.ru, 2009; Russian Federal Government, 2009]. Subsequently, the ability to marshal full support from the highest levels of government was a key selling point in the Russian bid book and went a long way toward convincing reluctant FIFA decisionmakers that a Russian World Cup would occur without incident and, crucially, be lucrative for all parties involved.

As all World Cup bids, the Russian bid was a contract between the organizers and FIFA. This legally binding document promised the full cooperation and collaboration of fifteen federal ministries and the unqualified support of every host city administration and municipal council. This degree of unanimous support speaks to the centralized power at the heart of this project. Nor did this degree of centralization disappear once the bid had been won, as the Russia 2018 World Cup bid committee dissolved and reformed into the Russia 2018 Local Organizing Committee (LOC). The key players from the bid committee remained in positions of authority, but the new LOC was expanded to include officials from all levels of government, including regional governors. Unlike most other mega-events, however, the composition of the Russian LOC was overwhelmingly federal and centralized in its makeup, and Russia's (semi)authoritarian governance structure [Gel'man, 2015; 2008] ensured that regional authorities took direction from their federal superiors in key decisions. In this light, the authorities in Russian host cities can be better understood as executors of a federal plan rather than as autonomous actors working in the interests of their localities.

The Russian LOC was divided into four levels: the Supervisory Board (responsible for strategic development), the Managing Board (translating the decisions of the Supervisory Board into policy), the national level LOC (coordinating and communicating up and down the hierarchy), and the regional LOCs (implementing developments in each of the host cities). At the top of this hierarchy, in charge of the Supervisory Board, sat President Putin. Under him, the rest of this board was staffed by representatives from numerous federal ministries, including the Minister for Justice, the Minister for Regional Development, the Minister for Transport, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the director of the Federal Security Service, any of whom should give the reader an appreciation of the federal importance placed on the World Cup project. Aside from these, the Supervisory Board also included select regional governors, members of the RFU, and some representatives from state-owned and non-state-owned businesses. Continuing down the hierarchy, the other levels within the organizing committee were similarly staffed with men from federal ministries. It is telling that the FIFA-LOC board, created so that the World Cup owners could monitor developments, was inserted in the middle of the hierarchy, below the second level Managing Board, indicating that FIFA had little practical authority. Instead, the structure of the Russian LOC established the Russian president and the federal government under him as the ultimate authority in all matters pertaining to the World Cup.

In this light, it would be erroneous to see the Russian LOC as working *with* the Russian government, as is typically the case in other mega-events. Rather, it would be more accurate to say that the

Russian LOC was itself a branch of the central government, though a temporary and project-based one. Subsequently, the 2018 World Cup can be seen as a state project, created at the federal level and dispersed down through various bureaucratic hierarchies through decree, covered in the trappings of a sports event but in actuality much broader than a mere tournament. This is the sense in which Russia's recent mega-events can be understood as a strategic re-entry of the federal state into regional spatial planning [Golubchikov, 2017; Golubchikov, Badyina, 2016]. Again, what is remarkable about these processes in Russia is how they were legitimized with the neoliberal rhetoric of inter-urban competition framed in a city-centric focus, despite their centralized character.

This hybridity rarely features in mega-events hosted in other countries, which suggests a variegated interpretation of mega-events, contingent on the sociopolitical and economic specificities of a given host city or country. Thus, for example, the London Olympics were about rekindling national pride in a former imperial power, delivered through neoliberal public-private partnerships [Mackay, 2012; Raco, 2014], while the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa was a hybrid of neocolonial and postcolonial discourses, intended to introduce the nation to global flows of capital but also enriching a coterie of well-connected private elites [Chari, 2014; Cottle, 2011; Cornelissen, 2004]. Conversely, the Chinese experience in Beijing was intended as a reframing of the nation on the global stage and a wide-ranging urban development scheme, though without the neoliberal discourses commonly seen in mega-events [Brownell, 2008; Cook, Miles, 2017; Zhang, Zhao, 2009]. The mega-events most similar to the Russian experience with the World Cup are, perhaps unsurprisingly, found in the so-called near abroad — Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, to name a few — all of which feature various flavors of the same neoliberal discourses that in reality represented a retrenchment of the central state [Gogishvili, 2018; Koch, Valiyev, 2015; Militz, 2016]. In this way, we could say that that these are all varieties of *authoritarian mega-events*. This interpretation dovetails with the notion that that neoliberal urbanism is related to political cultures, resulting in a multiplicity of variegated neoliberalisms across the globe [Brenner, Theodore, 2002; Lauerermann, Davidson, 2013].

### Development promises and outcomes in Ekaterinburg

Throughout the preparatory period, neoliberal rhetoric legitimizing the World Cup was repeated at all levels of government, from the president down to municipal administrators. Nor was this rhetoric confined to one host city over another; rather, it was reproduced nationwide in a variety of contexts rather, it was reproduced nationwide in a variety of contexts. A typical example can be seen in the mega-event-driven urban development plan enacted in the host city of Ekaterinburg. During the early years of the preparations, Ekaterinburg was, after decades of waiting, promised an expansion of their metro system.

Since opening in 1991, Ekaterinburg had only a single metro line, although every train optimistically displayed a map with a three-line network, with the word “prospective” marked over the two non-existent lines — clearly displayed the city's ambitions and hopes. The metro serviced almost 10% of Ekaterinburg's population daily [NSK Metro, 2015], and administrators regularly promised expansions of both stations and lines. Within the World Cup development program, organizers initially promised to open the long-awaited second line, with two stations near the football stadium. This was an attempt to marry the needs of the World Cup with the needs of the city [Moskvina, 2013].

In this way, the metro project was linked explicitly to the World Cup, all of which fit into the broader national plans of Russia 2018 to improve and expand the country's transport infrastructure, aiming simultaneously to fulfill the short-term requirements of moving football fans from all over the city into the stadium zone, while still satisfying the city's long-term needs. This seemed a clear example of local authorities working with federal decisionmakers in the context of mega-event hosting in order to bring a stalled but municipally beneficial project to life.

In the end, however, federal decisionmakers refused to fund the metro expansion, in favor of projects that were considered critical to the mega-event, like the stadium and the airport [E1.ru, 2013]. Due to this lack of crucial federal support, the new metro lines did not come to pass — despite the fact that they would have fulfilled the goals originally promised both to residents and in the World Cup bid. In terms of satisfying FIFA requirements for fan mobility, it was deemed more cost-efficient to add dedicated buses to the city's transport system, though this was only a temporary measure aimed at the event and left no lasting benefits for residents. Without federal transfers to undertake metro work, the Ekaterinburg municipality shelved their expansion plans once more. The public has now endured multiple decades of failed promises to expand the metro system. Long used to disappointment, some residents used humor



as a tactic to explain this latest failure: “We used to have five-year plans, but now we have thirty-year plans. Tell me that’s not progress!” (March 2018, Ekaterinburg). Echoing the glowing reports from Soviet centralized economic planning, this joke contextualized current developments within a broader framing of bureaucratic inefficiencies that reached back to the USSR. In so doing, this Ekaterinburg resident placed the failure of the metro expansion in a long line of broken promises from the authorities.

A public transport expert that worked with the Ekaterinburg municipality explained the problems inherent in tying urban development to mega-events:

The bureaucrats have this idea that they can renovate and develop the city by holding these events [...], the problem is that the promises sound good on paper, but they don’t come true. We have been waiting for the new metro line for over twenty years, but it is too expensive and, anyway, the city prioritizes drivers (July 2016, Ekaterinburg).

This expert blamed the metro failure on the extreme expenses involved in underground construction — a restriction that exists in every country — and underscored the importance of federal support. Following this, it is logical to attach a costly municipal transport development to a federally supported national project. Theoretically, having promised to host the World Cup, federal authorities would be forced to attend to neglected needs in peripheral cities. A municipal administrator in Ekaterinburg explained: “The World Cup is absolutely worth it. [...] It is great accelerator of necessary things” (November 2015, Ekaterinburg). In this example, however, the attempt failed: the World Cup failed to bring necessary pressure to federal authorities, who — no doubt under pressure from the post-Crimea international sanctions as well as the economic hangover after the busted budgets of Sochi 2014 — preferred to fund a cheaper, temporary bus-oriented solution for the World Cup.

### **Development between the host cities**

A further example of the conflict between development priorities can be found not in the host cities but between them. When evaluating bids for the 2018 World Cup, one of FIFA’s concerns was the distance between Russian host cities and the lack of quality connections. This was flagged as a danger in the Russian bid and would lead to a dangerous overreliance on the country’s air transport system [*FIFA, 2010*]. To address these concerns, Russian organizers promised to expand the existing train network and to accelerate plans for rolling out high-speed rail networks between major cities. In this scheme, the *Sapsan* high speed connections between St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Nizhny Novgorod (all of which were World Cup host cities) would be augmented by new connections to Kazan and Rostov and, in some plans, extended even as far as Sochi and Ekaterinburg. This would cut travel times significantly across much of European Russia, allaying some of FIFA’s concerns about overreliance on airplane transit, as well as providing long-term benefits for the nation through improved rail connectivity. Organizing Committee CEO Alexey Sorokin explained:

The modernized transport infrastructure that will be ready for the tournament will also increase the population’s mobility. It will become a solid foundation for a long-lasting legacy for many Russian generations [*Transport Ministry of the Russian Federation 2016, p. 2*].

Here again appear the discourses connecting mega-event preparations to the country’s long-term improvement through urban development. Predictably, Russian regional administrators were enthusiastic about the possibility of high-speed linkages to Moscow, thereby diminishing the distances between the peripheries and the center. With improved connections to the center, after all, peripheral cities could hope for increased flows of attention, information, tourists, and capital.

As previously, however, the time pressures associated with inflexible World Cup deadlines ensured that infrastructure critical for the event took precedence over other projects. It proved easier to bolster the nation’s existing air transport system than to build several thousand kilometers of new high-speed rail. This left each host city with a modern, attractive airport capable of handling the peak traffic required in a first-order international mega-event, but it did not leave the nation with the promised new high-speed rail network. An administrator in Rostov shared his disappointment: “We had hoped to complete the [*Sapsan*] project quickly, but all we can do is wait patiently. [...] The federal priority is the high-speed link between Moscow and Kazan, and that one is delayed too” (Sep-

tember 2016, Rostov). As in Ekaterinburg, this regional administrator underscored the necessity of federal support, without which the regions are unable to complete costly, large scale projects. In the end, the demands of the mega-event outweighed the needs of the cities.

### **Conclusion: Double mutations and forgotten spaces in the 2018 World Cup in Russia**

The core issue in these developments appeared to be gaining federal attention, as peripheral authorities needed to convince central decisionmakers of the value of various regional projects. From this perspective, becoming a World Cup host city can be seen as a strategy to raise a peripheral city's profile in the eyes of central authorities who, crucially, hold the purse strings. Correspondingly, central authorities framed the Russian World Cup as a plan to modernize the peripheries, engaging a strategy of urban development from above. There were three problems with this strategy, however, which help explain the many divergences between World Cup development rhetoric and outcomes on the ground in Russia's peripheral host cities.

The first two problems with Russia 2018's mega-event-driven urban development strategy can be discerned by employing a policy mobilities lens, while the third can be illuminated by unpacking the notion of peripherality. First, in line with other mega-events around the globe, Russia imported the Barcelona Model mobile policy during the 2018 World Cup in order to enact its urban development aspirations. These aspirations were stymied by the processes Müller [2017] describes as seizure: mega-event priorities dominated the agenda at all scales from national to municipal, crowding out other needs under the pressure of saving face on the international stage. Tying development strategies to a mega-event means taking the risk that event priorities will overwhelm other needs. This can be understood as a mutation of mobilized policy and represents a common problem when attaching a development agenda to hosting a mega-event. In the Russian case, however, this mutation went a step further because of the centralized nature of government functioning which, combined with neoliberal legitimations, is explained here as a variegated expression of authoritarian mega-events.

Despite the neoliberal rhetoric of entrepreneurial urbanism through area-specific development strategies (as found, for example, in [Hall, 2006; Lauer mann, 2014]), the World Cup was largely planned, managed, and funded from the center. This centralized authority meant that federal officials had the final authority over developments, and federal — that is, mega-event — priorities were supported instead of municipal needs. This offers a different explanation why many plans of local and regional importance did not come to pass, including Ekaterinburg's promised metro expansion and the high-speed rail linkages to Sochi, Rostov, Kazan, and Ekaterinburg. Ultimately, since actors in the federal center controlled the funding, peripheral authorities were dictated to in a form of paternalistic development that diminished local needs in favor of national goals. This dynamic augments the more familiar mutations visible in the processes of mega-event seizure, so that the articulation of the 2018 World Cup actually represented a double mutation: both from abroad into Russia, and also from the center to the peripheral host cities.

Finally, viewing the majority of Russian host cities as peripheral belies their economic and contributions to the national economy. Most of the host cities have populations of over one million, indicating their relative strength in the national political economic makeup. Particularly in the context of the World Cup, the fact that key decisions flowed from central authorities in Moscow reveals that these host cities were indeed peripheral, since they were excluded from the decision-making authority and unable to dictate developments in the interests of their residents. Yet the peripheral exclusions go further when considering the relationship between the host cities — as regional capitals — and other cities in their regions. From this perspective, it becomes clear that the smaller regional cities were doubly peripheral, excluded by both Moscow and their regional capitals from mega-event-related development.

Thus, the 2018 World Cup can be understood as a regional and urban development program, imported into Russia as a mobile policy and wrapped in neoliberal rhetoric, though controlled by the central state. The centralized nature of these developments shaped the articulation of the mega-event towards fulfilling federal priorities and away from locally-oriented developments that may have benefited host city populations, if they differed from the plans that were exerted from the center, while ignoring peripheral non-host cities almost entirely. In this way, the World Cup demonstrates not just the mutations that can be expected in a mega-event-driven urban development scheme, nor the mutations that might be found in a center-periphery relationship, but rather a convoluted combination of the two, rife with multiple mutations and overlapping exclusions.

From the perspective of many peripheral host cities residents, the World Cup represented a cruel bait-and-switch, as demonstrated by the failed metro expansion in Ekaterinburg and the curtailed high-speed rail connections to the capital. Hosting the event was explained as an opportunity to enact a series of long-awaited material improvements, but many of the promised improvements were shelved in the context of high costs and inflexible World Cup deadlines that necessitated attention to critical mega-event infrastructures. Regardless of this, in many instances the mutated outcomes that diverged from the promises of earlier years were subsumed by the pleasure and spectacle of the event itself, in a common process of getting lost in the emotive power of the so-called feel-good factor [Hiller, Wanner, 2015]. In this way, residents often forget – at least temporarily – the disruptions, inconveniences, and broken promises that too often plague mega-event development. In the words of one Ekaterinburg resident in August 2018: “The transport situation is simply terrible, and I don’t think it will get better. [...] Of course, they promised very many things at the beginning, but – as the saying goes – it turned out like always. [...] But all the same, at least it was an excellent party!”

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# С.Д. ВОЛЬФЕ

## ГОРОДСКОЕ РАЗВИТИЕ В РАМКАХ МУЖСКОГО ЧЕМПИОНАТА МИРА ПО ФУТБОЛУ 2018 ГОДА: ВИДОИЗМЕНЕННАЯ МОБИЛЬНАЯ ПОЛИТИКА НА ПЕРИФЕРИИ

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Планировщики, политики и другие элиты часто используют мегасобытия, такие как чемпионат мира по футболу, как стратегию городского развития. Так произошло и с чемпионатом мира по футболу 2018 года, который проводился в одиннадцати городах России и предполагал модернизацию принимающих периферийных городов. Несмотря на то что идея развития городов с помощью мегасобытий широко распространена, российский опыт продемонстрировал много нового.

Данная работа рассматривает развитие городов в рамках чемпионата мира по футболу в России как пример гибкой политики, показывает, каким образом это мегасобытие было импортировано из-за рубежа и как видоизменилась политика во время подготовки к мероприятию в принимающих российских городах. Специфика российского опыта во многом заключается в том, что оргкомитет чемпионата мира по футболу был создан и функционировал как дополнение к центральному правительству Москвы. Таким образом, то, что поначалу представлялось как способ дифференцирования принимающих городов путем их соревнования друг с другом в городском развитии, на самом деле оказалось установлением еще большей централизации в региональное пространственное планирование. Следовательно, даже при улучшении определенных материальных условий в принимающих городах чемпионат мира по футболу представлял собой не выражение региональной демократии и даже не стратегию межгородской дифференциации, а, скорее, еще один пример развития, продиктованный из центра, издалека.

**Ключевые слова:** мобильная политика; городское развитие; мегасобытия; чемпионат мира; Россия

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