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“Fanatic Energy in the Wrong Places”: Potemkin Neoliberalism and Domestic Soft Power in the 2018 Men’s Football World Cup in Russia

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"Fanatic Energy in the Wrong Places": Potemkin Neoliberalism and Domestic Soft Power in the 2018 Men's Football World Cup in Russia

Thèse de doctorat

Présentée à la
Faculté des géosciences et de l'environnement,
Institut de géographie et durabilité
de l'Université de Lausanne par

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Sous la présidence du Prof. Eric Verrecchia

Lausanne 2019

"Fanatic Energy in the Wrong Places"

Potemkin Neoliberalism and Domestic Soft Power in the 2018 Men's Football World Cup in Russia

Bathing in the river Volga. Source: author

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Vu le rapport présenté par le jury d'examen, composé de

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Le Doyen de la Faculté des géosciences et de l'environnement autorise l'impression de la thèse de

Monsieur Sven Daniel WOLFE

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"Fanatic Energy in the Wrong Places": Potemkin Neoliberalism and Domestic Soft Power in the 2018 Men's Football World Cup in Russia

Lausanne, le 21 août 2019

Pour le Doyen de la Faculté des géosciences et de l'environnement

Professeur Christian Kull

A future World Cup training facility in Ekaterinburg. Source: author

Summary

This thesis uses the 2018 World Cup in Russia to engage with the processes of neoliberal restructuring and the conception of soft power. Based on a comparison of the host cities of Ekaterinburg and Volgograd, it unpacks the World Cup at multiple scales of analysis and offers a light and revisable framework for understanding mega-events. Grounded in primary qualitative and secondary documentary data, the thesis demonstrates multiple dimensions of Potemkinism in the articulation of this World Cup. Inspired by but moving beyond traditional post-colonial thought, it attempts to make good on the premise of theorizing from anywhere, making a case for the relatively invisible cities of the Global East in a landscape of urban theory dominated by the hegemonic North or the subaltern South. This ambition represents the overall frame for the thesis, while the work itself focuses more specifically on the planning and impacts of hosting the World Cup.

This work is composed of two central thrusts. Within an understanding of mega-events as fundamentally urban events, the first thrust explores hosting as the vanguard of neoliberal restructuring, one of the traditional means of making sense of mega-events. In this view, bidding and hosting are seen as a strategy for inter-urban competition and a ploy to attract increased flows of tourists and capital. This is understood as one of the markers of a shift to a more entrepreneurial mode of urban governance and is part of wider global political economic restructuring that de-emphasizes the national in favor of regional or municipal scales. Using Neil Brenner's conceptualization of rescaled competition state regimes, this part of the thesis explores how rescaling worked on the ground in Russia and demonstrates that these processes of neoliberalization are not as easily understood as they might first appear. Instead, what is revealed in the articulation of the Russian World Cup is a seemingly paradoxical combination of national state-led projects to develop the peripheries in regionally and municipally specific ways, for the purposes of interurban differentiation and competition. The thesis proposes the notion of Potemkin neoliberalism to make sense of these seeming paradoxes and, further, traces some of the uneven developments within the host cities. This is framed within an emphasis on the superficial rather than the substantive, meaning an attention towards aesthetics and appearance rather than on structural reforms and durable infrastructural improvements.

The second thrust investigates Joseph Nye's notion of soft power, which is another traditional way of understanding the rationales for hosting mega-events. Soft power analyses typically frame hosting through the lens of foreign policy, a view that tends to ignore the domestic component entirely. Separate from this, some mega-event studies focus on hosting as a strategy for nation- or identity building, but typically these do not situate this domestic concern within the conceptual apparatus of soft power. Combining these two approaches, this thesis takes the Russian World Cup as a primarily domestic affair, both to develop the urban peripheries (as demonstrated in the first thrust), and to inculcate certain soft power narratives within the domestic population. Conceptualizing the narrative project as soft power allows a tracing of each element in the soft power equation: narrative generation, the mechanisms of distribution, and the reception (or lack thereof) among host city residents. This is presented as discursive Potemkinism, whereby a certain set narratives were promoted as the official way to understand the mega-event, though with little attention to the realities underneath. Finally, the thesis explores the final element in the soft power equation – the impacts on host city residents – through an attention to the micro level of everyday life. In this, it engages with de Certeau and Lefebvre to create a spectrum of tactics employed by residents to disalienate themselves by various degrees from World Cup developments. The thesis emphasizes the individual and the quotidian to offer a more nuanced, human level approach to understanding mega-event-led urban development.

Situated in a relational comparative urbanism that valorizes the Global East, these two thrusts represent the core contributions of this monograph. Overall, the thesis presents an investigation of the 2018 men's Football World Cup that takes stock of global political economic processes, Russian national state spatial strategies, uneven municipal developments, the creation and distribution of soft power narratives to the domestic audience, and the adoption, reworking, or outright refusal of those narratives among host city residents.

Résumé

Cette thèse utilise l'exemple de la Coupe du Monde de 2018 en Russie pour analyser les processus de restructuration néolibérale, et la conception da la « puissance douce » (« soft power » en anglais). Elle se base sur la comparaison des villes de Ekaterinbourg et de Volgograd qui ont hébergé la Coupe du Monde, et elle offre un cadre léger et révisable pour comprendre les méga-événements a plusieurs échelles. A travers un travail de recherche qualitatif, basé sur des données ethnographiques et documentaires, la thèse met en lumière les multiples dimensions du Potemkinisme dans l'articulation de cette Coupe du Monde. Elle s'inspire de la pensée postcoloniale qui encourage la création de théorie à partir de n'importe où, mais va au delà, en examinant les villes relativement invisibles de l'Est Global, dans un paysage de théorie urbaine dominé par l'opposition de Nord hégémonique/Sud subalterne. Cette ambition constitue le cadre général de la thèse, tandis que le travail lui-même se concentre plus spécifiquement sur la planification et les impacts de l'organisation de la Coupe du Monde.

La thèse est composée de deux discussions centrales. La première discussion explore l'hébergement de la Coupe du Monde comme l'avant-garde de la restructuration néolibérale, une façon traditionnelle de comprendre méga-événements, en les considérant comme des événements fondamentalement urbains. De ce point de vue, l'appel d'offres et l'hébergement sont considérés comme des stratégies de concurrence interurbaine, et un stratagème pour attirer des flux grandissants de touristes et capitaux. Ceux-ci sont compris comme l'un des marqueurs d'un passage à un mode plus entrepreneurial de gouvernance urbaine, et s'inscrivent dans le cadre d'une restructuration politique et économique mondiale plus large qui met moins l'accent sur le national au profit des échelles régionales ou municipales. À l'aide de la conceptualisation par Neil Brenner des régimes de concurrence rééchelonnés, cette partie de la thèse explore comment le rééchelonnement a fonctionné en Russie, et démontre que les processus de néolibéralisation ne sont pas si faciles à comprendre qu'ils ne le semblent à première vue. Au contraire, l'articulation de la Coupe du Monde Russe révèle une combinaison paradoxale de projets nationaux menés par l'État pour développer les périphéries de manière spécifique au niveau régional et municipal, a travers la différenciation interurbaine et de concurrence. La thèse propose la notion de néolibéralisme Potemkine pour donner sens à ces paradoxes, en explorant certains des développements inégaux dans les villes hôtes. Elle met l'accent sur le superficiel, plutôt que sur le substantiel, c'est-

à-dire sur l'esthétique et l'apparence, plutôt que sur les réformes structurelles et les améliorations durables de l'infrastructure.

La deuxième discussion s'intéresse à la notion de la puissance douce de Joseph Nye, qui est une autre façon traditionnelle de comprendre la raison d'être des méga-événements. Les analyses de puissance douce travaillent généralement à travers le prisme de la politique étrangère, un point de vue qui ignore l'élément national. Par ailleurs, certaines études trouvent que les méga-événements somment une stratégie de construction nationale ou identitaire, mais qu'elles ne situent généralement pas cette préoccupation nationale dans la base théorique du pouvoir doux. Combinant ces deux approches, cette thèse prend la Coupe du Monde en Russie comme une affaire essentiellement intérieure, à la fois pour développer les périphéries urbaines, et pour inculquer certains récits de soft power à la population domestique. Conceptualiser ce projet narratif a travers la puissance douce, permet de retracer chaque élément de son équation: la génération des récits, les mécanismes de distribution, et la réception (ou l'absence de réception) parmi les résidents de la ville hôte. La thèse présente ces dynamiques comme un Potemkinisme discursif, c'est-à-dire que certains récits ont été présentés comme le moyen officiel de comprendre le méga-événement, mais sans accorder d'attention aux réalités qui s'y déroulent sur le terrain. Enfin, la thèse explore le dernier élément de l'équation de la puissance douce - les impacts sur les habitants de la ville hôte - à travers une attention au niveau micro de la vie quotidienne. Dans ce contexte, elle engage les travaux de de Certeau et Lefebvre qui aident mettent en lumière l'éventail de tactiques employées par les résidents pour se désaligner, à différents degrés, de l'évolution de la Coupe du Monde. La thèse met l'accent sur l'individu, et le quotidien, pour offrir une approche plus nuancée, à l'échelle humaine, et pour comprendre le développement urbain des méga-événements.

Situées dans un urbanisme relationnel comparatif qui valorise l'Est Global, ces deux discussions représentent les contributions essentielles de cette monographie. Dans l'ensemble, la thèse présente un examen de la Coupe du Monde de Football Masculin de 2018 qui inclue les processus politiques et économiques mondiaux, les stratégies spatiales nationales russes, les développements municipaux inégaux, et la création et la distribution de récits de puissance douce au public alors que les résidents des villes hôtes adoptent, remanient, ou refusent catégoriquement ces récits.

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Exchange Rates and Costs

The Russian ruble is not a particularly stable currency of late, particularly after the 2014 imposition of economic sanctions in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis. The exchange rate collapsed in short order: after hovering around 30 rubles to the dollar for many years, by 2015 the rate had tumbled to 60 rubles to the dollar, and the lowest rate in 2016 was 80 rubles to dollar. More challenging than this, though, is how the rate has fluctuated: just a few months after the low of 80, the rate had returned to float in the high 60s. Understandably, this causes difficulties for governments, businesses, and day-to-day life.

Exchange rate fluctuations also cause problems regarding this thesis. Mega-events involve a lot of money – they cost a fortune and make a fortune. It is challenging to convey information about World Cup costs when the value of the ruble keeps changing. Complicating matters, the sanctions and economic crisis hit about halfway through the preparations, so on one day a 12 billion ruble investment converts to $400 million, but just a few months later this same 12 billion became $200 million. I needed a standard measure to make sense of these sums and allow some kind of comparison to take place. For this purpose I created an average rate by taking the highest and lowest historical exchange rate for each year between when the crisis hit and the World Cup opened. This provides a messy but still serviceable exchange rate of 59.6 rubles to the dollar, which is how I have communicated costs and prices.

Year	High Rate	Date (high)	Low Rate	Date (low)
2014	58.87	21 Dec	33.19	5 Jan
2015	72.41	29 Dec	49.32	18 May
2016	82.28	22 Jan	60.48	30 Dec
2017	64.42	11 Mar	56.37	16 May
2018	62.40	11 Jun	56.35	31 Jan
Avg	**59.6**			

Historical exchange rates taken from: https://www.xe.com/currencycharts/?from=USD&to=RUB, accessed 23.10.2018

Russian Spelling and Language Conventions

I have long been unhappy with the various standards on offer to transliterate Cyrillic into Latin characters for English readers. Some systems strive for linguistic accuracy while others emphasize familiar readability. Typically, an author working between Russian and English will not adhere strictly to a given system, so as to avoid the confusion surrounding, say, reading "Yeltsin" as *El'cin* (according to the UN1987 standard) or *El't͡sin* (following the United States Library of Congress). Despite the cosmopolitan air they often lend a text, I'm fairly critical of diacritical marks and feel that they too often interrupt the English reader.

So, in order to transliterate the many Russian words in this thesis, I created a hybrid of the Russian GOST 7.79-2000 System B and the United States Library of Congress guide. I did this to eliminate diacritics and other elements of transliteration that I find unappealing or inaccurate. I think Russian is beautiful and its English textual reflection should at least try to convey some of the sound of the language in a way that readers who do not speak Russian nor hold a degree in linguistics might grasp.

Gratitude

This is going to be a bit long and emotional, so feel free to skip ahead to see where your name is. And please accept my apologies if I've forgotten to include you – I will make it up in person. Any project – writing a dissertation or hosting the World Cup – relies on a multitude of people, so I want to start by expressing my thanks. I am so grateful for the opportunity to do this work and for the support you have given me!

Home and family: I want to start by thanking Sofia and Yasha, my daughter and son, because they bore the brunt of me buried behind books and computer screens. Thank you for understanding why I can't play right now, even though I want to, and for being patient. Thank you for listening to me talk, endlessly, about cities and politics. Thank you for being the most delightful human beings. This dissertation is dedicated to you.

Anastassia: none of this, not the kids, not this work, and not least these adventures, would be possible without you. Thank you for sharing your beautiful country and for showing me the secret rooftops, the perestroika songs, and the roads all the way from St Petersburg to Sochi. You give meaning to my life, regardless of where we happen to be living. I have not lost hope that relations between our birth countries could one day be as wonderful as relations between us.

Nils Jonathan and Ingrid Johanna: you have always helped, nurtured, guided, and protected me. Thank you for picking me up when I'm wobbly and putting me back together when I break. You inspire me so much! I hope we can now co-author something on fractal health geographies or create some other interdisciplinary beauty.

Kindness and kinship. Thank you, David and Ann, for letting me grow in my own circuitous way, and for supporting me so steadfastly in my midlife university adventure. I feel so blessed to be your child. Tack så väldigt mycket! Также хочу поблагодарить вас, Мама Люба и Папа Саша, за то, что вы всегда верили в меня, и за то, что доверяли мне с любимой дочерью. Я вас очень люблю и так сильно скучаю.

Yes, there's a little more. Thank you for reading this far.

Of course I met many good people in Russia during this project. In particular I want to thank you, Natalya Spirina, for your friendship and humor, and for taking the time to show me your Ekaterinburg. I also want to thank you, Ivan Kurilla, for introducing me to Volgograd, and I want to thank you, Denis Sivkov, for showing me Tsaritsyn-Stalingrad-Volgograd, for opening your home, and for being a true friend. Thank you so much, Nikita Lomagin, for advising me on my first master's, for your kindness and support, and for suggesting the Sochi Olympics and soft power in the first place! And I

would be remiss if I didn't thank you, Anatoly Vishevsky, Todd Armstrong, and John Mohan, for shepherding me into the русский мир all those years ago. Thank you all.

Unfortunately I can't name everyone who talked with me or helped me in Russia, but I do want to acknowledge the many anonymous people who spoke openly about controversial topics. Thank you for understanding that I am not an enemy.

Secrecy aside, it's time to recognize some good people in Zurich and Lausanne. Lukas Japp: none of this would be possible without you navigating the bureaucracy to bring us to Switzerland, and to keep us here. Thank you for fighting for us. Benedikt Korf: thank you for providing an institutional home and much needed logistical and emotional support. I am grateful for your kindness and sensitivity, and so much enjoy sharing coffee with you. Tim Raeymaekers, Muriel Côte, Rony Emmenegger, Thenne Gedara Thamali Nisansala Kithsiri and the rest of the PGG crew: thank you for making me feel at home after my team left for Lausanne. I have so enjoyed our professional and personal interactions. Samuel Graf and Ephraim Pörtner: thank you for your friendship and fun. Carole Oppliger and Marcia Curchod: thank you for making me feel welcome at UNIL and for helping me manage all the bureaucratic challenges involved in getting me settled and finishing this dissertation.

Obviously I want to acknowledge my immediate academic family. Elisabeth Militz: thank you for our PhD buddy connection and for being the best big sister in our funny Schurr-Müller academic family. Nadja Imhof: it is a joy being your friend and your PhD buddy big brother. Thank you for finding me and for being such fun, and especially for being a super auntie to Sofia and Yasha. You have an excellent project and I can't wait to see your dissertation come to life. Miriam Hug: thank you so much for helping me find my mojo when it was lost! Sunçana Laketa: thank you for suggesting a beautiful path after the PhD and for showing me how to be cool under pressure. Chris Gaffney: thank you for your realism and humor, for cautioning me to avoid the one-legged samba of bad writing, and for sharing what was the best office in the University of Zurich. Yes, you base your media engagements on relentless negativity, but I want to thank you for your positive influence. And then, of course, there's…

Martin Müller, my tireless and most inspiring advisor and mentor: there isn't enough space here for me to convey my gratitude and admiration. Thank you for giving me the chance to work with you, for guiding me through my downs and ups, and for keeping steady the ship of my dissertation. Thank you for encouraging me, for letting me explore, for taking me around the world, and for always – always! – having the insight on how to push my work to a higher level. I am so grateful to be part of your team and will never forget what you've done for my family and me. I shudder to think what life would be like if you hadn't come to Kazan.

Ultimately, a dissertation is also shaped by the PhD committee, and so I want to acknowledge Elena Trubina and Kevin Ward. I want to thank you both for the effort you spent knocking me into shape, for helping me find my footing, and for giving me something to aspire to. I think you are amazing scholars and now that this project is ending, I hope that I can get to know you on a less formal level too. I also want to thank you, Michael Gentile, for your friendship and guidance, especially in challenging moments. You weren't a part of the committee, but I feel like you belong here anyway. And I am particularly grateful to the jury at my colloque privé in Lausanne: Natalie Koch, Michał Murawski, Gabriel Silvestre, and Christophe Mager. Our discussion was among the most intense experiences of my life and I thoroughly enjoyed it. Thank you for putting your time and energy into improving my work.

Change is not an easy thing, whether you're finishing a dissertation or preparing to host the World Cup. In closing, I would like to acknowledge a change in my life and take the unusual step of thanking the officers who detained and questioned me in Volgograd: Senior Lieutenant Ivan Gennadyevich of the Russian Federal Migration Service and the unnamed agent in brown, of the Russian Federal Security Service. We only spent a few hours together but it seemed like a lifetime, and you had a profound effect on this project too. I believe that we can find value everywhere and I have finally found something to be grateful for in our meeting: thank you for giving me an authentic Soviet experience, and thank you very much for letting me go.

However, I don't want to end on an unpleasant note, so let's not let them sour anything else. I guessed that doing a PhD would be hard, but I didn't really understand how harrowing and humbling it could be. And I had no idea it would be so fun! This has been a happy time, even with the bumps along the way. Thank you, everyone, for helping my dissertation come to life. Thank you so much. I hope you enjoy reading.

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Нам нужна мечта, надежда, утопия. Утопия – это великое открытие. Если люди не изобретут новую, на первый взгляд никому не нужную утопию, то они не выживут в качестве людей.

We need a dream, a hope, a utopia. Utopia is a great discovery. If people do not invent a new utopia, one that at first glance looks useless, then they will not survive as people.

– Alexander Zinoviev, Russian philosopher and dissident (1922 – 2006), not to be confused with Alexander Zinoviev (1979 -), Russian midfielder who played seven football matches in 2005 for FC Ural, in Ekaterinburg.

New football statue installed at the Mayakovsky Central Park for Culture and Leisure in Ekaterinburg. Source: author.

1: INTRODUCING THE RUSSIAN WORLD CUP

A Glimpse of Volgograd Arena

On a sweltering day in July 2016 I decided to visit the World Cup football stadium under construction in Volgograd, Russia. I wanted to see and understand the changes occurring in the city during the preparations for the 2018 FIFA men's Football World Cup, and since the stadium is the most visible and symbolic intervention into the urban environment, it seemed like the proper place to start. The original plan was to gain permission to explore the stadium from the inside, but after more than a year of negotiating and waiting, I still had not received credentials from FIFA (the owners of the World Cup) and the Russia 2018 Local Organizing Committee. Even though I could never hope to get into the stadium without accreditation, I still wanted to see for myself this epicenter of World Cup construction, even if only from outside. It was my first time in the city, so I also wanted to visit the famous *Rodina Mat' Zovyot* – The Motherland Calls – a towering memorial of 85 meters that commemorates the Russian victory at the Battle of Stalingrad during the Second World War. This statue is deeply significant, standing on a hill that was the site of particularly bloody fighting during the battle for the city. It is a reminder of the almost unfathomable scale of urban combat – fighting raged for every street and every building – that destroyed the city and cost nearly two million lives, over five terrible months from 1942-1943. The Soviet triumph in Stalingrad turned the tide in the war and the destroyed city became a symbol for endurance, strength, sacrifice, and triumph. These are the values enshrined in and communicated by *Rodina Mat' Zovyot*, and in many ways, the memorial has even come to symbolize Russia as a whole – perhaps in a similar way that the Statue of Liberty serves as shorthand for the United States. As the climax and centerpiece of an entire memorial complex, The Motherland Calls also overlooks the World Cup stadium. This proximity is intentional: football fans from around the world will be unable to miss the monumental memorial to Volgograd's military might (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Workers building the Volgograd Arena World Cup stadium, with the Rodina Mat' Zovyot monument in the background. Source: Sport-In

It is less than a kilometer walk from the bottom of the memorial complex to the stadium site, but when I came in 2016 there was no sidewalk for pedestrians. Instead I made my way on a dirt path along the tram tracks on Lenin Prospekt until I came to a corrugated metal fence topped with barbed wire. Turning down the road towards the stadium, I saw security cameras at the gate and a uniformed guard with a machine gun, so definitely no entry possible. But no one bothered me as I walked through an open gate in the neighboring territory, hoping to catch a better view of the construction. This is how I happened to find the entrance to Volgograd's *Spartak* swimming pool and sports complex, a charming but dilapidated Soviet-era facility with a handful of worn out tennis courts (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: View of the Volgograd Arena World Cup stadium from the dilapidated swimming pool and sports complex next door. Source: author.

With my small mission somewhat accomplished, it occurred to me that a swim in the pool might be nice. The doors were locked, however, and a handwritten paper taped there announced that the facility was closed for renovation. An old woman walked through the gate and joined me at the door. "Why would they do this?" she complained after she saw the note. "Where am I going to swim now?" I asked her if she came here often. "Every week," she told me. "There are many pensioners swimming here, and children too! And I just paid my membership! Where will I go to swim?" We walked together back to the big street. I mentioned the phone number on the paper for people to get refunds, but she scoffed. "You really think they'll give me any money?" She shook her head and walked away in the shade of the metal fence that surrounded the construction site. Facing the traffic on Lenin Prospekt, this fence was emblazoned with the official symbols of the host city and, written in letters over a meter tall (shown in Figure 3), the words "VOLGOGRAD IS WAITING FOR THE FOOTBALL WORLD CUP."

Figure 3: "Volgograd is waiting for the Football World Cup". View of the Volgograd Arena World Cup stadium construction site from Lenin Prospekt. Worker housing is visible behind the sign, and to the left is the rounded roof of the old Soviet-era swimming pool and sports complex, now closed. Source: author.

What exactly was going on here? In the shadow of one of Russia's most famous monuments, a new 16 billion-ruble stadium (USD $268 million) was under construction on the banks of the Volga. Next door, a public pool in lamentable condition was closed for renovation, but it was valued by residents – and one woman was convinced of its permanent disappearance and her inevitable losses. The contrast between optimistic expectations and the dilapidated inconvenience could hardly be starker. All of this occurred in the context of the upcoming 2018 World Cup, where narratives of modernization were broadcast to both international and domestic audiences, even as the uneven outcomes of these same projects materialized on the ground in the eleven host cities. This moment also highlights the contrast between elite sport and grassroots community sport: one was prioritized, receiving the fanatic energy of World Cup development, with concomitant federal funding and international attention, while the other was neglected and excluded from vital government support. The contrasts on display here speak to tensions common in mega-event hosting and highlight some of the uneven ways in which the World Cup was articulated in Russia.

Visible in Volgograd were processes of change conceived, driven, and managed from Moscow and Zurich, involving billions of dollars and coordinating tens of thousands of people across space and time. In this thesis, I am interested in the World Cup precisely for moments like these. I want to explore how the World Cup was organized and deployed, to uncover the changes it engendered, and to unpack the ideas that accompanied these changes. I also want to focus on the micro scale and explore how these global processes took shape in individual lives. There is something missing if we discuss, for example, event-led urban regeneration closing a swimming pool in

Volgograd, and we neglect to mention the pensioner woman turned away by the locked doors. In ignoring the individual, we risk reducing analysis to a cost-benefit calculation. Instead, I argue that a critical analysis should include these ordinary and individual stories in order to transcend a definition of value that implicitly or explicitly privileges financial logics. There are losses – and benefits, for that matter – that can best be captured by an attention to the individual and the everyday.

The World Cup is large, costly, temporary, and engenders significant impacts on the built environment and the host population. It is what researchers call a mega-event and mega-events have inspired a growing body of academic literature (for good introductions, see Hiller 2000a; Horne and Manzenreiter 2006b; Horne and Whannel 2016; H. J. Lenskyj and Wagg 2012). Mega-events are relevant for broader academic research because they catalyze, exemplify, and highlight dynamics in a variety of registers, contributing to debates in globalization and modernity (Roche 2002; Tomlinson and Young 2012), neoliberalism (C. M. Hall 2006; Vanwynsberghe, Surborg, and Wyly 2013), urban development (Hiller 2000a; Müller and Gaffney 2018; Poynter, Viehoff, and Li 2015), nationalism and geopolitics (Grix 2012; Koch 2017a), soft power and image branding (Grix and Houlihan 2014; Manzenreiter 2010), and protest and resistance (Dart and Wagg 2016; H. J. Lenskyj 2008).

Using mega-events as an entry point to study dynamics of change in host cities or nations is nothing new, but here – in addition to making sense of the wider processes involved – I also want to attempt a systematic exploration that makes sense of developments from a variety of perspectives. Moving from organizational structures through the construction and dissemination of narratives, and finally to the micro level effects of World Cup developments brings nuance that otherwise might be overlooked. To illustrate: Vitaly Mutko, then the Minister for Sport and now the Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, visited Volgograd in 2015. He commented on the ailing *Spartak* pool:

> "Next to the stadium there is a swimming pool that belongs to the labor unions. The building is in a very bad state. You get the feeling that it is going to collapse on the very people who are guarding it. We have already proposed, and I will do so officially again, that we purchase this facility from the labor unions and make it federal property. We will bring it into shape and by 2018 it will be a wonderful new pool that will not ruin the view of the new stadium. And we will give this

> new and wonderful pool to the Volgograd Academy of Sport and Physical Education, so that children and students have good conditions for training."
> (Glazunova 2015)

Here, having departed the capital city for his tour of the peripheries, Mutko shared his view on developments, a view that was hierarchical, placing Moscow above the peripheral Volgograd, and narrow, privileging one particular conception of sport, modernity, and progress. For him, the Soviet-era swimming pool was an eyesore, a piece that did not fit in the puzzle that Moscow authorities were building in various cities throughout the nation. The main rationale for acquiring and repairing the pool was not to provide better services for locals like the old woman I met. Rather, the pool came to Mutko's attention because it was a blighted building that was impossible to miss on approach to the new stadium. It would not do to have this crumbling Soviet relic standing next to the jewel of the new stadium. Considering the international visitors that would soon be arriving for the World Cup, this became an urgent problem. In this sense, the interior of the pool – its condition, the quality of its services, its opening hours – were irrelevant. What mattered to Moscow authorities was the fact that the Soviet pool *looked* bad. This logic of pretense over substance – of privileging facades over interiors – brings up the idea of Potemkin villages, the idea of constructing a pleasing exterior to mask a missing or inadequate reality underneath. Though the origin of this story in Catherine the Great's exploratory voyage to Crimea is likely an exaggeration or a myth (O'Malley 2007; Panchenko 1999), the metaphor has survived as a means to describe a political tactic that continues in many countries to this day. Broudehoux (2017, 13) connects the Potemkin metaphor to mega-event urban development in this way:

> "Over a 16-year period that spanned from the early 1990s to the Olympic Games, I witnessed the construction of a Potemkin city, a highly controlled, make-believe dreamworld of unproblematic success, wealth and prosperity."

This unproblematic dreamworld is what Mutko attempted to create. Notably, this imaginary construct was aimed at visitors; for locals, he framed these interventions from Moscow in the manner of a benevolent patron, offering to help fix a local problem and bring the situation under control by using the resources and authority he commanded from the capital. And so the trade unions sold the facility for 56.3 million rubles (USD $945,000) to *Sport-In* (Sport-Engineering), a state-owned company under the Ministry of Sport that was in charge of building seven of the twelve World Cup stadiums.

From a distance this seems like a positive development for Volgograd residents; after all, the pool really was in poor condition and needed investment and repair. And yet the reactions of the old woman by the locked doors of the pool belie this simple explanation. More investigation revealed that she was not the only one poorly informed of the upcoming changes: after the sale, the pool director vanished and it became clear that no one had informed the pool's employees of the changes taking place. So more than 50 people suddenly found themselves without work, though they did receive two months' severance pay (Glazunova 2016). Two years later, an arbitration court fined *Sport-In* 4.5 million rubles (USD $75,000) for late payment of the purchase price, part of a growing number of court cases against the state-owned company (Afanasyeva 2018). I do not know where that old woman (or any of her friends) go for their swimming now, but I know it is not here: two years later, even after the World Cup had come and gone, the pool remained closed.

This story is one of many that makes me look skeptically at official announcements about the benefits of mega-event development. Knowing what we know about the pool, what can we imagine when Vitaly Mutko spoke about a new road built along the Volga River on the far side of the stadium: "This is access to the Volga, a new embankment, and a new quality of life. There will be pedestrian boulevards, bicycle lanes, and green space, so that citizens can walk and enjoy nature" (Sokolova 2017). I am interested in situations like this, in why these projects came to be, and in how they affected the people who live in the host cities. One of my goals in this thesis, then, is to explore how the 2018 World Cup development program was conceived, how it was explained to the public, and what were the human level effects at the end of this chain.

Mega-events are also about sport, of course, but when viewed from the ground of a World Cup host city, the nearly eight years of preparations dwarf the four weeks of football. Investigating the guiding rationales for hosting also reveals motivations other than sport. Nations commonly attempt to use mega-events for economic benefits (Malfas, Theodoraki, and Houlihan 2004; Preuss 2004), to regenerate neglected areas (Chalkley and Essex 1999a; Coaffee 2010), or to introduce a new conception of the host nation to the wider world (Black and Westhuizen 2004; Cornelissen 2010). As such, I argue that it is more appropriate to see mega-events as wide-ranging political and economic projects that alter the built environment, impact the social landscape, often

damage the natural environment – and that also come with a sporting event attached. At the same time, it is incomplete to hold this wider view of mega-events without exploring the individual level. It is easy to forget human beings when discussing global events, so I attempt to balance this dissertation between explorations of transnational processes while also highlighting the contrasting and sometimes contradictory effects on cities and the individuals who live there. For me, examining the narratives that accompany the mega-event provides a bridge between global processes and individual lives.

Guiding Questions

Officially, the Russian World Cup was launched with four overarching goals: to open new markets to FIFA and world football, to accelerate the urban development of the host cities, to introduce the world to Russian hospitality, and to improve the level of football across Russia (Russia 2018 World Cup Bid Committee 2010). In this dissertation, I focus on questions of urban development and examine how these goals were articulated through the Russian World Cup. To understand how this happened, and with what effects, I address the following questions:

How and why was the Russian World Cup organized?

I begin with an investigation of the organizational structure behind the Russian World Cup. I want to know how action was coordinated across time and space, and with what goals. Who made decisions at various levels, when do they do this, and why did this happen? What effects did these engender? What actually happened on the ground in comparison to what was promised, and if there were differences, what accounts for those differences?

Further, given that mega-events are often involved with development schemes, how did the 2018 World Cup connect to Russian urban and regional development? What were the effects on the population of the host cities, and how, if at all, were people involved in these developments?

What roles did narratives play in the Russian World Cup?

Mega-events often serve as vehicles to carry messages to specific audiences and I want to know what narratives accompanied the Russian World Cup. What groups produced these narratives, and what groups did they target? It takes nearly a

decade to prepare for hosting – how, if at all, did those narratives change over that time? What was the role of the urban dimension in the narratives?

Finally, I want to examine the effects of these narratives on host city residents. How did residents make sense of the Russian World Cup? Did the preparations and the event itself affect the conduct of everyday life? If so, how?

Theoretical Underpinnings

In this dissertation, my interest begins with mega-events and cities. Starting from the premise that mega-events are a global urban force comprising interventions into the built environments and social fabrics of the host cities (Gaffney, Wolfe, and Müller 2018), I examine the preparations for and the impacts of the 2018 World Cup in Russia in two host cities: Ekaterinburg and Volgograd. These are two major cities with over a million inhabitants each, but they are still little known outside Russia. Overall, the Russian World Cup is part of a trend where mega-events are hosted increasingly outside of the Global North. It is also the latest example of a Russian governmental strategy to host globally prestigious events, including the 2013 Universiade in Kazan and the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. Hosting these mega-events legitimized particular conceptions of national sovereignty and political and business power (Makarychev and Yatsyk 2015b; Trubina 2017), lubricated the machinery of a neopatrimonial political economic network (Müller 2014; Wolfe and Müller 2018), and reasserted the power of the national state in local planning while developing the level of infrastructure in Russia's peripheral cities (Golubchikov 2017).

In this dissertation, however, I aspire to go beyond contributing only to mega-events scholarship. Following Edensor and Jayne, who bring to light the slow progress in urban geography with "moving beyond theoretical agendas dominated by North American and European traditions" (Edensor and Jayne 2012, 1), I attempt to participate in the broader project of decentering urban theory from its traditional focus on a small number of cities in a relatively predictable number of countries. This belongs with post-colonial arguments that attempt to resist the hegemonic tendencies of Western knowledge production and instead espouse the idea that theory can be generated anywhere (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012; Robinson 2006), part of a body of work that strives to

dismantle Western-centric universalism (Chakrabarty 2007; Connell 2007; McNeill 2017; Parnell and Oldfield 2016; Robinson 2005; Roy 2009; Roy and Ong 2011).

And yet there are oversights in this body of work too. Despite laudable moves towards including post-Soviet and post-Socialist experiences in comparative urbanism (Jacobs 2012; McFarlane and Robinson 2012; Robinson 2011, 2014, 2016c), the countries of Central and Eastern Europe remain largely outside the realm of consideration for urban theory. Indeed, if visible at all, these cities have mainly been seen as importers of theory rather than exporters (Sjöberg 2014), as testing grounds for theories generated elsewhere. Under the conceptual rubric of the Global East, Müller (2018) demonstrates the value of these areas underappreciated in global debates and draws attention to how the countries of the former Second World too easily disappear into the cracks between our conceptualizations of North and South. Reinscribing the Global East, then, is the framing context for this thesis overall.

Structure and Theoretical Engagements

In Chapter 2, working within the theoretical framing summarized above, I introduce the scholarship that informs my later empirical chapters. I contextualize changes in Ekaterinburg and Volgograd as part of the processes of transformation that happen when cities host mega-events, and I put the World Cup into global context by addressing the argument that mega-events are one of the vanguards of neoliberalism. Hosting can be seen as a series of transformations that produce pro-growth and profit-oriented rhetoric, that commodify culture, space, and time, and that propagate urban entrepreneurialism and inter-urban competition (C. M. Hall 2006; Osborn and Smith 2015). In this sense, World Cup governance and infrastructure projects – and their associated effects – could be explained as one of many variegated forms of neoliberal capitalist globalization, and we also see that Russian elites have been engaged in this path for some time (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Harvey 2007; Trubina 2015). This builds from Neil Brenner's conceptualization of globalization:

> "…the dialectical interplay between the endemic drive towards time-space compression under capitalism… and the continual production and reconfiguration of relatively fixed spatial configurations… that becomes intrinsically premised upon the construction of large-scale territorial infrastructures, a 'second nature' of socially produced spatial configurations such as railways, highways, ports, canals, airports, informational networks and state

> institutions that enable capital to circulate at ever-faster turnover times." (Brenner 1999, 435).

Thus, the context for the articulation of the World Cup would be David Harvey's famous delineation of the shift to urban entrepreneurialism (Harvey 1989) and Neil Brenner's exploration of the parameters of change involved in the transitions away from Fordist-Keynesian models of capitalism and towards various forms of a competition state (Brenner 2004). Continuing in this vein, I could make sense of World Cup preparations by focusing on the host cities as key sites of state power, where urban territories are positioned as growth centers to try to take advantage of certain locational advantages arising in the spread of global capitalism (Brenner 2004; Trubina 2014). This framing would give me the conceptual vocabulary to make sense of mega-event led uneven development and its effects on the lives of people who live in Volgograd and Ekaterinburg.

And yet, what we see in the Russian World Cup is not simply neoliberalism run amok, but rather developments that trouble the conceptualization of neoliberalization presented above. Instead, the rhetoric of accelerated urban development, place marketing, and global competition is only partially borne out by events on the ground. The Russian case represents something of a mismatch between rhetoric and results (Kinossian 2012), exhibiting features that seem to complicate this understanding of the evolution towards more neoliberal and locational policy. Brenner identifies numerous characteristics of these models and positions them in opposition to one another, for example centralized-decentralized, or uniform-customized. In Brenner's reading, these attributes are mutually exclusive. In other words, if the predominant scale is national, as in a Keynesian model, then the spatial policy is a generic one applied evenly across the national territory, while if the scale has shifted to a more regional or urban focus, then policy is customized and area-specific. But in the governance and implementation of the Russian World Cup, I found developments that exhibit opposing attributes simultaneously, that is, they were at the same time and to various degrees centralized *and* decentralized, uniform *and* customized.

The implementation of the World Cup was rife with neoliberal rhetoric, to be sure, and exhibited many familiar characteristics of the processes of neoliberalization, including narratives of place promotion and urban competition. At the same time, host cities were

executors of a centralized plan dispatched from the highest levels of the national state and were judged by their ability to fulfill planning requirements imposed from without. So, in this sense, Russian cities and regions should not be seen as positioning themselves independently in a global economy (as in, for example Brenner 2004, chap. 5). And yet, this centralized plan manifested itself in locally contingent ways, via customized strategies dependent on area-specific features, as municipal and regional authorities attempted to leverage place marketing and the infrastructural improvements associated with mega-event hosting to better position their cities in transnational flows of tourism and investment capital (though the long-term results of these strategies remain to be seen).

Nevertheless, the design, impetus, funding, management, and ultimate control of the World Cup development program came from the national state, and regional or municipal autonomy was restricted. In the context of the Russian World Cup, then, hosting a mega-event does not indicate a 'hollowing out' or retreat of the federal state (Jessop 2008; Strange 1996). Instead, and somewhat paradoxically, hosting represents a return and reterritorialization of the federal state into urban and regional planning (Golubchikov 2017), though accompanied by narratives of urban competitiveness at international scales, and with area-specific strategies of differentiation and accumulation, including host cities and regions competing for federal funding rather than receiving a predefined share.

In Chapter 2 I also explore the narratives that guide the event as an expression of soft power (Nye 1990, 2005), but attempt to augment the established understanding of the concept in a three part move. First, I distinguish between international and domestic audiences; second, I examine the mechanisms by which soft power narratives are transmitted; and third, I focus on the micro scale of everyday life in order to make sense of the effects of these projects and narratives. This attention to the individual and the quotidian comes from the everyday life paradigm (Gardiner 2000) and is inspired by the works of Henri Lefebvre (2014) and Michel de Certeau (2011). Grounded in but moving beyond de Certeau's conceptualization of strategies and tactics, I endeavor to examine the micropolitics of individual host city residents and the ways in which they understand the changes occurring to their city and themselves.

Though these soft power narratives were aimed both inward and outward, meaning towards domestic and international audiences, the majority of soft power studies address the international. In contrast, when I focus on the reception of the narratives I eschew the international in favor of the domestic. On the domestic level, then, these soft power narratives had less to do with national identity (as in the Sochi 2014 Olympics, seen in Alekseyeva 2014; Grix and Kramareva 2015; Osipova 2017, among many others) and more with ideas of national development, modernization, and competitiveness. In short, the domestic audience was targeted with soft power narratives informed by neoliberal logics and, unlike the international narratives, these were not so dependent on geopolitical considerations and did not change much over time. Instead, there was a consistent process of explaining the World Cup as a universal good that would benefit Russia's cities and people both immediately and for the long term.

To make sense of the production and dissemination of these narratives, I conceptualize this process as an ideological pipeline from decision-makers in Moscow, reproduced at various levels of accuracy by government officials and media outlets at the regional and municipal levels, and ultimately dispersed to residents in the host cities. A nuanced tracing of these narratives during World Cup preparations allows for a more precise identification of when certain narratives appeared and others fell out of favor. Further, my analysis shows how these narratives failed in many cases to achieve the desired effects on the host population. Analyzing the selective failures of the ideological pipeline demonstrates the lack of ideological control in contemporary Russia, despite the context of growing authoritarianism. In this way, I explore the spaces between official narratives and actual lived experience, and start to explain where, how, and why the federal state's return to regional planning (re)produced inequalities and uneven results.

In this way I attempt to augment our received understanding of soft power by foregrounding the domestic audience at the end of the ideological pipeline. With reference to the theories of everyday life (de Certeau 2011; Gardiner 2000; Lefebvre 2014), a focus on the quotidian reveals the spaces between dreamy rhetoric and dreary results, allowing a view of how disconnected many World Cup-related interventions were from residents' everyday experiences. Further, I explain how residents made sense of developments through a number of small-scale tactics, including deploying the notion of *normalno* – normality, or a condition of acceptable quality – in a multifarious move to

explain changes in their city, to justify disruptions to routine, and to save face in the glare of the international spotlight. I offer a taxonomy of these tactics along a spectrum of decreasing or increasing alienation.

Moving on, Chapter 3 provides background information on how the World Cup is organized overall, and how Russia bid for and won hosting rights for the 2018 edition. It also introduces the host cities of Ekaterinburg and Volgograd, details the rationales behind choosing them as study sites, and flags the sites within each city where I began my investigations. Finally, Chapter 3 situates the 2018 World Cup in context with other mega-events hosted in Russia, and then frames these mega-events in relation to other mega-events worldwide. In this way, the chapter places Russian hosting in wider conversation with global developments, aspiring to reduce the Othering and Orientalizing tendencies (Said 1978, 2013) too common in western analyses of former Soviet countries. The goal of this contextualization is to allow an appreciation of the specificities of Russian mega-event experiences within a broader understanding of how mega-events have played out worldwide.

Working in Ekaterinburg and Volgograd, Chapter 4 details the research design employed to produce and analyze data for this dissertation. In brief, this work is based on media and document analysis, informal and semi-structured interviews and conversations, photos, field diaries, and personal notes. The project is situated in inductive techniques from constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz 2011; Strauss and Corbin 1997), where I employed an iterative process of refining research questions and narrowing down study sites and topics of interest over 9 field visits to Russia totaling 114 days, between 2015 and 2017.

Continuing in Chapter 4, I provide transparency on the steps of my research process and reflect on issues of positionality as a Russophile American doing qualitative research in a time of heightened geopolitical tensions. I also explicate the methods of analysis employed to make sense of generated data and engage with the methodological and ethical challenges of doing research in more closed political contexts (Gentile 2013; Glasius et al. 2018; Koch 2013b), sharing some of the problems I encountered in trying to conduct research in Russia.

My four empirical chapters are organized to address the research questions elaborated above. Chapters 5 and 6 detail how the World Cup was organized and deployed, starting with how action was coordinated and to what ends. I structure these chapters around moments in both Ekaterinburg and Volgograd where the articulation of the World Cup either confirms or contradicts the processes of neoliberalization as identified by Brenner, demonstrating how the Russian World Cup defies easy categorization. In Chapters 7 and 8, I move into an examination of the narratives that were crafted to carry specific messages of what was happening with the World Cup and why. To do this I explore the production of mega-event soft power narratives, the mechanisms of their distribution through an ideological pipeline, and explore their reception (or lack thereof), at the level of the individual. In all empirical chapters, I examine World Cup-driven changes to the built environment, revealing areas of significant but selective infrastructural change, but in Chapter 8 I foreground the residents in the midst of these changes. By spotlighting the human level effects of the spatial inequalities that result from fulfilling hosting requirements, this move underscores how, in addressing the short-term needs of the event instead of the long-term needs of the city, World Cup infrastructure was built largely for guests and not for residents. This contradicts the narratives conveyed down the ideological pipeline, claiming long-lasting infrastructural benefits for the host population. In this way, uneven development for the World Cup both reflected and was a product of the distance between host city residents and those who held decision-making power.

By focusing on the everyday, I do not want to romanticize the difficulties of host city residents, nor do I want to present them as some kind of marginalized population and paint ordinary people as victims. I also wish to underscore that these are not necessarily generalizable findings that can be extrapolated to broader populations. On the contrary, focusing on the individual means just that: these are individual lives and personal experiences that may or may not be mirrored in others. At the same time, this focus on the individual and the everyday makes clear that the rollout of globalized neoliberal capitalism is neither uniform nor irresistible. In Ekaterinburg and Volgograd I did not find specific acts of resistance, however small, against the mega-event (as one might expect, for example, from a reading of Scott 1985, 2014). Rather, I identified tactics employed by residents to make their own lives in spite of the designs imposed upon them from without. These did not take the shape of "knowing how to get away with

things" (de Certeau 2011, xix) or participation in an informal economy (Round, Williams, and Rodgers 2008), though these practices certainly are present in many cities in the Global East. Instead, I found in many residents a rebellious detachment from World Cup developments that was less of a deliberately deployed tactic and more of a pragmatic approach to handle a particular expression of alienation (Lefebvre 2014). These were not exactly spaces of hope, much less viable alternatives to uneven development, but at the same time they represented a significant re-appropriation, almost a state of independence in the face of developments over which residents had no control.

2: THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

Mega-events as More Than Sport

What are mega-events and why do they matter? Scholars agree that a mega-event must be an occurrence, that is, it must have a beginning and an end, and it must be relatively short in duration. Aside from this basic consensus, there is disagreement on a variety of aspects that can lead to differences in analysis. The first of these disagreements focuses on the nature of the event itself. The Olympics and the World Cup are recognized as quintessential mega-events and they are based on sport, but do mega-events actually *need* sport? Some scholars believe not, counting Expos, World's Fairs, conventions, summits, and festivals as mega-events (Gotham 2005, 2011; Hiller 1995; Kassens-Noor et al. 2015; Roche 2002). Others emphasize the role of the games, and never go without adding the adjective "sporting" to "mega-events" (Grix 2012, 2014; Grix and Houlihan 2014; Grix, Brannagan, and Houlihan 2015; Maennig and Zimbalist 2012).

For me, there are two interconnected reasons to underscore sport in my definition of mega-events, though they do not concern sport itself: human emotion and the media. Sport has the capacity to engender profound feelings of attachment and belonging, while media connectedness amplifies the event far beyond its specific geographical location. The popular drama and emotional potency of sport are key drivers for this mediated reach, and many scholars agree that mediated reach is a crucial element for events to reach "mega" status (Gold and Gold 2017; Hiller 2000a; Horne 2007). So in my understanding, sport is not strictly necessary for an event to be a mega-event, but sport makes it more likely.

Another area of debate concerns the fleeting nature of mega-events: they come and they go. A question then arises about large regular occurrences in the same city; are these mega-events too? Perhaps the best example of this is the Hajj, where millions of pilgrims gather in Makkah, Saudi Arabia. The Hajj shares many features with a mega-event: it is a mediated occurrence, deeply emotional and significant for billions of people across the globe, and it requires planning and coordination especially in terms of security and public health (Abubakar et al. 2012; Barhamain 1997; Memish et al. 2012). At the same time, authorities in Makkah know that this is not a one-time event; pilgrims will continue to

come, so organizers can learn from previous experiences, improve planning, and invest in infrastructure with the knowledge that it will see use. This does not coincide with the experiences of most mega-event organizers, where part of the challenge is balancing the overall development trajectory of the city against an event that probably has never been before and likely will never come again.

The temporary and singular nature of mega-events impacts urban development in particular, as events come with specific and costly requirements for infrastructure investment (Essex and Chalkley 1998; Essex and de Groot 2017; Mills and Rosentraub 2013). Thus, hosts must navigate between satisfying the short-term needs of the event and investing in the long-term needs of the city, and the failure to balance these priorities often leads to the deleterious outcomes that have become commonplace in the aftermath of mega-event hosting (Müller 2015a). In this light, infrastructure (in the context of competing or complimentary development priorities) provides a further conceptual refinement to my definition of mega-events; so even though they are temporary, one-time, heavily mediated, and involve sports, I disqualify American events like baseball's World Series on the grounds that they use existing infrastructure. A view towards new, upgraded, and perhaps spectacular infrastructure – particularly when considering whether events are singular or repeated – highlights a crucial difference between mega-events and mass gatherings, and provides a key to understand how the Olympics and the World Cup differ from major sporting events like the Super Bowl, or from massive religious gatherings and pilgrimages like Kumbh Mela or the Hajj (Baranwal et al. 2015; Memish and Alrabeeah 2011; Steffen et al. 2012).

Mega-events, then, are "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 2015b, 3). In this dissertation, I am primarily concerned with the fourth aspect (d): the impacts of mega-events on people and the city, though I also take into account their mediated reach insofar as it amplifies these impacts. To this definition I would also add that mega-events are political, that is, that they are about more than sport. In other words, organizers, states, proponents, and opponents all attempt to use mega-events for reasons beyond their ostensible purpose. One reason why these strategies are so often employed is because sport has the almost unmatched emotional power to affect billions of people

around the globe (Giulianotti 2015). Sport brings pleasure to both participants and spectators, as pleasure in the drama is matched by pride in victory, and an analysis that does not acknowledge this basic fact is incomplete. Further, the business of sport brings pleasure as well, in the pleasure of money and capitalist success. Power works through these channels (Koch 2017b), enrapturing bodies with concentrated doses of sporting pleasure and happiness – effects only enhanced by the commonplace consumption of alcohol and the sense of tribal community enjoyed by spectators (Pringle, Rinehart, and Caudwell 2015). It makes sense, then, why authorities would want to host mega-events: with the power to invoke so much good feeling among the populace (Black 2007; Hiller 2000a; Preuss and Solberg 2006; Smith 2009), it might also be possible to engage the affective power of mega-events in order to inculcate various audiences with particular narratives (Pringle 2015).

In discussing mega-events, I refer specifically to the products of the advanced capitalist economies of the Global North that, until recently, were hosted exclusively there (Gruneau and Horne 2015; Roche 2002). This is not to discount the history of mass gatherings and large-scale events that were hosted predominantly if not exclusively in former Communist countries, such as the World Festival of Youth and Students or the Sopot International Song Festival and Intervision Song Contest. While these events were significant in ways that deserve study, they did not have the size or the impact to be considered mega-events in the sense discussed in this thesis. Rather, the story told here is one of *mega*-events, created and hosted in the Global North, of how these mega-events traveled to new territories, and how this travel engendered changes in the new hosts. Further, despite the various histories and impacts of these other events, they do not compare to the prestige of the mega-events of the Global North. In line with this, the Russian population largely considered the Olympics and the World Cup as capable of increasing both the prestige of their nation on the international stage (Levada Center 2007) and, domestically, of their national leadership (Levada Center 2014). Hence, regardless of the exorbitant costs, they were on the balance considered worthwhile investments (Levada Center 2011, 2013).

Given the spatial exclusivity of mega-events, then, there are now two questions that I would like to address. The first is how to theorize mega-events when they are hosted outside of their traditional territories, referring to the trend where mega-events are

increasingly hosted by new nations outside of the Global North, as shown in Table 1. Regarding the 2018 World Cup, former FIFA president Sepp Blatter said: "We go to new lands. Never has the World Cup been in Russia and Eastern Europe…" (Radford 2010). Following this, I am curious how this new generation of hosts challenges our received understanding of mega-events.

Table 1: Hosts for the Summer and Winter Olympic Games, the FIFA Men's Football World Cup, and the Expo, 2000-2018. Note the increase in hosts from outside the Global North.

Year	Event	Host	North/Non-North
2000	Summer Olympics	Sydney, Australia	North
2000	Expo	Hanover, Germany	North
2002	Winter Olympics	Salt Lake City, USA	North
2002	Football World Cup	Japan / Korea	North
2004	Summer Olympics	Athens, Greece	North
2005	Expo	Aichi, Japan	North
2006	Winter Olympics	Turin, Italy	North
2006	Football World Cup	Germany	North
2008	Summer Olympics	Beijing, China	Non-North
2008	Expo	Zaragoza, Spain	North
2010	Football World Cup	South Africa	Non-North
2010	Winter Olympics	Vancouver, Canada	North
2010	Expo	Shanghai, China	Non-North
2012	Summer Olympics	London, England	North
2012	Expo	Yeosu, South Korea	North
2014	**Winter Olympics**	**Sochi, Russia**	Non-North
2014	Football World Cup	Brazil	Non-North
2015	Expo	Milan, Italy	North
2016	Summer Olympics	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	Non-North
2017	Expo	Astana, Kazakhstan	Non-North
2018	Winter Olympics	PyeongChang, South Korea	North
2018	**Football World Cup**	**Russia**	Non-North

The second question is more general and represents an understated aspect of the theorization of mega-events. We understand that mega-events are about more than sport – we define them as political and we say they impact the built environment and the population – but I want to know what this actually means for the people who inhabit the host cities. In other words, I want to understand what hosting a mega-event does, both structurally, at the level of nations and cities, but also on the ground, for the people whose lives are implicated in the mega-event. In the sections and chapters that follow, I will examine how these aspects – organization, narratives, and the people of the host city – are intertwined, as I unpack how the 2018 World Cup came to be and what it has done.

Mega-events as Urban Events

Mega-events take place in a given host city but, through the media, they are broadcast across the globe. As mediated occurrences, mega-events have a fundamental relationship with spectacle: they are built *on* spectacle and built to *sell* spectacle (Adair 2013; Koch 2018a; MacAloon 1984; Puijk 1999; Qing et al. 2010; Tomlinson 1996). Crafted for a worldwide audience, the ritual ceremonies and the drama of the games routinely command a global viewership in the billions, with the host city and stadium often serving as a picturesque backdrop for global broadcasts (Solberg and Gratton 2013, 2014).

For the 2018 World Cup, FIFA reported record-breaking results for media performance and audience size: during the event, FIFA alone (that is, not counting other broadcasters or networks) generated more than 5000 hours of content, racked up over 1.5 billion YouTube views, with over 3 billion individual viewers across all platforms (TV and digital), and over 7.5 billion engagements on digital platforms (FIFA 2018c). Well over 2000 international journalists and photographers were accredited to work the 2018 World Cup and, for the final match between France and Croatia, also held in Luzhniki Stadium in front of a capacity audience, more than one billion people worldwide tuned in to watch live. On digital platforms, it was the most viewed sporting event ever in the United Kingdom, France, China, and the United States. These media engagement numbers underscore the global scales at play, but work on this scale cannot be accomplished without substantial amounts of infrastructure.

Before the creation, commodification, and distribution of mega-events can take place, then, there must be a stage. In the World Cup, this means the stadium. Stadiums are critical infrastructure and they must conform to stringent requirements as detailed in FIFA technical manuals, event handbooks, and contracts (FIFA 2011; Street, Frawley, and Cobourn 2014), and they are the most visible intervention in the urban landscape of the host city. Worldwide, they have existed in some form in nearly every urban environment throughout history, from the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and Mesoamericans up to the present day; they convey a wealth of information about the societies and the politics that built them, they embody cultural memory and collective identities, and – particularly in the modern era – they often serve as shorthand for an entire city (Gaffney 2009; Harmon 2007; Trumpbour 2007). As such, stadiums often figure as the object of study for academic investigations of mega-events, serving as entry points or even representative metaphors in explorations of politics, inequalities, planning

practices, and uneven development (Alegi 2008, 2007; Chepurnaya 2013; Hlatshwayo and Blake 2011; Ke 2014; Roult and Lefebvre 2013). But a mega-event needs more than the stadium to exist: distributing the spectacle relies on recording and broadcast equipment, communications infrastructure, and power. It also requires people to operate this equipment, which means food supply, sanitation, accommodation, and transport. Of course a mega-event also needs an in-person audience, which multiplies exponentially the infrastructural requirements. And finally there are dignitaries and other high-profile individuals to account for, including the athletes, all of whom require 5-star treatment. What this means is that mega-events have wider and deeper impacts than what is visible if we look only at the stadium. Mega-events are not hosted merely in stadiums, but in cities. They are urban events.

Aside from the stadiums, FIFA also requires a high level of capacity and quality for other areas of the host city: training facilities, airports and train stations, roads and public transport, power generation, wastewater treatment, hotels and banquet halls, telecommunications and broadcasting facilities, tourist sites, and so on. As noted above, these requirements are governed through contracts signed by hosting committees, municipal authorities, and FIFA. Hosting contracts commit the host cities to fulfill this development trajectory, with such costly infrastructure investments that, typically, authorities justify them by claiming long-term benefits for the city (Hiller 2000b; Horne and Manzenreiter 2006a; Gold and Gold 2017). Organizers also assert that hosting will bring substantial economic benefits to the city and region by attracting tourists and increasing inward investment (Zimbalist 2016). Simultaneously, the high costs are downplayed by framing urban development (and the overall hosting experience) as a universal and long-term benefit (Atkinson et al. 2008; Hiller and Wanner 2016).

Working at the intersection of mega-events and the urban, there is a growing body of work dedicated to illuminating event-led development projects and their often-deleterious outcomes. Scholars have provided case studies of mega-event-led regeneration plans for a city or a region (French and Disher 1997; Hiller 2000b; Poynter 2012; Poynter, Viehoff, and Li 2015) but have also followed one event as it travels to numerous cities (Chalkley and Essex 1999b; Essex and Chalkley 1998; Essex and de Groot 2017), and investigated the urban impacts of the largest mega-events across every host city for a number of years (Müller and Gaffney 2018). There have been

investigations of exclusions, gentrification, and displacement (Gaffney 2015; Kennelly and Watt 2011; Silvestre and de Oliveira 2012; Watt 2013), analyses of transport infrastructure (Bovy 2010; Kassens-Noor 2012, 2017), explorations of the urban impacts of failed bids that did not lead to hosting (Lauermann 2016a, 2016b, 2014b; Oliver and Lauermann 2017; Silvestre 2017), examinations of surveillance and urban securitization (Bennett and Haggerty 2012; Boyle 2012; Boyle and Haggerty 2009; Eick 2011; Klauser 2008, 2011; Gaffney 2012; Giulianotti and Klauser 2011), and studies of governance strategies for mega-event-led urban development (Grabher and Thiel 2014; Raco 2012, 2013, 2014). These processes continue over time, so many scholars devote their attention to the so-called legacy period, taking stock of the impacts of hosting, or what was left behind after the mega-event has concluded (Cashman 2006; Evans 2016; Grix 2014; Mangan and Dyreson 2013; Oliver and Lauermann 2017; Pillay, Bass, and Tomlinson 2009; Silvestre 2009; Tomlinson 2014b; Wagg 2016). And where there is urban social change on this scale, there is often protest and resistance (Boykoff 2014; Dart and Wagg 2016; Gaffney 2016; Lenskyj 2008, 2016).

Especially since the Barcelona Summer Olympics of 1992, the idea of linking mega-event hosting to urban development has morphed into something of a mobile policy, and it is not uncommon to hear hyperbolic talk of using the "Barcelona Model" to regenerate a city (Degen and García 2012; de Moragas and Botella 1995; Garcia-Ramon and Albet 2000; González 2011; Millet 1995). This is despite the fact that Barcelona 1992 cost about four times more than promised, displaced populations through gentrification, and had unclear effects on the job situation, with some scholars finding a long-term net benefit to employment and others reporting only low-quality, short-term work (Baade and Matheson 2016; Brunet 1995; COHRE 2007; Flyvbjerg, Stewart, and Budzier 2016; Malfas, Theodoraki, and Houlihan 2004).

The processes of urban social change implicated in hosting go beyond what is explained in a narrow reading of mega-events literature; a wider view suggests that these processes should not be seen as separate from the ordinary forms and trajectories of urban politics, regardless of the particularities of mega-event hosting (Raco 2012). How then to understand what happens when cities host? Or to put it more specifically, what is happening in Russian World Cup host cities, and how does exploring them help make sense of global urban processes?

Mega-events as Potemkinism

The confluence (or conflict) of urban development agendas – between the needs of the mega-event and the needs of the city – lends itself well to academic analysis (Coaffee 2010; Smith 2017). Research has revealed that mega-events are commonly claimed to showcase urban development, accelerate existing regeneration plans, address structural political economic inequalities, and stimulate future development (Smith 2012). I frame these claims within an understanding of Potemkinism, wherein image takes precedence over substance, and attention to the superficial supersedes actual improvements to the built environment (Beriatos and Gospodini 2004; Broudehoux 2017). Broudehoux notes that Potemkinism is not limited to the visual domain but:

> "…also includes a wide range of discursive practices and strategies that rely upon the use of seductive rhetoric, superlative language, mystifying data and diverse forms of exaggeration to improve perceptions of reality. Going beyond simply window dressing and the construction of false facades, it involves the reconstruction of an entire reality, a whole Potemkin world in which newspapers, movies, political speeches and official statistics conspire to dispel allegations of economic and cultural backwardness" (Broudehoux 2017, 24–25)

This explains many of the strategies on display during the preparations for the 2018 World Cup and, notably, Broudehoux underscores that these strategies are aimed not only at international visitors but also the domestic audience. In this thesis, I wish to interrogate this domestic audience and explore how the World Cup – as a Potemkin project – was understood by host city residents. I argue that it is insufficient merely to identify that a project is a fabrication, a façade, or a mirage; I maintain that it is necessary to go further and unpack what this urban development project has done, not just to the built environment of the host cities, but also to the people who live there. In other words, in order to investigate the Potemkin qualities of a project, it is necessary to illuminate what might lie underneath the surface, and I argue that this is incomplete without an attention to the micro and the quotidian.

The concept of Potemkinism – typically expressed as an adjective appended to a noun, as in Potemkin village, Potemkin court, Potemkin project – is traditionally used to describe a façade that masks or subverts an underlying reality. The term connotes artifice and duplicity, as well as evoking an authority that deems what may be shown and what must be hidden. It originated with the story of Grigory Potemkin's efforts to construct show

villages along the river Dnieper for the benefit of Catherine the Great (O'Malley 2007). Despite the fact that this origin story contains much that is disputed historically and likely apocryphal (Panchenko 1999), the metaphor has been adopted around the globe as shorthand to describe a situation that may appear successful, but where the surface presentation conceals a decay or deception beneath.

In Russia, Potemkin practices continued during the Soviet period and the selective display for consumption by a particular audience was commonplace, particularly when displaying Soviet accomplishments to foreign visitors (N. Hall 2016). There was a dilemma, however, stemming from the longstanding history of distrust of Russia among many westerners, a trend that had only intensified due to the 1917 Revolution. At the same time, many visitors to the early Soviet Union came not from a position of distrust but with wide-eyed optimism, eager to witness how Communism was being built (David-Fox 2012a). In both cases, the challenge for Soviet hosts was to prevent visiting delegates from witnessing conditions or moments that would serve either to reinforce an anti-Soviet bias, or to disabuse them of their pro-Soviet inclinations. In short, the goal was to "isolate foreigners from unpleasant discoveries and to shuttle them from one favorable model to another, yet at the same time to allay the widespread fears that they were being isolated and manipulated" (David-Fox 2012b, 102). The legacies of these practices remain salient in Russia to this day, both in terms of managed presentations to guests, as well as the tendency to delineate between benign and threatening foreigners. Beyond this, there was a domestic focus to these Potemkin presentations as well, as Soviet authorities worked to inculcate the peasantry (and the more educated public, to a degree) with a curated version of Soviet reality (Fitzpatrick 1994, 262). From both foreign and domestic perspectives, then, Potemkin practices engendered the idea, grounded in binary thinking, of a truth masked by deception.

It is important to reiterate that Potemkin practices occur worldwide and are not the exclusive purview of Russia or the (former) Soviet Union. It is not my intention here to engage this concept to perpetuate the Orientalizing tendencies (Said 1978, 2013) so common in western discussions of Russia. On the contrary, I aspire to show how a term that originated in the Global East has travelled and can be applicable worldwide, and I attempt to bring some conceptual rigor to a phrase that is often used loosely, and more often – though not exclusively – by journalists rather than scholars. Within the academic

literature, Potemkinism has been used to make sense of urban transformations in Baku (Roth 2016) and to unpack the processes of nation building in Birobidzhan (Blyakher and Pegin 2011), but again, critical engagement with the concept is rare, and scholarly application tends to be limited to the Global East.

Outside of the academy, however, the term is commonly applied around the world in media reports and opinion pieces: Al-Jazeera (Qatar) has described Turkmenistan as a Potemkin economy (Roache 2019), the ABC (Australia) has labeled Chinese tours to Uyghur vocational centers in Xinjiang Province as Potemkin villages (Handley 2019), The Globe and Mail (Canada) has dubbed US American stock market surges as a Potemkin rally (Rosenberg 2019), and the Telegraph (England) has criticized the British government for having Potemkin departments (Baker 2019). Nor is usage limited to the Anglosphere, as French commentators have used the term to describe Algeria's constitution (Khan 2019), Austrian observers have used it to explain US American political developments (Niederndorfer 2019), and Russian journalists have employed the term in its native habitat, so to speak, to describe the preparations in Chelyabinsk before a visit from president Putin (Dementeva 2019; Ufimtsev 2019).

Building on this, I argue that many practices exist in the contemporary moment that can be better understood through a Potemkin lens. Public relations campaigns, for instance, run on a concern for image and image management (L'Etang and Pieczka 2006), and the accusation of something being a "PR stunt" is, I maintain, a criticism of attention to the imagistic rather than the substantive. In other words, labeling an event a PR stunt is a means to delegitimize it by calling into question its authenticity – or, put more simply, by bringing to light its Potemkin nature. Similarly, the notorious PR firm Burson-Marsteller, once the largest in the world, created largely successful image campaigns for a variety of controversial actors, including the civic-military dictatorship of Argentina (Klein 2014), the Dow Chemical Company after the Bhopal disaster (Larabee 2000), and the Philip Morris tobacco company (Burson-Marsteller 1986). In so doing, the firm created Potemkin realities, propagating artificial and benign constructs to mask the brutal nature of the dictatorship, the criminal negligence of the chemical company, and the catastrophic public health effects of tobacco use. In these campaigns, a common strategy was the creation of front groups, which have been shown to affect public opinion by obscuring the true interests of sponsors (Apollonio and Bero 2007; Pfau et al. 2007).

Front groups are Potemkin groups, pretending to portray the concerns of ordinary citizens while actually advancing the agenda of hidden authorities.

As it happens, Burson-Marsteller also worked with mega-events: they were the first public relations firm to participate in the organization of the Olympics, serving as on-site advisor during the planning and implementation phases of the 1988 Seoul Summer Games (SLOOC and Burson-Marsteller 1987). But there were substantial linkages between mega-events and Potemkin constructions long before this. The 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, for example, performed an experiment in mega-event-related urban planning called The White City, presented as an ideal version of Chicago and composed almost entirely of temporary artificial buildings, streets, squares, and canals (Silla 2013). The experience was said to be transformative for visitors, and the architectural innovations, though made of plaster and destroyed soon after the close of the event, have had a lasting impact on Chicagoan and American urban development (Graff 2012). This endeavor – exposed to almost 28 million visitors during the six months of the World's Fair – was a literal Potemkin city, predicated on the idea of constructing a superficial ideal that masked the gritty industrial quality of life in ordinary Chicago.

Yet the impacts of the White City – both affective, on the personal level, and more broadly regarding urban development across the United States – suggests something beyond the Potemkin binary of surface vs. substance. In Chicago, visitors to the World's Fair clearly understood that the White City was an artificial construction, an ideal projection of a dream (Burg 1976; Keeler 1950). This knowledge did nothing to diminish the power of the experience. On the contrary, the Potemkin nature of the event gave the White City a particular power: by presenting audiences with a dream made tangible, however temporary, the World's Fair keyed into collective aspiration and engaged potential energy so substantial that the mega-event continues to be discussed over a century later (Stone 2005).

Put another way, mega-events are often built on Potemkin practices, but they are not necessarily limited by the binary construct of surface and substance. To be sure, there is much in mega-events that fits this dualistic thinking, for example the emphasis on repairing host city building exteriors but leaving the courtyards untouched and in shambles, as I witnessed in the preparations for Russia 2018. Or in how organizers for

Sochi 2014 installed kilometers of anonymous fencing along the main roads, rather than risk having guests witness the unadorned living conditions in the peri-urban settlements between the clusters of Olympic venues. Or the ways in which host city authorities in Vancouver and London removed homeless youth in preparation for their Olympics (for the 2010 and 2012 editions, respectively), attempting to construct an unproblematic image of their cities (Kennelly 2015; Kennelly and Watt 2011). The Potemkin binary makes sense in each of these cases, as authorities were transparent in their attempts to use an artificial exterior to mask various problematic interiors.

In other cases, however, a dualistic view is too limiting. To start, the Potemkin binary presumes that the masked interior is somehow broken, whereas in actuality, sprucing up a host city's façades might perhaps be understood in the same manner as cleaning up one's home before guests arrive for a party. Put another way, what appears to be Potemkinism might actually be closer to elementary hospitality. Further, limiting analysis to a Potemkin binary supposes an easy distinction between superficiality and substance, but some aspects of the mega-event experience confound this delineation. Take the spectacle of the opening ceremonies, for example. The ceremony is a clear example of Potemkin performance, as host authorities construct a curated image of the nation for consumption by both international and domestic audiences (MacAloon 1984; Tomlinson 1996). Yet these performances have real effects and can play crucial roles in the construction of nationhood and national belonging (Militz 2016; Tomlinson and Young 2012). This suggests that, in certain circumstances, the façade and the substance are one and the same. In other words, the spectacle *is* the mega-event. This view confounds the simplicity of the Potemkin binary and gestures towards an explanation of the affective power potentially engaged by mega-events. Ultimately, thinking along these lines complicates many established ways of understanding mega-events.

Global Neoliberalization

One common approach is to explain mega-events as the vanguard of globalizing neoliberalism (Hall 2006; Silk 2014; Vanwynsberghe, Surborg, and Wyly 2013), as one of the hallmarks of modernity (Roche 2002, 2006). Neoliberalism means the:

> "…theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills

> within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey 2007, 2).

In the context of mega-events, however, I am interested more in neoliberalism as a political program, rather than as theory. In one sense, this has taken shape as the "deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision" (Harvey 2007, 3), but there has also been a tendency for the "creation of a new infrastructure for market-oriented economic growth, commodification, and capital-centric rule" (Peck, Theodore, and Brenner 2009, 55). In this light, mega-events are seen as one of the mechanisms by which this creative destruction or restructuring can take place (Gotham 2015; C. M. Hall 2006; Lauermann and Davidson 2013). Beyond this, sporting practices in particular have been linked to socializing people towards neoliberal ends (Ritchie 2015). It is important here to note that I am not employing neoliberalism as a catchall concept to explain any and all problematic contemporary developments. On the contrary, despite the academic overreliance on neoliberal analysis, there are significant overlaps between mega-events and neoliberalism that warrant investigation. Further, one of the noteworthy aspects of the Russian case is that neoliberal narratives were conspicuously used as explanatory rationales by organizers towards to the public, as I will demonstrate in later chapters. Thus, rather than representing a boogeyman for an academics, neoliberalism in the 2018 World Cup resembled more of a selling point to host city residents.

In this light, I shy away from using neoliberalism as a universal, all-explanatory factor, acknowledging the tensions between macro level political economic interpretations and more variegated approaches to the concept (Brenner, Peck, and Theodore 2010; Lauermann and Davidson 2013; Peck 2013). Rather, I situate myself with literatures that emphasize the particular varieties or local expressions of neoliberalism, and focus more on neoliberalization as a process rather than as a stable state (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002; Peck and Theodore 2012).

Regarding neoliberalization and the city, Harvey (1989, 11) states: "The task of urban governance is… to lure highly mobile and flexible production, financial, and consumption flows into its space." When cities are bidding to host, then, it is common to hear neoliberal legitimations of place promotion (Andranovich 2017; Gold and Gold 2008; Hiller 2000b), local growth machine politics, (Surborg, VanWynsberghe, and Wyly

2008), and public-private partnerships (Raco 2014), all in the context of boosting economic growth for increased global competitiveness. This suggests that bidding and hosting is a strategy for inter-urban competition, a mechanism by which to attract flows of tourists and capital and embark upon or continue a shift to a more entrepreneurial mode of urban governance (Hall and Hubbard 1996). Even failed bids for hosting have the potential to serve neoliberal development and place-promotion goals (Lauermann 2014b, 2016b; Oliver and Lauermann 2017).

The strategies of neoliberal entrepreneurialism through hosting mega-events hold true for cities in the Global East as well. Makarychev and Yatsyk (2015a) explore consensus building during mega-event preparations in Russia, as host cities experiment with new city branding tactics to legitimize widespread urban development. That these developments were beset by corruption allegations does not diminish the significance of the neoliberal rhetoric employed to advance territorial branding strategies. Similarly, Trubina (2014) examines the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics in reference to growth and development in the context of neoliberal globalization, demonstrating how rapid urban development resulted in the uneven distribution of resources, rapacious rent seeking, and outright theft. This work highlights the contradictions inherent in the articulation of a western image project in a country beset by anti-western attitudes, framing these processes as part of Sochi joining the international economy. Further, Müller and Pickles (2015) focus on the ways that hosting a mega-event signals global modernity for post-socialist states, drawing attention to crucial differences that come into play when hosting in the Global East. As opposed to western nations that may be vying for a Barcelona-style urban regeneration project, post-socialist states often use mega-events as a strategy to prove themselves on the global stage. Because of this, they tend to spend lavishly on hosting, both to display themselves as part of the modern world, and also because there is often a substantial need in these cities for infrastructure investment. The creation and modernization of infrastructures is a crucial element in place promotion and lends weight to the idea of using mega-events as a strategy for urban entrepreneurialism in the context of global neoliberalization. In all this, the urban is not only where mega-events unfold, but also the stage where the conflicts of neoliberal restructuring are played out (Golubchikov 2016b).

Overall, mega-events tend to reduce the role of the national state in favor of a focus on cities (Gold and Gold 2017; Vanwynsberghe, Surborg, and Wyly 2013). In other words, these developments are part of a global political economic restructuring that "decentre[s] the national scale of accumulation, urbanization and state regulation in favour of new sub- and supranational territorial configurations" (Brenner 1999, 435). Thus, mega-events can be seen as projects through which processes of globalized neoliberalism reconfigure relations and territorial configurations by rescaling cities and states. They are:

> "….designed (a) to promote urban regions rather than national economies as the most essential geographical targets for economic development initiatives, and (b) to customize the institutional infrastructure of urban governance according to place-specific political-economic conditions." (Brenner 2004, 255)

Brenner sees these rescaling policies as restructuring nationally oriented and standardized processes from the Fordist-Keynesian period, towards strategies of urban governance oriented on competitiveness and growth. Among other reconfigurations, this restructuring means the decentralization and customization of state capacities according to specific local conditions, in order to enhance the territorial competitiveness of cities and regions and reposition them within global circuits of capital. He conceptualizes these new configurations as Rescaled Competition State Regimes, or RCSRs (Brenner 2004, 260), underscores the variegated approaches towards achieving these reconfigurations, and emphasizes their disruptive, dysfunctional, and uneven outcomes. RCSRs are understood as spatial projects and strategies along scalar and territorial dimensions. Brenner focuses on how these projects and strategies move – in linear fashion, though always in tension – from *centralized*, *singular*, *uniform*, *equalizing* and *balancing* configurations, and toward *decentralized*, *multiple, customized*, *differentiating* and *concentrating* reconfigurations, as elaborated in Figure 4. What this means is that in the current round of global restructuring, we see centralized and uniform policies of redistribution transforming into localized and customized processes of differentiation and accumulation. In this view, mega-events are a tool of RCSRs, as they mobilize locational entrepreneurial policies to enhance urban competitiveness in the context of state rescaling.

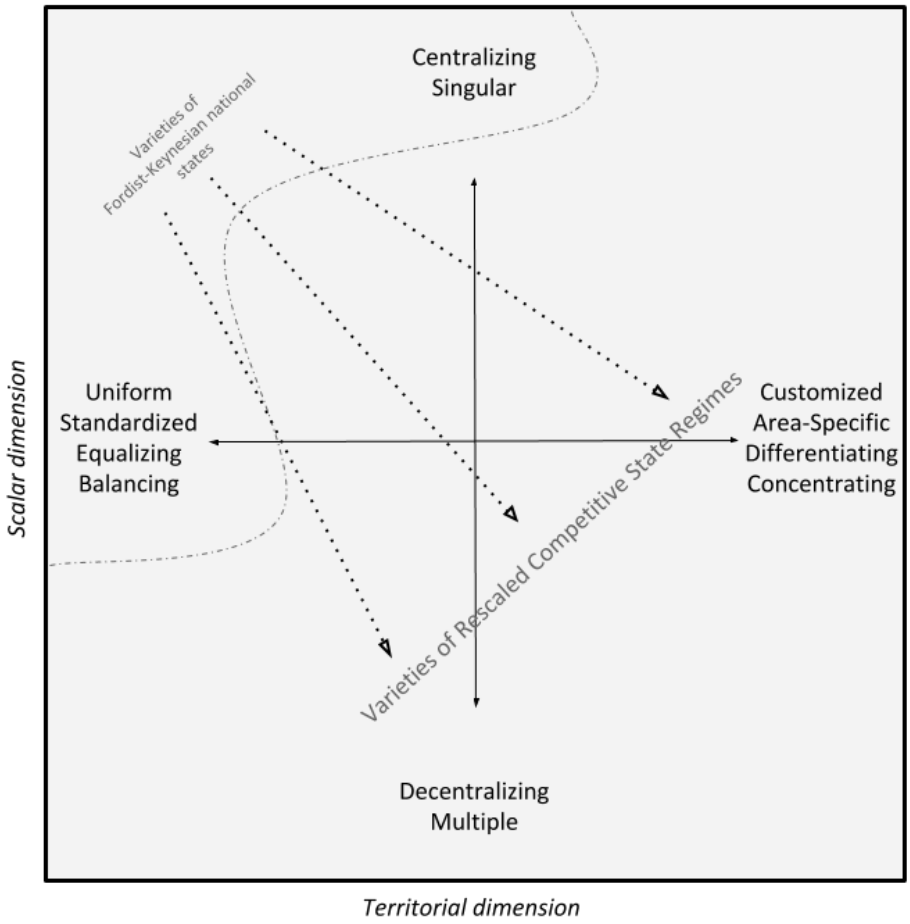

Figure 4: Neil Brenner's understanding of Rescaled Competition State Regimes, moving in linear fashion from centralized uniform singularity to decentralized customized multiplicity. Adapted from Brenner 2004.

The problem with this contention is that it does not make sense in light of the Russian World Cup. Instead of the withdrawal of the state that might be expected in a project of neoliberal restructuring, and despite the rhetoric of place promotion, urban development, and global competition, my investigation reveals widespread state presence in this mega-event, to the degree that the Russian World Cup can be seen not as a process of withdrawal, but rather as state return and retrenchment. State production of this mega-event took various shapes: government officials staffing the organizing committees, state owned companies performing most of the required infrastructure work, and the project as a whole representing a selective return of the federal state to regional planning, restructuring cities and regions in processes of extraverted or outward-facing urbanism (Golubchikov 2016a; Golubchikov and Slepukhina 2014). This is seen as a return of the federal state after its retreat from regional policy and spatial planning due to the collapse of the planned economy at the end of the USSR (Kinossian 2013; Golubchikov 2017).

At first blush, a city established as a pole for strategic regional development seems to fit with the entrepreneurial idea of place promotion, but the calculus changes when the impetus for this restructuring is revealed as coming from the national state. Indeed, it was actors within the central government who selected which peripheral cities would be modernized to make them outwardly competitive for further investment and increased tourism, and it was these same actors who deployed this development agenda and monitored its progress. From the highest levels of national government, the World Cup was engaged as the engine to make this restructuring happen, so it would not be an exaggeration to call the Russian World Cup a state project. And yet this was not entirely a central state project either, as certain local projects were articulated according to area-specific and differentiating characteristics, in effect transforming neoliberal rhetoric into material form.

In this light, with both centralized and decentralized features, the World Cup complicates the ways that mega-events are understood as part of Brenner's Rescaled Competition State Regimes. RSCRs are seen to move in a straight line, for example from a *uniform* to a *customized* project. The rescaling notion is a linear one and, while not an either/or binary, it does not account for a state regime that might inhabit multiple places on the spectrum at once. As I will demonstrate, the Russian World Cup is composed – seemingly paradoxically – of *centralized* and *decentralized* projects and strategies that are all at once *singular, uniform*, *standardized, equalizing,* and *balancing*, as well as *multiple, customized*, *area-specific, differentiating*, and *concentrating*. They are *centralized* because they originate as a state project, as opposed to other mega-events that emerge as a private endeavor or a public/private partnership, and political authority remains concentrated at the national level. But they are also *decentralized* because the regulatory tasks necessary for the managing of the World Cup have been transferred to subnational levels, even as a hierarchical system of personal responsibility ensures the ultimate authority of the national state. They are *singular* because they privilege the national level as the dominant scale for socioeconomic activities, but they are *multiple* because one of the goals of the World Cup development program is to spur economic activity at regional and municipal scales, engaging host cities as the nodes of modernization. Further, they are *uniform* and *standardizing* because the same development agenda is imposed on each host city with the same purpose, that is, to establish largely equivalent bureaucratic processes and service levels throughout a territory. Yet they are also *customized* and *area-specific*, because each

city's profile is unique and each has different capacities to offer in a de-industrializing entrepreneurialism. Further, the World Cup is *equalizing* and *balancing*, in that it is a state project to modernize Russia's neglected peripheral cities, but at the same time it is *differentiating* and *concentrating*, since investment and development attention is concentrated only on a selection of regional capitals that are not necessarily the cities most in need, nor are the areas of the host cities that receive investment the areas that most need it. In other words, the Russian World Cup defies Brenner's linear categorization of RCSRs. Instead, it is an all-encompassing, seemingly paradoxical, and contingent state-sponsored neoliberalism.

To be sure, Brenner's (2004) analysis is predicated on western European states, so in this sense it may not be appropriate to apply RCSR thinking to the political economic configurations of Russia or other eastern European nations. Further, Brenner discusses how national states have attempted to situate themselves within these rescaled accumulation strategies and restructured state spatialities, thereby retaining some kind of control over political economic space. This kind of adaptive survival strategy could explain the high degree of state involvement in Russia's World Cup. Finally, neoliberalism is neither monolithic and universal, nor entirely variegated and particular, but rather the currently dominant global ideology that is partial but consistent, hegemonic but incomplete (Lauermann and Davidson 2013; Peck 2013). Following this, perhaps the particular conditions found in Russia's World Cup can be explained as a local variant of neoliberalism, as a variegated expression of actually existing neoliberalism (Brenner and Theodore 2002), similar in some respects to other mega-event-led projects, but also unique. Yet one of the values of Brenner's analysis is that it can be used to explain *global* processes, that is, to help understand neoliberal restructuring beyond the territorial confines of Western Europe. And while the countries of Eastern Europe did not transition from the generally analogous formations of the Fordist-Keynesian model, they nonetheless have participated in the global capitalist system for over a quarter century, and it is important to explore the ways in which these eastern cities can trouble established western theory. And while it is possible that the Russian state could be situating itself subserviently within the dominant system of neoliberal relations, I will demonstrate that it is rather the state that has employed neoliberal ideas for its own ends. This echoes Trubina's (2015) arguments about the irrational rationality of post-socialist

urban development, and I contend that the paradoxical articulation of the 2018 World Cup exemplifies just such a situation.

Soft Power and Everyday Life

As mentioned in the mega-events definition that opened this chapter, organized sport is inherently political, operating at every scale from the individual to the global (Giulianotti 2015; Sugden and Tomlinson 2002). Political considerations motivate state involvement in sport, but sport can be used by states for more than diplomatic or foreign policy goals. In fact, sport holds a powerful place in a state's soft power toolbox (Nygård and Gates 2013).

Soft power refers to the concept developed by Joseph Nye (1990, 2005) to explain how states negotiate positions and achieve goals not through coercion but through attractiveness or persuasion. It is intangible, predicated on the co-optive strategy of "getting others to want what you want" (Nye 1990, 167), and includes resources such as cultural attraction, ideologies, and institutions. This intangibility makes soft power difficult to operationalize, particularly because attempts to measure attractiveness (a key element of the soft power mix) rely on subjective interpretation. This can create an ethnocentric bias in measurements of soft power, implicitly and explicitly privileging the western, advanced capitalist nations that so often happen to host the very researchers and institutions working on the concept. McClory's (2018) index of soft power provides an example of how attempts to measure soft power, despite including contributors from beyond the Global North, nonetheless consistenly manage to place the UK, the USA, Germany, and France in the top 5. Biases notwithstanding, though, this index – like the concept of soft power itself – has proven internationally compelling to governments and businesses alike.

Regardless of ethnocentric problems, the very notion of an index of soft power reflects a global entrepreneurial competitiveness, as states jockey to improve their rankings year over year. In this light, hosting a sports mega-event is a common strategy for states to boost their soft power and, particularly through spectacle, bolster or reframe their image on the world stage (Brannagan and Giulianotti 2015; Grix 2012; Grix and Houlihan 2014; Grix, Brannagan, and Houlihan 2015; Manzenreiter 2010; Preuss and Alfs 2011). This also helps explain the allure of hosting mega-events for the new generation of

mega-event hosts among developing or emerging economies (Baade and Matheson 2015; Black and Westhuizen 2004; Cornelissen 2010; Cornelissen and Swart 2006; Friedman, Andrews, and Silk 2004; Grix and Lee 2013).

The new generation's soft power aspirations for hosting can be understood in two parts. First, hosting is a strategy to announce the state's arrival as a player on the global stage, hoping for attendant increases in foreign direct investment and international tourism. Second, there is a domestic aspect at play where the host population is targeted, though this is not often conceptualized as soft power and rather is presented as processes of nation-building and identity formation (Alekseyeva 2014; Horák 2017; Hyde-Clarke, Ottosen, and Miller 2014; Koch 2013a, 2017a; Militz 2016; Thibault and Harvey 2013; Wolfe 2016). I contend that this is soft power as well, however – merely involving a domestic frame rather than a geopolitical one. On top of this there is often a goal of increasing both international and domestic tourism. For the new generation of hosts, the attention to investing in and accelerating the development of infrastructure is intended to bring material conditions in line with countries of the Global North, creating a tangible foundation to attract increased tourism and support the newly reframed international and domestic soft power formations.

Given these goals and the nationalistic narratives that often accompany them, it could be argued that an engagement with the literatures on nationalism would be a better fit for explaining Russia's domestic and international ambitions in hosting mega-events (for a sample of appropriate literature, see Arnold 2018; Gorokhov 2015; Laruelle 2008, 2019; Toal 2017). While there is much to be said about such an approach, I employ soft power here instead because it is so commonly used to explain mega-events outside of academic life, as can be ascertained by the numerous media commentators who reproduce this style of interpretation in the run-up to most mega-events, and particularly those outside of the Global North.

As they tend to be situated in the scholarship on political science and international relations, many studies on soft power privilege the international or geopolitical frame of reference. Further, these studied typically focus only on the generation of narratives, but less often explore the effects or effectiveness of the project. Fewer still concentrate on domestic audiences, though notable exceptions to this trend come from Hiller and

Wanner (2011, 2014, 2016), Müller (2012), Vetitnev and Bobina (2017), and Zhou and Ap (2009). These are good studies on the perceptions and attitudes of mega-event host populations, but they rely on surveys and do not reach the level of individual experience. And for most others, it seems preferable to eschew the local entirely, in favor of discussing the narratives themselves, rather than their effects, and remaining on a more national or institutional level. I disagree with this approach on several counts.

First, in privileging the national over the local, we ignore the ways in which the individual and the everyday constitute and reproduce the national, thereby contributing to an imbalanced and inaccurately hierarchical understandings (Edensor 2002). This is similar to Billig's (1995) arguments for banal nationalism, grounding the geopolitical in the mundane and the everyday. Moreover, and perhaps more practically, when we focus on the narratives of the soft power project without considering their effectiveness or their results, we neglect the actual purpose of the project itself. In other words, I argue that unpacking the soft power narratives that underlie mega-event hosting is only half the job, and that it is necessary to explore the efficacy and the effects of these narratives as well, and with an awareness of the multiple audiences involved. I argue that this requires attention to the micro level and to the ways in which these soft power narratives are embedded in the everyday. Further, attending to the micro and the quotidian corrects for the tendency in soft power research to privilege narratives at the expense of practices. My focus on these overlooked geographies is an attempt to balance out soft power's overreliance on narrative by highlighting the effects on people and the places they inhabit.

I define narratives here as the stories that people tell in order to make meaning from everyday life (Naughton 2014; Riessman 2008). I see narratives as the vehicle through which mega-event organizers transmit their soft power project to various intended audiences. In contrast to many studies on Russia's previous mega-event, the 2014 Sochi Olympics (see for example Alekseyeva 2014; Arnold 2018; Casula 2016; Grix and Kramareva 2015; Makarychev 2016; Osipova 2017; Petersson 2014; Persson and Petersson 2014), I did not find much evidence to support the idea that the 2018 World Cup was used to reframe national identity. Instead, the World Cup's primary soft power narratives for the domestic audience were based on urban development, modernization, and competitiveness, packaged in the rhetoric of international hospitality. All of this was

framed as a universal good, and the notion that mega-events are beneficial was never questioned.

Nye conceptualizes the soft power relationship between agent and target, respectively the creator and recipient of a given soft power project. Within this relationship, he identifies three resources that can be deployed in soft power projects: culture, political values, and foreign policies, but predicates these on the condition that the culture must be attractive to others, the values must be authentic, and the policies must be legitimate and moral (Nye 2011, 84). In this way, Nye emphasizes the socially constructed, relational, and subjective nature of soft power (there is no attraction possible if the target finds the agent's culture repellent), and underscores that soft power cannot be based on obfuscation, exaggeration, or lies. Working from this, the 2018 World Cup reveals three areas where Nye's soft power approach falls short.

The first is that the soft power frame is conceptualized as separate from hard power, and does not provide sufficient space for political projects where the two approaches might intersect, overlap, or blend. Though Nye recently has presented hard and soft power as opposites on a spectrum (where one commands and the other co-opts, as shown in Nye 2011, 21), this view still places them as opposites. In contrast, Russian mega-events reveal how soft and hard powers are not as discrete as imagined: they are intermingled, sometimes complementary, sometimes contradictory.

In Russia – and particularly in Russian mega-events – there is a tension between a drive for soft power gains and an imperative for sovereignty, hard power, and so-called great nation status. Often made visible through geopolitical intervention, the Russian drive for displaying great nation status has become particularly noticeable on the international stage in recent years. Since the Ukrainian crisis of 2013/2014, international relations between Russia and the West have soured so much that the period has been called a new Cold War (Trenin 2014b, 2018). Here, though, I am less concerned with the actual expressions of Russian hard power than I am with the narratives that accompanied them, and specifically I am interested in the contradictory, conflictive, and yet symbiotic relationship between Russian hard and soft power projects.

In the World Cup, Russia's conflicts on the international stage stood in counterpoint to the mega-event-driven narratives of openness, hospitality, and international integration and cooperation, and clash with neoliberal discourses of increased global competitiveness. Brought to bear by the pressures of preparing for and hosting the World Cup, I wish to explore the tensions between hard and soft power narratives, and the ways in which they are mutually constitutive and yet contradictory. The Russian annexation of Crimea that began in the closing days of the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi is a prime example of this puzzle, but I argue that these patterns were found not only in the Olympics and were also present during the 2018 World Cup. And in any case, I submit that a pure soft power frame is insufficient to explore what mega-events do to nations, cities, and people.

The second area where the traditional soft power approach falls short in analyzing the Russian World Cup stems from the tendency to ignore the domestic population. The agents and targets in a soft power relationship generally are assumed to be from different nationalities – hence Nye's underscoring of the need for cultural attractiveness. What this leaves unstated is the notion that soft power can be aimed at the domestic population, as detailed above, in projects that typically have been labeled as nation building or identity formation. These are soft power projects, though: they involve attraction and persuasion instead of coercion or force. The Russian state project of the World Cup sold an image of celebration and, as I will show, even critics of the preparations joined in the parties during the height of the event. Soft power, then, is not only directed outwards, but also inwards. Further, it is subject to temporal logics: what is ineffective at one time may change to become deeply effective at a later date. The Russian World Cup illustrates these dynamics and problematizes the traditional ways in which soft power targets are understood.

Finally, the third area where the soft power framework is insufficient comes from the World Cup's relationship with Potemkinism. Nye states that soft power must be based on legitimacy and authenticity in order to be effective, but this is grounded in the assumption that authenticity is a binary state, either present or absent and, moreover, that authenticity is easily perceived. As discussed previously, unpacking Potemkinism reveals that neither of these claims is necessarily true. To be sure, the Russian World Cup focused on façades and superficiality, as illustrated by the closure of the dilapidated

swimming pool next to Volgograd's new stadium, but this hardly dampened the soft power victories among both foreign and domestic populations. It is more understandable that short-term visitors could be blind to what lay beneath the polished exteriors, but what I found surprising was the effectiveness of the World Cup soft power project on host city residents who understood firsthand the problems that were hidden beneath the surface. And yet, despite their knowledge of the mega-event's inauthenticity, the soft power project appeared to win many of them over – at least for a time.

In defying easy categorization, these three aspects of the Russian World Cup suggest that our conceptualization and operationalization of soft power should be augmented in order to make sense of mega-events. Given that soft power deals primarily with intangible resources, and is inherently subjective, contingent, and dynamic, I hesitate to advance a universal prescription that might accommodate multiple situations. But for the project at hand, looking specifically at the 2018 World Cup, I propose three recommendations.

The first is to focus on the multiple audiences for soft power projects. If Nye conceives of the soft power relationship as between agent and target, at a minimum we should distinguish between international and domestic targets. Of course this multiplicity can be further refined, and I would even suggest that there might be multiple agents as well, but for a start we should remember that there are different targets. Second, we should question not just what is being communicated but how. This means a focus on narratives and, more specifically, on the *transmission* of narratives. Combined with a view that accommodates the passage of time, a focus on narratives and the mechanisms of their transmission allows us to make something tangible out of the intangible aspects of soft power. Third, in order to understand the contingent efficacy of soft power, I suggest dedicating attention to the individual and the everyday. I argue that many attempts to measure soft power fail because they attempt to measure what is essentially immeasurable. Soft power is not a substance that can be portioned out or weighed, and its effects and effectiveness cannot be adequately understood in quantitative terms. Instead, I contend that qualitative attention to individual lives can provide a richer understanding of the contradictory but symbiotic, contingent, and temporally dependent characteristics of soft power.

To make sense of these dimensions in the 2018 World Cup, I focus primarily on the domestic audience (though I do consider the *creation* of narratives for the international set). In order to make sense of the creation and transmission of narratives, I propose to view these processes as an ideological pipeline. I employ this metaphor for three reasons. First, it emphasizes the produced nature of the narratives. Though intangible, these are products manufactured for a purpose. Second, the metaphor underscores the directionality of transmission. A pipeline is not intercourse; the flow in Russia during the World Cup was decidedly one way. And third, the metaphor helps us visualize the distance between narrative producer and intended audience. More to the point, it can help us identify moments when the transmission broke down and the narratives did not achieve their intended effect.

Finally, I also undertake a micro level engagement with host city residents, examining their quotidian practices and life strategies within the context of World Cup-driven narratives and the processes of urban change. I take inspiration for this from Gardiner's (2000, 207–8) paradigm of everyday life:

> "Less a unified 'theory' than a general sensibility or ethos connected by a series of overlapping themes… the everyday life paradigm seeks to relate the particular to the general, locate the concrete in the universal, and to grasp the wider sociohistorical context within which everyday practices are necessarily inscribed."

More succinctly, the value in focusing on the micro level and the ordinary is well expressed by Lefebvre (2014, 690): "Daily life harboured a hidden wealth in its apparent poverty." There are philosophical and methodological challenges in focusing on the individual and the quotidian, however:

> "…There is a certain obscurity in the very concept of *everyday life*. Where is it to be found? In work or in leisure? In family life and in moments 'lived' outside of culture? Initially the answer seems obvious. Everyday life involves all three elements, all three aspects. It is their unity and their totality, and it determines the concrete individual. And yet this answer is not entirely satisfactory. Where does the living contact between the concrete individual man and other human beings operate? In fragmented labour? In family life? In leisure? Where is it acted out in the most concrete way?"
>
> (Lefebvre 2014, 53)

Lefebvre expands on these questions by making use of the notion of alienation, which provides the conceptual apparatus for his explorations of modernity, capitalist relations, and commodified leisure. Working from the context of labor and modern capitalism,

Lefebvre's alienation starts from the idea of the lack of control or autonomy over one's life, development, and environment. Alienation is not singular and absolute, but rather particular, multiple, and relative, and Lefebvre proposes a dialectic movement to understand the functioning of the concept in social life: alienation-disalienation-new alienation (Lefebvre 2014, 501). By this we can understand how, for example, a man could suffer from alienation due to the dehumanizing lack of autonomy and meaninglessness inherent in the fragmented labor activities required for him to reproduce his daily life. After work, this same man participates in leisure activities – he buys a ticket to a football match, for instance – and in this is disalienated from the effects of his earlier labors. At the same time, Lefebvre contends, this disalienation contains within it new alienations, all of which requires analytical precision at the micro level in order to untangle and understand.

Here, in my focus on the micro level, I am interested in operationalizing this alienation-disalienation-new alienation dialectic and interrogating it not in specific reference to labor, but rather as a means to illuminate particular effects of hosting upon the host population. In this, I engage with the work of Michel de Certeau, whose *The Practice of Everyday Life (2011)* has come to play a significant role in geography, largely due to his conceptualization of strategies and tactics within an emphasis on the micropolitics of the everyday. Tactics and strategies are ways to make sense of power and place: a tactic is seen as an art of the weak, whereas strategies are seen as the domain of the strong. Strategies are rational, militaristic, and scientific, while tactics – predicated on the absence of power – are circumstantial, isolated, and placeless – the domain of the Other (de Certeau 2011, 36–38). This conceptualization has had lasting use in the literature (for a sample of strategies and tactics in urban geography, see Andres 2013; Cuny 2018; Iveson 2013; Jackson 2012; Pickerill and Chatterton 2006), though some scholars accuse de Certeau of valorizing tactics uncritically (Crang 2000).

In this thesis, de Certeau's strategies and tactics could help make sense of the rationalities, planning, and actions found in hosting authorities (strategies) and the means by which residents resist developments (tactics). Standard academic practice here might invoke a comparative case study that would show how residents of Ekaterinburg, for instance, successfully converted tactics into strategies in order to assume a sort of agency over spatial developments in their city, while residents of the other case city (Volgograd)

failed at this conversion and instead remained limited only to small – though morally significant – tactics of resistance. This alone is neither unexpected nor revelatory, however: there are a variety of studies that follow this pattern, and while this story might be compelling, I see little added value in simply categorizing actions into discrete boxes, one labeled "tactics" and the other "strategies." Instead, I find it more useful to begin with de Certeau's attention to the unruly and secretly rebellious:

> "Unrecognized producers, poets of their own affairs, trailblazers in the jungles of functionalist rationality… They trace 'indeterminate trajectories' that are apparently meaningless, since they do not cohere with the constructed, written, and prefabricated space within which they move."
>
> (de Certeau 2011, 34)

In de Certeau's reading, poets and trailblazers take as their raw material the fabricated substance of modern life – be it a television advertisement, consumer capitalism writ large, city planning, or the preparations for a mega-event. Within these boundaries, then, the unrecognized producers find alternate uses for proscribed behaviors, dismantling and recombining them in ways that defy control. De Certeau's focus on the concrete practices of everyday life is a means to perceive these acts that might escape notice in a higher-level analysis. This, to me, is the conceptual utility in understanding tactics: seeing what they allow people to do, particularly given the challenging conditions found during the preparations for the Russian World Cup.

With a view towards the tactics employed by host city residents to blaze trails through the jungles of mega-event rationality, attending to the everyday opens up theoretical space to reconsider Lefebvre's alienation-disalienation dialectic. Take for example the role of sport in society. Particularly in reference to authoritarian states, organized sport is often seen as a tool through which to pacify the populace by training them as spectators, to make them accept inequalities in power and wealth, and to inculcate particular conceptions of national identity (Adams 2010; Koch 2013a). From a distance we can understand this as alienation, the first stage in the dialectic. Taking up de Certeau and the micropolitics of everyday life, we can question what precisely it means to inculcate a particular national identity, and how these strategies translate into concrete differences in people's lives. Further, a focus on the everyday allows us to spot moments of resistance to these processes of alienation, however irrational or small. These unruly tactics – no matter how ineffectual overall – represent the second stage of the dialectic, disalienation. And finally, an attention to the micro and the quotidian allows the movement to

Lefebvre's third stage, where we might (re)discover within this disalienation a new alienation once again.

In this way, I attempt a theorization of the Russian World Cup that operates at multiple levels. The national, municipal, and meso levels illuminate the organization of the mega-event, the rationales behind its existence and implementation, and the creation and dissemination of soft power narratives; while the micro level grounds these global processes in everyday experience, illustrates the functioning or failure of the domestic soft power narratives, and demonstrates how residents carve out small spaces of autonomy in the midst of mega-event-led spatial development and restructuring that, paradoxically, simultaneously embodies and defies the processes of global neoliberalization.

Framing Through the Global East

Overall, I situate these theoretical moves within the literatures of the Global East, that is, in context with the nations and cities that share a common post-socialist or post-Soviet history, now existing in the gap between the Global North and the Global South. Too often, these cities are the victims of academic oversight, caught in a kind of double exclusion, barred from the North and the privileged position of creating theory, but also prevented from participating in advancing post-colonial thought with the South (Tuvikene 2016). It is difficult to know how exactly to understand these ambiguous cities in relation to the rest of the world:

> "So the East is inferior, but not inferior enough. It is a kind of subaltern, but not really. It is not rich, but neither is it poor. It has some elements of European modernity, but lacks others: too different to be included in the North, too European to be included in the South." (Müller 2018, 7)

This quality of being in-between, and therefore difficult to visualize, categorize, and understand, does not only apply to the views of westerners looking in. There is also a centuries-old history within the Global East itself of posing questions about national identity and international affiliation, essentially asking, "*who are we and where do we belong?*" The legacies of Tsar Peter I (1672 – 1725) remain salient today, as his orientation of the Russian Empire towards Europe continues to be debated even in the popular press (for a tiny sample, see Krechetnikov 2017; Kudryashov 2016; Repin 2017). This is something of a traditional topic of discussion, and even Dostoevsky's later diaries reveal a

nationalist obsession with Russia's place in the world: too Asian for Europe but too European for Asia (Dostoevsky 2017; Kohn 1945). These are substantial questions that transcend social class and have maintained relevance, from Tsarist times through various Soviet configurations, and lasting to the contemporary moment (Berdyaev 1997; Karsavin 2017; Solovyov 2010; Volovikova 2004). For my part, over the last twenty years I too have participated in countless similar discussions with residents of the Global East in general and with Russians in particular, over beers in a bar or with sweets and tea (or something stronger) at the kitchen table.

In Anglophone scholarship, work addressing this tenacious ambiguity has tended to emphasize politics and foreign policy (Duncan 2005; Trenin 2011; Tsygankov 2007, 2014, 2016), although sometimes work does focus on culture (see, for example, Barker 1999). For me, however, the salient question is how we can make sense of or move beyond this ambiguity in order to reinscribe the Global East in global debates. A focus on the urban is one method of attempting this leap. So, focusing on the urban, scholars of, from, and within the Global East have endeavored to draw attention to the value of contributions from these nations and cities, whether applying postcolonial lenses to Sarajevo (Bădescu 2016), comparing gentrifications between St Petersburg and Berlin (Bernt 2016), or demonstrating how the analysis of global mobile policies has not sufficiently taken post-socialist cities into account (Borén and Young 2016). Scholars have problematized the usage of the term "post-socialist" to categorize these cities (Chelcea and Druţă 2016), taken issue with the conceptualization of Eastern cities lagging behind the West in terms of both urban development and academic knowledge production (Ferenčuhová 2012; Ouředníček 2016), examined spatial inequalities in property development after the fall of the USSR (Cybriwsky 2016), and argued for the abolishment of the "post-socialist" term altogether (Gentile 2018)

All the same, in Anglophone geography, this literature feels somewhat removed from mainstream urban theorizing, as though Global East scholars are siloed in a separate room and talking only to one another, while debates central to the field occur in other places without them. I have actually witnessed this kind of situation at conferences of the American Association of Geographers, where Global East scholars acknowledge each other with nods at a distance in the large halls before meeting face to face for discussion in much smaller rooms, and without the huge names. Similarly, I have been approached

to peer-review papers that are located empirically in the Global East, despite the fact that their proposed theoretical advancements would suggest other scholars for a better fit.

Ferenčuhová and Gentile (2016) posit four reasons why this happens: first, there is the idea that post-socialist cities deviate from capitalist normality, and therefore that theorizing from these regions is inappropriate and inapplicable. Second, alongside this assumption of abnormality, and despite much work that argues to the contrary, post-socialist cities are still seen as lagging behind their western counterparts. This normative developmental-temporal framing of other spaces is surprisingly persistent in western geography, despite foundational work that endeavors to dismantle it (for example, Massey 2005). Third, theory generated in post-socialist cities is still seen as parochial and particularistic, while theory from the chosen few cities of the North/West is too often unquestioned and considered universal. And fourth, due to linguistic, cultural, institutional, and financial constraints, scholars from the Global East have been unable to bridge the gap between their worlds and the dominant Anglo-American academy.

Bearing this framing context in mind, I return to my project of making sense of the 2018 World Cup by attempting to answer Robinson's call:

> "How might a more global urban studies be grounded, methodologically and conceptually? How might we work productively with existing theories while keeping conceptualization open to inspiration from any city? Can we encourage a culture of theoretical practice commensurate with the revisability of concepts, respectful of divergences and differences? How might we provide a rigorous foundation for the possibility of beginning conceptualization anywhere?"
>
> (Robinson 2016a)

With this inspiration, I embark upon a comparative study of two Russian host cities with a view that is sympathetic to the relational comparative gesture for generating urban theory (Robinson 2016b; Ward 2008, 2010). Further, I structure my empirical material around existing scholarship in two camps: the first on global neoliberalization, entrepreneurialism, and urban development, and the second on soft power. This is not to reify the old trope of employing the cities of the Global East as testing grounds for imported Western theory, but rather an acknowledgement that Russian cities – most recently through their participation in the World Cup – have already inserted themselves into global conversations. My arguments are a bid to demonstrate how the experiences of these Russian cities challenge our received wisdom in the West, as well as to

contribute to the theorization of mega-events, generated in countries outside of the more traditional hosts in the North and West.

A Framework for Understanding Mega-Events

In order to make sense of the Russian World Cup – as well as aspiring to provide value beyond the given case – I offer a light framework for the study of mega-events. As shown in Figure 5, this framework is based on four elements. The first, all-encompassing element is *uniqueness*, the acknowledgment that the host's culture has wide-ranging impacts that cannot be ignored. The World Cup in Russia 2018 was different than in Brazil 2014, which was different from South Africa 2010, and different again from Germany 2006. This may seem self-evident, but the implications are crucial: Russia's governmental structure, political history, economic situation, and unique mix of cultures all shape the mega-event in ways that cannot be understood without the framing of these essential factors.

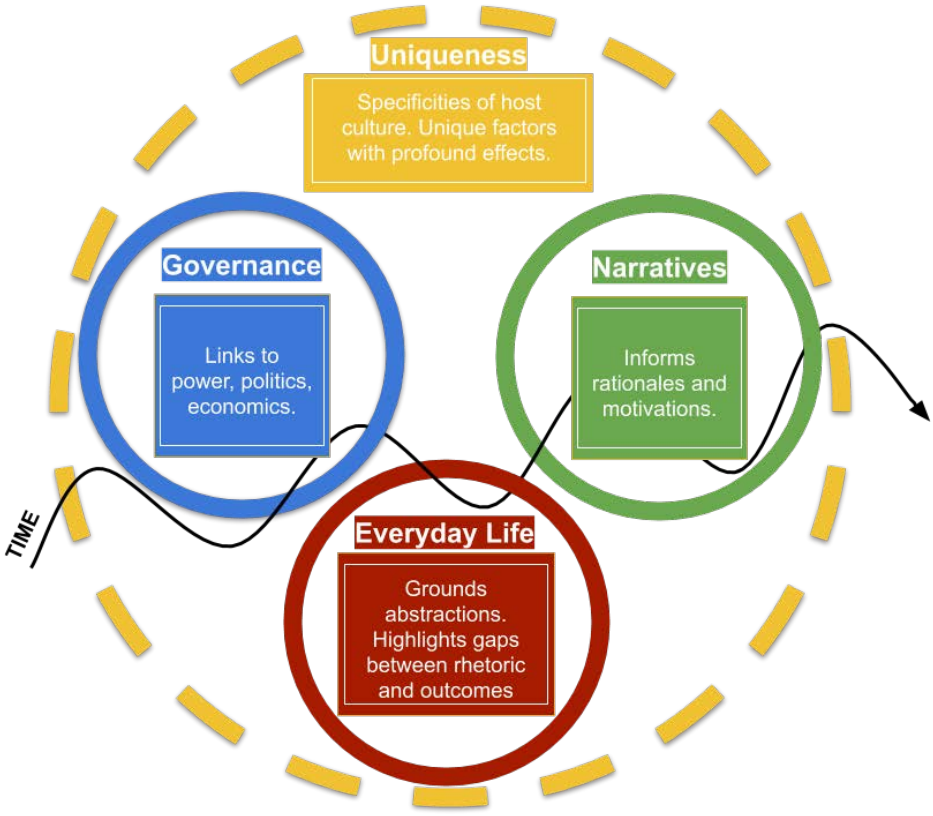

Figure 5: Towards a framework for researching mega-events. Situated in the uniqueness of a host's culture and history, these elements can be combined in any order to illuminate the specific articulations of a given mega-event.

The remaining three elements – governance, narratives, and everyday life – can be taken in any order or combination, so their presentation here is not indicative of a required or

even recommended ordering. At the same time, the specificities of each of these elements are dependent on the element of *uniqueness*, so it is advisable to ground analysis with that element first of all.

Moving on, the element of *governance* illuminates the host's political structure, informs economic questions, and foregrounds the relationship with the event owner. Exploring how and why decisions are made helps explains a mega-event's position and purpose within the host society. Further, the element of *narratives* illuminates the rationales and motivations that underlie the mega-event, and they connect seemingly abstract ideas to concrete developments on the ground. Moreover, narratives do nothing unless they are transported to an audience. In the Russian World Cup, narratives were generated and distributed in ways that mirrored the centralized structure of the state, but mega-events in other countries have different strategies for creating and conveying narratives. So it is not just the content of the narratives that matter, but also the means by which they are shared that requires attention. Finally, the element of *everyday life* grounds the abstractions that too often haunt mega-event research by focusing on the micro scale of the individual and the quotidian. And throughout all of these elements, time plays a role as well. There is a span of years between preparing for the bid and the opening of the games, and none of these elements are necessarily immune to change over this period.

Individually, each of these elements provides a different entry point into studying a mega-event. Yet, on their own, each element is insufficient and misses something vital. When combined, however, the four elements of this framework offer a flexible but ordered means to rethink what mega-events are and what they do.

3: ESSENTIAL CONTEXT FOR THE RUSSIAN WORLD CUP

The FIFA World Cup Event Cycle

FIFA – the Fédération International de Football Association – is the world's governing body for football. Comprised of 211 national football associations, FIFA organizes a variety of football tournaments and football-related development programs around the globe (FIFA 2017b). Its headquarters are located in Zurich, at the end of a tram line in a posh neighborhood at the top of Züriberg, the local hill. Beyond the trappings of decoration – the colorful FIFA flags, the symbolic sculptures of football and internationalism, the private football pitch – what stands out in the self-proclaimed home of football is the façade of the headquarters building. It is only a few floors tall, the base of black marble, the top covered in reflective glass. This glass is protected by sheets of translucent gray mesh, the primary effect of which is to convey a dark and impenetrable surface. The home of FIFA, shown in Figure 6, appears as a literal black box.

Figure 6: Fédération International de Football Association (FIFA) headquarters in Zurich, Switzerland. Source: author.

From these offices, FIFA oversees numerous major and minor football tournaments and programs around the year, but the men's World Cup is the organization's flagship event and the source of the majority of its revenues (Tomlinson 2014a). Oriented around this event, FIFA operates on a four year financial schedule, and total revenue for the 2015-2018 cycle has been budgeted at USD $5.65 billion (FIFA 2017c; FIFA.com 2018). Capitalizing on a global audience, the sale of broadcasting rights, marketing rights, and

licensing rights for the World Cup generates the bulk of this fortune, accounting for about 95% of revenue. Every conceivable aspect of the sport is scrutinized for each participating team and player, leading to exhaustive compendiums of on-field performance statistics to be pored over by fans and scholars, and compared to previous events (FIFA 2018b, 2014, 2010a, 2006). Less visible, however, are the processes involved in allowing this lucrative month-long sporting mega-event to take place. Preparing to host the World Cup takes almost a decade from beginning to end, and means coordinating thousands of people in order to fulfill a list of required actions. Broadly, these can be broken down into phases: bidding to host the event, preparing for the event once the bid has been won, and hosting the event itself. Recently, however, organizers and analysts have begun paying attention to a fourth phase once the event has passed, often called the legacy period (Grix 2014; Horne 2017). Though these event phases repeat consistently during each World Cup, multiple events run concurrently at different points in the event cycle, as illustrated in Figure 7. These temporal overlaps allow hosts to learn from other hosts through knowledge transfer programs, in theory applying lessons from previous events to current situations.

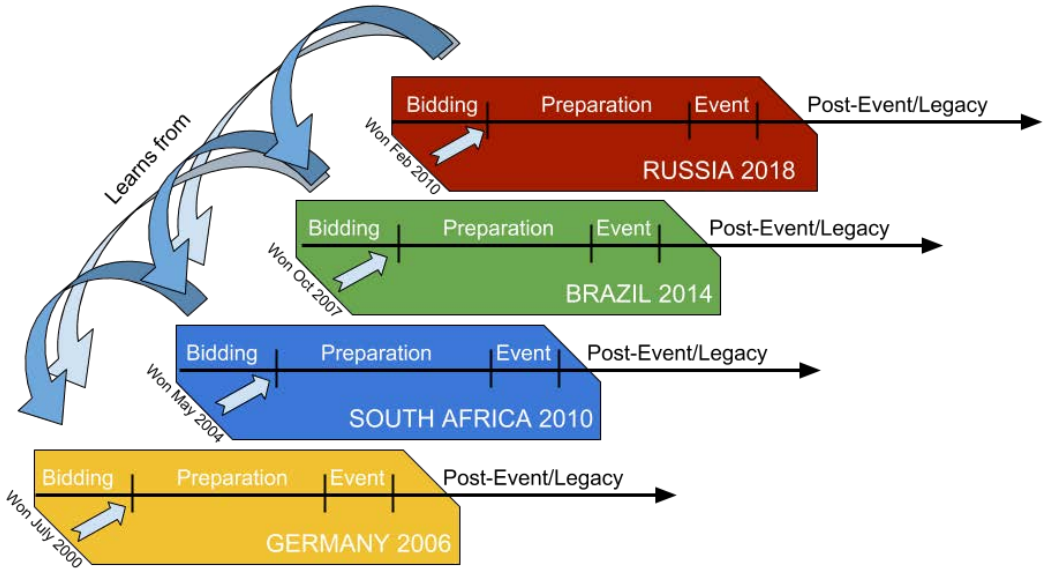

Figure 7: Overlapping phases from the World Cup event cycle for Germany, South Africa, Brazil, and Russia, showing how new hosts learn from previous hosts.

Bidding for Russia 2018

When organizing the World Cup, nearly everything is oriented around this event cycle that, like the seasons, informs the activities of disparate actors in predictable patterns. The first stage in the World Cup event cycle – bidding for the event – is a process that places interested nations in competition for hosting rights and that lasts around two

years. The competition for hosting the 2018 and 2022 editions of the event was opened on January 15 2009, with a letter from then FIFA Secretary General Jérôme Valcke to eligible member associations (typically only one edition is open for bidding at a time, but at that moment FIFA was experimenting with new bidding processes). Valcke's letter invited applications for hosting, communicated the timeline of the bidding process, and broadcast FIFA's expectations:

> "At this stage of the bidding process, FIFA would like to emphasise that the infrastructure and facilities in the host country must be of the highest quality in order to fulfil the requirements of the world's most popular sporting event. Approximately 12 stadiums with minimum capacities of 40,000 for group matches and 80,000 for the opening match and final, are required to host the FIFA World Cup™, which is expected to be contested by 32 teams. In addition, the very highest standards of TV broadcasting, information and telecommunications technology, transport and accommodation are an absolute must… Full details about the requirements for staging the FIFA World Cup™ will be stipulated in the bid documents and hosting documents, to be dispatched by FIFA to interested member associations only." (Valcke 2009)

The point here is Valcke's emphasis, from the very outset, on the necessity of the highest quality and capacity infrastructure. These requirements shape the bidding proposals and later the infrastructure projects for the winning bid, constraining host authorities that might try to use the mega-event to enact tangential development agendas.

According to the timeline, completed Expression of Interest forms had to be submitted by February 2 2009, after which FIFA distributed the bid registration form to the member associations. The bid registration form communicated the rules and procedures for the bidding process and, upon submission of this form by March 16, the aspiring nation officially launched its bid to host. In this way, nine bids were registered with FIFA, some trying for only one event and others vying for either. Upon this formal registration of interest, the event cycle began in earnest. Since the framework established by FIFA had to be followed if a nation wished to be eligible for selection, the event cycle followed the same pattern in every aspiring host nation, even as the specifics of the bid varied according to local goals, constraints, and other conditions.

April 2009 ushered in the next stage in this process, as FIFA distributed event agreements and documents, the legally binding contracts that mandated the framework of participation in the World Cup, should the candidate be chosen to host. Once signed,

these agreements instituted a number of bureaucratic, infrastructural, and legal requirements meant to guide the development of preparations. These agreements were confidential and closely guarded, so I was unable to access a complete set of every contract. I was, however, able to secure copies of the bidding agreement, the host city agreement, and the stadium agreement cover (FIFA 2009, 2010d, 2010f). The bidding agreement contained overviews of the contracts that I am missing, so I was able to piece together a fairly accurate picture of the legal commitments that underlay the bid. They were comprehensive, mandating certain behaviors, indemnifying various actors, guaranteeing exempting FIFA and associates from taxes, and securitizing a variety of spaces within the host cities. Aside from these, the bidding agreement also represented a legal commitment to the bid process and stipulated the structure and content required for the bid committee to create the official bid book for submission to FIFA. Notably, the bid agreement also mandated government support, stating:

> "The Competitions have such national and international significance that the successful hosting and staging of, and the exploitation and protection of any rights relating to, the Competitions cannot be effectively achieved without the full cooperation of the Government. The Bid Committee shall therefore secure the full support of the Government and all further relevant local, regional and national governmental authorities of the bidding Country for its Bid…"
>
> (FIFA 2009, 10)

This is a vital aspect for the development of the World Cup, because the "full support" demanded by FIFA took the form of contractual agreements (the government declaration, eight separate government guarantees, and the government legal statement) that, among much else, eased entry and exit procedures, established broad tax exemptions and, crucially, guaranteed that the host government will pay whatever is needed in order to ensure compliance with FIFA requirements. These were breathtaking concessions. The fact that nations actually compete for the right to sign away national sovereignty on this level is a testament to the symbolic power – and the potential profits – available to hosts. On top of all this, signing the bidding agreement stipulates that:

> "The bid committee acknowledges and agrees that all information given, statements made, and plans and measures proposed, by the bid committee in the main body of its bid book will have a binding legal character and be legally binding for the bid committee… the LOC… and [the] member association…"
>
> (FIFA 2009, 9)

In other words, the bid book becomes a legally binding contract if hosting rights are won. It is important to note the legally binding nature of the bid book, for two reasons.

First, since the goal of the bid committees was to win the bid, they used the bid book to try to satisfy or exceed FIFA's goals as much as possible. These promises, however, may not align with current needs on the ground in the potential host country, nor with the host cities' development trajectory, nor in fact correspond to real world conditions at all. On the contrary, the bid books were full of promises meant to dazzle and win the bid; they did not necessarily make sense outside of the context of outshining the immediate competition. Second, there was a span of almost eight years between Russia winning the bid and the opening of the event in 2018. Many things changed between winning and hosting, but the legal character of the bid book locked the LOC into a development plan that was several years out of date by the time it was implemented.

The LOC referred to above stands for Local Organizing Committee, an organization mandated by the bid agreement to plan and stage the World Cup. The bidding agreement required the member association to create the LOC but keep the organization dormant unless the bidding nation was chosen to host. Aside from this, the bid agreement also required the establishment of the bid committee as a separate entity from the member association, in order to participate in the bid process and submit the bid. This was the legal basis that establishes the relationships between FIFA, the bid committee, and the LOC.

The Russia 2018 Bid Book

With the establishment of the bid committee and the (conditionally dormant) Local Organizing Committee, FIFA required submission of the signed bidding agreement by December 11, 2009. At this point, the bid committees designed the bid books, fulfilling the formatting and content requirements established in the bidding agreement, and endeavoring to create a plan that would impress. Submitted by the deadline of May 14 2010, the Russia 2018 World Cup bid book was comprised of 1099 pages across 20 chapters in three volumes. Volume 1 (203 pages long) provided information on Russia's history, culture, and physical geography, shared the hosting concept and the motivations for bidding, and introduced the plans for preparing the host cities for the event. Volume 2 (500 pages) detailed stadium plans, and Volume 3 (396 pages) covered the remaining aspects of host city development, including plans for training sites, accommodations, transport, security, media, medical services, insurance schemes and a short chapter about the nation's political system and government support for the World Cup (Russia 2018

World Cup Bid Committee 2010). In Volume 1, 55 pages were devoted to demonstrating how preparing for the World Cup would fit with each host city's existing development plans. That is to say, more than a quarter of the first volume of the Russian bid aimed to show how well FIFA's requirements aligned with the master plans and development trajectories of the host cities (though of course the bid book refrained from too many specifics while the cities' actual plans were quite detailed).

Much of the bid book was decorated with vaguely inspirational but meaningless phrases like, "Russia is vast. Russia is endless. Russia is timeless and eternal… Yet Russia can still surprise" (Russia 2018 World Cup Bid Committee 2010, 103, Vol.1). These platitudes notwithstanding, there were important narratives communicated through the bid book, which I will analyze more thoroughly in later chapters. Here, though, it is important to highlight briefly the guiding principles underlying the bid. Broadly, the goals were to give FIFA access to the new markets of Russia and the former USSR, while introducing the world to a different conception of Russia. Domestically, the goals were to use the World Cup as an urban and social development project, while improving the quality of domestic football. These goals were encapsulated with phrases like: "using football as a mechanism for societal, cultural and economic development" (Russia 2018 World Cup Bid Committee 2010, 108, Vol.2), and "providing access to millions of new hearts and minds as well as markets across the near, central, and far east" (Russia 2018 World Cup Bid Committee 2010, 149, Vol.2). The developmental goals emphasized that massive investments in infrastructure were a catalyst to accelerate the modernization of the country, while hosting would impart "life-long skills offering hope for a better future for a more highly trained, skilled workforce" (Russia 2018 World Cup Bid Committee 2010, 150, Vol.2). This aligned with FIFA's stated commitment to use football for social and economic development, as illustrated by the FIFA Foundation and the Football For Hope program (FIFA.com 2017; SoccerEx 2018). At the same time, the event would open new markets for FIFA and partners, providing access to tens of millions of potential new customers. This proved a major selling point in the Russian bid, and these narratives were communicated regularly throughout the bidding documents and in speeches from organizers.

After the submission of the bid book, FIFA conducted inspection visits to each of the bidding nations. These inspections lasted three days each and produced a bid evaluation

report, judging the country's capacities to fulfill the promises outlined in the bid book and balancing this estimation against potential risks. The FIFA evaluation group was present in Russia for approximately 72 hours from August 16 – 19 2010. In this time, they rated the bid reasonably well, emphasizing Russia's overprovision of certain requirements (more stadiums and host cities than the minimum, for example, and nearly twice as much existing hotel stock as required), but noting some risks – particularly the reliance of the event on the air transit system due to Russia's vast geography (FIFA 2010b). Though promised upgrades to the airports seemed to assuage the evaluators, they still flagged the air transit system as the highest risk in the Russian bid. The evaluators concluded each report by listing legal and operational risks. For operational risks, Russia was rated "Medium" overall, with one category classified "High Risk," based on the air transit situation. Russia presented well in terms of legal risk, earning a "Low Risk" rating overall, because the participation of the Russian government led to signing and submission of all contracts and agreements:

> "The government support has been secured and the Russian government has been given the opportunity to gain experience and prove its willingness to make material concessions." (FIFA 2010b, 35)

It is interesting to compare these risk assessments with some of the other bids. The United States, for example, was rated "Medium" for legal risks, due to the fact that none of the required government guarantees were signed or submitted (FIFA 2010c). Similarly, the Japan bid and the Holland / Belgium dual bid were rated "Medium", while the England bid earned a "Low" legal risk despite submitting only partial government guarantees, including qualifications and exceptions to their contracts. These nations did not receive higher overall risk ratings because of their established experience in hosting previous mega-events, which FIFA evaluators took into account. For operational risks, every bidding nation was rated low risk except for Russia ("Medium") and Qatar ("High"). That certain bids were not overly penalized for their incomplete applications demonstrates how FIFA favored potential hosts from the Global North. Further, it illustrates the relative importance of the World Cup for the new generation of hosts, whose governments were willing to fulfill every requirement, rather than negotiate or refuse some of FIFA's demands. Finally, it also exemplifies some advantages of hosting mega-events outside of established democratic countries; it is often easier to manage global events in more authoritarian states, as Secretary General Jérôme Valcke famously said:

> "I will say something which is crazy, but less democracy is sometimes better for organizing a World Cup… When you have a strong head of state who can decide, as maybe Putin can do in 2018… that is easier for us organizers than a country such as Germany, where you have to negotiate at different levels"
>
> (BBC 2013b)

This admission sheds light on some of the unexpected organizational advantages enjoyed by the Russian bid, and also provides a possible alternative explanation for the preponderance of mega-event hosts from outside the Global North (FIFA, after all, is not in the business of democracy promotion). In this light, a bidding authoritarian country might enjoy certain advantages over their more democratic competitors: with a centralized command structure and the public limited only to token participation, the odds increase for a trouble-free and profitable event, as Valcke noted.

Finally, to conclude, the bid evaluation reports were provided to FIFA executive committee members and the saga that began with Jérôme Valcke's letter from January 15 2009, came at last to an end on December 2 2010, as shown in the milestone timeline in Figure 8. Gathered in Zurich, representatives of each bid committee made speeches before the final vote. Vitaly Mutko made waves by switching to English and saying "Let me speak from my heart," a plea that was made more emotional by his admitted difficulties with English (Rabiner 2015). In two rounds Russia won an absolute majority to secure the hosting rights for the 2018 men's Football World Cup, though the entire bidding and voting process triggered international controversy, a spate of legal challenges, and a FIFA ethics investigation. Aside from detailing the corrupt practices of executive committee members in selling or attempting to sell or trade their votes, the Ethics committee also noted how little attention members of the executive committee paid to the details of the bids:

> "Bid teams took the requirements of the contents of the bid books quite seriously. Each team submitted a professional product of significant length and cost. Once the copies were filed with FIFA, they were made available to each executive committee member. It appears that, despite the 'core' relationship to the bid's merits, few members reviewed the books. Some members did take the opportunity to pass the books related to other bids on to the bid team from their respective home countries."
>
> (Garcia and Borbély 2017, 18–19)

That executive committee members did not pay much attention to the bid books begs the question of how they determined where to cast their votes, but the Ethics committee

determined that the Russia bid was not guilty of improprieties. Controversies and allegations aside, the victory for the Russian bid marked the conclusion of one part of the event cycle. In this way, the bid phase came to an end and the next phase – actually preparing for the event – could begin. The previously dormant LOC kicked into life and began working to put into practice the now legally binding promises from the bid books.

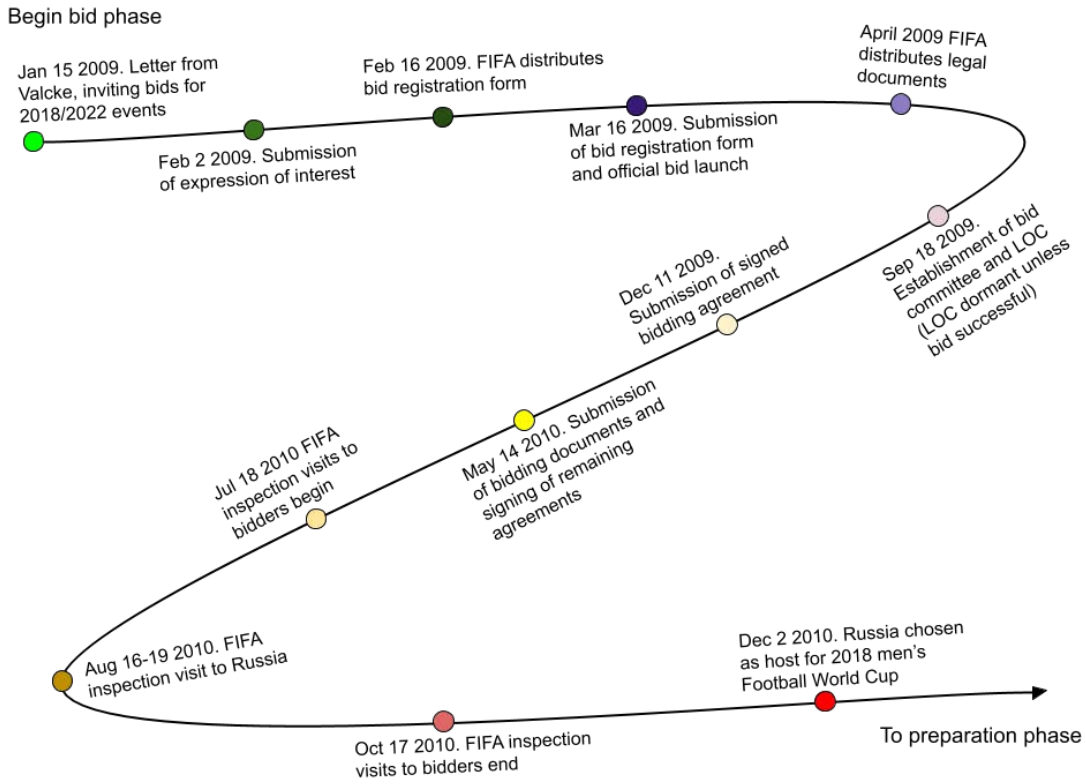

Figure 8: Bid process timeline for 2018 World Cup, showing major milestones on the path from initiation to winning the bid.

Introducing Ekaterinburg and Volgograd

In the bid, World Cup 2018 organizers divided the potential host cities into five clusters. I decided to choose cities from two of these clusters so as to avoid proximity between the sites, and I wanted to focus on the peripheries rather than on host cities better known to the West such as Moscow, St Petersburg, or Sochi. My final choices, Ekaterinburg and Volgograd (see Figure 9) both belong to the group of *millioniki*, or cities with over a million inhabitants. Ekaterinburg is Russia's fourth largest city and growing; Volgograd is the fifteenth and shrinking – soon it might no longer be in the group of *millioniki* at all (Russian Federal State Statistics Service 2010).

Figure 9: Map showing all 11 host regions and cities for the 2018 World Cup in Russia. This study focuses on the cities of Volgograd and Ekaterinburg, displayed in bold text. Sources: Wikimedia Commons CC BY-SA 3.0, modified by author.

Ekaterinburg and Volgograd are industrial cities and both have played major roles in Russian history. Ekaterinburg, known as the capital of the Urals, was founded in 1723 and remains famous across Russia for metalwork, industrial production, and mining (Ekaterinburg Municipality 2019). Malachite and other gemstones from the Urals figure heavily in the royal palaces and cathedrals of St Petersburg, but nowadays they are sold all over central Ekaterinburg as souvenirs, carved into boxes, shaped into little animals, or simply polished as-is. The city is the site of the exile and assassination of the royal family, putting an end to the Romanov dynasty (Plotnikov 2003). Renamed Sverdlovsk after the Revolution, the city grew as a hub of heavy industry and centralized planning during early Soviet industrialization. It also played a crucial role in the Second World War, as the city's production potential was reoriented to the war effort, and entire factories were evacuated from the front lines and relocated to Sverdlovsk (Ekaterinburg Municipality 2019). In the post-war years the city's industrial products were beloved around the USSR, to the point where even now, decades after the collapse, I have witnessed people (who have never visited the region) talking with deep affection about the "Ural" vacuum cleaner and the legendary "Ural" motorcycles. Aside from its industrial might, Sverdlovsk/Ekaterinburg (it regained its original name in 1991) is known for its substantial contributions to Soviet and Russian rock music. Many residents underscored these cultural aspects and valorized their city in relation to St Petersburg or Moscow: "This is the third capital of Russia" (B17), or "Ekaterinburg is Russia's cultural capital – I mean, after Petersburg of course," (F92).

Though it shares common features with Ekaterinburg, Volgograd displays striking contrasts. Volgograd is much older, originating in 1589 as a fortress on the river Volga (Volgograd Municipality 2019). Its original name was Tsaritsyn, from the word *Tsaritsa*, meaning Tsarina or Queen. This name persisted as the fortress amassed a storied military history, growing into a village and then a river-port city. It was renamed Stalingrad in 1925 and transformed into an industrial center, with factories lining the riverbank of the long, thin city (Skripkin, Lunochkin, and Kurilla 2015). By far the most significant historical event to occur in the history of the city was the Battle of Stalingrad, from August 23 1942 to February 2 1943. It was one of the bloodiest battles in human history, with some estimates placing the number of dead close to two million (Hellbeck 2015). This battle marked the turning point in the Second World War and remains a point of fierce pride for the residents of Volgograd and citizens of Russia overall. It also obliterated many areas of the city. Even now, during preparations for the World Cup, builders working at the stadium construction site found mangled war equipment, soldiers' remains, and unexploded artillery shells (Tarasov 2018; TASS 2014d). I was told that this is not unusual during building projects all over the city. For example, the small war museum at Volgograd State University had a display with war materiel pulled from the ground when they expanded their campus (see Figure 10). Volgograd seems inextricable from the war, both symbolically and materially.

The city was renamed Volgograd in 1961 as part of the de-Stalinization processes, but to this day many residents seems to have an uneasy, somewhat contradictory relationship with the name Stalingrad. This is due to the heroic sacrifices and victories associated with the name, but tempered by awareness of the atrocities of the Soviet leader. "You have to understand," a young man explained. "He saved the country" (F04). There are periodic petitions to return to the city's previous name, and while there are few who believe this will actually come to pass, the city does legally refer to itself as Stalingrad eight times a year during certain holidays (Volgograd City Duma 2013). This move has caused some consternation among observers both in Russia and in the West, who worry about the possible political rehabilitation of Stalin (Alekseev 2017; BBC 2013a; Levada Center 2017), though the president has refrained from taking a position and stated that the issue is the responsibility of regional and municipal authorities (TASS 2014c). Either way,

souvenirs with Stalin's portrait are for sale in display cases in the airport, next to pictures of Vladimir Putin and little statues of *Rodina Mat' Zovyot*.

Figure 10: Physical remnants of the Battle of Stalingrad, found during construction activities at Volgograd State University, on display at the university's war museum. Finds like this are common, and the museum curator told me that much more materiel was found than is displayed here. Source: author.

Ekaterinburg and Volgograd have proud industrial histories, but they suffer from factories that are shuttered, standing idle, or not working to capacity. Both cities were involved in the war but in notably different capacities, and this affected each in different ways. And in the post-Soviet period they have witnessed divergent fortunes, as Ekaterinburg has grown in population, stature, and prestige, while Volgograd – despite a brief cultural and sporting renaissance in the 1990s – has not. Ekaterinburg remains in a superior economic position; it is much wealthier, with a city budget nearly twice that of Volgograd's, and this discrepancy is immediately visible in terms of urban maintenance (Ekaterinburg Municipality 2018; Volgograd Municipality 2018). Both cities, then, shared similar characteristics even as they exhibited differing trajectories, and here they serve as exemplars of how mega-event-led preparations unfolded in different ways in major Russian peripheral cities.

Russia 2018 in Context with Other Mega-Events

Mega-events are not isolated occurrences; as discussed in Chapter 2, they are situated in the urban fabric of the host cities, with concomitant sociocultural and political economic specificities, and they are articulated in relation to other mega-events. These include the overlapping mega-events in other countries that have run before and will come after the current edition (as shown in this chapter, Figure 6), as well as other mega-events that have been hosted previously in the same country. In other words, the existence of other hosting experiences – both with previous mega-events in Russia and with other World Cups around the globe – affected the articulation of the 2018 World Cup.

Russia has a history of hosting mega-events, most notably the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow (though Olympic venues were also sited in Leningrad, Kiev, Minsk, and Tallinn). In the post-Soviet era, Russia began hosting smaller, second-order events, such as the 2013 Universiade in Kazan, exemplifying a strategy of hosting as "springboards to the ultimate prize of first-order events" (Black 2014, 17). This strategy had been deployed effectively by organizers in South Africa with a string of second-order events (including the Cricket and Rugby World Cups) on their path to winning rights for the 2010 Men's Football World Cup. Brazilian organizers employed this strategy as well, hosting the Pan American Games before winning rights for the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics. Together, South Africa, Brazil, and Russia joined China (that had blazed the trail with Beijing 2008) as the most prominent nations of the new generation of hosts, establishing the trend where mega-events developed and hosted in the wealthy industrial nations of the Global North have moved decidedly outside of their traditional territories. Cornelissen (2010) identifies the motivations of these emerging hosts as oriented around a common group of aspirations: signaling international stature, showcasing and stimulating economic development, and deploying soft power.

Regarding the Russian case, the most obvious mega-event to discuss in reference to the 2018 World Cup is the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. The shadow of Sochi 2014 shaped preparations for the 2018 mega-event, particularly in terms of costs and narratives. Sochi was the most expensive in Olympics history (Müller 2014), though a large portion of the costs were dedicated towards an ambitious urban development project intended to boost Sochi's economy by transforming the dilapidated region into an all-year world-class resort (Golubchikov 2017). At the same time, Sochi 2014 was instrumentalized in a partially successful attempt to deploy a new conception of Russian-

ness to both international and domestic audiences (Wolfe 2016). This soft power project informed the articulation of the entire mega-event, ranging from the catchphrase emblazoned by the entry to the coastal cluster of Olympic venues – "Russia: Great, New, Open" – to the spectacles of the opening and closing ceremonies that packaged and presented a grand version of Russian and Soviet history in order to answer the oft-discussed question of contemporary Russia's missing national idea (Valdai Discussion Club 2014).

In contrast to these ambitions, the 2018 World Cup was relatively scant in nationalistic narratives. Partly this was due to the fact that, despite the increasing sophistication of each spectacle, the World Cup opening ceremonies have typically been seen as an inferior vehicle for communicating national messages as compared to the Olympics (Tomlinson 1996). Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, after the well-documented excesses of Sochi 2014, the differing political and economic climate revealed little national appetite, need, or even budget for more grand opening and closing spectacles. In the end, the opening ceremony for Russia 2018 came as something of an anticlimax, as it was the shortest on record – totaling less than half an hour. More broadly, as I will detail in subsequent chapters, the run-up to the World Cup was much more no-nonsense than Sochi, largely devoid of rhetoric oriented around national identities, and much less aimed toward at international audiences. Instead, organizers targeted the domestic arena, framing the preparations as a transformative project for the host cities, with improved infrastructures representing a long-term benefit for Russian residents.

Interventions Within the 2018 Host Cities

As mentioned above, as part of the bidding process, FIFA required the submission of signed agreements from host authorities and city governments from every host city. These agreements contained too many interventions to list here, and not all of them were relevant to this project even though they may have had immense consequences for the host nation, for example the exemptions from tax law, or the commitments from host cities to cover costs and guarantee support for all required infrastructure and facilities.

For the purposes of this thesis, the most crucial agreements were those that mandated a uniform standard of infrastructure quality and capacity. Within each city, FIFA requirements shaped interventions in a given number of sites, including the football

stadium where the games would be played, the training facilities where teams would practice, hotels (first for VIPs and players and then more generally for fans), transit hubs like airports and train stations, roads and highways to connect these areas and move large numbers of people, and the less visible infrastructures needed to power, operate, and maintain these facilities (FIFA 2009, 2010e; Frawley and Adair 2014). These were the primary sites of infrastructure investment and the most visible and predictable areas of change during the preparations for hosting. An infrastructure or beautification project outside of these sites was more likely to be an independent project launched at the local, regional, or federal level, and were not mandated by contract with FIFA. These included projects that may have had long-term value for the city after the event, for instance an expanded transport system or a new city park, but since they were not stipulated in the agreements, they were not expressly needed for the successful execution of the World Cup, and therefore more at risk for being cut in the context of limited budgets and inflexible event deadlines.

Notably, the agreements stipulated more infrastructure than was needed during the event, for instance requiring each host city to prepare a minimum of four potential training sites, while only two would be chosen for the event (one main and one backup). Moreover, the agreements granted FIFA high degrees of authority over urban space, establishing controlled areas in order to maintain consistent marketing and branding messages. These concessions included so-called protocol routes, which were:

> "…the main, official traffic within the Host City during the Competition Periods or the periods of certain Competition-related Events hosted and staged in the Host City, such as the road between the airports and main train stations of the Host City and the stadium, the draw venues (if applicable), the FIFA headquarters (if applicable) and the FIFA venue hotels within the host city."
>
> (FIFA 2010d, 58)

Aside from the protocol routes, these controlled areas also applied to a 2km radius around the stadium, a 100m radius around the fan fest zones, flexible areas around the transit hub territories, and more (see Figures 11 and 12). Since the primary purpose of these areas was to secure consistent marketing, the host city agreement mandated that, within these controlled areas, all inventory of outdoor advertising be provided to FIFA free of charge or at first right to acquire. This included advertising locations such as billboards, bus shelters, building wraps, and the exteriors of public transit vehicles. The World Cup also required the securitization of this space to ensure not just general safety

but also the efficient provision of critical event deliverables. These logistical requirements led to a special security regime for each host city, lasting several weeks before and after the event and restricting mobility in and around the Controlled Areas (Russia 2018 World Cup Organizing Committee 2018a).

These areas represented the culmination of the bid process that began with Valcke's letter in 2009, and were the spaces of intervention – resultant from a centralized, uniform process – that I used to begin my explorations in Ekaterinburg and Volgograd. They grounded my initial visits to Russia, informed my encounters with residents, and provided a basis for comparison across both host cities. In the coming chapters I begin from these sites but then continue exploring elsewhere in the host cities in my investigation of how, why, and with what effects the 2018 World Cup was articulated in Ekaterinburg and Volgograd.

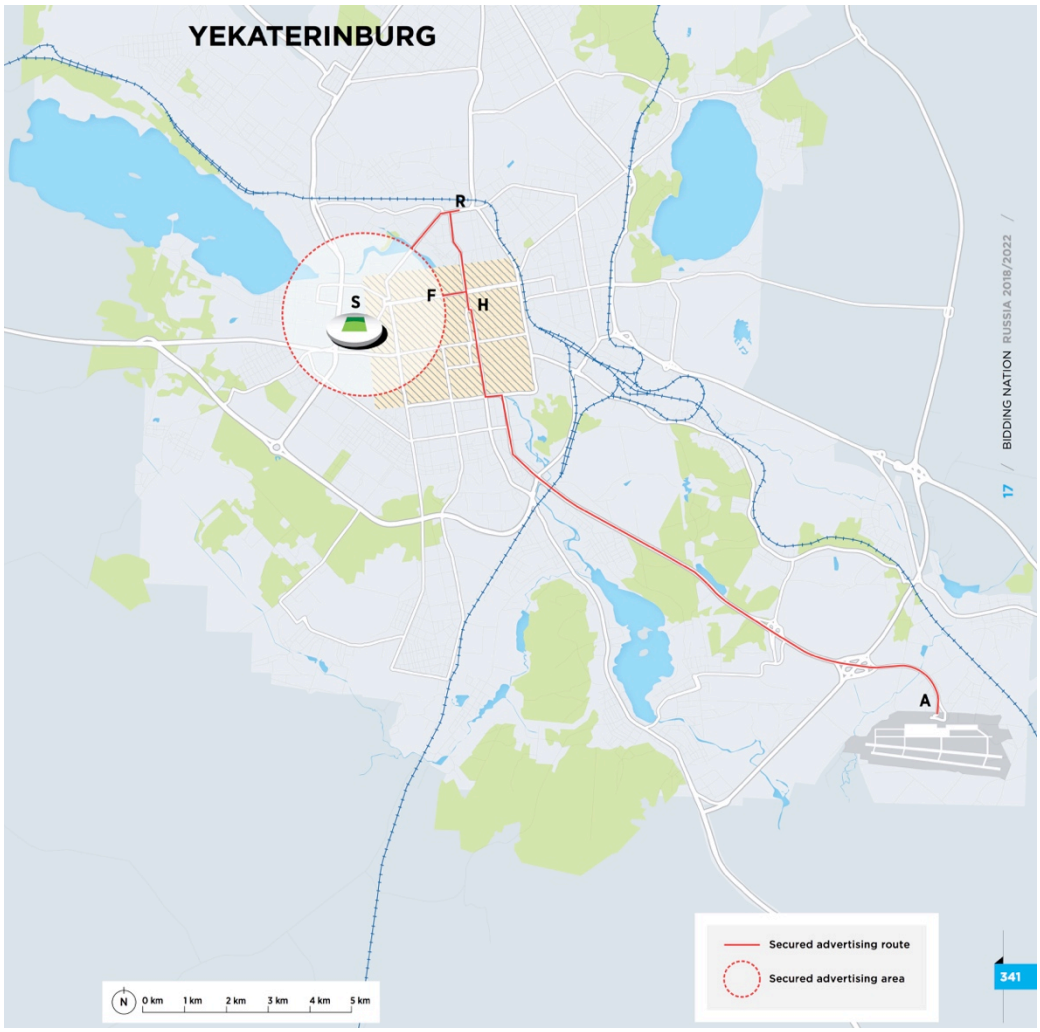

Figure 11: Map of Ekaterinburg showing Controlled Areas and Routes, encompassing airport, stadium, and urban core, in which FIFA controlled advertising space and securitized the surroundings. S=Stadium, F=Fan Fest Zone, R=Train station, H=Hotel, A=Airport. Source: Russia World Cup Bid Committee, 2010.

Figure 12: Map of Volgograd showing Controlled Areas and Routes, encompassing airport, stadium, and urban core, in which FIFA controlled advertising space and securitized the surroundings. S=Stadium, F=Fan Fest Zone, R=Train station, H=Hotels, A=Airport. Source: Russia World Cup Bid Committee, 2010

4: RESEARCH DESIGN

Detaining

There was a loud, brisk knock at the door to my room in the Old Stalingrad, a kitschy hotel in central Volgograd based on Soviet and wartime nostalgia. I tumbled out of bed and threw on yesterday's clothes, preparing to ask the cleaning staff to give me some time. When I opened the door, though, it wasn't the staff that I saw. Instead, two men stood in the hotel hallway, one in an ordinary brown suit and the other in a police uniform. The man in uniform flashed an identification card, a small cardboard rectangle that opened to reveal a photograph and handwritten details. I had something similar once, given to me by Herzen University when I first moved to St Petersburg to study in 1998: mine was a *studencheskiy bilet*, a student card, and it gave me access to transport and museums all around the city. But this man's card was something else entirely, and it granted him access to far more than museums or the metro. "Sven Wolfe," he said, not asking. "Passport and visa, please."

As of this writing, I have lived in, visited, and travelled around Russia for twenty years, and I have had my share of interactions with the police. From random document checks to the occasional shakedown for a petty bribe, most of these have been benign, if not particularly pleasant. There have been more serious moments, though, when my nationality affected the interaction. Once, as we were hitchhiking to Sochi, my wife and I were hauled into a back room at the armed checkpoint crossing into the Krasnodar region. It took a long time to convince the regional border guards that we were merely young idiots and that I did not work for the CIA. They released us after recording my passport details by hand in a giant tome where, after every name entered there, I saw written, "Chechen… Chechen… Dagestani… Chechen…" After my name, the officer wrote "USA" in huge letters and circled it twice. But all these interactions, no matter how harrowing, were distinguished by happenstance or bad luck, and they were marked by the fact that I was in some outside territory. Never before had the authorities come to find me where I was living. They had never been looking specifically for *me*.

"My passport? Of course!" I fumbled around my room, found the little blue booklet, and presented it to the officers in the doorway. They flipped through my passport and snapped it closed. "Come with us." In a silver SUV, they drove me to a part of

Volgograd I had never seen before, an entire district of prefabricated concrete walls, muddy roads, and grey buildings. They parked in front of one of these and led me into the headquarters of the regional branch of the Federal Migration Service (see Figure 13). They shepherded me upstairs, opened the door to an office, and seated me at a table covered in stacks of paper. An electric kettle stood next to a few old mugs, a bottle of carbonated water, and an opened box of chocolates. Except for the FSB wall calendar, and the fact that I was there against my will, I could have been visiting the vice dean of a university or the human resources department at a midsize company.

For the next three and a half hours, men in suits and uniforms came in and out of the room, peppering me with questions or plying me with conversation. They wanted to know what I was doing in Volgograd, where else I had been in Russia, whom I had met, where I had gone. The uniformed man who had fetched me from the hotel was aggressive. Once, he entered the room with a stack of printouts half an inch high: all my entrances and movements in Russia since I was a student in 1998. He leafed through them in front of me and then barked, "You didn't register yourself after your entry on July 17, 2007! Where were you in July 2007?"

My desperation grew as the detention continued, but then the man in the brown suit reappeared and offered a friendly ear and more compassionate conversation. I found him open and affable, and I desperately wanted him to like me and to set matters straight. I recognize this now as the Good Cop / Bad Cop technique from the movies, but I had no idea it was so effective in real life. It turned out that the man in brown also wanted to know details: whom I had spoken with and where we had met. It is a small victory, but I am proud that I did not divulge identifying details to my questioners, even to the supposedly friendly agent in brown. I changed names of my interlocutors on the fly and confused the names and locations of the bars, cafes, and apartments where we met.

Figure 13: Volgograd division of the Federal Migration Office, where I was taken for questioning. Source: author.

Of course I am not a spy, but I can see how the authorities could suspect me. I am an American citizen, my Russian language skills are suspicious, and I was doing politically contentious research in peripheral Russian cities where foreigners were still a rarity (though of course many tens of thousands of foreigners came later for the World Cup). Worse, I had committed a bureaucratic error and was doing this research under a tourist visa, which was the official pretext for picking me up, questioning me, fingerprinting me, and ultimately ejecting me from the country. It does not matter that doing research or participating in conferences under a tourist visa was standard practice for many years, a widespread semi-formal strategy to circumvent byzantine entry requirements. It is also irrelevant that, as one of my Volgograd friends told me afterward in the bar, "They noticed you, so they would have nailed you for something, visa or not." I was legally in the wrong and therefore vulnerable. And beyond the visa, the specifics of my nationality mattered too, given the context of increased tensions between Russia and the West after the annexation of Crimea and the violence in eastern Ukraine. Simply being American in Russia at that time was not value-neutral.

This encounter with the authorities put a premature end to my fieldwork in Russia. It also forced me to withdraw my participation from a European University at St Petersburg grant that, my colleagues and I had hoped, would have established branch

university outposts in a number of peripheral cities, starting with Volgograd. In the aftermath of my encounter, several Russian colleagues cut contact with me: I became politically dangerous, or at least I was seen as such by some, and they could not afford that vulnerability (I do not blame them – I would not wish a visit from the security services on anyone, least of all my friends). Other colleagues and friends did not seem to care as much, however, and viewed this incident either as a bureaucratic mistake or as an example of official stupidity. It is because of this latter group that I was able to continue work on this project, albeit at a distance and mediated through video chat, text message, and email. At home, I filled pages with writing about my encounter in an attempt to make sense of what had happened to me. I processed many of these writings in the same manner as I did other data generated in the field, coding them for themes and placing myself alongside the people who had spoken with me for this project. In this way, new themes arose inductively from my material. I began to think about life in more closed or authoritarian environments, and about how people make sense of official narratives in periods of disruption and change. I wondered about what can and cannot be said, and thought about where, when, and for whom these rules apply.

The Red Line

In some of my interviews and conversations, I spoke with people who reproduced what I identified as official narratives. They did not necessarily do this because of Russian authoritarianism. Perhaps they shared these narratives because they thought that is what a foreigner expected to hear, or maybe they sensed there was no rapport between us in a social research interaction inappropriate to their given culture and space-time. It is also possible, of course, that they legitimately believed those narratives! Still, there is something about conducting research in more closed or authoritarian contexts that complicates the research process; it concerns forbidden topics of discussion and what happens if a person broaches these topics. Glasius et al (2018, 38–47) place these politically sensitive or forbidden research topics behind what they call the Red Line. If a researcher strays beyond the Red Line, then they expose themselves to consequences, ranging from surveillance and threats, to expulsion, imprisonment, or death (BBC 2018; Kirchgaessner 2016). The existence of real consequences for asking questions is, for me, one of the defining characteristics of a more closed society. There is a further distinction between hard and fluid red lines within the authoritarian field, with an emphasis on the "gray area around certain research topics… [where] restrictions are vague and

punishments appear random" (Loyle 2016). The colorful metaphors employed here serve to illustrate the unpredictability of navigating authoritarian spaces, with the threat of punishment lurking behind a misstep. These dangers make reflexive questioning about positionality all the more important, both inward – who I am, how I present myself – and outward, towards the "wider world" (Rose 1997, 309). The wider world is not uniform, however, and this is important to remember when working in more closed societies. There is no totalitarian control over Russian society, after all, and the lived experience of authoritarianism is fluid, uneven, and contingent. In other words, there are spatiotemporal and positional grammars at play: the Red Line is not the same in all places or times, nor uniform for all people.

The various sites where I worked illustrate how fluid and contingent the Red Line for my project could be. To illustrate, take the idea that World Cup preparations might result in certain negative outcomes for a host city, whether through local corruption or as a general byproduct of mega-event development. This topic was not taboo at FIFA headquarters, though I noted an unsurprising tendency there to emphasize or exaggerate the benefits of hosting. It was not verboten in academic workshops and urban planning conferences in several Russian cities where I presented on the potential problems of hosting. In Ekaterinburg, these questions generated debate, whether with members of the municipal and regional administrations, academics and students, or residents. And in Volgograd, these topics were not problematic in the streets, bars, cafes, or apartments where I met with residents. But when I spoke at Volgograd State University to a group of student volunteers about the potential promise and pitfalls of the World Cup, I crossed the fluid Red Line – or, to paraphrase the words of my friend, "they" noticed me. Thus, the knock on my hotel door the following morning.

These boundaries are unstable, however: they shift over space and time, and are contingent on political relationships and on the positionalities of the people involved – so it is possible that I might have been able to have the same discussion with student volunteers at a different Russian university, or at Volgograd State but at a different time, and face no consequences because I would have remained on the safe side of the Red Line. What is difficult here, particularly for foreigners, is that the Red Line is not just fluid but also invisible: there are few, if any, warning signs, and yet the consequences for overstepping can be severe.

In my story, once I drew the attention of the authorities, I was confronted with surveillance and questioning techniques designed to elicit fear, confession, and information, offerings from a standard menu of the security services in post-Soviet spaces (Gentile 2013). Aside from the risks to my person and the desire to end the encounter as rapidly as possible, my priority was to act ethically in this new situation and protect the identities of the people who had spoken with me (Glasius et al. 2018, 31). This is why I refused to divulge names and places, instead fabricating fictional encounters on the fly. Sitting in the office and peppered with questions, though, I became keenly aware of the fragility of my recorded interviews, conversations, photographs, and field notebooks. I had worked anonymity into my record keeping, so in many cases it would be impossible for the authorities to identify my participants, but in others – particularly the semi-structured interviews – it would be easy to uncover identities if the authorities seized my materials and traced the connections between them. I worked to correct this problem as soon as I was released from questioning, deleting files and tearing up whole sections of my field notebooks so I could flush them down the toilet in my room at the Old Stalingrad Hotel. When I left Russia safely, in what I confess was a paranoid state, I went through my materials back home to purge anything with even a hint of identifying information. I was frightened by the idea that my materials might actually somehow be seized.

Identifying, questioning, and ultimately ejecting me from the country was a similar process to that employed by Soviet authorities in distinguishing between good and bad foreigners, as discussed in Chapter 2. Since I did not have a particularly notable status, however, I did not rate Potemkin treatment and was not taken on special excursions, as were many foreign and Russian journalists. It was only when I posed politically sensitive questions to the volunteers at Volgograd State University that I was flagged as one of the undesirable foreigners and brought in for questioning. Aside from potentially providing information, I also proved useful to the authorities as a propaganda prop: having forced me to sign dozens of pages of a pre-written confession, I appeared in both news articles and a television program as an example of how western security services were "warring against the 2018 World Cup" (Karpova 2017; Polyanichko, Baldenkova, and Karpova 2017; Rossiya24 2018b).

In sum, the costs for my straying over the Red Line were moderate overall but significant for me: I was not harmed nor explicitly threatened, but the authorities made it clear to me that my activities were unwelcome and that I would be in trouble if I continued. By this time, I had already adjusted my interview methods to achieve better results within the given circumstances of that historical conjecture in Russia, but now I had to adjust further and cease fieldwork entirely. And, on a personal level, I had to accept the possibility that I may never be allowed to return to Russia, even to visit in-laws or friends. Nevertheless, given what could have occurred and in the light of what has happened to too many other researchers around the world of late, I consider myself fortunate.

Positioning

One of my aims in this thesis is to explore the articulation of the 2018 World Cup at multiple levels, unpacking the organizational structures, the rationales and narratives that explained what was happening and why, and investigating the impacts of these developments on the residents of host cities. This ambition requires a methodology that can grasp developments that are both broad and narrow, translocal and hyperlocal, and that is attuned to how these conceptions of scale might break down, revealing the ways in which they are constituted relationally. Moreover, this methodological approach must take into account the challenges of doing research within the uneven and contingent closures of Russian authoritarianism. My encounter with the Russian migration and security services illustrates these challenges and illuminates how intertwined the geopolitical and the individual can be. Placed here, this encounter demonstrates my methodological approach to encompassing these multiple scales, while locating myself as a researcher in their co-construction. It also hints at the ways I generated and analyzed data, at some of the ethical challenges I encountered, and at how I communicate my findings in this dissertation.

Doing qualitative research means facing ethical, pragmatic, and situational challenges related to field access, establishing rapport, proceeding with informed consent, protecting interviewees from any consequences resulting from their participation, and representing these research interactions fairly (Clifford, French, and Valentine 2010; Limb and Dwyer 2001). These issues are further complicated when doing work across cultural and linguistic divides (Mukherjee 2017; Sultana 2007), and further still in

challenging contexts such as a more closed political environment (Glasius et al. 2018; Koch 2013b). Visa mistakes notwithstanding, it is easy to confuse my qualitative research practices in Russia – exploring the city, taking photographs of politically contentious sites, establishing rapport with residents, recording conversations, and taking notes – with espionage (Driscoll and Schuster 2017). These practices were especially suspicious due to my positionality, the "unique mix of race, class, gender, nationality, sexuality and other identifiers… as well as location in time and space" (Mullings 1999, 337). A researcher's positionality always has effects in the field, but these were amplified for me in Russia due to the broader geopolitical context, not just with my interview partners, but also notably with the security authorities.

Acknowledging researcher positionality means understanding that I was operating *within* the world, co-producing partial and situated knowledges, rather than epistemologically outside and above it (Haraway 1988; Rose 1997). This co-production was predicated on the particulars of my positionality, not just physical identifiers (male, white, and so on) however important they may be, but also on my twenty years of lived experience in and involving Russia. This has given me a partial, inconsistent, but nevertheless significant insider access (Mohammad 2001) to what is often, for many at least, a challenging research environment. It is worth noting, however, that being an insider is no guarantee against challenges in the field (Ezeh 2003). Practically, my partial insider access means that I can sometimes pass for Russian, particularly in shorter interactions, or at least *nash*, "ours", referring broadly to someone who hails from one of the nearby countries of the former USSR (for a harrowing story of a foreign researcher passing as *nash*, see chapter 1 of Wanner 2010). As it pertained to this project, my linguistic and cultural facility meant that I could often minimize researcher effects (by which I mean how behavior is influenced by environmental conditions and personal values in the research interaction), particularly if I was working more covertly. It also meant that I could more easily establish rapport, even when operating openly as a foreigner, regardless of my native language or the color of my passport.

At the same time, my positionality as an *obrusevshy Amerikanets*, a Russified American, introduced a different set of potential researcher effects, and also exposed me to the local implications of otherwise abstract geopolitical relations. Russia's increasing authoritarianism has already resulted in western researchers limiting their work or leaving

the country altogether (Goode 2010), and the increased international tensions in the aftermath of the 2014 Ukrainian crises have only complicated this situation. If foreign researchers abandoning Russia is not an explicit aim of the authorities, it is at least a positive side effect for them, insofar as they benefit from more closure and less exposure. This represents a significant change from the much more open research environment that began with the loosening of political restrictions in the *glasnost* and *perestroika* eras, and marked by the opening of long-secret archives (Donadio 2007; Raleigh 2002). This period is largely over.

Now, if foreigners are not willing to abandon research in Russia, one response to these increased risks would be to engage in more covert research activities, observing and participating in social life but not expressly announcing one's role as researcher (Hilbert 1980). At the same time, covert research introduces problematic ethical concerns, troubling the peer review process, complicating the effort to validate claims and, perhaps most damagingly, taking advantage of unsuspecting people and potentially exposing them to risks (Herrera 1999, 2003). These factors are further complicated by the conditions of political closure, because then covert research – already an ethically ambiguous situation but hardly one that is limited to Russia – begins to resemble spycraft; it is the authoritarian context that gives covert research an extra political meaning.

Leaving aside the notion that researchers in liberal democracies also may face issues of (self-)censorship and the dangers of surveillance from security authorities, what exactly does it mean when we talk about working in more closed societies? Koch (2013b, 2013c) probes these questions in an effort to conduct research that privileges practices over opinion, in order to separate western researchers from implicit liberal assumptions. Further, Koch and others who work in this direction endeavor to move beyond a liberal/illiberal binary, drawing attention to the inconsistencies of closure in authoritarian countries and the various closed contexts hiding within liberal democracies (Belcher and Martin 2013). I am furthered inspired by Turner (2013), who navigates the dual challenges of bureaucratic obstacles and gatekeepers on one side, and self-censorship among suspicious research participants on the other. Turner focuses not only on what is said but also, notably, on significant selected silences. This idea proved relevant for

certain aspects of my research process, despite the differences between Russia and the Sino-Vietnamese borderlands where Turner worked.

So, insofar as possible, it is important to define the spaces of Russian political closure. In the context of chronically weak political institutions, the post-Soviet period in Russia has been marked by increasing authoritarianism (Gel'man 2015a), though many scholars refrain from absolutes and instead describe the Russian state in mixed language: as a hybrid regime (Petrov, Lipman, and Hale 2014; Shevtsova 2001; Treisman 2011), electoral authoritarian (Reuter and Robertson 2012; Schedler 2015), populist authoritarian (Mamonova 2019) or competitive authoritarian (Levitsky and Way 2010). There is a gulf between these classifications – which are, after all, quite abstract – and lived experience on the ground, where authoritarian practices may be different than envisioned by scholars, journalists, or other observers. This can complicate the research process by coloring what we see, or what we assume we will see:

> "We may get fixated on a notion of agents of the state who are constantly and single-mindedly involved in arresting dissidents, harassing journalists, closing down websites or breaking up demonstrations. Indeed, some of us have found that by using authoritarianism as an analytical lens, we unintentionally constructed a monster in our minds called authoritarian regime. The monster, we imagined, is out to do nasty things to its citizens, and perhaps to us."
>
> (Glasius et al. 2018, 7–8)

Authoritarian practices in Russia do have real effects on people – indeed, I experienced some of these firsthand – but at the same time they are not universal nor, for the most part, draconian. Thus, despite my encounter with the security services, I attempt to move beyond the monstrous imagination of authoritarianism that, in my reading, bears more in common with Cold War-era Russophobia (Feklyunina 2012; Tsygankov 2009) than it does with actual life. Still, Russia's authoritarian conditions did affect many aspects of the research process, particularly in context of the increased negative attitudes towards foreigners in general and Americans in particular (Levada Center 2018a, 2018b), all of which complicated issues of access and permission, altered the calculus for ethics, transparency obligations, and protection of research, and raised questions about basic safety (Driscoll 2015; Shih 2015). But the application of authoritarian practices in Russia is not uniform, neither for researchers nor for residents. In other words, living this authoritarianism was a dynamic and not easily predictable process, and it was dependent on the conjuncture of my positionality and location in a particular city in a particular

space-time. Working within this authoritarianism also combined with more universal challenges in qualitative research and, together, these conditions necessitated some adjustments to how I generated data for this project.

Generating

My encounter with Russian authoritarian practices forced an early stop to my fieldwork, but nevertheless I generated and analyzed a substantial amount of data for this project, summarized in Table 2. I conducted this work primarily in (but not limited to) the two host cities where I sited most of my research, aiming to address the relative lack of comparative research in urban theory (Robinson 2014; Ward 2010) and mega-events scholarship (Müller and Gaffney 2018). As a multi-city event, the World Cup would seem ideal for comparative investigation, but as I am a single researcher, it was not practical to explore developments in every host city. Instead, I chose to conduct fieldwork in two cities, aiming for a compromise between depth and breadth, and began an inductive process of looking for cities that might exhibit interesting or contrasting features that could contribute answers to my research questions, framing my investigations with reference to a light touch comparative urbanism that pursues detailed case studies to contribute to larger theoretical debates (Robinson 2016a). In this I began by viewing the host cities as singularities, to use Robinson's (2016b) term, wherein the processes of change occurring on the ground could be seen as distinctive on their own terms, rather than as part of already established processes. Robinson notes that, in the context of global interconnectedness, "urban outcomes are repetitive, even as they are at the same time distinctive" (Robinson 2016b, 14). To me, this mirrors the seeming paradox covered in Chapter 2, where the World Cup developments were standardized and simultaneously area-specific. Crucially, I required a comparison in order to address this paradox, and comparing two sites allowed me to identify locally contingent variations of developments that were, simultaneously, unified expressions of a standardized national development program.

In keeping with my concern for the ways in which the World Cup is articulated into Russian cities, I generated material for this dissertation through methods targeted at making sense of organizations and governance structures, changes to the built environment in the host cities, and the everyday lives of residents. In this way I hoped to expose linkages that would reveal how the global and the local are relational and co-

constitutional, to see how global processes take shape in ordinary lives and how those lives might affect the wider processes as well.

Table 2: Materials and methods of analysis used in this dissertation

<table>
<tr><th>Research Method</th><th>Target / Material</th><th>Addresses Research Question(s)</th><th>Method of Analysis</th><th>Possible Issues</th></tr>
<tr><td>Document collection</td><td>Bid books, contracts, event handbooks, development plans, project reports, government decrees, budgets, official statements, etc.</td><td rowspan="4">1 (Organization)

2 (Narratives)</td><td rowspan="6">Inductive thematic coding through grounded theory, discourse analysis.</td><td>Documents can give important high level view but lack nuances and meanings found at the individual level</td></tr>
<tr><td>Semi-structured interviews</td><td>Mostly experts: people working in FIFA, sports-related business, the 2018 World Cup Organizing Committee, Russian federal, regional, and municipal governments, etc.</td><td rowspan="3">Interview interactions should not be seen as uncovering absolute truths, but rather as partial and co-constructed performances. Seductive pull towards false ideal of authenticity. Researcher positionality affects interactions.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unstructured interviews</td><td rowspan="2">World Cup volunteers, journalists, business owners, students, academics, hotel staff, professionals, sports fans, pensioners, etc.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Informal interviews</td></tr>
<tr><td>Media and social media</td><td>Popular Russian news sites, alternative and independent media, social media like blogs, Facebook, VKontakte, and Instagram.</td><td>2 (Narratives)</td><td>Media and social media present partial representations that should not be treated as truth.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Participant observation</td><td>Social environments at FIFA, sports-business offices, stadiums, training sites, fan zones, transit hubs, conference halls, university campuses, bars, cafes, restaurants, apartments, and more broadly within the host cities in general.</td><td>1 (Organization)

2 (Narratives)</td><td rowspan="2">Researcher positionality affects interactions. Findings represent partial, contingent interpretation of events.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Go-alongs</td><td>Exploring sites with people listed above, including areas important for the World Cup like the stadium, training sites, and transit hubs, as well as disparate areas like residential neighborhoods and shopping centers, etc.</td><td>2 (Narratives)</td><td>All of above + visual analysis of photographs.</td></tr>
</table>

To this end, I generated material through participant observation, informal, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews (Bernard 2012; Crang and Cook 2007), go-alongs (Kusenbach 2003, 2017), and documents from FIFA, the Russia 2018 Organizing Committee, and Russian federal, regional, and municipal authorities, as well as local news and social media.

I began fieldwork in Switzerland and Russia almost simultaneously, building on relationships established through a research agreement signed between my supervisor, Martin Müller, and the knowledge transfer group at FIFA, followed soon after by attending a mega-events conference in Ekaterinburg. Working from these initial relationships, I employed snowball methodology to contact new research participants and expand my networks. I worked inductively and did not establish discrete categories of participants, opting instead to speak to people informally before teasing out whether they would be amenable to a more formalized research encounter. Ultimately, I conducted interviews with individuals in FIFA, with people in related sports and sports marketing businesses, and occasionally with people in the Russian government at the federal, regional, and municipal levels. Most often, these interviews were semi-structured, more formal, and often recorded. I faced challenges accessing many individuals in various Russian bureaucracies and, once I managed to contact some officials in the organizing committees, I was at first frustrated by the tendency to repeat official narratives that were easily heard from many outlets. It was only later that I understood the significance of these repeated narratives, which I will discuss in subsequent chapters.

In addition to these interviews, I also spoke with World Cup volunteers and volunteer coordinators, journalists, business owners, urban professionals like event coordinators and project managers, and assorted market sellers, pensioners, and sports fans. These interactions generally were less formal, rarely recorded, and sometimes covert. By covert I mean that I did not reveal myself as a researcher, even as I steered the interactions towards areas of my academic interest. There were two reasons for this covert behavior. For one, many of these interactions were spontaneous and short, and it would have been bizarre and counterproductive to admit my multiple roles. For another, particularly for the longer interactions, I noticed a tendency to close up and refuse to speak when I attempted a more formalized interview. Instead, I endeavored to fashion social situations that approximated conversations in order to build the necessary rapport. In all cases, I

did not approach interview interactions as a process of uncovering some objective truth, but rather treated our encounters as "intersubjective conversations with a purpose [that] involve an active collusion between participants" (Cloke et al. 2004, 155).

With an awareness of the epistemological challenges and the performance aspects involved (Gubrium et al. 2012), I used these interactions to understand how developments and other preparations were rationalized and understood, and how individuals made sense of their lives in the midst of global processes of change. Naturally my questions were different depending on which actor group I was working with, but broadly speaking I asked organizers about who makes decisions and when, how action was coordinated, and why things happened the way they did. And when I spoke with people who did not have roles in the organizational structures, I tended to let them lead our interactions. In some cases, then, we did not discuss the World Cup at all, and rather explored other conversational territories that were important to them. These generally centered on their quotidian concerns.

In order to avoid relying on a singular type of data, I combined these interviews and conversations with go-alongs, participant observation, and documentary research. Go-alongs allowed residents to show me the areas of the city that were important to them, while participant observation enabled me to witness the value of the quotidian as well as the distance between everyday concerns and the spectacular changes enacted by the World Cup. At first, I oriented go-alongs around the sites of my interest in the city as determined by FIFA requirements, but in time I adjusted my approach as I understood the value of following participants wherever they chose. This was an easy move, as it seemed natural for residents to show a guest around their city, and it turned into a fruitful practice as we left the tourist spots for more ordinary areas. Through go-alongs, I was better able to perceive and understand how individuals engaged with their physical and social environments, as I accompanied them on commutes and petty errands, like shopping, dropping off children, or simply wandering around their neighborhoods as they wished. I also took a large number of photographs to build a visual archive.

Finally, documentary research enabled me to understand the legal and organizational foundations of the World Cup. These documents were vital for unpacking the governance structures of the mega-event and understanding how these structures

changed over time. Most of these documents were publicly available, distributed either by FIFA or the Russian federal, regional, or municipal governments, but some of them were leaked by anonymous parties. Others I received only because of a research agreement with FIFA that gave me access to confidential documents. These documents included:

- The official candidature files (or bid books) that launched the Russian bid for the World Cup. Entitled "Ready to Inspire", these three volumes convinced FIFA of the viability of the Russian plans and established the direction of development, as well as provided much of the rhetoric that accompanied the preparations for the World Cup. Notably, the candidature files became legally binding once Russia won the bid.
- Foundational contracts signed between FIFA and Russian authorities that regulated World Cup developments, for example legal agreements with the Host City or the Stadium Authorities. These legal documents established the broad parameters of development and communicated FIFA's detailed infrastructure requirements, which allowed me to start my site visits to the host cities in places subject to intervention.
- FIFA's handbooks, reports, and other internal documents that stipulated requirements for hosting, for instance the Stadium Handbook and the Transport Handbook. These documents laid out precise technical requirements for the organizers to fulfill. In addition, FIFA project management and organizational documentation informed about the governance structures within FIFA itself and conveyed crucial information about the relationships between FIFA and the event organizers. I also made use of FIFA's independent ethics committee reports on the bidding for the 2018 World Cup and the Russian bid in particular, in order to explore some of the controversies involved in the awarding of the event, as well as to identify key actors in the Russian bid and then trace them over time.
- Russian federal government decrees that established the legal frameworks and detailed infrastructure plans to prepare for the World Cup. These included project details like overall budgets and which government entity was responsible for paying. Examining the many amendments to these decrees allowed me to

make sense of the World Cup developments over time, witnessing how the event changed from the bidding phase to the opening night.

- Federal plans and reports relating to the preparation for the World Cup, including comprehensive transport planning and reports on the economic, social and environmental impacts of the World Cup development program. These documents gave insight on the priorities and aspirations of the organizers and allowed me to compare rhetoric to official results.
- Regional and municipal development planning documents and budgets that outlined long-term development agendas for host cities. These master plans allowed me to understand the local and regional contexts of the host cities, in order to determine where (and whether) there were moments of overlap between the needs of the city and the plans for the event.

Finally, in order to supplement these documents and interviews, I collected and analyzed Russian media articles. These provided me with information about local priorities and developments without having to worry about interviewer effects, and it also gave another opportunity to identify the narratives that accompanied World Cup developments, as well as to locate moments of oversight or silence. I conducted this media collection in two phases, basing my strategy around the most widely read outlets in each region and, for comparison, nationally (Medialogia 2017a, 2017b, 2017c). Ranging from 2014 – 2017, the first phase was relatively informal, as the World Cup was still many years away and news came out only sporadically. Mega-event media coverage balloons as the opening date approaches, so the second phase (2017 – 2018) was more controlled in order to manage the abundant flow of articles. This phase comprised a formal search and collection strategy that started as daily and then weekly Google News Alerts I created to harvest Russian articles based on search terms like *World Cup, Ekaterinburg, Volgograd,* and *stadium* (though in Russian, of course, as this project does not concern international media perceptions of Russia). There are limitations in using many media sources in Russia, however, as there is a tendency to parrot the official narratives coming from the federal government, which have become universally celebratory and triumphalist. At the same time, this can also be useful, as in my case, if a researcher is interested in gathering precisely these narratives. I attempted to balance these narratives by combining my automated media searches with a separate, non-automated search strategy for Russian news sites that were not included in Google's net but that nevertheless have an impact in

the Russian media landscape and should be considered. I also collected articles and commentary from lesser known alternative news sites, blogs, and social media, due to the increased presence there of critical or more balanced perspectives. During phase 2, I completed 15 months of media collection, ultimately sorting, analyzing, and coding over 6,000 articles. The thesis does not present a discrete analysis of this media archive, however; rather than investigating the media landscape itself, I employed the archive as a complement to my fieldwork, observations, and interactions with host city residents. The archive informed my understanding of mega-event related developments, inspired ideas of where to begin exploring the host cities, and improved the quality of my conversations and interview questions.

All told, I tallied up communications with over 250 people at varying levels of formality, spread over 9 field visits to Russia totaling 114 days, between 2015 and 2017. For me, a field visit means placing my body in spaces of research interest, meaning specifically the host cities. Visiting FIFA headquarters could be considered field visits as well, but I did not bother counting these since I live in Zurich and saw no added value in this categorization. All told I generated over 400 pages of interview transcripts and field notes. On top of this I maintain regular contact with a number of individuals in Russia through text message, video chat, and email, and this has continued to contribute to my understanding of developments in the post-event period, though I have not learned anything surprising that would change the conclusions in this dissertation.

Adjusting

At the outset of fieldwork I had numerous interactions wherein I would be fed stock answers that only reproduced official narratives, even from people who had nothing to do with the organization of the World Cup. I began to notice that the formal, semi-structured interview format tended to produce these cookie cutter responses, and at first I thought that the authoritarian context could explain this tendency. For instance, Koch (2013b) considers that authoritarian spaces challenge researchers who employ methods implicitly designed for more open settings: methods based on liberal conceptions about individuality and opinion come laden with assumptions about subjectivity and agency that can render them less useful when applied outside of the predominantly western, democratic countries in which they were created (Koch 2013c). Yet it is common in qualitative research to encounter mismatch between a particular method and the

situation in the field, and to have to adjust (Bernard 2012; Creswell 2007), and I would contend that such methodological mismatches do not occur only in authoritarian contexts. Working to establish rapport with a less formal approach, ethnographic approaches have proven useful where more structured interview attempts fall flat (Bernard 2011; Watson and Till 2010). Similarly, when faced with a lack of satisfying connections in my fieldwork, I adjusted to conduct more ethnographic interactions in less formal spaces, though I did not spend enough time in the field to conduct a proper ethnography. These adjustments took the shape of abandoning my voice recorder and my notebook, and instead of interviews in offices, I talked with people in cafes or bars or together on walks. It meant scribbling notes after an interaction, while aware of the imperfections of human recall. And it meant adjusting my ethical approaches to suit local contexts (Marzano 2012), described in more detail below. In this way I attempted to establish rapport in ways and places where I might go beneath and beyond the reproduction of official rhetoric. This approach was less successful when it came to individuals involved in municipal administrations who, predictably, seemed reluctant to deviate from the official line, or to meet up with me in less formal spaces. At the same time, these adjustments proved more effective when it came to interactions with people not involved in the state bureaucracy, for instance with journalists, urban professionals, academics and students, and sports fans.

Alongside the practicalities of establishing rapport, conducting qualitative inquiry raises ethical questions regardless of whether in an authoritarian state or not (Christians 2011). I approached my fieldwork as a series of dynamic, relational engagements, rather than as a static field waiting for a researcher to extract data (Massey 2003, 83), and these considerations also affect the ethical discussion. There are no ethical standards universally applicable to every situation, but many scholars work towards ethical encounters through a framework of justice, beneficence/non-maleficence, and respect (Christians 2011, 66; Hay 2010, 38). Four questions ("Is it just? Am I doing harm? Am I doing good? Am I showing respect?") initially served as a foundation to structure my fieldwork interactions, but they were insufficient to handle some of the ethical quandaries I encountered in the field. Some of these problems applied to qualitative research in general, while others were due to the politically contentious nature of my research in Russia's more closed context, however contingent those closures might be (Mohammad and Sidaway 2013). For instance, in line with prevailing practices, at the

outset I ensured research participants of their anonymity and I informed them that they could withdraw from my project at any time. I also asked permission to record our semi-structured interviews. These attempts at acting ethically often closed down rapport and contributed to the production of stock responses, or outright refusal (when, only minutes before, the conversation had been flowing easily). My actions now seem to me situationally inappropriate, a product of the ineffective importation of norms that ignore actual conditions on the ground (Marzano 2012) – but this is not necessarily related to authoritarian conditions in Russia. I did encounter ethical problems related to the authoritarian context, however, for example in the political meanings and risks given to my research when I began working more covertly.

In short, I needed an ethical approach that could accommodate the varieties of potential situations in the field, both in terms of cross-cultural qualitative inquiry and also sensitive to the particularities of Russia's uneven authoritarianism. Thrift imagines an ethical fieldwork encounter as one of a "space of thoughtfulness, however temporary and fleeting, different from that of either of their two cultures" (Thrift 2003, 114). I attempted to create this space of thoughtfulness in my interactions by cultivating and maintaining horizontality and flexibility, accepting invitations when offered, for example, and reciprocating as relationships developed (Malekzadeh 2016; Markowitz 2016). In several instances this led to new friendships. Aspiring towards a space of justice and respect, I endeavored to depart from a more extractive model of research, wherein an outsider might land in a new place, take what he needs for his work, and then depart with no consideration of the effects of his actions. This is one reason why I was participating in a grant to establish branches of European University in peripheral Russian cities: in pursuit of more ethical research relationships, I had hoped to build long-term connections through teaching and exchange. I was interested in establishing academic networks between Russia and the West that would bypass the ordinary hubs of St Petersburg and Moscow and focus instead on peripheral cities. I failed at this attempt, partly due to my lack of appropriate preparation (the wrong visa, for example), and partly because of the climate of increasing authoritarianism – and attendant suspicion of outsiders – within Russia overall (which I underestimated at the outset of my project, assuming incorrectly that my partial insider status would shield me from potential problems).

As I shifted to less structured and more ethnographic interactions, I largely abandoned the formalities of informed consent and transparency. I strove instead to apply what Heggen and Guillemin (2012) call "situated research ethics", grounding my work in an understanding that ethics are local, contextual, and relational, and require attention to the conditions of each individual interaction. These situated ethical considerations meant that I strove to distance myself from abstract guidelines and instead be ethically mindful within the context of each relationship at the given moment. This proved problematic in numerous instances, however, as my research interactions became more ambiguous. To illustrate: one evening in Ekaterinburg, I met with a group of friends at a bar. These people knew that I had come to Russia to research the World Cup, and in fact I had tried a formal interview with one of them before. I was not intending to work that night, but when the conversation drifted towards the World Cup, I began listening as a researcher and not just as a friend. When new people joined the circle, I was introduced only as an American friend, so my researcher identity became secret. When the conversation turned again to the World Cup, some of the material was too good: I took notes on my phone under the guise of texting someone. What is this if not ethically ambiguous covert research? To be sure, I proceeded as ethically as I could in the situation, ensuring anonymity and safety by not writing down names or identifying details, but I was also acting without transparency or permission. At the same time, outing myself as a researcher would have been socially insane, to say nothing of potentially costing my friend who had originally vouched for me and introduced me to the group. Also, I did not want to return to the kinds of interactions where people parroted standard narratives, as I had collected more than enough of those already. Maintaining the secrecy of my multiple roles, I aspired to an uneasy middle ground between generating meaningful data for this project while protecting the people who were sharing their perspectives.

Analyzing

This was an inductive project, informed by constructivist grounded theory (Creswell 2007; Charmaz 2011; Thornberg and Charmaz 2014). I proceeded iteratively, refining my questions during and between my times in the field, and allowing the interplay between data collection and coding to inform the direction of further research. I was not able to work in the field until theoretical saturation, however, since my encounter with the security services interrupted my research.

At first I applied open codes to my material, simply describing what had been said, for example: "Building the Stadium", "Talking About How Work Gets Done", or "Complaining about Transportation." Further, at the outset I divided my material according to geographic location, distinguishing between Volgograd, Ekaterinburg, FIFA, and other locations. With time, I began erasing the boundaries between sites as broader patterns became visible and I refined my early efforts into more analytical codes, such as "Infrastructure", "Organizational", and "Complaining." After more iteration, these codes developed into meaningful collections of material, for instance: "Infrastructural Benefits to the City" (with subcodes for "Required by FIFA", "Russian Initiative", "Potemkin", and "Unfulfilled Promises"); "Communication" (with subcodes for "FIFA-LOC", "Federal-Regional/Municipal", "Government-People", and "Challenges"); and "Distance" (with subcodes for "Better For Foreigners Than For Locals", "Doesn't Apply To Me", "Important For Me", and "Aspiring To Make A Change"). In this way I coded my growing archive of material, working both inside and outside Russia, and identifying broader patterns in the collected data.

In parallel, I continued collecting and coding media material, making sense of my sizeable and growing archive of articles, blogs, and commentary. The media collection period formally started one year before the games and continued for three months after (I did collect articles for several years beforehand and a few months after this period, but my approach then was not as formalized or rigorous). I migrated between my media collection and firsthand experiences, regularly reviewing my field notes and making memos to keep track of the evolution of my thinking. In this way I transformed (or flattened) the world into a series of representations (Denzin and Lincoln 2011), and I used MaxQDA software for coding to make sense of the continually developing material. Ultimately I ended with 64 codes and 2,852 coded segments.

In addition to refining this material with grounded theory, I also employed discourse analysis (Willig 2014) in order to analyze and interpret meaning in these texts. This process involved foregrounding the constructive and performative aspects of the texts with the goal of interrogating how particular social realities were constructed. This was useful in making sense of the soft power narratives that accompanied World Cup development, and allowed me to move beyond a description of logistics and

development plans, into more refined understandings of meaning, sense-making, and power.

Producing

I did not have a clear division between the phases of analysis and writing:

> "Analysis is not simply an issue of developing an idea and writing it up. Rather, it is thinking by writing that tends to reveal the flaws, the contradictions in our ideas, forcing us to look, to analyze in different ways and rethink. The question that quickly emerges is how on earth we are meant to separate 'analysis' from 'writing'." (Crang 2003, 130)

Along these linses, Flyvberg (2001, 145) explains that his case "can neither be briefly recounted nor summarized in a few main results. The story is itself the result." So too in the story I am telling of the Russian World Cup in Ekaterinburg and Volgograd. Following Flyvberg's call to practice meaningful social science, I have taken up "problems that matter to the local, national, and global communities in which we live… focus[ing] on issues of value and power" (Flyvbjerg 2001, 166). And I attempt to make this research matter by communicating my results effectively, with the understanding that there is value in pushing the boundaries of style and theories of expression in an effort to recast the textures of urban scholarship by immersing ourselves into the political realities of everyday life (Oldfield 2018). I attempt to provide a grounded narrative that analyzes multiple levels of the World Cup: its organizational structures, its guiding narratives, and its effects on residents. In this way, I attempt to grapple with the intertwined articulation of global processes and local developments. Partly this is a move against popular conceptualizations (certainly among mega-event organizers) of the city as a tourist spot, as opposed to a valorization of everyday life, and partly it is a strategy to highlight the ways in which individuals make sense of global processes and tensions.

Thus, we can examine how approved World Cup narratives are disseminated to the population, and highlight how nuance is reduced in favor of ideologically simple narratives. There is a challenge here, however, particularly given my positionality as a foreigner: how to criticize developments in Russia without feeding into anti-Russian discourses or perpetuating Russophobic narratives? So I reiterate that none of my work is meant to fetishize the authoritarian characteristics of the Russian state, nor do I wish to engage in a hyperbolic discussion about neo-Stalinist security practices, nor indeed to

romanticize the struggles of a downtrodden but indomitable population. Instead, I wish to place the 2018 World Cup accurately, representing the circumstances of that time in Russia without exaggeration or fear mongering, nor with an inappropriately rosy portrayal. In this light, I use my encounter with the migration and security authorities to illustrate how a politically contentious moment at a seemingly distant global scale actually implicated ordinary lives, locally, on the ground in a host city. This was an embodied example of how hierarchical scale collapses into something flatter and more relational (Marston, Jones, and Woodward 2005), and for me it served as further confirmation of the appropriateness of a relational approach to researching cities.

Finally, there are two more points with wider significance that are brought to light by the security services encounter with which I opened this chapter. First, it highlights the lack of imagination among administrators and authorities in understanding different ways to be in the city. "Volgograd," an officer scolded me during my questioning, "is only for patriotic tourism." They told me that, as a tourist, I am only to visit the *Rodina Mat' Zovyot* monument and the Panorama Museum to the Second World War. Nowhere else. "I've already seen those," I explained. "They were marvelous, but I would like to walk in courtyards and visit other parts of the city." The FSB officer waved his hand in frustration. "Then go visit them again!" Then, after a pause for thought: "Tourists who want something unusual can go see our underground tram." This tram is a local curiosity and a point of small pride. The stations look and feel like they belong to the outskirts of the metro system in St Petersburg or Moscow, but instead of metro cars, regular city trams come trundling down the underground tracks. I had already been invited to see the tram by several Volgograd residents and it appeared to be something of an attraction. Clearly, though, these three sites are insufficient for more than a day's visit, but after my release, aware that I was likely under observation, I duly went back to the tram, the war museum, and *Rodina Mat' Zovyot*.

Later, outside Russia, I discovered that my encounter with the security services garnered more interest among scholars and journalists than my investigation of the World Cup. It makes sense that this story would overshadow my actual project since it is markedly more visceral and exciting than a discussion about the paradoxical traits of the neoliberal behind World Cup hosting, or an analysis of the meanings behind guiding narratives. To me, though, this moment with the security services is less interesting on its own (though

of course it was significant on a personal level). Rather, I view this interaction as indicative of broader contradictions in Russia's World Cup hosting. Simultaneously, authorities had to open the nation to the world and welcome hundreds of thousands of visitors, while also maintaining the narrative that Russia was under threat from a belligerent West. This contradiction made itself visible to me in other moments as well, which I will discuss in subsequent chapters.

The second point of wider significance in my encounter demonstrates once again the uneven application of Russian authoritarianism. Contrary to much popular and even scholarly imagination in the West, the security authorities do not maintain a uniform repression across the nation. In my fieldwork, I experienced the distrust and suspicion of spycraft only in Volgograd, though of course just because I did not detect it does not mean that I was not under surveillance elsewhere (Glasius et al. 2018, 79–81). Still, I find it notable that even my friends in Volgograd joked geopolitically, nicknaming me *shpion* (spy) and *razvedchik* (secret agent) many months before my encounter with the real thing. To me, this illustrates the spatial differentiation of Russian security practices and emphasizes the various narratives that circulate in different cities. For example, in the course of this project I also spent time in Ekaterinburg, Sochi, Kazan, St Petersburg, and Moscow, and this kind of security discourse – even as a joke, among ordinary people – was present only in Volgograd. Around the same time as they picked me up, the security services in Volgograd also snared two colleagues, a professor from the United States and a journalist from Switzerland. The authorities also arrested Semyon Simonov, a campaigner for Human Rights Watch, outside of the Volgograd stadium construction site (Buchanan 2017). Even the Russian urban blogger Ilya Varlamov, on his tour of each of the eleven World Cup host cities, ran afoul of the FSB only in Volgograd. Prevented from filming the beautifully renovated central train station, Varlamov traveled around Volgograd and pointedly filmed litter, broken infrastructure, locked public toilets, and barren city parks (Varlamov 2018a, 2018b). My experiences differ from Varlamov's, of course, as we express different positionalities and inhabit differing political-temporal contingencies. Nevertheless there seems to be something particular about Volgograd that brought all of us to the attention of the security authorities. This serves as a reminder that the Red Line is fluid, invisible, and contingent, and these experiences are an argument for the value of attending to the micro level, without which our understanding of global processes risks becoming lost in hierarchies and abstractions.

5: TOWARDS NEOLIBERAL RESTRUCTURING

Budgeting the World Cup

I was in Ekaterinburg and speaking to a member of the local organizing committee who also worked in the city administration. We were at the Innoprom, an annual international trade fair dedicated to industrial technology and innovation. As we walked past displays from Chinese and South Korean firms, I asked him what the World Cup would bring to Ekaterinburg. We stopped in front of a table emblazoned with *Sdelano v Rossii, priznano za rubezhom* – Made in Russia, Acknowledged Abroad. He gestured at the trade fair around us and said: "This is all for the benefit of our city …All of these events are absolutely beneficial, without doubt. Yes, we have many ideas on how to develop the city," (A152). This interaction speaks to many of the themes salient for this thesis, as Ekaterinburg – in hosting an array of international events at various levels of prestige – worked to raise its global profile in order to capture transnational flows of tourists and capital. As this organizer noted, hosting events was one of their strategies to develop the city. In this way, he tied together mega-events, urban development, and the strategies of interurban competition.

This vignette suggests that mega-events can indeed be seen as projects through which processes of globalized neoliberalism rescale cities and states, enacting customized, area-specific policies in order to promote urban regions over national economies (Brenner 2004; C. M. Hall 2006; John and McDonald 2019; Miller 2012). Here, I understand neoliberalism to be more than an economic theory but as a set of concrete projects with economic, political, and cultural aspects, in which the retreat of Fordist-Keynesian models of distribution is marked by the ascendance of market rationalities of competition and entrepreneurship at all scales (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Harvey 2007; Hilgers 2011; Wacquant 2010). In this and the following chapter, I will investigate the neoliberal features of hosting in Ekaterinburg and Volgograd, and demonstrate that what seemed at first to be another example of mega-event-led restructuring, in fact turned out to be something that defied easy categorization. Following many other studies, this investigation begins with the financial aspects of hosting.

The Russian World Cup, like all mega-events, came with exorbitant costs and, at 664 billion rubles, was the most expensive in history (Russian Federal Government 2017a;

Müller and Wolfe 2014). Typically, mega-event costs are justified by boosters and supporters via arguments that hosting serves to catalyze urban development and stimulate the economy (Essex and Chalkley 1998; Gratton, Shibli, and Coleman 2005), even accelerating infrastructural development by up to a decade (Preuss 2004, 234). These arguments were present in the preparations for the Russian World Cup as well, starting with the guiding narratives found in the bid book (Russia 2018 World Cup Bid Committee 2010). Here, however, I am less concerned with the rationalizations for investments (though see Chapters 7 and 8 for an engagement with these and other narratives) than I am in investigating the projects themselves and discovering what impacts they had within the host cities.

The document that defined the 2018 World Cup development plan was called Russian Federal Decree 518. This plan defined the infrastructure projects required for the World Cup, determined the budgets to pay for these projects, and established which entities would be responsible for paying (Russian Federal Government 2013). At its creation in 2013, the decree listed 271 World Cup infrastructure projects throughout the eleven host cities. For each of these, it provided the overall budgets and determined the financing source: federal government, regional government, private sources, or a mixture of these three. Figure 14 displays the budget breakdown (between federal, regional, and private) for the 2018 World Cup development program, as initially created in 2013.

The larger point in breaking down the World Cup funding structure centers on the strategies of neoliberal restructuring. One of the ways Decree 518 helps illuminate these strategies is by identifying budget responsibilities. Given that the processes of rescaling involve a diminishment of the national state, examining the funding sources found in Decree 518 reveals the degree to which non-national scales were staking claim to certain development projects. In other words, the processes involved in preparing the World Cup infrastructure projects also repositioned certain subnational spaces within national capital flows.

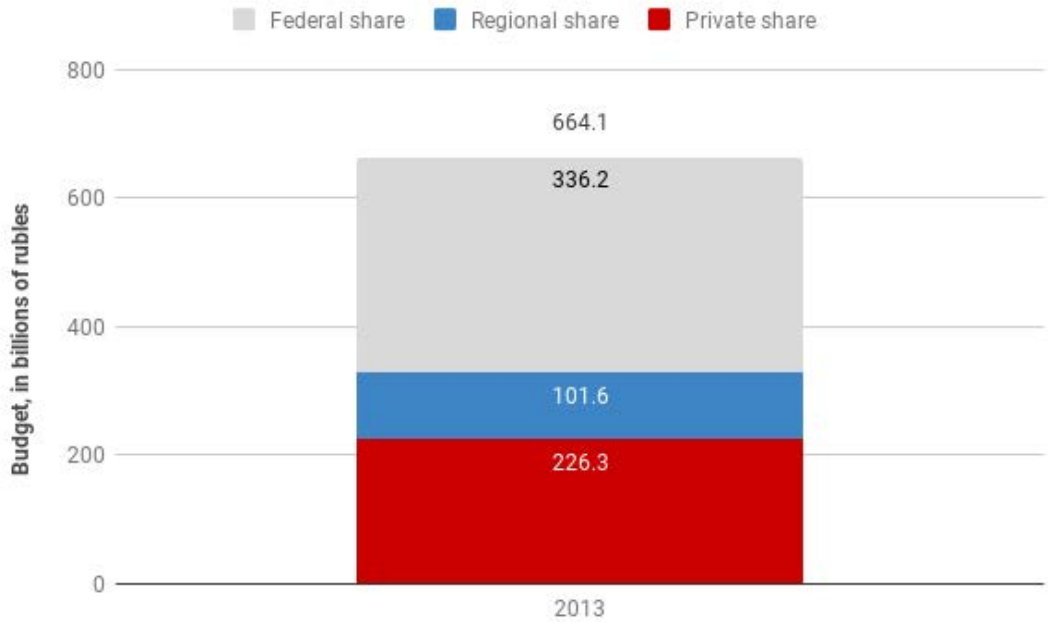

Figure 14: Russian Federal Decree 518 budget breakdown from 2013, displaying total 2018 World Cup budget with federal, regional, and private shares of responsibility, in billions of rubles. Source: Russian Federal Government 2013.

As shown, the private share of the World Cup infrastructure budget was 34%, more than twice that of the regional share. To be sure, the federal level carried 51% of the total budget, but this is not out of the ordinary, since in most nations private entities shy away from investing in mega-event-related infrastructures that often do not make a profit (Zimbalist 2016). Nationwide, private and regional funding comprised 49% of the total initial budget, a significant split between national financing on one side and private or regional on the other. Furthermore, as a transition economy with unique characteristics, entrepreneurialism is relatively weak in Russia (Aidis, Estrin, and Mickiewicz 2008; Batjargal 2003; Estrin, Meyer, and Bytchkova 2008), so the level of private funding shown in this breakdown of the World Cup budget actually was rather ambitious.

Beyond issues of public or private funding, Decree 518 also helps identify infrastructure projects that further illustrate the processes of neoliberalization. The World Cup served host cities in their attempts to enact neoliberal strategies of place promotion, and the projects listed in Decree 518 represent the mechanisms by which the logics of competition, growth, and area-specific differentiation were executed on the ground. Put another way, as they were engaged in processes of reconfiguration in order to emphasize their territorial competitiveness, we can conceptualize World Cup host cities as Rescaled Competition State Regimes (Brenner 2004, 260). To better grasp the customized

strategies involved in these processes, however, it is necessary to examine the planning documents for the host cities and their regions.

Volgograd Regional Government Decree 679 and Sverdlovsk Regional Government Decree 1683 established, for their respective host cities and regions, the subprograms and individual projects necessary for the implementation of the World Cup (Sverdlovsk Regional Government 2013; Volgograd Regional Government 2013). Just as with Russian Federal Decree 518, these regional decrees detailed the funding sources: federal, regional, municipal, private, or mixtures of these four (see Figure 15).

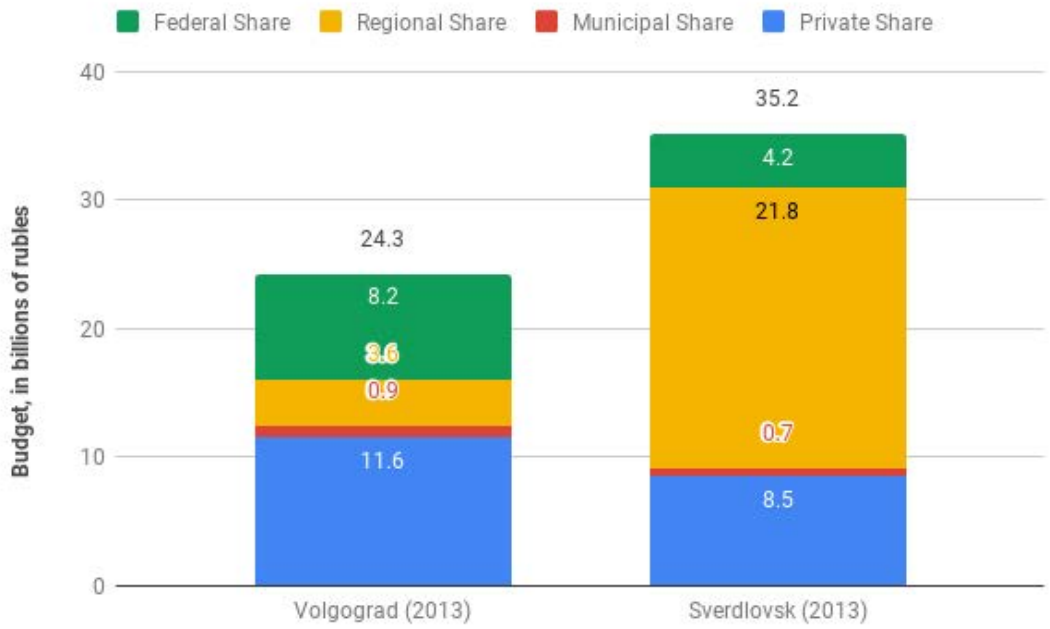

Figure 15: Volgograd and Sverdlovsk regional budget breakdowns from 2013, divided by federal, regional, municipal, and private shares of responsibility, in billions of rubles. Sources: Volgograd Regional Government, 2013; Sverdlovsk Regional Government, 2013.

Each decree's budget breakdown – representing World Cup preparations for the given host city and the wider region – reveals the differing approaches enacted by Volgograd and Ekaterinburg. Volgograd's 2013 budget shows that private funding accounted for 48% of the total, by far the largest share. Federal coffers were slated to pay for 34%, and the regional share was pegged at 15%. Aside from revealing Volgograd's outsize reliance on private funding, this budget plan also communicates the miniscule responsibilities shouldered by the regional and municipal levels. This indicates the relative weakness of these levels of government and underscores the lack of autonomy they had in planning the World Cup. Instead, the private sector took most of the responsibility, while the federal government managed the bulk of the remainder.

In contrast, at 45% higher than Volgograd's, Ekaterinburg's budgets portray a city-region that is both willing and able to pay for more substantial infrastructure projects. Partly, this stems from the fact that Ekaterinburg and Sverdlovsk Oblast are about twice as wealthy as Volgograd and Volgograd Oblast (Ekaterinburg Municipality 2018; Volgograd Municipality 2018). Regardless of the World Cup, the Sverdlovsk regional budget is more than twice as high as that of the Volgograd region, and Sverdlovsk receives less than 10% of this budget in the form of federal transfers, while Volgograd relies on federal support for close to 30% of its regional budget (Lezhnin 2018; Sverdlovsk Regional Government 2017; Volgograd Regional Government 2017). Similarly, the Ekaterinburg municipal budget tends to be around twice that of Volgograd's, though both municipalities rely on federal and regional transfers for around half of their funding (Ekaterinburg Municipality 2018; Volgograd Municipality 2018; Yumakaeva 2015). Further, as ranked by gross municipal product, Ekaterinburg is one of Russia's top five wealthiest cities, while Volgograd occupies the 17th slot on the list; and gross municipal product per capita places Ekaterinburg in third place nationwide, behind Moscow and St. Petersburg, while Volgograd languishes at the very bottom with an almost three-fold gap between it and Moscow (Institute for Urban Economics 2015).

These disparities were paralleled in the World Cup budgets. Ekaterinburg's superior financial foundation was reflected in the funding structure through a smaller overall role for federal support, just as Volgograd's relative financial fragility meant a greater need for federal funding. In line with this financial profile, Ekaterinburg's regional share represented 62% of its total budget, while Volgograd's was only 15%. Conversely, private funders covered the majority of Volgograd's budget, while only 24% of Ekaterinburg's was taken by private sources. These differing approaches to development help set the stage to explain how the World Cup was articulated in customized and area-specific ways that culminated in divergent and differentiating results.

But a look at budgets alone is not sufficient to explain these variations, nor to connect them satisfactorily to the processes of global neoliberal restructuring. It is not enough to note the outsize share of private investors in Volgograd, or the miniscule portion of Ekaterinburg's World Cup budget taken by the federal government. To better grasp why these differences exist and, more importantly, to understand the effects they had on the

cities and the people, it is necessary to explore the projects themselves and examine how they took shape on the ground.

Customized and Differentiating

The divergent, area-specific expressions of World Cup development took shape in a number of municipal projects in Volgograd and Ekaterinburg. These projects were cataloged in each host city's regional decree and framed within differing rationales that explain how the Volgograd and Sverdlovsk regions aimed to use the World Cup, grounded in their differing socioeconomic positions and potentials.

Starting with the Volgograd decree, the development goals that guided the World Cup preparations covered a page and a half of text. It was hyperbolic and listed a range of hugely ambitious goals under the heading of "expected results":

> "As a result of realizing the [World Cup Development] Program, the following socioeconomic results are expected: raising the quality of life, improving the region's image, attracting investment, developing sporting, transport, utilities, and social infrastructure, developing consumer markets… implementing world class standards for the marketing of the hospitality industry… testing innovative technologies in the areas of transport and recreation… developing an ecological culture… attracting the youth into politics by promoting a healthy lifestyle… Fulfilling FIFA requirements will allow the attraction of investors for international hotel chains… the development of tourism… the education of highly qualified specialists… and the creation of public-private partnerships for an economic and social effect to increase the region's attractiveness for investment… Realizing the Program will bring social and other benefits to Volgograd and the Volgograd region."
>
> (Volgograd Regional Government 2013, 9–10)

There are several elements to unpack here. First, note the neoliberal rhetoric of public-private partnerships in order to boost the region's investment potential, a relatively new phenomenon for Russia, particularly in the peripheries (Aidis, Estrin, and Mickiewicz 2008; Estrin, Meyer, and Bytchkova 2008; Shmulyar Gréen 2009). Thus, the foundational legal document for Volgograd's World Cup development program featured the narratives of inter-urban competition in national and supranational circuits. More broadly, Volgograd organizers clearly pinned their hopes on the potential of the World Cup to bring a range of benefits, improving standards of living, attracting investment, and boosting the quality of infrastructure – all familiar elements of mega-event-led neoliberal urbanism.

More than this, though, the idea that hosting a mega-event could alter the fortunes of an entire city region to the degree dreamed of in Volgograd was not dissimilar to the utopian transformative imaginaries invoked by the hyperbolic Barcelona Model (Degen and García 2012). This was not a targeted program with a narrowly defined and measurable goal. On the contrary, Volgograd's decree demonstrates a wholesale dreaming that was so ambitious as to tread into the realm of fantasy. It was also a reflection of how difficult the living situation was in Volgograd and how low were the actual prospects of change, barring a substantial improvement in the status quo. For context, in an annual quality of life survey of 150 Russian cities, Volgograd sat at the bottom of the list for all *millioniki* cities, and ranked 140th overall (Domofond 2018).

Further, invoking FIFA requirements as the impetus of progress is a fundamentally neoliberal argument. Here, Russian administrators abdicated their responsibilities over urban development, ceding authority – at least discursively – to a non-public, international actor. That this actor might have different priorities than that of the city was never discussed. Rather, FIFA's urban development priorities were cast as the city's priorities, in effect transforming Volgograd and Ekaterinburg from regular cities into host cities. Moreover, this move further buttresses the idea of state rescaling, as a non-governmental actor – from outside territorial borders, no less – seized the right to define the direction of developments. This represented a diminishment of the state, not just the national government, but at regional and municipal levels as well.

In contrast to Volgograd, Ekaterinburg organizers seemed to treat the World Cup less as a panacea and more as part of a long-term strategy. For one, the Sverdlovsk decree established a legal foundation for World Cup developments that was stark and limited in scope, featuring only two goals for hosting, listed in bullet point format: first, to fulfill the requirements agreed to in the bid book between the LOC, the host city, and FIFA; and second, to construct and modernize the region's infrastructure in order to host large, regional, all-Russian, and international events (Sverdlovsk Regional Government 2013, 7). This could hardly be plainer. There was nothing extraneous and only a hint of something aspirational. Those aspirations centered on the second goal: that of using the World Cup to prepare the city for hosting future events from the region, the nation, and abroad. This statement indicated the regional and municipal goal of reorienting

Ekaterinburg onto an event- and tourist-based economy. In an interview, a municipal administrator and member of the Sverdlovsk regional LOC explained this idea:

> "All of this is part of a strategic plan to develop Ekaterinburg by attracting large events to the city… But you must understand, for Ekaterinburg the World Cup is not the focus. It's very important but it is not the only thing… For Ekaterinburg it is one link in a chain." (R384)

Here, the administrator framed the processes of preparing Ekaterinburg for the World Cup within the city's broader existence. In essence, he resisted the tendency of mega-events to dominate the municipal agendas of host cities, what Müller (2017) calls event seizure. Instead, he attempted to condense the World Cup into one episode – albeit an important one – within Ekaterinburg's history. This thinking stands in contrast to Volgograd where, in line with their decree, administrators continually attempted to present the World Cup as being all things to all people: improvement to infrastructure, boosting tourism and investment, and an increase in quality of life. Instead, this administrator echoed the sentiments set out in Decree 1683: for authorities in Ekaterinburg and the Sverdlovsk region, the World Cup was an important event but not foundational – nor, in fact, was it the only event. The administrator emphasized this point by listing some of the many events hosted in Ekaterinburg, including the Innoprom industrial and technical trade fair, and the Tsar Days, a nine day religious festival that saw over 100,000 visitors from across Russia (Nash Ural 2018). In light of these and other events it makes sense that Ekaterinburg's administrators would frame the World Cup as one project among many, rather than as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to set their city's fortunes on a different track. Volgograd, in contrast, did not boast a similar event calendar, and for administrators there the World Cup was unique.

Moving away from the framing language surrounding the regional development programs and focusing on the projects themselves, Volgograd's decree originally mandated 17.5 million rubles (US $293,000) to increase tourism by promoting the Volgograd brand in both international and domestic spaces. This was not a large sum in context with other World Cup investments, but it was notable because of the lack of a coherent Volgograd brand in the first place. A local journalist explained: "I wouldn't say we have an image of the city, except the Hero City Volgograd, you know, *Rodina Mat' Zovyot* and Mamaev Kurgan," (B76). In other words, Volgograd's military past dominates its present and delineates its future. There were no substantive attempts to build or

convey an image of the city separate from its military character. On the contrary, Volgograd officials seemed to fix their city's tourist potential on military history, as the head of the Volgograd region tourist industry union said:

> "We expect that Volgograd will interest foreigners not only because it is one of the 2018 World Cup host cities, but because it is the world-famous Stalingrad, the hero city with military history monuments. First among these, of course, is Mamaev Kurgan with, by the way, Volgograd Arena at its base." (TASS 2017)

Volgograd authorities followed this line of thinking, emphasizing Volgograd's wartime character as the primary source of the city's tourist appeal. To be sure, the military history of Stalingrad does hold international interest, and international visits to Russia have been increasing year over year (RosTurism 2017). At the same time, the majority of these visits come from what Russians call the "near abroad," specifically Ukraine and Kazakhstan, rather than from more distant countries, and the capital cities of Moscow and St Petersburg remain the most popular destinations by far. A tour operator in Volgograd explained the situation to me like this:

> "Many people come to see the memorial complex or the museum panorama… I would say that military history is the focus, of course, and there is a lot to see in Volgograd… On the other hand, Mamaev Kurgan can't always pull our region. We must have other things to show people." (L65)

This operator had seen the consistent rise in tourists firsthand, and noted that the flow of foreigners had begun to increase as well, though the majority of visitors came from other Russian regions. While she was pleased by the increase in business and optimistic for the World Cup, she also wondered about more long-term prospects, and doubted that tourists would make repeat visits to the city for the same military history excursions. And yet, she said that the non-military tours were markedly less popular. The implications were clear: Volgograd did not have much to offer tourists outside of its military history offerings.

On the other end of the spectrum from the tour operator, many politicians and business leaders could not conceive of a Volgograd without this military history. In this view, the World Cup was an opportunity to remind the world about the legacy of Stalingrad. A regional politician demonstrated this approach by saying:

> "The championship should be not only a celebration, but something for everyone. People should feel in their everyday lives a connection to Volgograd

> and the region and especially to the veterans… We should all together hold memorial events, and this should be connected to the improvement of people's lives… especially to those people who are the descendants of the generation of victors." (Q117)

In this politician's view, the World Cup could not exist in Volgograd without reference to their victory in the Second World War. The war was not a part of their history that could be walled away from the present and, since the war continues to inform the present day, it was impossible for him to imagine holding the World Cup without placing the war in the discursive center. Further, he connected remembrance of the war to the goals of the Volgograd decree, which held that the World Cup would improve the quality of life of residents. Notably, this politician emphasized residents whose families had suffered and survived the war, presumably prioritizing them over more recent arrivals.

In the context of the World Cup's international visitors, the difficulty in separating contemporary Volgograd from its military past had wider geopolitical resonance. A Volgograd journalist noted: "Can you imagine if the German team played here? Let's just say it would not be desirable… I hope that FIFA somehow manages the situation," (K88). This journalist was less concerned about violent ultra fans than she was about the symbolism of the situation. If, as she said, the World Cup was supposed to be about peaceful competition and international cooperation, Volgograd officials' insistence on highlighting the war would introduce uncomfortable and potentially unresolvable conflicts between negotiating the needs of the present while honoring the memories of the past. This was all the more piquant due to the Russian national team's perceived weakness and the German squad's traditional football dominance.

Conversely, wartime considerations were absent in Ekaterinburg, where administrators seemed more concerned with fitting the World Cup into the city's longer-term development plan. While administrators in Volgograd were discussing how to manage military-oriented tourism, people in Ekaterinburg were participating in an open competition to design a new city logo (LogoEKB.ru 2015). This was an attempt to craft a bite-sized identity for the city through which to communicate its dynamism, culture, history, and potential. The contest was open to entries from around the nation and ultimately collected over 300 submissions. Multiple variants of the winning entry are displayed in Figure 16.

As shown, the winning logo was flexible enough to make sense in both Cyrillic and Latin characters, emphasizing the city's desire to accommodate foreigners. The logo could be displayed in either solid or italic type, an attempt to indicate both stability and dynamism. Finally, there was space included in the design to personalize the logo with both words and graphics. This took the shape of a broader Ural region identification, as in "Ekaterinburg – the soul of Ural", and also making reference through graphics to the city's architectural, mining, and cultural heritage. For good measure, the designers included an image of a football to acknowledge the World Cup.

Figure 16: Variations on the logo that won the Ekaterinburg city branding contest, flexible, meaningful, and multilingual. Source: Ekaterinburg municipality.

Just as the image of the football was subsumed to little more than an asterisk above the city's new logo, so too did Ekaterinburg administrators attempt to contain the World Cup within a larger view of the city's plans. Seven months before the World Cup, the Sverdlovsk governor already discussed how Ekaterinburg would bid for and win the hosting rights for Expo 2025, the next potential mega-event on their calendar:

> "It will be the smartest city in Russia and, I'm not afraid to say it, the whole world. The territory that is set out for the Expo Park is the size of an average Russian city. There will be the most modern technologies that will then spread to all of Ekaterinburg… We already have the results from preparing for the World Cup: the face of the city is changing and investment projects are being realized… We haven't won yet, but we have had initial discussions with investors who are ready to invest into the development of that territory." (66.ru 2017)

In this, the governor reproduced the development rhetoric from the World Cup to justify new investments in the Expo Park. At the same time, he fashioned the World Cup into another link in the chain, to continue the metaphor introduced by the Ekaterinburg administrator. This echoes the narratives of modernity and catch-up modernization, often seen in post-socialist spaces to justify spectacular developments enacted from the top levels of the state (Kinossian and Morgan 2014; Koch 2010; Mau and Drobyshevskaya 2013). In this light, mega-event development can be seen as one of the tools by which the new generation of hosts attempts to engage in these catch-up contests and display their belonging in the modern world.

On hearing the governor speak about reconstructing Ekaterinburg for the Expo, one resident exclaimed: "Reconstruction again? They haven't even finished reconstructing for the World Cup and already they're talking about more reconstruction!" (W42). Nonetheless, regardless of complaints like these, plans continued for the next wave of mega-events in the city. And, just as before, Ekaterinburg authorities attempted to harness the development impulse of hosting in order to justify investments and continue modernizing their city, even as they insisted on contextualizing each mega-event within the city's trajectory – rather than allow hosting to become the dominant or only force in the city.

Despite the fact that Volgograd seemed to be lagging behind Ekaterinburg in establishing a coherent and marketable municipal identity, both cities were engaged in customized projects to differentiate themselves as part of wider processes of neoliberal restructuring. Sýkora and Bouzarovski (2012) offer a framework that can help make sense of these processes based on a wider analysis of post-communist urban transitions. As shown in Figure 17, Sýkora and Bouzarovski conceptualize post-communist restructuring in three phases, based on institutional, social, and urban transformations. While acknowledging the variety of different trajectories exhibited by states and cities in the Global East, each

case's transformations are thought to occur linearly, that is, in a direct line through the three phases of transition.

Following this, we could place Volgograd and Ekaterinburg at different points along this diagram to explain the differences between each city's responses to the World Cup development program. In this view, Volgograd would be in Transition 2, as they were embarking on their first attempts to internationalize and enact neoliberal politics with a view towards interacting with wider circuits of tourists and capital. Similarly, Ekaterinburg could be in Transition 3, as they seem more experienced in neoliberal practices and postmodern culture (the city's website even featured a picture of a young man in front of a graffiti-covered wall, with a can of spray paint in his hand and the city's new logo painted behind him). The attention paid to building Ekaterinburg-City (Platova 2016) a business district replete with skyscrapers in the city center, seems to confirm this categorization.

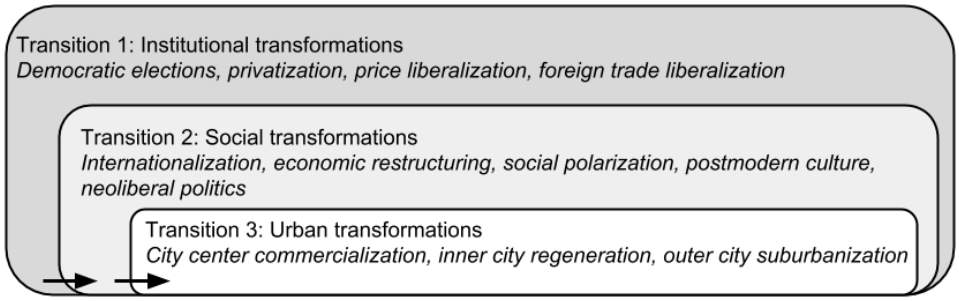

Figure 17: Sýkora and Bouzarovski's model of post-communist transformations, moving through multiple transformations along institutional, social, and urban dimensions. Adapted from Sýkora and Bouzarovski 2012.

A closer analysis, however, reveals the blurry lines between these stages, and demonstrates how both host cities exhibit characteristics of multiple phases at the same time. Volgograd, for instance could be placed in any of the three stages, as neither the city nor the region have competitive or legitimate elections. In the context of the World Cup development program, Volgograd's city center is undergoing substantial processes of regeneration, though inner city commercialization seems to be lagging as the large number of enormous empty buildings attest. The building that previously housed the state department store, for example, is located in the heart of tourist Volgograd, directly across from the eternal flame on the Square of Fallen Fighters, but its five stories were still abandoned even after the World Cup. And yet, despite this stagnation, internationalization was proceeding: as part of World Cup development, English signs

began appearing around Volgograd, and international chains started opening hotels around the city.

Along these lines, Ekaterinburg defies easy categorization as well. Democratic mayoral elections did occur – a rarity in contemporary Russia – although the mayor mostly had symbolic power and even that was removed as direct elections were canceled in 2018 (Kolezev 2018). At the same time, the city continues to pursue neoliberal strategies of place promotion and event-based tourism, while revitalizing and reconstructing the city center. In this way, both Volgograd and Ekaterinburg can be seen to occupy multiple places on Sýkora and Bouzarovski's framework simultaneously. What this speaks to is the way that Russian cities defy easy categorization. This is not to invalidate Sýkora and Bouzarovski's contribution, but rather to point out that transition or transformation is not necessarily a linear process: there are moments when cities and states turn back, when they proceed in fits and starts, and when they exhibit multiple seemingly contradictory traits simultaneously. More to the point, as this is true for Sýkora and Bouzarovski, so too is it for Brenner's conceptualization of the processes of neoliberal restructuring, as I will discuss in the next chapter. First, however, it is necessary to investigate in more depth the urban impacts of some World Cup development projects in order to explore more fully the features of rescaling at play.

The Urban Impacts of Area-Specific Projects

As shown, authorities in both Volgograd and Ekaterinburg attempted to leverage hosting to enact development goals not directly related to sport, though each city pursued its own customized and differentiating strategies. Subsequently, these strategies manifested in divergent and area-specific ways when translated into the built environment. Many of these took shape as overdue physical improvements, confirming the notion that post-socialist nations tend to spend lavishly on hosting in part because of the need for investments in infrastructure (Müller and Pickles 2015). For example, within the framework of preparing for the World Cup, a new road was built along the bank of the Volga River, as explained by this representative of the municipality:

> "Volgograd has a linear layout, so another parallel road will help relieve the pressure on the central auto thoroughfares. This will improve the transport situation significantly. Along with this, the beautification of the waterfront territory will make it attractive not only for drivers but also for all Volgograd residents and guests." (L149)

Because Volgograd is so long and thin, stretched out for almost 100km on the west side of the river, transit has presented a continual challenge for residents. Prior to the World Cup, the city had three major boulevards that ran the length of the city; these had different official names depending on where they were in the city, but collectively they were known as first, second, and third *prodolnaya*, referring to the way that the roads ran parallel to the river. With so few thoroughfares, serious traffic jams were a common feature of city life. On top of this, the quality of the roads was generally poor, rife with potholes and crumbling asphalt, especially in the less central districts but also sporadically in the more touristy areas in the center. Referring to the lamentable quality of the roads, one resident quipped: "This is why the SUV is the official vehicle of Volgograd. Pay attention – you'll never see an official driving around in a car that doesn't have high clearance," (D42). In this context, the various road construction and improvement projects were one of the most celebrated aspects of the World Cup development program. Thus, constructing the new *prodolnaya*, or parallel road (shown in Figure 18), was a major investment in improving the quality of transit in the city.

Figure 18: Construction of the new prodolnaya, or parallel road, along the banks of the Volga River about 5km south of Volgograd's World Cup stadium, next to a pair of elite apartment buildings. Source: author.

More to the point for this argument, however, it was a customized and area-specific articulation of the World Cup development plan, an expression of a local effort for differentiation. In this, organizers attempted to marry what they saw as local needs to the broader requirements of hosting. As construction progressed, the regional governor often released statements underscoring the long-term value of this road:

> "The new parallel road is important not only for the 2018 World Cup, but also for transport development, as well as for the development of the waterfront zone and for all of Volgograd." (Maslova 2017)

In this, the governor continued the tendency, begun in the regional decree, of framing World Cup developments as a transformative moment for the city. In his telling, the parallel road – which began by threading the narrow strip of land between the new stadium and the river before travelling south – would improve the quality of life for all of Volgograd. In this telling, the road became more than a road, and instead resembled a panacea. Further, investments like these were part of an array of World Cup-driven improvements, as the governor continued:

> "Residents know that the region is undergoing comprehensive work to renew essential services like housing and utilities. These are facilities that aren't visible at first glance, but they raise the quality of life for everyone. But most importantly, this will remain as a foundation for further development." (Maslova 2017)

These "invisible" improvements included the construction of new sewer lines in a district just north of the stadium, improvements to electricity and gas provision, and road repair. The majority of this work took place in more central neighborhoods but nevertheless had the potential for positive material impacts on many residents. These projects were not necessarily deliberate strategies of differentiation or customization, but they were linked to those ideas all the same. Underlying these discussions of material development was the notion of improving the city's attractiveness for investors and tourists – the classic neoliberal argument for interurban competition. Adequate quality infrastructure was an essential ingredient for this attractiveness, and the idea that subsequent benefits would trickle down to residents was never questioned on an official level. Instead, residents' lives were thought to improve automatically from the new infrastructures (more likely when considering the construction of sewer lines than luxury hotels) and they would enjoy less immediately tangible but nevertheless real benefits from the increased flows of tourists and capital.

Similar infrastructural improvements took place in Ekaterinburg, where a road project near the World Cup stadium also served to reduce traffic congestion and improve transit in the city. On the northwest side of the stadium ran Tatishev street, a poorly maintained two-lane road with no sidewalks or curbs; on the northeast, Lenin Prospekt, one of the city's central thoroughfares that ran almost the entire width of Ekaterinburg. Tatishev connected to Lenin Prospekt by means of a strip of asphalt barely wider than a single car, with muddy ruts on either side where drivers had pulled off to pass one another. Soon this turned completely into a dirt road that hugged the north side of the World Cup stadium. There were no signs or sidewalks but I saw many pedestrians make their way through, and even some cars, though for the vehicles it was more like off-roading in the center of a major city. Building a proper connection here was one of the development projects connected to the World Cup, and intended to bring transit connections up to the modern standard expected in the center a major city. At the same time, and in line with the tendency in Ekaterinburg to de-emphasize the dominant role of the World Cup, a municipal administrator insisted that the project had existed prior to hosting:

> "The connection to Lenin Prospekt would have happened with or without the World Cup. The event is only an accelerator… These projects would happen anyway" (R212).

I corroborated this claim with a look at Ekaterinburg's Master Plan, where linking Tatishev Street and Lenin Prospekt had in fact long been on the docket, though nothing had been accomplished for over a decade (Ekaterinburg City Duma 2004, 24). In other words, Ekaterinburg administrators had successfully harnessed the preparations for the World Cup in order to accomplish a pre-existing and indeed longstanding development agenda (Smith 2012). Similar to Volgograd, this transit connection was only one of many less visible projects in the city, but in Ekaterinburg these were discussed almost exclusively within the sweep of the city's broader history.

Both cities' projects had more effects on the ground, however, than can be gleaned from planning documents or the perspectives of administrators. To illustrate by means of fleshing out the example of the road connection to Lenin Prospekt in Ekaterinburg, Figure 19 shows one of a small group of wooden houses on Tatishev Street next to the stadium. Standing in the shadow of new apartment buildings, these wooden houses were demolished to make way for the Tatishev expansion.

Figure 19: One of a group of wooden houses in Ekaterinburg next to the World Cup stadium and in the shadow of new apartment buildings. Slated for demolition in 2016 to make way for the expansion of Tatishev Street. Source: author.

As the project was underway, I spoke to several residents about the demolition and construction. "It's cool, probably… It will make driving much easier… It will be a normal road," (B06). This woman judged the project on the promised benefits for cars and drivers and did not concern herself with the changing character of the neighborhood. She seemed untroubled by the demolished wooden houses. This lack of concern was echoed by another resident:

> "You want old houses? They left an old house on the corner… I'll take you there and you can see for yourself," (F57).

This man was not irritated at my questions but seemed perplexed that I would fail to grasp the material progress that was unfolding in the city. He assured me that there were plenty of wooden houses remaining elsewhere, and of much finer quality as well.

The road connection also affected a small wooded park at the end of Lenin Prospekt. This park was notable for a civil war monument consisting of a pillar and an eternal flame. As Tatishev Street was transformed from a small, rutted road into a major boulevard, the park and monument standing in the way presented an obstacle. This problem was resolved by dividing the park in two. One half was bulldozed for construction but the other half was spared, and new sidewalks and fences were added. When the expanded and connected road was opened, Tatishev Street boasted three smoothly paved lanes in each direction, with a pair of tram tracks in the center. All this flowed smoothly into Lenin Prospekt, an unnoticeable transition except for the way the road curved around the monument of the pillar and the eternal flame, which remained even though the rest of the surrounding park had been cleared for the road. Cars and trams travelling east and west hugged the monument on either side, as shown in Figure 20.

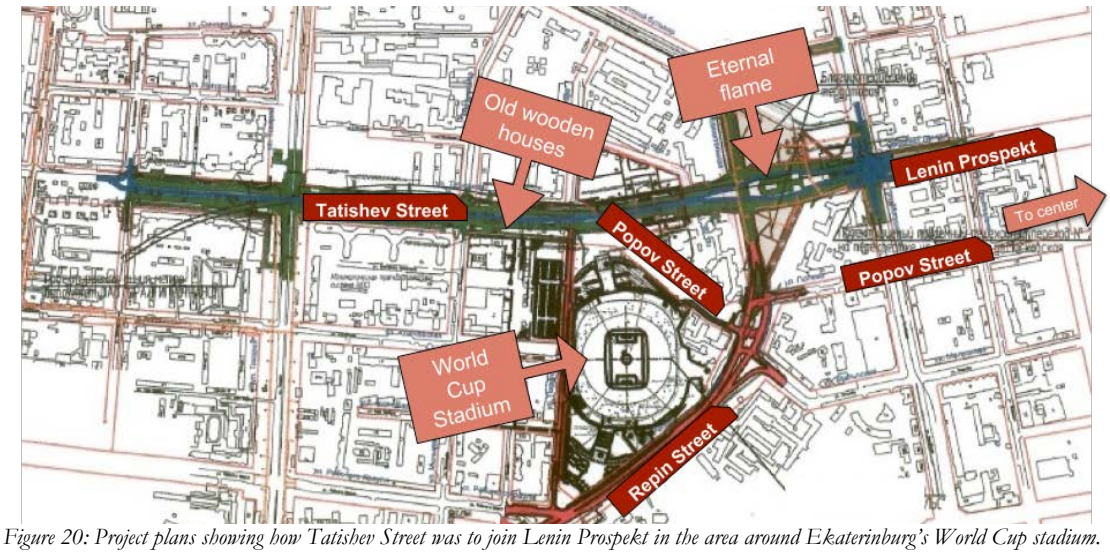

Figure 20: Project plans showing how Tatishev Street was to join Lenin Prospekt in the area around Ekaterinburg's World Cup stadium. Note the eternal flame surrounded by new streets over the former park, and the old wooden houses on Tatishev Street that were demolished. Sources: Ekaterinburg Municipal Administration, author.

Most of the residents I spoke with reacted enthusiastically about this project and understood it as a tangible improvement. Only one person mentioned the park without prompting: "It's a little sad, you know. The trees were very tall… But that's how it happens," (P81). This woman felt the poignancy of the changes, but described this as the

normal way of things, and even admitted that the new connection was more convenient. When I asked other people about the monument, they reacted positively. "It looks cool,"(A60) and "They did a good job," (X29) were typical comments, reflecting that authorities had managed to work around a potentially thorny political issue without stirring up undue controversy (imagine if they had bulldozed the eternal flame, for example). Many people approved of the refreshed feel of the park as well, though few had actually walked there and had only seen it while passing.

In Ekaterinburg, then, this decentralized, customized, and area-specific project of differentiation was jumpstarted using the impetus of the World Cup, and accomplished without undue disruption to many residents, save for a minority who expressed a sort of wistfulness about change. In this, residents could be seen largely to support some of the urban modernization and development projects enacted under the impetus of preparations for the World Cup, as they improved material conditions in the host cities in order to better each city's fortunes in neoliberal strategies of differentiation and competition. Not every project was supported so enthusiastically, however.

Pushback Against a Standardizing Project

In Ekaterinburg, the occasion of the World Cup inspired municipal authorities to pursue an extraordinarily ambitious urban refurbishment program. The initial idea was to repair the facades on all the buildings in Ekaterinburg's center where tourists would pass, on what was called the *gostevoy marshrut* – the guest route. This referred to a narrow red line painted on certain sidewalks in the city center to guide tourists to areas of interest.

This idea grew in scope until it aimed far beyond the red line to include a total of 2065 buildings, and not just in the center but in disparate areas of the city wherever visitors might go for World Cup-related activities. These included the training stadium in UralMash, a district in the city's north, and areas by the Fan Fest zone, in the south (Ekaterinburg Municipality 2017). Under the guise of preparing for the World Cup, the municipality's plans grew to absurd proportions, as a journalist explained:

> "The money is the big problem… They're going to do a wholesale renovation of the buildings along the guest route. Not just painting the facades, you understand, but the interiors too, plumbing, everything… Where will they find the money for this? ...I don't even know what to think!" (N16)

It was impossible to use the World Cup to justify renovation of 2065 building interiors, however, and this expanded ambition was not mentioned again. Nevertheless, the city administration persisted in pushing improvements for the exteriors of the 2065 buildings on its list – a move that echoed the traditional Potemkin emphasis on surface rather than substance (though this could also be seen as a gesture of hospitality, as discussed above).

Ekaterinburg's Chief Artist and head of the Department of Urban Design explained that the goal of this project was to bring every façade into a single, harmonious style. This meant removing all non-permitted or non-standardized external additions such as satellite dishes, air conditioners, and balcony modifications like new sidings or glass enclosures:

> "All the balconies should look identical… There should be no bars on the windows… We have a safe city here… All windows should be brought into a single style. There should not be old wooden windows at the same time as modern plastic windows." (Svechkov 2017)

This was an idea of creating architectural harmony through uniformity, and thereby broadcasting a message both to international visitors and to the rest of Russia that Ekaterinburg was competent, collected, and under control. It was an attempt to promote the city for increased integration in national and transnational flows by presenting a particular image of urban harmony – which ideally would then translate into an improved investment climate. It also proved the Potemkin superficiality of planners' priorities: what mattered was how the buildings looked on the outside, not how they functioned on the inside. Nor, for that matter, were the interior courtyards of any official concern. Instead, it was the street view that mattered to authorities, and standardizing façades was an official priority because officials wanted to present what they considered a proper image.

Moreover, authorities had flagged as problematic a host of independent building additions and modifications that were almost ubiquitous. Starting in the 1990s, some families upgraded their apartments while others did not; some sought official permission and pursued these modifications in accordance with the city codex, while others avoided the bureaucracy and built as they wished. Thus it was not unusual to see façades decorated with a hodgepodge of air conditioners and balcony window modifications, as shown in Figure 21. In this, Ekaterinburg residents were displaying flexibility,

adaptability, and resilience, troubling the binary notion of housing transformations led by elites against powerless residents (Bouzarovski 2016). Yet since at least 2012, the municipality had official plans to restore what it deemed architectural order, aiming to make the city more presentable through standardizing and renovating the façades (Ekaterinburg City Duma 2012). As with the Tatishev-Lenin Prospekt connection, the idea now was to use the development impulse of the World Cup to bring these longstanding plans to fruition. This represented a peculiar mix: under the guise of improving the city in terms of its entrepreneurial competitiveness – in theory, a customized and area-specific process – the municipal administration attempted to enact a project that was uniform, standardized, and equalizing.

Figure 21: A residential building in Ekaterinburg with disparate balcony modifications and air conditioning units, all to be removed as façades were slated for standardization in to the municipality's World Cup development plans. Source: author.

There were two especially controversial moments in this plan, however. The first was that Ekaterinburg residents were not consulted, but rather learned about this plan *fait accompli* from the media – an unwelcome surprise, to be sure, especially when combined with the second issue: cost. If your building ended up on the list of 2065, not only were you responsible for organizing yourself and your neighbors to launch and then see through the bureaucratic process of registering your building and its status with the authorities – already an onerous task – but also you would be responsible for paying for these renovations out of your own pocket (Belyayev 2017). As the head of the Department of Urban Design stated: "There will be no funding from the budget for the standardization of the façades. There will be no extra funds earmarked," (Svechkov

2017). Or, as detailed in a media report on the controversy, this interchange in the City Duma:

> "'How much money has been marked for this project in the budget?' asked City Duma deputy Alexey Borodin.
> 'At the moment, none,' answered Alexey Belyshev, deputy head of the Ekaterinburg administration.
> 'So who will pay to correct the inconsistencies?'
> 'As it is set out in the Civil Code: the owners will pay.' (UpMonitor 2017)

In other words, residents would themselves have to pay for the privilege of undoing the work they had previously undertaken and paid for, shouldering the financial burden of standardizing their buildings. It is obvious in hindsight that this plan would cause citizen uproar, correcting what the authorities so cavalierly referred to as inconsistencies, but to residents actually meant the balconies and air conditioners of their homes. This raises the question of why the authorities would attempt such a project, given the scale of the plan and the likely reactions of residents. Assuming they were acting rationally, it appears they believed that the context of the World Cup, combined with the national and municipal pressure to fulfill hosting requirements, would allow them to push through this longstanding but unpopular project.

Resident pushback was immediate and scathing, however, overflowing with indignation toward municipal administrators. Local media covered the controversy relentlessly and many City Duma representatives sided with residents against the administration. In social media and in person, people had much to say about the matter, but the following statement from a resident in one of the buildings on the list sums up most of the feelings expressed both online and in person:

> "The administration is out of their minds… They'll have to fight 2065 separate court cases if they try to go through with this project." (M48)

This resident had no illusions about the impossibility or the scope of the plan. It was, to him, a sign of administrative incompetency that such an idea would even be floated. In reaction to the controversy, the administration hardened its position and, though stating that the budget would pay to renovate five buildings (out of 2065), they would "declare a civil war" in order to get the so-called balcony reform project underway and, in so doing, clean up the city (Komarov 2017a; Varkentin 2017).

In the midst of this debate, other development-related controversies erupted in the city. The most notable of these were a wholesale overhaul of the city's public transit network (launched under the auspices of the World Cup but presented as a long-term benefit and accompanied by the same neoliberal narratives) and the proposed construction of a cathedral in the middle of the city's lake, both of which generated substantial public opposition though for different reasons (Batalova 2016b; Merkulov 2015). Beset by controversies like these, Ekaterinburg during the run-up to the World Cup hardly resembled the picture of controlled competency that authorities wished to portray. To calm the situation in the face of continued resident indignation, the administration began softening their stance about the balcony reform, as the head of the Department of Urban Design stated:

> "We understand the global complexity of this work and we hope for the understanding of all residents. Events will pass, guests will come and go, but we will stay in Ekaterinburg. We need to understand that we – the city dwellers – are doing this for ourselves. After all, we want our children to inherit a wonderful city, not a collection of fragmented buildings." (Yakino 2017)

This was an attempt to remind residents of Ekaterinburg's wider history and to frame the project as a long-term benefit in that context. But this was only one narrative in a confusing landscape of often-contradictory messages coming from local government, and several people I spoke with explained that they would wait for clearer instructions before embarking on any renovations. This confused atmosphere provided opportunities for scam artists, who tried to take advantage of worried residents by pretending they worked for the city and would fix all the façade problems for a flat fee – even on buildings that were not included on the list of 2065 (AIF 2017b).

As the city continued preparing for the World Cup, the façade renovation project lurched on, rife with contradictory instructions from the authorities and beset by debates in government and in the media. The civic indignation continued until the Ekaterinburg City Manager (also a member of the regional LOC), suddenly stated that the project would not be pursued: "It's not worth it even to connect this with the football World Cup. We don't have the time…" (Chukreev 2017). This was a dramatic shift in argument, but the City Manager continued softening the plans, clarifying that the administration had only "recommended" that owners begin the bureaucratic processes of registering their buildings with the appropriate renovation authorities, and that no repressive measures would be taken against those who did not comply. This is some distance from

the talk of civil war that administrators were bandying about earlier. Regarding cost, the City Manager further explained that residents would not pay for the renovations directly, but that the administration had meant that residents would pay indirectly, through a regional fund for renovation – a transparent walk-back but, to many, a welcome one. Finally, he also explained that the renovation would be delayed indefinitely, and that the list of 2065 buildings would only be treated as those needing attention for beautification in the context of the World Cup (Komarov 2017b). This represented a full stop for the façade project and a failure for the administration's standardization plans for increased urban competitiveness. It also demonstrated the limits of neoliberal rhetoric in achieving administrators' goals. In their uproar and indignation, Ekaterinburg residents communicated that there were lines that would not be crossed.

The reason for the municipal administration's abrupt change in policy was unclear, but it was alleged in the media that President Putin had become personally involved in the controversy on a visit to Ekaterinburg. Certainly, that was the impression given by one of the residents I spoke with: "[The renovation project] was chaotic for sure… But then one day it all stopped. They say that Putin told Kuyvashev [the regional governor] to get things in order and boom, problem solved" (N193). The appearance of the president in Ekaterinburg established a pattern in which a local development spread out of control until Moscow authorities stepped in to set matters in order. This pattern hints at how these projects were not as purely customized, decentralized, and area-specific as they might first have appeared. Instead, there were broader patterns at play in these expressions of differentiation, patterns that – as I will show in the next chapter – trouble our existing understanding of how mega-events are articulated as processes of neoliberalization.

6: POTEMKIN NEOLIBERALISM

Managing the World Cup

I was in Volgograd, hoping to meet someone in the local organizing committee. There were no responses to my emails and I had no phone number to call so I went in person to their offices within the premises of the municipal committee for physical culture and sport. Inside this building, I knocked at a metal door with the Russia 2018 logo. There was no response but the municipal receptionist had brought me here; certainly this was the right door. I opened it to find a set of empty offices, wires dangling from the ceiling and assorted computer equipment on the floor (Figure 22). Either they were moving in or moving out, but wherever the Volgograd local organizing committee worked, it was not here. It was one year to the day before the opening of the World Cup.

Figure 22: Empty offices of the Volgograd regional local organizing committee. The sticker on the internal door reads, "I live for football" under the Volgograd LOC logo. Source: author.

This vignette hints at some of the defining features of the Russian World Cup. I had had relatively little trouble getting in touch with the federal LOC, whose press secretary was responsive over email, even though the organization itself never got around to granting

me credentials to visit the stadium sites. The Volgograd regional LOC was a different story, however, and the emptiness of their offices struck me as symbolic of wider processes in the organization of this mega-event. The vacant interior spoke immediately to Broudehoux's (2017) engagements with Potemkinism, as my exploration beneath the constructed surface revealed a shambolic and fraudulent interior. Beyond this, however, lay less immediately visible questions regarding state influence in the creation and articulation of the World Cup and, given that the state is multiple, which level of government was implicated in determining developments. In this chapter, I demonstrate centralized state influence at multiple levels of the World Cup management structure, an exploration that complicates the presentation of mega-events as purely neoliberal projects predicated on centralized state withdrawal. Further, this chapter follows Broudehoux in moving beyond an interpretation of Potemkinism limited only to the visual domain, as preparations for the World Cup also demonstrated discursive and locational Potemkinism. Finally, as discussed before, the chapter also endeavors to transcend the binary thinking that places unhelpful limits on the notion of Potemkinism.

The Russian World Cup, unlike most mega-events, was in many ways a project conceived of and managed by the central state. This has implications for the ways in which the World Cup was articulated as diverse expressions of customized and area-specific neoliberalization, and complicates the projects in Volgograd and Ekaterinburg presented in the previous chapter. Traditionally, the Russian state has been seen as centralized and hierarchical, where the president is the key figure and final authority, dispersing decisions down a chain of command from the federal to the regional and municipal levels (Sakwa 2008). This has been called the power vertical, and it is universally recognized that, since taking office, president Vladimir Putin has strengthened the role of the central state at the expense of regional and local authorities (Ross 2003; Sharafutdinova 2013). The president's high profile, however, has led many scholars, journalists, and other observers of Russia to use president Putin as an all-explanatory factor for practically any situation. This was particularly noticeable during the 2014 Sochi Olympics, where analysts often emphasized the personal role of the president, sometimes even conflating Putin, the nation, and the games (H. J. Lenskyj 2014; Orttung and Zhemukhov 2017; Ray Taras 2017).

Some scholars have attempted to destabilize this simplification and unpack the power vertical, presenting more nuanced pictures of bureaucratic domination that fails to provide effective or just governance (Ledyaev 2008), or analyses of the system of informal obligations that permeates the bureaucratic hierarchy (Ledeneva 2013). Others have examined the ways in which relatively stable subnational governance structures interact with centralized power in the context of increasing authoritarianism (Gel'man and Ryzhenkov 2011), or the processes of direct control that rely on senior individuals overseeing projects personally (Monaghan 2012). Here, I acknowledge the centralized power of the federal state, located in Moscow and often personified in the person of the president, but I situate this work alongside scholarship that understands complexity beyond the personality of the president and uncovers the complexity of multiple states in the interactions between federal, regional, and municipal levels. In this way, I use the preparations for the World Cup to explore the uneasy and unstable ways in which the neoliberal projects of regional and municipal differentiation collided with centralized state influence from Moscow. Thus, what at first appeared to be purely neoliberal expressions turned out, in the context of Russia's dominant central state, to exhibit more contradictory and confusing characteristics that defied easy categorization.

In this light, instead of seeing World Cup preparations as customized, differentiating, and area-specific projects, the centralized influence of the state – as expressed through the power vertical – manifested projects that were also simultaneously uniform, equalizing, and standardized. That preparations could exhibit contradictory traits in this way is a situation that approaches paradox, but close examination of the preparations reveals some of the ways that these seemingly paradoxical situations were created and sustained.

To begin with, centralized state involvement was visible from the outset of the World Cup project, before the bid had even been won. Starting at the beginning of the event cycle, the key group behind this mega-event was the Russia 2018 World Cup bid committee, an organization dedicated to creating the bid and shepherding it through FIFA's initial phases. The Russian bid committee was comprised of only 15 or 16 people; it was not possible to determine the precise quantity or composition because these processes were shrouded by Russian government protocols as well as FIFA's storied secrecy. Still, I was able to determine that the organization was comparatively small, and to identify some key figures that played roles in the World Cup from the start. At the

center of the bid committee were two men: Chairman Vitaly Mutko, and Chief Executive Officer Alexey Sorokin (Borbély 2017). Together, Mutko and Sorokin came up with the initial idea of hosting the World Cup in Russia, and worked to assemble a formal bid. At the time, both men were involved in the top echelons of national football: Mutko served as the president of the Russian Football Union, the governing body of football in the Russian Federation (and, also, the organization that represents Russia in FIFA as a Member Association), while Sorokin served as the Russian Football Union's CEO and General Secretary.

Further, both men – but particularly Mutko – had strong ties to state structures. While president of the Russian Football Union, Mutko simultaneously served as the St Petersburg representative to the Federation Council, the upper house of the Russian parliament. He then was promoted to Sports Minister for the Russian Federation. He performed both roles until then-president Dmitry Medvedev required all sports federations to be led by professionals, not government officials, causing Mutko to resign his duties as RFU president and join the board of trustees instead (RIA Novosti 2009a, 2009b). At the same time, he was elected to the FIFA Executive Committee and began hatching the plan for the Russian World Cup bid. Alexey Sorokin, Mutko's partner in the bid, had a background as a diplomat working in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and then became the Moscow city government's Deputy Director of Sport, before stepping into his role alongside Mutko at the Russian Football Union (Kominsky et al. 2018). President Medvedev's attempts to establish a separation between state and organized sport may have been superficially successful, but they did not appear to apply to the World Cup bid, where Mutko's political role in the federal government was crucial in gaining the official support of the central government (Borbély 2017).

Mutko's efforts at engaging official government backing could hardly have been more successful: in 2009, Vladimir Putin (temporarily serving as prime minister) issued federal decree 1469, committing the federal government to support fully the World Cup bid. This decree appointed First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov as a representative on the bid committee, putting the central government squarely in charge of the bid (Gazeta.ru 2009; Russian Federal Government 2009). The full support at the highest levels of government was a key selling point in the Russian bid book. It is worth

reviewing a large section of the text in order to get a feel not only for the scope of government involvement, but also for how prominently this was discussed:

> "Mr. Shuvalov's role, specifically, is to oversee the coordination between all levels of government, including the proposed Host Cities and regions, and across all key ministries and agencies. Those ministries and agencies are listed below:
>
> - Ministry of Sport, Tourism and Youth Policy
> - Ministry of Finance
> - Ministry of Economic Development
> - Ministry of Health and Social Development
> - Ministry of Regional Development
> - Ministry of Transportation
> - Ministry of National Resources
> - Ministry of the Interior
> - Ministry of Civil Defense of Emergencies (EMERCOM)
> - Ministry of Foreign Affairs
> - Ministry of Information Technologies and Communication
> - Federal Customs Service
> - Ministry of Culture and Mass Communications
> - Ministry of Education and Science
> - Ministry of Defense
>
> This close collaboration amongst all levels of government and between departments is not unique to Russia's FIFA World Cup™ candidacy, and it will continue during the planning and implementation phases of the tournament, as well as long afterwards. Should Russia be named host of the 2018/2022 FIFA World Cup™, an organizational structure at the highest level of the government will be put in place. The preparations will be supervised and coordinated under direct control of the President of Russian Federation through his existing Presidential Council for Sports… Such visibility and attention at the highest level of the Federal Government not only maximizes efficiencies between organizations, but also facilitates timely delivery and quality operations. Such complete government support extends to each of the 13 Host Cities, whose City Councils unanimously have declared their unqualified commitment to Russia's bid…" (Russia 2018 World Cup Bid Committee 2010, 391)

This part of the bid book was designed to emphasize, with no hesitation or restrictions, the federal government's absolute commitment to hosting. Guaranteeing the cooperation and coordination of fifteen national ministries, establishing the unqualified support of the host city administrations, as well as the city councils, every one of which voted unanimously to support the bid – a clear expression of authoritarianism. Beyond this, the bid promised the involvement of the president himself, all of which made for a convincing argument that the World Cup would be executed without fail – and, as promised in the bid, with maximum efficiency. These commitments stood in contrast to

the other candidate nations who had not even managed to secure all the government guarantees, despite the fact that these were required by FIFA in order for the bids to be considered complete. Moreover, the Russian bid benefited from the perception of the nation as a centralized hierarchy under command of an all-powerful president. If the idea of the Russian power vertical could be taken at face value, then winning presidential approval was a sign of guaranteed success. In this way, the Russian bid used authoritarian centralization as a selling point.

These were important considerations for FIFA, since the organization required above all the financial viability of the World Cup. In combination with the FIFA president's desire to promote football in new territories and thereby access new markets (Borbély 2017; Radford 2010), Russian governmental support made the bid look more compelling. In their report, The FIFA evaluation group rated this aspect of Russia's bid highly, noting repeatedly how the bidding committee had provided all government guarantees without reservation or modification, and noting the high level of alignment among all levels of Russian government (FIFA 2010b).

Once FIFA granted hosting rights to Russia and the event cycle moved into the preparation phase, the Russia 2018 World Cup bid committee dissolved and reconstituted itself as the Russia 2018 Local Organizing Committee, or LOC. Key individuals from the bid took on roles within the new organization, which grew to include officials from national, regional, and municipal governments. During the years of preparation, there were numerous promotions, retirements, lateral moves, and other internal political developments among these individuals, but one thing remained consistent: their involvement with the national government. For example, Vitaly Mutko continued in various roles as the Russian Sports Minister, FIFA executive committee member, president of the Russian Football Union, and Chairman of the LOC. This continued until he was banned for life from the Olympics for his role in the Sochi 2014 doping scandal (International Olympic Committee 2017). Following this, Mutko stepped down from his role in the FIFA executive committee and was removed from his duties in the LOC (Kelner 2017; Russian Federal Government 2017b), to avoid casting aspersions on the upcoming World Cup. At the same time, however, he was promoted to Deputy Prime Minister for Construction and Regional Development, indicating that his punishment by the international sporting community carried little weight inside Russia.

Thus, one of the architects of the World Cup was not only a well-connected government minister, but during the course of the preparations he even advanced his own position within government structures.

Other figures in the national government played prominent roles in the World Cup organization as well. Igor Shuvalov, the First Deputy Prime Minister assigned to the bid by Vladimir Putin, performed supervisory and alignment roles in the bidding committee. Once the event moved into the preparation phase, he continued these duties as chairman in the LOC. In another example of government/mega-event synergy, as Deputy Prime Minister, Shuvalov was also responsible for overseeing Russian social and economic development, foreign affairs, financial planning, and domestic investment projects – all of which dovetailed nicely with the World Cup development program (Finmarket 2012). For his part, Alexey Sorokin, who had been CEO of the Bidding Committee, continued as CEO of the LOC, before stepping into the FIFA executive committee after Mutko's lifetime ban. Sorokin also filled in for Mutko as LOC Chairman until a new government official, Arkady Dvorkovich, was appointed to the role. Dvorkovich previously served as Adviser to the President of the Russian Federation and then a Deputy Prime Minister (FIFA 2018a). The point in these details is that, regardless of personnel turnover, key positions in the LOC were staffed by individuals either drawn from government ranks or who held positions within the government and the LOC simultaneously. This allowed the creation of an organizational structure that mirrored the functioning and the features of the power vertical, as illustrated by an executive from the federal LOC who told me in an interview:

> "I am not worried [about the preparations]… We have personal responsibility. We know who is responsible for what in each city. I go to each city every 2-3 months and ask how things are…" (S17)

Crucially, individuals at all levels of the organizing committees were held personally to account for the developments under their domain, as expressed by the Russian power vertical and the system of patron-client relationships (Fisun 2012; Gel'man 2015b; Guliyev 2011). This stands in contrast to the neoliberal model of mega-event organization, largely pioneered by Peter Ueberroth in the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles, who launched the idea of privately financed Games, intensive corporate sponsorship, and an organizing committee composed mostly of prominent figures in the business community (Reich 1986; Wenn 2015).

Aside from filling committees with government figures, Russian state involvement in the World Cup was reflected in the management structure of the LOC itself (FIFA 2017a), shown in simplified form in Figure 23. This structure mirrored the hierarchical composition of federal, regional, and municipal governments, and reproduced the dynamics of the power vertical.

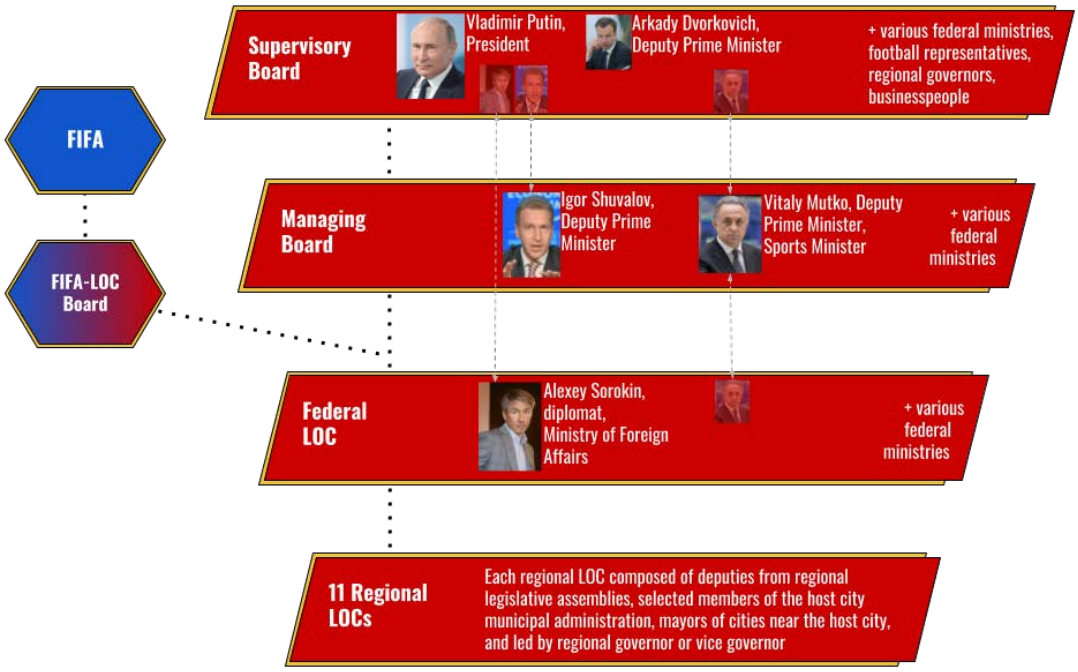

Figure 23: Simplified diagram of the overall LOC management structure for the 2018 men's World Cup, including some key figures, their former or current roles in government, and multiple roles within different levels of the LOC. Sources: FIFA, Russia 2018 Bidding Committee, Russia 2018 Local Organizing Committee, Vedomosti, Gazeta.ru, e1.ru, v1.ru, Oblastnaya Gazeta, Kremlin.ru. Image sources: Wikimedia Commons, Kremlin.ru (CC-BY-SA 2.0, CC-BY-4.0), Russia 2018 Local Organizing Committee.

At the top of the LOC was the Supervisory Board, which set the strategic direction of World Cup developments. Notably, the Supervisory Board was headed by Russian President Putin and, among many other representatives from federal ministries, included 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 (SovetskySport 2011). Aside from these, the Supervisory Board also included regional governors, members of the national football organization, and representatives from state-owned and non state-owned businesses. This structure established the Russian president and the national government as the ultimate authority in all matters pertaining to the World Cup.

Below the Supervisory Board was the Managing Board, headed by Igor Shuvalov, which coordinated the LOC's operations in accordance with the instructions of the Supervisory

Board. In essence, the Managing Board's role was to translate the decisions of the Supervisory Board into policy, to be communicated down the vertical and implemented in the host cities. The Managing Board also included representatives of numerous federal ministries, including many who also simultaneously participated in the Supervisory Board. There were numerous blurred lines and overlapping duties involved in the organization of the World Cup, but again, the consistent factor here was the deep involvement of these individuals within state structures.

As the World Cup was not solely a Russian production, there was a need to provide communication, monitoring, and approval between FIFA and the Russian organizers. This was the function of the FIFA-LOC board, located in the vertical below the Managing Board. The function of this board was to provide a forum wherein FIFA representatives could monitor developments, verify that their organizational and infrastructural requirements were met, and issue approvals or recommendations. To this end, a number of inspection visits took place over the years of preparation, where FIFA delegations would tour the host cities and monitor developments. These visits were short and controlled, shepherding FIFA inspectors around key sites in a number of host cities over a few days. As a journalist told me:

> "What can you see in such a short time? …And, you know, so much is done for the checkmark. They're supposed to build a certain way so they follow the rules, but it's not done properly… It's like the elevators for people with limited mobility. They exist, but they don't work and no one uses them… These things are not yet well developed in Russia." (K103)

In this light, the inspection visits underscored the Potemkin nature of the preparations, whereby Russian officials could manage perceptions to present a superficial image of progress while masking less palatable conditions. As this journalist commented, Russian organizers could show FIFA officials newly built facilities that appeared to fulfill requirements but this did not mean that the substance behind the gleaming surface was functional, just as the powered lifts that were installed on stairways throughout the city were not actually hooked up to electricity. Russian organizers engaged in these traditionally Potemkin behaviors because FIFA's approval was necessary for the preparations to continue, emulating the origins of Potemkinism in creating a pleasing but artificial surface to placate or hoodwink a visiting authority. At the same time, it is notable that FIFA did not dictate the direction of developments within the Russian power vertical. Rather, FIFA's input entered in the middle of the chain and the LOC

structure made plain where ultimate authority lay. This relationship complicates the binary interpretation of Potemkinism and reveals that the articulation of the Russian World Cup was not as straightforward as it initially appeared.

Below the Supervisory and Managing Boards was the level of the federal LOC, headed by CEO Alexey Sorokin, whose duties involved communicating and coordinating policy issued from above to the regional LOCs below. The degree of state presence in the organization of the Russian World Cup was summed up by Joseph Blatter, then FIFA president, in his comments to a meeting with members of the supervisory board, the managing board, and the federal and regional LOCs:

> "It is a great honor for me to be invited here today especially thanks to the presence of the head of the government, President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, because it is specifically he who is the architect of the decision to hold the World Cup in Russia… Incidentally, I would also like to greet everyone present here. I even have the impression that I am present at a proper meeting of the Government. There are ministers and mayors here, and other guests, and the President of the Russian Football Union." (Kremlin.ru 2014)

Seated in a conference room in Moscow next to the Russian president and surrounded by government ministers, the reason Blatter had the impression that he was at a "proper meeting of the Government" is because that is precisely where he was. He was witnessing firsthand the mechanics of the power vertical, encapsulated in this sentence from president Putin's opening address to the room: "…We must have full cooperation and coordination between all agencies and services, and we must establish personal responsibility," (Kremlin.ru 2014). In this way, the Russian president directed the machinery of the state hierarchy towards articulating the World Cup, asserted himself at the top of the chain, and established the parameters of expected behavior. As mentioned above, personal responsibility here refers to the methods of direct control by which key individuals monitor and are held responsible for developments in certain designated areas, an expression of the power vertical and suffused with patron-client relations (Monaghan 2012). Rather than having institutions be responsible for developments, it was individuals who established personalized networks that initiated, enacted, and monitored World Cup preparations.

Mapping these relationships onto the Russian World Cup organizing structure reveals a waterfall decision-making paradigm, whereby the president and other members of the

Supervisory Board disbursed decisions down to the Managing Board, to the federal LOC, and out to the Regional LOCs. In the system of personal responsibility, each of these levels was under the authority of a key individual, who ensured compliance and relayed reports back up the chain.

The power vertical that existed at the national level was repeated in fractal fashion in the regions, with the governor taking the place of the president, and disbursing decisions down through the regional LOC in a miniaturized version of the nationwide system of personal responsibility. For Ekaterinburg and Volgograd (as well as the other host cities, of course), the person in command was the regional governor. At the same time, the regional LOCs were not entirely fiefdoms under the command of a governor; they were also composed of federal level bureaucrats assigned to work in the peripheries. Aside from these appointees, the regional LOCs also were staffed with regional and municipal bureaucrats and politicians. In Ekaterinburg, for example, the regional LOC was comprised of the mayors of smaller nearby cities where World Cup training facilities were planned (namely the towns of Berezovsky, Verkhnee Dubrovo, and Verkhnyaya Pyshma), as well as deputies from the Sverdlovsk regional government (Batalova 2016a; Oblastnaya Gazeta 2014; Varkentin 2014). Further, the regular meetings of the regional LOCs were timed to match the inspection visits from members of the federal LOC, thereby reinforcing the links between the higher and lower levels of the vertical.

There are divergences, however, between the ideal or theoretical functioning of the power vertical, and how things actually played out in the World Cup preparations. I will detail some of these divergences later in this chapter, but for the moment, the key point here is to note the involvement of individuals at all levels of the Russian state – federal, regional, and municipal – in the preparations for the World Cup. This orientation towards individuals is another dimension in which the Russian case troubles the neoliberal functioning of mega-events, which scholars traditionally think of as subject to objective market rule rather than the dictates or whims of people. Further, seeing the World Cup overall as a centralized state project, conceived in Moscow and managed down the power vertical into the regions, complicates the academic conceptualization of this mega-event as simply another example of the processes of globalized neoliberal restructuring, wherein subnational scales would supersede the traditional nation state. Instead, the origin of this World Cup within the highest levels of the central state

complicates the picture of customized, area-specific, and differentiating developments as presented in the previous chapter. This picture becomes still more convoluted when examining the dynamics of the World Cup regional decrees and budgets.

Uniform and Equalizing

The processes of transforming the bid book promises into infrastructure projects in the host cities Cup officially began with Presidential Order 282, which read in part:

> "The government of the Russian Federation shall design and approve… a program to prepare for hosting the 2018 football World Cup in Russia. This shall contain a list of infrastructure projects necessary in order to host the World Cup, the amounts and sources of funding, and the specifics of the implementation of measures, taking into account the Russian Federation state programs and federal target programs. For all this shall federal executive bodies be responsible."
>
> (President of the Russian Federation 2013)

With the president commanding the government to draft a hosting plan, including necessary construction projects and program budgets, the World Cup began to be materialized, still as a centralized state project – and with federal executive bodies established as the ultimate authority. The hosting plan created on this presidential order was Russian Federal Decree 518, detailed in the previous chapter in order to demonstrate the degree of private funding that established the entrepreneurial nature of the World Cup, both nationally and customized within each host city.

While Decree 518 initially featured a strong focus on private funding, the document went through 35 revisions between its original publication in 2013 and the opening of the World Cup on June 4 2018. The repeated modification of this document makes plain that one of FIFA's central arguments in choosing Russia as host – that of the organizational advantages of a less democratic and more authoritarian government – were largely illusory. These revisions modified overall budgets, cut programs, and redefined which entity was responsible for paying. The most notable change in the budgets was seen in the retreat of private investors and a concurrent expansion of federal funding, as shown in Figure 24.

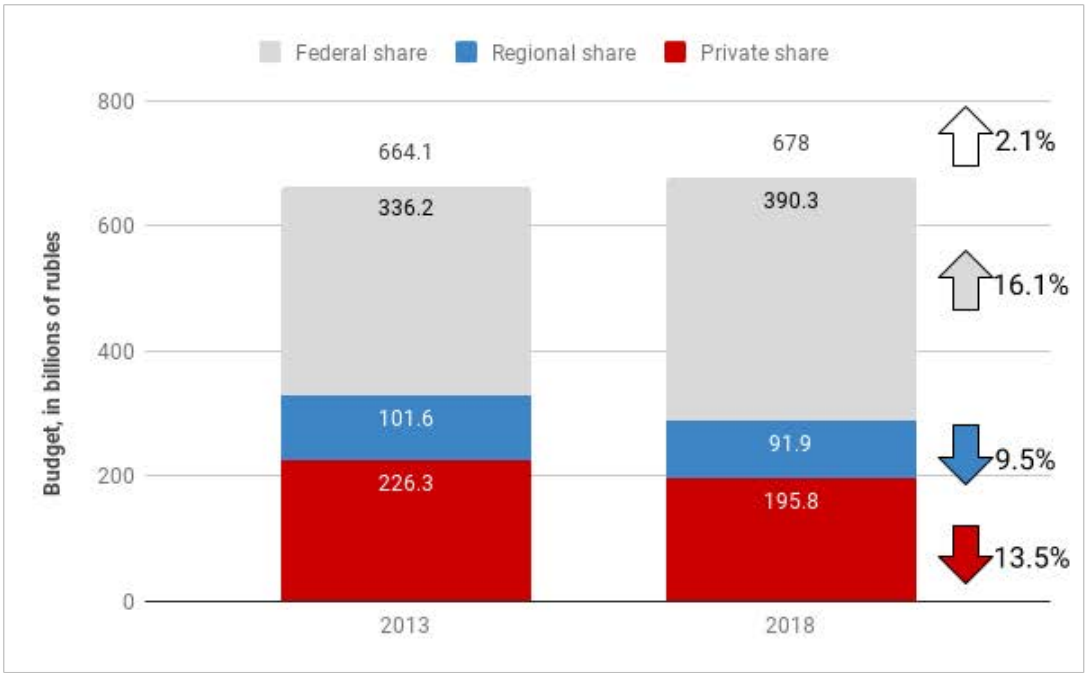

Figure 24: Overall budget for the 2018 World Cup, divided by federal, regional, and private funding, in billions of rubles, showing that the federal share grew while the regional and private shares shrank. Sources: Decree of the Russian Federation No518, 2013; Decree of the Russian Federation No182, introducing changes to No518, 2018.

The five years between the first edition of the decree and the opening of the World Cup saw notable shrinkage in both regional and private shares of funding, in the context of total budget growth and a larger overall federal share. This indicates the continuing enlargement of centralized control of the World Cup project, but it does not reveal why these changes occurred. There are at least three possible reasons underlying this shift. The first is simply a continued expansion of centralized power at the expense of the regions and of private capital (Sharafutdinova 2013; Yakovlev and Zhuravskaya 2009). The second is the relative economic weakness and/or reluctance of private investors and regions, leading to an inability to shoulder their shares – a change from the 1990s and early 2000s, when there was a marked reorientation of political power to regions and regional business (Aldis and Herd 2003; Orttung 2004). The third stems from the idea of neopatrimonialism, where patron-client relationships suffuse a legal-bureaucratic structure (Bratton and Walle 1997; Guliyev 2011). A neopatrimonial interpretation of World Cup preparations suggests a corrupt or at least quasi-legal quid pro quo wherein federal budgets assumed responsibility for private projects, while leaving ownership or other benefits to accrue in private hands (Wolfe and Müller 2018).

More to the point, these dynamics highlight the challenges of attempting to understand the World Cup in terms of the processes of neoliberalization, at least as understood

through the dynamics of private funding. The initial budgets featured significant amounts of private and regional funding, but the fact that these spheres of responsibility were created and assigned from the central government complicates the idea that these were decentralized expressions independent of Moscow. Further, the budget shifts over time demonstrate the progressive loss of these decentralized characteristics, even as the specifics of each region's development plans remained customized and differentiating.

Examining the regional budgets over time reveals similar overall tendencies of shrinkage, though these were unique to each city. In Volgograd, shown in Figure 25, the overall World Cup budget was cut, but both federal and regional funding increased: the federal share started at 34% of the total but grew to 47%, while the regional share was only 15% but grew to 34%.

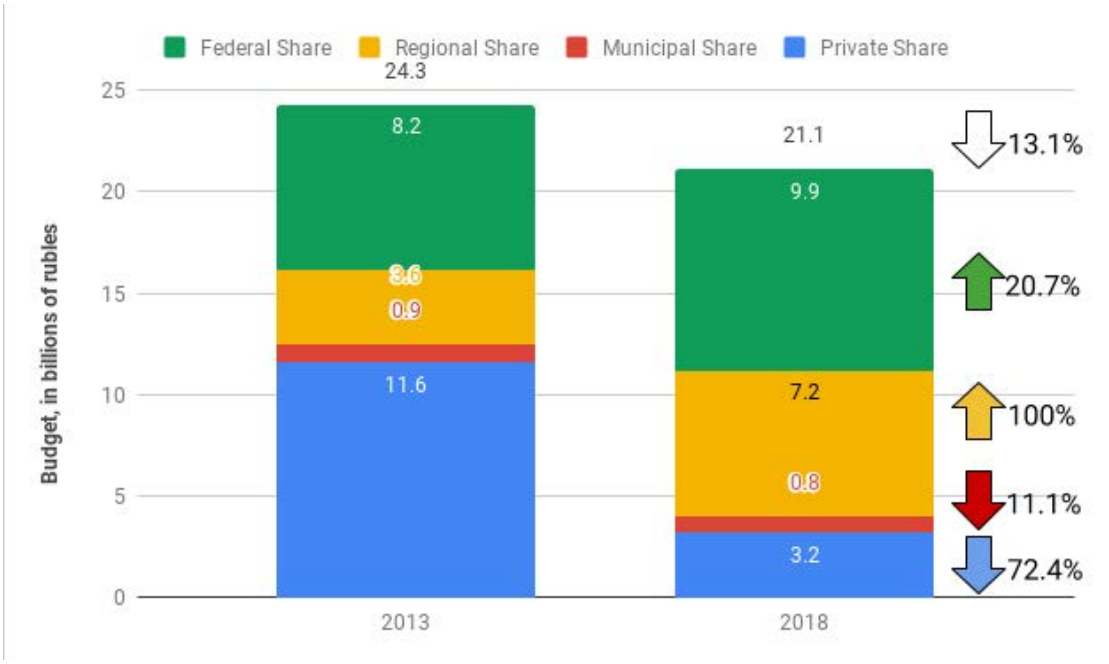

Figure 25: Volgograd regional budget total, divided by federal, regional, municipal, and private shares, in billions of rubles, showing that the federal and regional shares grew, while the municipal and private shares shrank, in the context of an overall shrinking budget. Sources: Decree of Volgograd Oblast No679P, 2013; Decree of Decree of Volgograd Oblast No366P, introducing changes to No679P, 2018.

The most notable change in Volgograd, however, was the initial emphasis on private funding which had all but disappeared by 2018, falling from 48% to 15% of the total. The vanishing of private funding indicates that, despite the dominant role intended for non-governmental entities at the outset, actual conditions on the ground were not conducive to private projects. Though initially conceptualized as a customized and decentralized regional project with a majority of private funding, the budget revisions revealed a regional development plan that could not have come to pass without state funding from federal and regional governments. This was not the case for Ekaterinburg,

where shifting budget dynamics revealed altogether different characteristics, as shown in Figure 26.

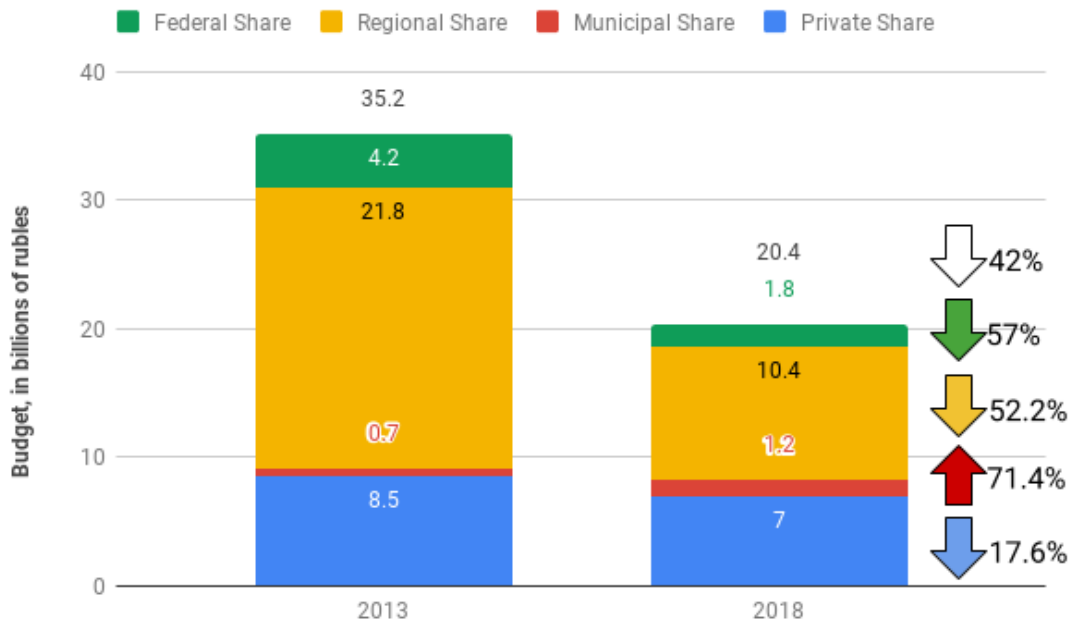

Figure 26: Sverdlovsk regional budget total, divided by federal, regional, municipal, and private shares, in billions of rubles, showing that federal, regional, and private shares shrank, while municipal shares grew, in the overall context of a shrinking budget. Sources: Decree of Sverdlovsk Oblast No1683PP, 2013; Decree of Decree of Sverdlovsk Oblast No975PP, introducing changes to No1683PP, 2018.

The first thing to note is that Ekaterinburg's initial World Cup budget was much higher than Volgograd's, but by 2018 this shrank significantly so that both cities' budgets were more in line with each other. This represented an action toward centralization, as regional variations were eliminated in favor of a more balanced approach across the host cities, regardless of the fact that Ekaterinburg was wealthier and Volgograd had greater need for investments. Yet within the broadly similar overall size of the budgets, the dynamics within each budget varied. Unlike Volgograd, which had begun with an outsize private share that then disappeared, Ekaterinburg's initial private funding represented 24% of the total. The total private investment in Ekaterinburg diminished over time, but since the overall budget had shrunk, the percentage of private funding actually grew to 35% of the 2018 total, despite the nominal decrease. At the same time, federal funding, which began as 12% of Ekaterinburg's budget, shrank to 9% - indicating a sustained lack of external funding and support. In line with this, both the original and revised budgets featured heavy reliance on regional funding, going from 62% of the total to 51% of the smaller 2018 budget.

Regarding the processes of neoliberalization, the budget changes in both cities demonstrate three interrelated moments of tension in the World Cup development

program. These moments of tension existed between the program's centralized origins, the neoliberal plans for customized regional differentiation that were locally generated even as they were dispatched from that central source, and the variegated failures to sustain those initial area-specific notions. A closer look at the regional decrees that governed the specific projects to be implemented within the host cities reveals further examples of these tensions. In parts, the texts of the decrees diverged as regional authorities expressed development goals according to area-specific conditions. There were other areas in the decrees from both regions, however, that revealed spaces of uniformity through the usage of identical text, such as the descriptions of the overall goals for the World Cup:

> "To create sporting infrastructure to host the 2018 football World Cup in line with FIFA requirements… to create other associated infrastructure for the 2018 football World Cup… to create the conditions for effective use of these sporting facilities after the conclusion of the football World Cup… to create the normative, legal, organizational, material, technical, and social conditions for the successful hosting of the 2018 football World Cup"
>
> (Sverdlovsk Regional Government 2013, 5–6).
> (Volgograd Regional Government 2013, 3–4)

That these exact phrases were found in both decrees indicates that they were copied and pasted from identical instructions issued from above. There were many such spaces of uniformity found within the two regional decrees, revealing once again tensions in the planning of the World Cup between uniformity and centralization on one side, and customization and decentralization on the other. Moving further, an investigation of specific infrastructure projects in the host cities restates these tensions and confirms the difficulty in categorizing the Russian World Cup as a purely neoliberal project.

Sports facilities were the most visible of the infrastructure projects within the World Cup development program, comprising 110 total projects between the main stadiums and the assorted training facilities. The construction of the stadiums exemplifies the tension between centralized and decentralized tendencies in the World Cup: while the project planning for all twelve stadiums was administered by each regional government and paid for by regional budgets with federal co-financing, the actual construction was paid for by the federal budget without exception (Russian Federal Government 2013, 3–5). Seven of the twelve stadiums – including those in Volgograd and Ekaterinburg – were built by Sport-Engineering, a state company. Of the remaining five stadiums, one was given to

OlympStroy, the state company responsible for the Sochi Olympics; one to the government of the Republic of Tatarstan; and one each to the governments of Moscow and St Petersburg, both established as cities of federal significance. Only one stadium, in Moscow, was to be funded by private sources, though just over a year after the original decree, Shuvalov announced that the federal budget would pay for part of this facility as well (TASS 2014a).

In this way the construction of the World Cup stadiums – by far the most visible and symbolic intervention into the host cities – demonstrated in material form what the budgets showed with numbers. There was initial space for private and regional influence, though granted by the center rather than independently generated as such. Over time, however, these private and regional forces diminished, while the central government assumed the majority of the responsibilities. Similar patterns were seen in the construction of training facilities, with federal money ultimately paying for 35 out of 47 facilities nationwide, and in the construction of team base camps, as the federal budget wound up funding 54 out of 59 facilities.

Aside from sports facilities, the World Cup development program also included significant projects related to urban infrastructure like transport, power, telecommunications, security, sewage, and so on. The breakdown of responsibilities for these projects continued the pattern of World Cup developments caught between centralized and decentralized tendencies. For instance, hotel and other accommodation infrastructures began as regionally and privately funded projects, with no federal funds whatsoever. By 2018, the overall budget had been cut almost by half, regional funding had vanished, and the projects were funded solely by private investors. In contrast, telecommunications and information technology projects started as a mix of federal and regional responsibilities with no private funding; over time, the regional influence disappeared and left only funding from the central state. Each project category demonstrated its own mix of uniform and customized characteristics. Thus, each project was a unique expression of the tensions generated by these processes of partial neoliberalization – again, at least as judged by private funding. Taken together, they illustrate the dynamic and variegated ways in which the World Cup was articulated in Russia.

Of all the development projects, investments into transport represented the largest overall share of the World Cup budget, outweighing even the costs of the sporting facilities: in the final 2018 budget, transport investments accounted for 52% of the total. The overall budget for transport investments grew by 4% between 2013 and 2018, but this increase was taken by the federal level; the private share remained unchanged and the regional budget grew only by a tiny amount. By 2018, the federal share represented 48% of the total transport budget. The centralized transport program manifested in uniform and equalizing ways within the host cities, taking shape as investments into every city's airport and train stations as well as the road and transport infrastructure that connected these hubs to the rest of the city. All at once, this fulfilled FIFA requirements for quality and capacity of transport infrastructure, while also enacting a development agenda for Russia's peripheries. As an executive in the LOC said in an interview:

> "All of this would have been built anyway, even without the World Cup… the World Cup is just an accelerator – an impulse for development… But everything we are building, we are building for our country." (G68)

Here, the executive engaged the familiar claim that hosting mega-events accelerates infrastructure investments (Preuss 2004), but there was a further argument beyond this. This Moscow-based executive was explaining how the center was involved in developing Russia's peripheral cities. This represented the central Russian state assuming a more active role in regional planning and development, using mega-events as a defacto state spatial policy (Golubchikov 2016b, 2017; Golubchikov and Slepukhina 2014). In this, Russian peripheral cities were being restructured to capture national and transnational flows, seemingly in classic neoliberal interurban competition. But these processes were not strictly neoliberal in the traditional understanding, as the impetus for these projects originated in Moscow and not from the regions under concern. Thus, actors at the federal state level were attempting to use neoliberal strategies and discourses to refashion Russian cities as growth poles in a national modernization project. At the same time, local and regional influences shaped these centralized developments, generating tensions between these opposing tendencies. In this way, the articulation of the 2018 World Cup confuses Brenner's conceptualization of the restructuring inherent in the processes of neoliberalization, as the preparations involved both centralizing and decentralizing forces, manifesting in projects that were all at once uniform and customized, standardized and area-specific, equalizing and differentiating.

The Urban Dimensions of Standardized Projects

As the largest share of the World Cup budget, the centralized transport infrastructure investments had widespread effects across the nation. Decree 518 set out a standardized plan for each host city that delineated a standardized, uniform, and equalizing approach to the center-led modernization of these peripheral capitals. This approach involved substantial upgrades to the airports and train stations, as well as the roads and (sometimes) rail to link these hubs to locations authorities deemed important, such as the stadium and the hotels. Yet within the parameters of this standardized program, an attention to how the projects were manifested in a particular host city reveals paradoxical moments of customized and area-specific differentiation.

Airport facilities in every host city were expanded and upgraded to meet FIFA's requirements for capacity and quality. These requirements were established within FIFA and were based on creating and maintaining sufficient throughput capacity to handle a World Cup stadium crowd for the ten hours before and after a match (Kassens-Noor 2014). These requirements were then communicated to the federal LOC, who dispersed instructions down the vertical to the regional LOCs. Thus the airport interventions within the host cities originated from a kind of double centralization, where the overall parameters of the projects were directed by FIFA in Zurich, before combining with the imperatives of the national state spatial modernization projects initiated in Moscow.

In Ekaterinburg, Koltsovo airport had already been upgraded before the Russian organizers even submitted the World Cup bid. This occurred through a federal expansion and renovation project from 2003 – 2009, constructing entirely new international and domestic terminals while refashioning the old Soviet facility into a VIP terminal for business and private passengers (Chernoivanova 2012; Koltsovo Airport 2015). Once the bid was won, the airport had to be expanded further in order to satisfy World Cup capacity requirements. Thus, Sverdlovsk Regional Decree 1683 allocated funds to continue airport renovations in three phases, sourced from federal budgets and regional budgets with federal support.

Koltsovo's World Cup reconstruction was divided between expanding the airport's ability to accommodate the larger aircraft scheduled for the World Cup, and improving business and VIP facilities, adding amenities like an entertainment complex with movie theater – though some of these luxuries were later scaled back (AviaPort 2017a, 2017b;

Chernikh 2015). The expansion was targeted at fulfilling FIFA requirements and ultimately left the airport with twice its previous capacity (Sverdlovsk Regional Government 2016). This was the expression of a centralized and uniform program that enacted airport modernization projects in every host city, and was part of a wider aspiration for integrating Russian regions into global flows, including through the international airport Open Skies program. On average, nationwide airport capacities were increased by 80% (Russia 2018 World Cup Organizing Committee 2018b).

At the same time, and confounding the idea of the airport project as a solely centralized project, the expansion of facilities in Ekaterinburg for business and elite travelers originated at the regional level. This was done as a strategy for urban and regional differentiation, as local authorities attempted to reposition Ekaterinburg as a hub between east and west, as well as a center for events and mega-events of all kinds. By the opening of the World Cup, Koltsovo airport had at least four luxury options for privileged air travelers: three business lounges and a lavishly appointed VIP terminal. To be sure, the rest of the airport was upgraded to international standards as well, so that the entire facility felt as though it belonged with the major airports of Western Europe. Still, that regional authorities would emphasize so heavily the business and luxury options of the airport – not just through the reconstructions but also advertised prominently on the airport website – serves as an indicator for their priorities and reveals what kind of people they wished to attract. In this way, Ekaterinburg's airport reconstruction embodied both centralized and decentralized characteristics, while generating both selective material improvements and, concurrently, uneven development.

Similar tendencies were visible in Volgograd, focusing not on the airport itself but on another nearby project: the road connecting Gumrak airport to the city. There was a project in every host city to improve, repair, or expand this linkage from the transit hub of the airport to important areas in the center, namely the tournament stadium and the best hotels. It was just as centralized as the airport improvement projects, created and largely funded by the federal government, but managed by regional authorities. In Volgograd, this transit improvement project ran about 12km from Gumrak airport until it intersected with the third *prodolnaya* road at the edge of the city. It was funded 95% by the federal budget but administered by the Volgograd Oblast Ministry of Transport and Road Maintenance (Volgograd Regional Government 2013). It was a four-year project,

timed to conclude half a year before the opening of the World Cup at the end of 2017. This would allow room to manage potential construction delays in what was as critical an infrastructure project as the airport itself and the stadium it connected. This linkage – called the Aviators' Highway – was prioritized by authorities to such a degree that this single 12km road was budgeted at only 22% less than all other Volgograd region World Cup transport infrastructure projects combined. That so many of Volgograd's roads were in dismal condition and in urgent need of repair made the prioritization of this road all the more controversial, as large swaths of the city in daily use by residents were excluded from necessary improvements.

Further, the Aviators' Highway project itself was rife with controversy from the start. The contractor for the project was a company called Dorstroyservis, who won the tender a total of three times. The first contract was annulled by the federal antimonopoly bureau because Dorstroyservis was the only bidder. The second time, the regional transport ministry disqualified three of the five bidders and then awarded the contract again to Dorstroyservis, even though its bid was highest. When critics highlighted Dorstroyservis' lack of experience in road reconstruction projects, the regional transport ministry revoked the contract and reopened bidding. Finally, the third time around, four companies participated in the bid and once again Dorstroyservis won with a higher bid (GorodGeroev 2017). This time, the company began work on the project without further incident. The Aviators' Highway, along with various other road repair projects in the city, were soon revealed to be substandard quality, with violations of numerous standards for asphalt thickness and quality, and cracks and potholes appearing soon after completion (AIF 2017a; IARegnum 2017a). With a year left to go before the World Cup, Dorstroyservis stopped work on Aviators' Highway altogether. The company's lead engineer complained that the regional transport ministry owed the company upwards of 600 million rubles (USD $10 million) while continually changing project requirements (Bloknot Volgograd 2017). Eventually the regional ministry placed Dorstroyservis on its register of banned companies and awarded the Aviators' Highway project to a new company (Pechenova 2017). Soon after, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, who had visited Volgograd the previous year and travelled around via helicopter rather than attempt to navigate the terrible roads by car, returned to the city and approved of the road improvements (Sheremeteva 2017).

These convoluted developments reveal the Volgograd road project as another instance of the same centralized and de-centralized processes seen in Ekaterinburg, generating selective material improvements with uneven results. This was a common formula during the World Cup preparations: a project began with centralized origins, funded by the federal government and intended to bring a uniform, standardized, and equalizing influence to the peripheral cities. At the same time, each project manifested itself in decentralized ways, managed by regional authorities according to customized and area-specific concerns and contingencies, and resulting in differentiation and inequalities. Thus, the Koltsovo airport and the Aviators' Highway fit into what could be called urban landscapes of priority (Gentile and Sjöberg 2006). This is a legacy of the Soviet central planning system, whereby certain projects or industries were marked as especially important and subsequently given priority over others. In Soviet times, this preferential treatment of certain projects resulted in spatial and economic inequalities, and similar tendencies remain visible even to this day. The preparations for the World Cup stemmed from this tradition and generated similar unequal results.

In Ekaterinburg, then, one of the landscapes of priority was the airport renovation project. Centralized attention here resulted in an international standard airport with luxurious amenities for travelling elites. In Volgograd, the Aviators' Highway was another landscape of priority. This project was executed poorly by a company beset by corruption allegations, until finally forced out and completed by another entity – at which point the prime minister approved of the progress. In both cases, these landscapes of priority neglected large areas of the host cities: very few people in Ekaterinburg would make use of the airport's VIP facilities, and though Volgograd's Aviators' Highway was a major artery in need of repair, it was not one of the primary roads into the city, and prioritizing this connection meant neglecting other roads within the city that regular citizens used more and also needed attention. In this way, both FIFA requirements and Russian federal priorities engaged a centralized planning program that, like its Soviet forbearers, resulted in preferential treatment and subsequent inequalities. This resulted in uneven developments that were neither purely state-led nor neoliberal, but rather something in between.

Further, the landscapes of priority engaged in these World Cup projects can be understood as various expressions of Potemkinism. By prioritizing an exclusive form of

development (here, Koltsovo airport and the Aviators' Highway, targeted at a relatively narrow class of person), authorities directed their attention to constructing a particular version of their cities, at the expense of other, perhaps more egalitarian possibilities. This unevenness was Potemkin development: a focus on relatively superficial aspects – a world-class airport, a smooth multi-lane highway to the city – instead of more substantial projects that might bring long-term benefits to a larger share of residents. A comparison to other mega-events can help explain these developments and offer a way out of the trap of binary thinking.

The preparations for Sochi 2014 were marked by similar patterns of selective and uneven development, as Moscow authorities enacted plans targeted at the more privileged tourist classes rather than most residents. Despite the resultant social and ecological inequalities (Müller 2012; Vetitnev and Bobina 2017; Wolfe 2013), in the years since the Olympics, Sochi regional incomes have risen, unemployment has fallen, and many quality of life indicators have improved overall (Nureev, Markin, and Grechkin 2014). This socioeconomic progress has placed Sochi in an enviable position in comparison to many other Russian regions. From the perspective of certain authorities, then, this type of selective investment can be understood as generating successful outcomes, at least when judging by a relatively narrow definition of what constitutes success. More to the point, the existence of multiple definitions of success and failure troubles the binary underpinnings of traditional Potemkinism, leading to the uncomfortable conclusion that many planners and residents do not actually hold opposing perspectives; rather, they inhabit something like parallel realities, informed by altogether divergent values, deviating priorities, and differing measurements of success. From this perspective we can understand why authorities would invest so heavily into projects that seem to benefit only a narrow segment of the population, without resorting to the comfort of binary thinking and the easy solutions of dismissing them as corrupt, venal, ignorant, or evil.

Exploring a Potemkin Project

To a large degree these uneven Potemkin developments fit with the guiding direction established by the Russian president – itself another reminder of the centralized power at the heart of the World Cup development program. In a speech to the regional organizing committees, the president said:

> "I want to bring attention to the timely and effective improvements of the host cities. I don't mean only those areas where the matches will take place, but also where the teams will live and train, where fans will visit. I will add that this task does not only apply for the championship, naturally. The point is not to create *shturmovshina* and *pokazukha*. Maintaining order and making improvements is the daily work of regional and municipal authorities, foremost in the interests of local residents." (Demchenko 2018)

The president here used two words that require explanation. *Shturmovshina* refers to a Soviet work practice from the era of centralized planning, wherein workers would rush to complete production targets at the end of a planning cycle, in order to compensate for earlier delays (Mokienko and Nikitina 1998). This work was often considered poor quality and accomplished primarily to fulfill obligations on paper – an apt description of mega-event preparations in many countries. *Pokazukha* comes from the verb *pokazat'*, meaning 'to show', and refers to the display of a superficial creation, generally for the purpose of deceiving a superior or an outsider. The idea of *pokazukha* – an artificial activity or façade that masks some less palatable realities – is a reflection of the standard visual connotation of Potemkinism. Thus, in his remarks to the regional organizers, the president employed both Soviet and pre-Soviet Tsarist-era metaphors to impress upon his subordinates the importance of breaking with past traditions and accomplishing legitimate work in proper timeframes, not only for the period of the World Cup but for the longer-term as well. In other words, he was emphatic that these developments should not reiterate Potemkin practices.

Though the president, along with every top-level authority figure, had consistently repeated these ideas of long-term benefit throughout the preparatory period, in this case the president's words were impossible to fulfill. Given that this speech to regional organizers occurred merely six weeks before the World Cup, it is not clear how local authorities could be expected to undertake any legitimate improvements in the host cities, nor how they could avoid fabricating the appearance of progress. Unless these projects had already been completed, at this point there was no time left to accomplish anything of substance. Put another way, president Putin was in effect creating a new level of Potemkinism, built discursively in the form of a warning against Potemkin practices that was itself impossible to fulfill. In this way, the president – though ostensibly warning against it – was in actuality reinforcing Potemkinism.

More broadly, given that Potemkinism traditionally focuses on the creation of superficial, controlled, and unproblematic images (Broudehoux 2017), the question here relates to what happens on the underside of that supposedly perfect surface. Broudehoux (2015) identifies six strategies by which Potemkin projects attempt to render poverty (and other threats to the host city image) invisible. She categorizes these as *forced evictions, concealment, aestheticization, disciplining, filtering, and symbolic erasure*. In the 2018 World Cup, unlike Sochi or Rio (Karbainov 2013; Silvestre and de Oliveira 2012), I am not aware of any evictions during the preparations, though of course it is possible that I am simply ignorant of them. Broudehoux's other five strategies were on display, however, in greater or lesser degree, throughout the host cities.

For example, in Volgograd I followed the FIFA protocol route down from the airport, along Aviators' Highway, and entered the city proper. I left the car before we reached the central district because I wanted to investigate a striking contrast I noticed in the built environment. On one side of the protocol route I saw a glassy shopping center and a gleaming new apartment tower (shown in Figure 27), while on the opposite a row of trees hid a wall that shielded several city blocks from view.

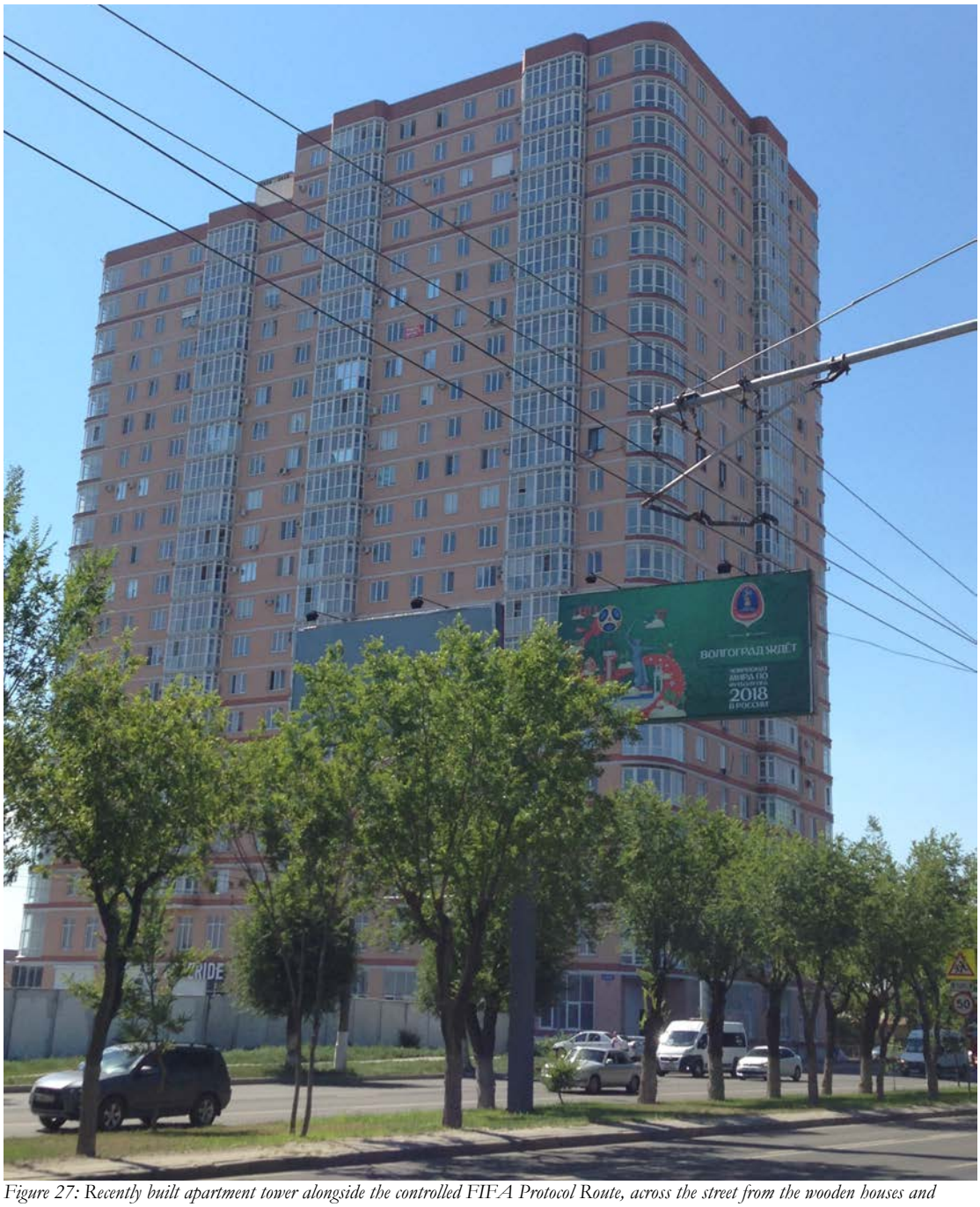

Figure 27: Recently built apartment tower alongside the controlled FIFA Protocol Route, across the street from the wooden houses and unpaved roads of the chastny sektor, concealed by a wall and trees. The billboard shows stylized imagery representing the city, including the Volga river and the Rodina Mat' Zovyot memorial. The text reads, "Volgograd is waiting for the 2018 Football World Cup in Russia." Source: author.

Behind that wall I found entire neighborhoods of old wooden dwellings, all of them alongside bumpy unmaintained roads. Periodically I would see a brick house or a larger structure with metal siding, recently built, on the same lot – an indication that some money had come in – but mostly these areas had a poor, run-down country feel (see Figure 28). This was called the *chastny sektor*, the private sector, and as the name implies, the houses here were built on privately owned land. These ramshackle neighborhoods were located walking distance from the tourist center of the city, and just a few minutes

from the towers of the new Volgograd-City development, a business district project replete with high-rises and elite accommodations (Volgograd-City.ru 2019).

Figure 28: Typical housing in Volgograd's so-called private sector, concealed behind a wall from a gleaming new apartment buildings and glassy shopping malls. This neighborhood was walking distance from the tourist city center. The tracks shown here are functional and trams service the area. While cars seemed common as well, the streets were unpaved and in poor condition, with piles of uncollected refuse at the intersections. Source: author.

This entire community was hidden from the FIFA protocol route by the wall and the line of trees, and it was impossible for the cars streaking by on the wide, newly paved boulevard even to glimpse these dilapidated neighborhoods. At the same time, visitors arriving to the city could not miss the polished towers and shopping malls. This is a clear example of the concealment and symbolic erasure strategies in Broudehoux's Potemkinism. Concealment is obvious here, as the neighborhoods were hidden from view and largely inaccessible from the main road, but the strategies of symbolic erasure were harder to track since they were based on the absence of representation rather than on any concrete portrayals. Not surprisingly, none of the images distributed by World Cup organizers featured pictures of this Volgograd. Nor were these dirt roads and ramshackle houses discussed by organizers at any level. In this way, they were omitted from the World Cup-oriented presentation of Volgograd.

Potemkin filtering strategies, aimed at limiting access to the spaces of the event, were visible in the uneven developments targeted at tourists and wealthier segments of the population. This was demonstrated by the airport and Aviators' Highway projects, as described above, but also applied to the construction of luxury hotels, the World Cup

stadium, and the renovations targeted largely at the center. These efforts at renovation and beautification also represented strategies of Potemkin aestheticization in an effort to "beautify poverty and make it more visually acceptable, thereby anesthetizing its political power," (Broudehoux 2015, 118). These urban beautification processes, focusing primarily – though not exclusively – on areas where tourists would be most likely to visit, resulted in, among much else, the demolition of cheap kiosks and other supposedly temporary but long-standing structures from central boulevards, the removal of banners and other advertisements from building façades, and the placement of large football-themed decorations around the city. This was an attempt at crafting and distributing the "projection of a flawless and consensual representation of the city, at once efficient, modern, disciplined, and visually appealing," (Broudehoux 2015, 123). Finally, the Potemkin strategies of disciplining – that is, a campaign for social behavior – were most visible in the efforts of authorities to drum up enthusiasm for the World Cup, as well as in the nationwide volunteer program, as I will describe below.

At the same time, developments in both host cities transcended the boundaries of these Potemkin strategies and cannot be explained so neatly. Aside from these more visual aspects of Potemkinism, the World Cup preparation period also saw examples of discursive and locational Potemkin strategies. The discursive strategies (which I will explore in detail in the next chapters) centered on how organizers and authorities presented a set of official narratives explaining the World Cup. These narratives combined to create a superficial imaginary of the host cities that excluded the substance of everyday life for most residents. Similarly, locational Potemkinism was visible in the selection of certain areas for development over others. Put a different way, locational Potemkinism was a product of the landscapes of priority.

Thus, the World Cup development program was not simply a Potemkin project in the visual sense, nor was it solely a neoliberal strategy for interurban differentiation or competition. Instead, it was Potemkin neoliberalism: a centralized project to modernize and develop the peripheral capital cities, reorienting them towards international and national flows of tourists and capital. At the same time, these centralized and unifying processes collided and conflicted with decentralized and customized processes on the ground in each host city. These processes expressed themselves in the built environment as projects that simultaneously focused on the Potemkin production of superficiality with

attendant inequalities beneath the surface or behind a wall. Further, beyond the spatial segregation on display, much of the articulation of the World Cup revealed the limitations of Potemkin binary thinking, as multiple parallel sets of values, priorities, and indicators of success overlapped or clashed. In the next chapters, I will explore some of these overlaps and clashes in an investigation of the discursive production of Potemkinism, highlighting the impacts of World Cup development on the everyday lives of host city residents.

7: SOFT POWER NARRATIVES AS DISCURSIVE POTEMKINISM

Mega-Events and Soft Power

A member of the Ekaterinburg regional LOC told me in an interview: "Let's agree to keep sports and politics separate… They are different things" (B13). This is a common refrain among organizers who often are keen to present themselves as representatives of an activity that is somehow above the pettiness, competition, vindictiveness, or other concerns of ordinary political activity. This attempt at separation ignores how politics has suffused sport and how blatantly sport has been used for political ends, as demonstrated by numerous scholars (Allison 1986; Armstrong and Mitchell 2008; Bairner, Kelly, and Lee 2017; Bloyce, Smith, and Smith 2009; Houlihan, White, and White 2003; Horne 2017; Horne and Manzenreiter 2006a).

Any sporting event can be political, given the context in which it is staged (Black 2008; Giulianotti 2015; Lee 2017; Sugden and Tomlinson 2002), but as one of the globe's top-tier events, the World Cup is a potent tool for organizers to accomplish goals not necessarily related to sport – particularly for the new generation of hosts (Black and Westhuizen 2004; Cornelissen 2010). One of the rationales for undertaking a mega-event like the World Cup is a reframing of perception. This can be divided into external and internal signaling strategies, where the host nation attempts a geopolitical reframing of international perceptions and neoliberal repositioning for outside audiences, and/or a refreshed outlook and sense of national unity or pride within the borders of the state (Baade and Matheson 2015; Black 2008; Black and Westhuizen 2004; Cornelissen and Swart 2006; Friedman, Andrews, and Silk 2004; Hiller 2000b; Houlihan 1997; Koch 2013a, 2017a).

Against this backdrop, the Russian World Cup can be seen not just as a national state-centered project that confuses existing notions of neoliberal restructuring, but also as a political endeavor used to convey narratives to international and domestic audiences. Given the high degree of centralized state control of the World Cup, these narratives can be considered part of a governmental soft power strategy (Nygård and Gates 2013). In exploring these narratives, I wish to highlight the domestic targets, as many studies on the soft power of mega-events eschew the local in favor of the international (though for exceptions see Alekseyeva 2014; Horák 2017; Hyde-Clarke, Ottosen, and Miller 2014;

Grix and Kramareva 2015; Koch 2017a; Militz 2016; Wolfe 2016). Further, my attention to soft power narratives is not intended to reify the idea that there exists a 'true' rationale underlying the hosting of the World Cup, nor do I wish to reinscribe an interpretation of the state-as-monolith, that is, the idea of the state as a singular entity that can make rational and consistent decisions. Instead, I attempt "to push beyond the all-too-frequent unitary readings of why political leaders choose to host sports mega-events" and instead trace some of "the infinitely varied symbolic politics and geopolitical encounters that arise" out of the World Cup (Koch 2018b, p.2013). In so doing I attempt not only to document the prevalent soft power processes but also to move beyond them and to explore the relationships between narratives, changes in the built environment of the host cities, and host city residents themselves.

To accomplish this I will, in this chapter, explore the production and maintenance of the predominant World Cup narratives, as well as elaborate the mechanisms that distributed these narratives. In the following chapter, I will illuminate the effects (or lack thereof) of these narratives on the residents of Ekaterinburg and Volgograd. Together, these chapters represent two contributions to the literature. The first is a reorientation of soft power scholarship towards the domestic. By framing mega-event nation- and identity building within the conceptual scaffolding of soft power, I establish the domestic goals of hosting within a broader understanding of the strategies of governmental cooptation and coercion and, further, work towards a fuller exploration of soft power beyond the generation of narratives. The second contribution stems from the investigations of Potemkinism begun in the previous chapters. Here, conceptualizing the construction of predominant World Cup narratives as a Potemkin surface allows an exploration of the structures underneath the surface. In other words, within an understanding of the World Cup soft power narratives as a Potemkin project, I investigate not just the superficial but also what exists behind and beneath. And, following my commitment to troubling the established conceptualizations of Potemkinism, I aspire to move beyond the limitations of the surface vs. substance binary. In this way, these two chapters present an analysis of the complete soft power equation – construction, distribution, and reception – all within a broader frame of Potemkinism.

Like the idea of the World Cup itself, the dominant World Cup soft power narratives originated within the federal state. More precisely, they were created and reproduced, in

both texts and speeches, by actors who served both within the federal government and the bidding and organizing committees. On July 1 2016, with 712 days left before the opening of the World Cup, Alexander Djordjadze – then head of the Department for FIFA-LOC Communications at the Russia 2018 LOC – spoke at the Moscow Urban Forum. Sporting a Russia 2018 logo pin in his lapel, he told the audience about the promise of the World Cup: "It is a chance for all of us to improve our lives, to use this mega-event as a catalyst for positive change" (Djordjadze 2016). This presentation of hosting as a stimulus for positive change is a typical quotation; as a member of the bidding and organizing committees, Djordjadze routinely discussed the World Cup as a widespread state project of material and social change, and he always framed it as a positive. Among the speeches, interviews, and texts created by other individuals at Djordjadze's level – that is, by figures in positions of organizational and government authority – there were no instances of the World Cup being presented as anything other than a universal good.

At the Moscow Urban Forum, Djordjadze was addressing a mostly domestic audience, and the messages he conveyed were targeted largely to ears within Russia. He did this in order to work towards the soft power goals of convincing Russian audiences of the benefits of hosting. The idea of the World Cup as beneficial for a variety of domains – infrastructural, social, political, sporting – was a key narrative underlying the planning and implementation of this mega-event. Narratives like these are one of the vehicles by which a soft power project can be engaged and transmitted, and it is useful to conceptualize this process as a complete equation: narrative generation, transmission, and reception – with the understanding that multiple narratives can exist at the same time, targeted towards different, but sometimes overlapping, audiences. In the Russian World Cup, the generation of narratives was accomplished by actors within the central state apparatus; individuals like Djordjadze, erstwhile sports minister Vitaly Mutko, LOC CEO Alexey Sorokin, and of course the Russian president himself, were all responsible for crafting and reproducing the official guiding ideas that launched and explained the World Cup.

While Djordjadze was addressing primarily domestic targets at the Moscow Urban Forum, there were also international audiences for the World Cup soft power narratives. Further, there were multiple target groups within this international/domestic division, as

well as potential overlaps between these groups. Figure 29 shows a breakdown of these audiences, with the caveat that these divisions were not necessarily as distinct as I have presented them, given that individuals could play multiple roles at once. In this subchapter, I explore the production of narratives for both international and domestic audiences, before turning my attention to the domestic mechanisms of narrative distribution. In the next chapter, I will focus on the reception, reworking, and rejection of those narratives among the domestic population of the host cities.

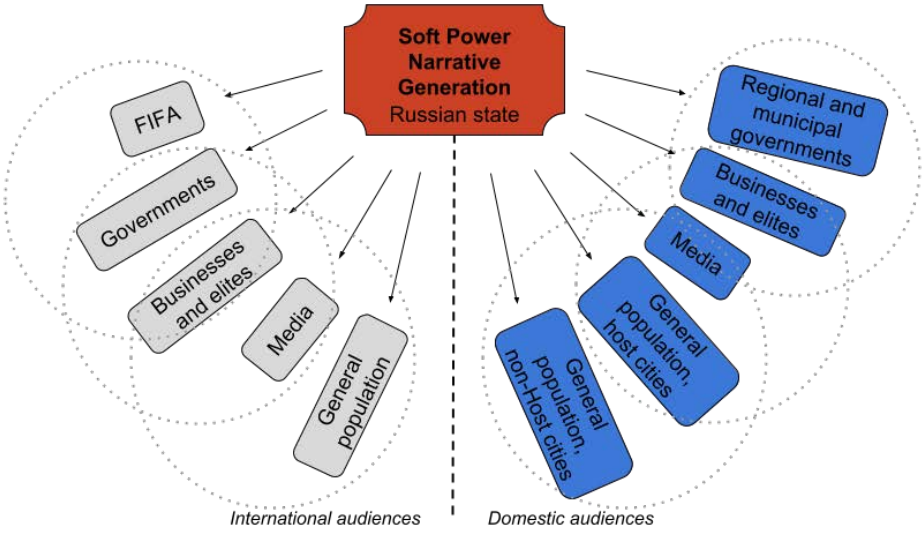

Figure 29: International and domestic audiences for 2018 World Cup soft power narratives, showing overlaps between groups.

When Djordjadze framed the World Cup as a catalyst for positive change, he was transmitting this narrative directly to the attendees of the Moscow Urban Forum: generally an elite audience that included representatives from regional and municipal governments who had travelled to the capital, as well as individuals from influential national companies. On top of this, Djordjadze's narratives were reproduced and further transmitted by the news media for consumption by primarily domestic but also, given the reach of the internet, international audiences.

The predominant World Cup narratives were more specific than merely framing developments as a positive catalyst, however. In an interview, Alexey Sorokin shared one of the overarching goals: "We have a large task – to develop the country," (O142). This statement places the World Cup within a larger context of infrastructural development and modernization, far beyond the purview of a sports championship. At the Moscow Urban Forum, Djordjadze echoed this idea, expanding on the nationwide impact of the World Cup:

> "On behalf of the organizing committee, I can tell you quickly about the essence of the World Cup, not from the point of view of the sports competitions, but about its impact on the country as a whole... Of course there will be a legacy after the World Cup. Legacy is the key word… It's something that I would divide into two categories: material and immaterial. The material legacies are primarily infrastructure… and the immaterial legacies are the development of new technologies, new modes of social behavior, and new competencies… The World Cup is a chance that is given to our country and to our cities… we believe that its potential will be realized… Of course this all depends on all of us."
>
> (Djordjadze 2016)

Here, Djordjadze explained the World Cup not as a sports championship but, similarly to Sorokin, as a national development project. Djordjadze emphasized legacy – that is, the post-event phase – and he provided justifications for the efforts involved in organizing the event. Broadly, he mentioned the intangible benefits as an organized effort to instill new standards of service and communication, or more theoretically, to impart new and modern ways of doing and being. In short, one of the goals of the World Cup was to change some fundamental elements of how life worked in the chosen peripheral cities, nestled in a framework of improved infrastructures.

These were narratives of modernization, part of a centuries-old pattern wherein Russia is discursively presented as backwards, lagging behind the west, and must catch up through industrialization and reform (Krastev and Holmes 2018; Mau and Drobyshevskaya 2013; Robinson 2006). This is a familiar story across the post-socialist world, though too often this illusory modernity has been presented as singular, rather than multiple and entangled (Therborn 2003; Wiest 2012). Many post-socialist countries have pursued and legitimized projects by making claims to a particular version of modernity, using elite visions to showcase the achievements of the nation (Koch 2010; Militz 2016), and mega-events are coveted by elites partly because they can signal that a host nation belongs within modern, global society (Roche 2002). At the same time, post-socialist nations often host mega-events not only to display their place within global modernity but also because there are legitimate needs for infrastructure improvements (Müller and Pickles 2015). The Russian World Cup addressed both of these imperatives, upgrading essential infrastructures in the host cities while presenting the nation as competent and modern. As I will argue, organizers and authorities presented the World Cup as more than a series of urban development projects; it was also a transformative, utopian vision, though one predicated on a narrow, elite conception of modernity. In this, the Russian World Cup resonates with Koch's (2010) analysis of the construction of modernity in Astana: both were

dispersed from the central government, wrapped in discourses of prosperity and development, and resulted in monumental architecture that laid bare the structures of power in the nation. The World Cup developments were not so much a capital city project, however, as an embodiment of what the central government in Moscow could bring to peripheral cities (though each host city was the capital of its own region). After the World Cup, the landscapes of priority – the new stadiums, the airports and train stations, the hotels, selected roads – were to remain not as monuments per se, but rather as engines to continue bringing to life Moscow's visions of modernity.

This is what Djordjadze meant when he discussed World Cup legacies at the Moscow Urban Forum. Beyond this, though, he emphasized the immaterial, social effects of hosting; these were also deemed transformative, and can be understood as fitting into a particular conception of modernity predicated on flexible neoliberal subjects who, like the rescaled city, reshape themselves to a better position within global competition. In Russia, this specifically referred to improving the quality of customer service, English language skills, and familiarity with western standards overall. Finally, as Djordjadze was speaking in an official capacity on behalf of the LOC, his words carried the weight of the central government. Thus, when he spoke of the "essence of the World Cup," this indicated the state's official version of how the event should be seen and understood – though this was not necessarily how domestic audiences received those messages, as I will discuss in more detail in the following chapter.

Unpacking World Cup Narratives

The dominant World Cup soft power narratives were found not only in speeches by organizers, but also in the foundational documents that set out the nation's plans and aspirations for hosting. An examination of the bid books reveals soft power narratives aimed at both international and domestic audiences, though the international dimension was prioritized since the primary function of the bid book was to convince FIFA to grant the World Cup to Russia. Still, narratives that targeted domestic audiences were included throughout the bid book as well, satisfying FIFA principles that require attention to social responsibility and human development (FIFA 2007). Taking both international and domestic dimensions at once, the primary World Cup narratives can be broken down into six categories (illustrated in Figure 30): Diversity and Global Importance, Openness and Readiness, Markets, Government Support, Improving

Football, and Development. The final category, Development, is best understood as two subcategories, both of which were framed in terms of post-event legacy. The first subcategory saw the World Cup as a catalyst for infrastructure projects, both the creation of new infrastructures and the acceleration of existing developments, while the second took the World Cup as the impetus for social development, including the promotion of healthy lifestyles and the creation of new skills and capacities.

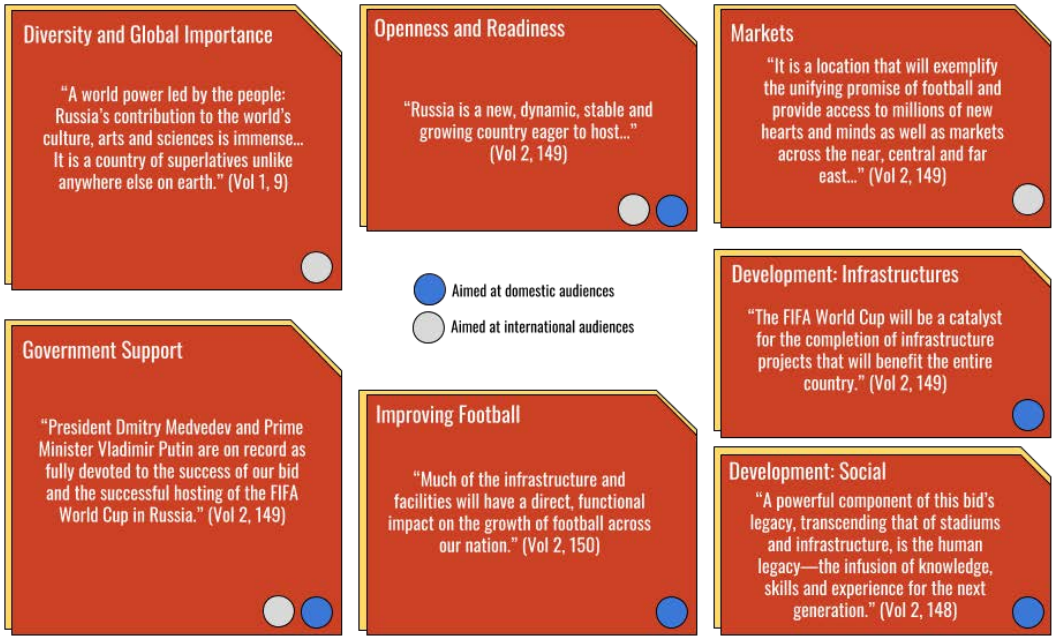

Figure 30: Dominant narratives for the 2018 World Cup, including representative quotations from the 2018 bid books. Source: Russian World Cup Bid Committee, 2010

The narratives of diversity and global importance were intended to signal Russia's standing in the world, bolstering the nation's position as a major player in global affairs. At the same time, these narratives attempted to reframe international perceptions of Russia, portraying the country as modern and tolerant:

> "A diverse, yet inclusive society, both multi-cultural and united, Russia is a nation of progress and pride, a modern country with a vibrant future. Friendly and open, we possess a genuine spirit of hospitality, a peaceful embrace of multi-culturalism, and a common and passionate love of sports."
>
> (Russia 2018 World Cup Bid Committee 2010 vol. 1, p.11).

This attempt at image reframing on the international stage is one of the primary goals of mega-event soft power projects, attempted with various degrees of success by hosts in Beijing (Preuss and Alfs 2011; Zhang and Zhao 2009), South Africa (Cornelissen 2010, 2014), London (Grix, Brannagan, and Houlihan 2015), Rio de Janeiro (Almeida, Júnior, and Pike 2014), Sochi (Alekseyeva 2014), and many more. As I have written about

previously, the Sochi soft power project was derailed on the international level by hard power concerns, but it was still mostly successful on the domestic front (Wolfe 2016). More to the point for the current argument, it was the Russian organizers' first attempt at using a top-tier mega-event as a soft power project (to say nothing of the fact that many of the actors involved in Sochi 2014 continued in the organization of the 2018 World Cup).

The international reframing agenda found in the World Cup bid book sought not just to inform the global community of the nation's importance, but also to present Russia as a modern, dynamic, and stable country that was ready and eager for further international integration. The historical context is crucial to understanding these narratives of openness and readiness; the bid was created in 2009-2010, a period when one of Russia's state policies was to increase international cooperation in order to further an agenda of modernization (Kremlin.ru 2008; Medvedev 2010). Following this, the bid book included narratives to signal the government's desire for integration:

> "As a new and developing country on the world's stage… hosting the world's greatest sporting event will certainly elevate our image, showcasing the 'best of Russia' to the world."
>
> (Russia 2018 World Cup Bid Committee 2010 vol. 2, p.150)

The Russian nation presented by the bidding committee was new, open, stable, democratic, and developing. Under President Medvedev, framed as an energetic reformer, the organizers promoted an image of Russia as a nation with a great history, transitioning from a painful past into a more fulfilling future:

> "In less than 20 years Russia has transformed itself from the Soviet Union to a representative democracy, bringing far-reaching social and economic reform along with the political ones… This transformation on an unprecedented order of magnitude largely has been achieved peacefully and in a manner that most Russian citizens endorse for bringing improvements in their daily lives… Without question, the progress has been significant, yet the work remains as the country persists in its efforts bringing [sic] comprehensive modernisation to all aspects of society — political, economic, social and cultural. President Medvedev recently called on the legislature to support his vision for fostering an environment that takes full advantage of the country's intellectual capacity, stimulates creativity and innovation and redeploys existing technologies and develops new ones to enrich the everyday lives of Russia's citizens."
>
> (Russia 2018 World Cup Bid Committee 2010 vol.3, p.389)

The bid book provided a concise summary of Russia's international relations: "Russia's future now depends on cooperation and integration with the world community" (ibid). In this context, granting the World Cup to Russia would be both an acknowledgement of its progress in joining the world community as a new and developing country, and a stimulus to encourage further development. Similar rationales and narratives were deployed in relation to other mega-events in the new generation of host nations, for instance South Africa (Chari 2014; Chari and Mhiripiri 2014; Cornelissen 2010) and Brazil (Grix and Lee 2013; Grix, Brannagan, and Houlihan 2015). From this perspective, Russia hosting the World Cup would be a means to reframe (primarily international) perceptions in order to further global integration, at the same time as it would leave the country with improved infrastructures, in much the same way as was attempted not just in BRICS nations, but also notably in the Olympic cities of Rome, Tokyo, and Munich (Smith 2012).

Part of this increased international integration involved opening Russian markets to FIFA and other businesses involved in transnational sport. This represented a major selling point to FIFA executives, who had a goal of expanding the global reach of their flagship event (Radford 2010). The bid book presented these new markets to FIFA as a promise that would grow over generations:

> "New markets, new growth for the game: the arrival of the FIFA World Cup in Russia promises to vastly expand the reach and inspiration of both the tournament and the sport of football… Russia represents a young and dynamic population and anew market of fans for FIFA… Russia's proximity to Western and Central Asia, as well as the Middle East, will provide FIFA with greater access to this large, growing target market."
>
> (Russia 2018 World Cup Bid Committee 2010 vol.2, p.149)

This underscores the fact that the World Cup exists beyond the confines of sport or even the explanatory powers of politics; at the core, this mega-event runs on money. Despite its billion-dollar profile, though, FIFA exists officially as a non-commercial, non-profit entity, and has released statements distancing the organization from the deleterious aspects of World Cup hosting, while touting their responsible usage of the wealth generated by international football (for example see FIFA 2013 in regards to the controversies surrounding the 2014 World Cup in Brazil). One of FIFA's stated goals – both with its own earnings and with its strategies for awarding hosting rights for its

events – is to encourage the development and improvement of football. This led to the only explicitly sport-related narrative in the Russian World Cup:

> "One goal is for the entire Russian population to have access to football, but the Russian Football Union is especially focusing on outreach to children via mass football, football in school projects and investment in youth academies… Ultimately, Russia is seeking to create a national framework that enhances the health and quality of life of people across the country through sport, and football in particular." (Russia 2018 World Cup Bid Committee 2010 vol.2, pp.157, 163)

This nationwide goal involved passing a federal strategy for sport development and a comprehensive program to construct coordinated football institutions at the national, interregional, regional, and local levels. Though organizers underscored that this program would take place even without the World Cup, winning hosting rights was explained as a victory that would catalyze the program and inspire a new generation nationwide. Hosting mega-events often accompanies shifts in a nation's sporting policy (Devine 2013), although whether mega-events actually inspire increased popular participation in sport remains less clear (Girginov and Hills 2008).

All the same, Russian government attempts to improve sport required developing football-related infrastructure, and the bid books emphasized that the World Cup would energize this process as well: "Our football infrastructure will be of international quality thanks to the newly built or renovated FIFA World Cup stadiums and training sites" (Russia 2018 World Cup Bid Committee 2010 vol.2, p.156). Beyond this, though, the developmental agenda included attention to both social programs and infrastructures beyond those required for sport. Social development narratives were presented as a form of job training, imparting practical experience for workers nationwide:

> "Thousands will have the opportunity to learn new skills: the event will develop new football administrators, trainers, drivers, hospitality experts, transport engineers and construction workers, to name a few. These roles will teach life-long skills offering hope for a better future for a more highly trained, skilled workforce." (Russia 2018 World Cup Bid Committee 2010 vol.2, p.150)

This fits into the ideas of Russian modernization, as vocational training and improving service standards were seen as key drivers of economic growth and development, particularly in the tourist and hospitality industries (Didenko and Klyucharyov 2013; Shkurkin et al. 2016). Underlying social development, the Russian bid communicated

narratives that promoted the infrastructural benefits of hosting, particularly in terms of the nation's transit systems:

> "The Russian Federation has made a significant commitment to the modernisation of the transportation infrastructure throughout the nation. Such work will occur regardless of the award of the 2018 FIFA World Cup. Should Russia be honoured as Host Country, however, improvements that would have otherwise occurred after the 2018 FIFA World Cup will be accelerated to benefit the event… Our already excellent public transportation system will be even further improved, providing a world-class network and infrastructure for fans and local residents… Our airports will be modernized more quickly as the FIFA World Cup comes to Russia."
> (Russia 2018 World Cup Bid Committee 2010 vol.3, pp.134, 149)

Once again, positive developments were framed as already in process but slated for acceleration due to the World Cup. As with the social improvements, the infrastructural development programs were cast as a long-term benefit for residents that would alter the nation's fortunes forever. For the record, there was never any open reflection among the organizers that these development projects could be accomplished without the World Cup. Instead, hosting was universally presented as a catalyst, as conveyed by LOC CEO Sorokin in an interview: "The World Cup is a big accelerator of these developments, of this investment, of essential things," (Q92).

These goals aspired to such national scales that none of them could be accomplished without the support and coordination of all levels of government. Government support represents the final category from the predominant World Cup narratives. Russian organizers were uncompromising in their presentation of government support:

> "A national priority for the Russian Federation and a risk-free choice for FIFA… The government guarantees all resources necessary for the staging of a tournament that will exceed every expectation of FIFA."
> (Russia 2018 World Cup Bid Committee 2010 vol.2, p.149)

Beyond framing the World Cup as a national priority, the organizers underscored Russia's centralized power vertical as an advantage for coordinating the event:

> "The complete support of the government is a necessity in order for the FIFA World Cup to be an unqualified success. Such support is even more crucial in the case of Russia, where the 13 municipalities serving as Host Cities of matches span multiple administrative regions. Russia's political system offers the stability essential for hosting a FIFA World Cup..."
> (Russia 2018 World Cup Bid Committee 2010 vol.3, p.383)

In this way, organizers portrayed the weakness of Russian democracy as a strength, dovetailing with FIFA Secretary General Jérôme Valcke's assessment that democracy is a hindrance to an effective World Cup (BBC 2013b). Taken together, then, the narratives of Diversity and Global Importance, Openness and Readiness, Markets, Government Support, Improving Football, and Social and Infrastructural Development represent the guiding legitimations of the Russian World Cup. As diverse as they might seem, these narratives all flow from a single argument: the presentation of Russia as a new, modern, and hospitable nation, rapidly improving itself in multiple domains but ready to benefit from the boost that hosting brings, and eager to open its markets in exchange for international cooperation and integration.

This discourse places Russia into an inferior position vis-à-vis the West, framing the nation as a supplicant for belonging. There is another script commonly present in Russia, however, which presents the nation as morally superior in relation to the West (Neumann 1995, 2008), though of course western countries also engage in these claims to superiority in comparison to Russia and the Global East more broadly (Headley 2015; Klinke 2012). For this argument, however, the point is that within Russia these two discourses are incompatible: one presented the nation as sovereign and superior, while the other emphasized the country's inferiority and desire for greater belonging in the international democratic community. The contradictions between these discourses were reconciled in the bid book by framing Russian greatness within an understanding of the country's unique spirit, its contributions to global culture, and its traditions of hospitality. Once the bid was won, however, there was less pressure on organizers to maintain this posture of supplication, particularly after the geopolitical developments in Ukraine. As I will discuss in more detail below, the conflict between these discourses marks one of the fundamental tensions in hosting the World Cup, even as it was largely glossed over during the bid.

The bid book itself was created by the Russian bid committee, and both Sorokin and Djordjadze served as chief editors, while coordinating with the Russian Football Union and the Russian Ministry of Sport, both of which were led by Vitaly Mutko. Below them were two co-editors, Dmitry Mosin and Julia Cooper. Mosin had worked in the Nizhny Novgorod regional administration before serving as the director for strategic planning in the 2014 Sochi bid, while Cooper had participated in the 2013 Universiade bid in Kazan

and worked for Helios Partners, an international sports consultancy with extensive experience advising prospective nations on their Olympic and World Cup bids. Helios consulted for both the Sochi 2014 and the 2018 World Cup bids and, as experts in understanding what FIFA decision makers want, was responsible for much of the slick and hyperbolic tone that is common in the genre of bid books. This speaks to the mobility of mega-event policy and the role of bid consultancies in transporting those policies across the globe, as familiar elements in mega-event campaigns appear in bids from aspiring nations worldwide (Lauermann 2014a; McCann 2013; Silvestre 2013). Helios' founder and president explained his approach in this way:

> "You have to be compelling, you have to be convincing and you have to inspire, because this is a game about inspiration. It's not about communication, it's about inspiring people." (Williams 2008)

This concern for inspiration over communication parallels the traditional Potemkin emphasis on surface over substance. Helios infused their inspirational rhetoric into the bid book, marrying it to the idea that modernization was already underway and would only be accelerated by the catalyst of the World Cup. Appropriately, the Russia 2018 World Cup bid book was titled *Ready to Inspire*. Despite the involvement of this international sports consultancy, however, there were elements of the guiding World Cup narratives that differed significantly from most other mega-event bids. While proclaiming the benefits of infrastructural development is a common enough narrative among the new generation of mega-event hosts, the idea of touting the advantages of a centralized, less democratic government is more novel. Aside from Russia, the only other examples among top-tier bids were Beijing, which emphasized universal government support in their bid for the 2008 Olympics (Beijing Olympic Games Organizing Committee 2009), and Qatar in their bid for the 2022 World Cup, which highlighted the advantages of centralized government as a constitutional monarchy under His Highness the Emir (Qatar 2022 World Cup Bid Committee 2010). For their part, and unlike Beijing or Qatar, the Russian organizers attempted in their bid book to straddle the divide between a presentation of the country as a modern, tolerant, and vibrant democracy, while at the same time offering the political, security, and stability advantages of an unquestioned centralized authority.

Once the World Cup bid was won, organizers continued restating these narratives, but shifted their focus to communicating towards domestic audiences. Djordjadze, for

instance, in speeches, conference appearances, and press releases, continually highlighted the transformative social and material potentials of hosting. He even went so far as to claim that the World Cup would be a historical event on par with the Second World War, referring to the ways in which Russian identity has been constructed with reference to wartime suffering and victory (Gudkov 2005; Zubkova 2015). Claiming that the World Cup would be similarly transformative, Djordjadze stated that, "the World Cup will help us make a different people and a new nation" (Harding 2011, 121, 136). Here again was the presentation of the World Cup as wholly transformative project, though through the usage of military metaphors, these messages resonate with the conflict between discourses of national sovereignty and discourses of international integration. Here, at a stroke, Djordjadze referenced the patriotic messages of Russian distinctiveness while also discussing the transformation of the nation into something more compatible with the norms of international modernity. Thus, he simultaneously engaged neoliberal ideas of change and growth alongside more statist connotations of patriotism and national unity. This speaks to the contradictions inherent in constructing an image of openness and internationality with a leadership structure that favors closure and control. One way to reconcile these contradictions is as an expression of Potemkinism, wherein officials worked to create and distribute a superficial construction (of neoliberal change, for example, or international integration) while maintaining the status quo underneath that surface. FIFA requirements were instrumental in creating the initial impetus for many of these narratives, given that they held control over whether to grant hosting rights, but ultimate responsibility for the creation and distribution of narratives fell to the Russian organizers. This was particularly true in regards to the domestic audiences, where neither FIFA nor any other international organizations had much ability to communicate independently to the Russian population.

Russian organizers continued their strategy of communicating that hosting would impart new skillsets and social behaviors on the background of modern infrastructures, increased tourist attractiveness, and improved investment potential, though once the bid was won, these narratives were targeted primarily at domestic audiences. These state-centered neoliberal narratives were presented as leading inevitably to a higher quality of life, with no alternative trajectories or possible negative outcomes. Organizers at all levels communicated these narratives through a variety of mechanisms, as will be shown below. And yet, dividing these narratives into superficial beauty masking an unpalatable reality –

a Potemkin interpretation, in short – does not do justice to the nuanced political and economic relationships at play. For Russia, hosting highlighted and exacerbated problems in their current method of governance: over the past two decades, Russian citizens have enjoyed significant improvements in their material circumstances and socioeconomic opportunities. This progress has not been linear, however, and in recent years has even been partially reversed, as Russia's leadership attempts to retain power in the face of a faltering economy, persistent isolation from the west, and increasing domestic discontent (Treisman 2018b). Russia is a semi-authoritarian country but not a totalitarian one, and it is not possible to govern through repression alone, though fear does play a role in managing opposition (Gel'man 2015c). In this light, the narratives created and distributed by organizers to explain the World Cup begin to make sense as a method for placating the public with promises of socioeconomic and material improvements, while leaving to the side any issues that might provoke the authorities with uncomfortable questions.

Returning to Djordjadze, what stands out in his reference to military history is the transparently political ploy of trying to invoke patriotism among his listeners, both to engage support and to stifle dissent. In his attempt to place the World Cup on the scale of the Great Patriotic War, he framed mega-event in the context of a major national effort that ultimately would leave the country in a better position. It is shocking to hear an administrator compare the preparations for the World Cup with the Second World War, which left between 26 – 27 million Soviet people dead (Ellman and Maksudov 1994). It is a sign of the political importance of the World Cup that this statement did not cause a scandal, particularly given the legal and financial consequences that have happened when the war – one of the foundational stories of the nation – was questioned or discussed incautiously (TASS 2014b; RIA Novosti 2014).

Moreover, Djordjadze was not the only official to invoke the war in furtherance of the World Cup. Once FIFA granted the right to host the 2018 World Cup, the Russian organizers had to choose which of the thirteen cities originally proposed in the bid would become a host city for the actual event. From the outset, Volgograd was considered one of the cities to be cut from the plan: the quality of existing infrastructure was too low and subsequently the amount of work needed was too high. Why choose Volgograd, for example, when Krasnodar (also part of the bid) already had a world-class stadium for its

nationally recognized football team (Latukhina 2017), and the city in general was already in better condition? President Putin was asked this question, and he responded with six words: "*Kak zhe nam pobezhdat bez Stalingrada?*" (Novie Izvestiya 2018a). In English: "How could we possibly win without Stalingrad?" His quip was brilliant politics – far more graceful than Djordjadze's attempt to invoke the war – and in a single phrase, he tied culture and history together with the needs of the contemporary moment. Without mentioning it directly, the president engaged the patriotic memory of the Second World War and combined it with the idea of football triumph in the World Cup. It was nimble work, pairing the neoliberal imperative of winning with the patriotic imperative of victory. Aside from the patriotic politics at play, the president's quip also speaks to some of the contingencies inherent in soft power narratives. First, this was clearly targeted at the domestic audience, as it can only be understood in reference to Russian and Soviet history and culture. Second, this ploy could only function in Volgograd, where the war remains a fundamental part of the city's character, even to the detriment of offering many other tourist options to visitors. Finally, there is a temporal factor at play here as well. Having invoked Stalingrad once, it is unlikely that the president (or any other officials) could do so again – at least not without cheapening the effect or igniting controversy. This brings to light an under-researched aspect of soft power narratives: the idea that they are not constant, but rather fluid, contingent, and subject to change.

Stable and Unstable Narratives

Just as most soft power studies tend to focus only on the international audience, so too do they not sufficiently take into account the issue of time. Instead, most studies implicitly frame a host nation's soft power project as singular and stable, and do not address the notion that multiple narratives (targeted at multiple audiences) might shift over time (Chitty et al. 2017; Grix, Brannagan, and Houlihan 2015; Grix and Lee 2013; Ji 2017; Manzenreiter 2010). This is particularly surprising given that almost a decade elapses between bidding for a mega-event and the actual start of the games.

The predominant narratives guiding the Russian World Cup were not stable over time. Once the bid was won, Russian organizers no longer had to convince decision makers in FIFA of the merits of their country. Thus, several narratives vanished from the speeches of organizers and other key figures because they were only relevant to the bidding phase. These vanished narratives included the allure of new markets for FIFA, the ideas of

Russia's diversity and global importance, and the statements of government alignment and support. There were also additions to the narratives, but these had little to do with the actual event. Rather, in the eight years between winning the bid and the opening ceremonies, a volatile geopolitical context generated new narratives and introduced complications to many of the initial narratives. In a sense, preparations for the Russian World Cup were beset by a kind of time lag, wherein some of the narratives introduced in 2010 were rendered partially obsolete within a few years. Further, the discordant geopolitical context created contradictions between some of the old narratives and the new narratives.

This shift in narratives occurred because of the explosion of tensions resultant from the Maidan crisis in Ukraine (Sakwa 2015; Trenin 2014a). As it pertains to this discussion about narratives and soft power, the question is less about Ukraine or international relations, than it is about how the sharp turn in global affairs affected Russia's World Cup. To be sure, the context of acrimony and heightened tension between nuclear powers had far-reaching policy effects (Colby 2018; Marcus 2018), but geopolitics also impinged directly on the World Cup preparations in the form of international pressure to boycott or even strip hosting rights from Russia (BBC 2015; M. Hall and Little 2018; Waterfield 2014). This spurred the generation of two new narratives, one directed largely towards international audiences and regarding Russia's strength, and one facing mostly inwards that portrayed the country as under threat. From the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, representative Maria Zakharova stated:

> "The regular round of the anti-Russian campaign in the western press is connected to the 2018 football World Cup… We remember the 'black PR campaign' in the run-up to the Sochi Olympics… Now there is a new plan that is actively being worked up relating to the 2018 World Cup. In a short time we will all witness active measures by the West in this direction, as they will take very serious actions in regards to Russia hosting this event. Of course their goal is to disrupt it. They will use all information tactics available, influencing public opinion. There will be many surprises… At this stage, the media are engaged in doing everything they can do to damage the image of the World Cup organizers… Once again we are hurrying to counteract the PR campaign that prepares this informational trash." (Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2017)

Informed by the renewed geopolitical rivalry between Russia and the West that has been misnamed a New Cold War (Kramer 2018), this belligerent and defensive posture contradicted the World Cup narratives of openness and hospitality. In news articles, current affairs programs, and opinion pieces, national media continually repeated these

narratives of Russia as an independent and indomitable great nation, righteously indignant at the years of unjust attacks. It was in this context that the photographs and secret videos of me (and other undesirable foreigners on the wrong side of the Red Line) were packaged and broadcast across the country. Parallel to this, the same media outlets continued distributing narratives of openness and hospitality to foreigners. Figure 31 illustrates the disappearance, appearance, and uneasy coexistence of the predominant narratives in the Russian World Cup.

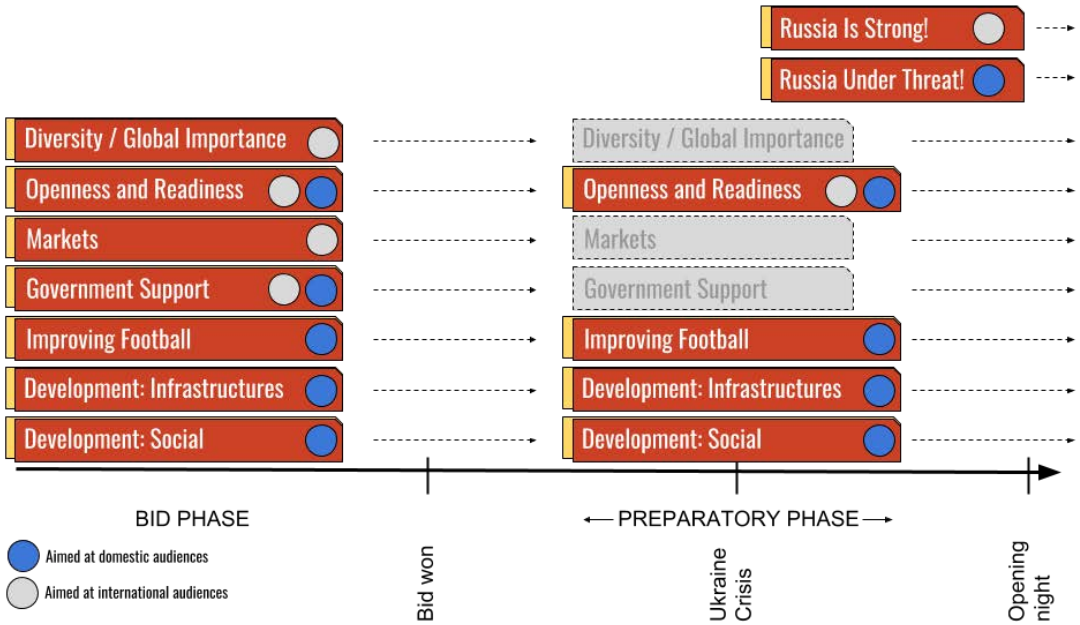

Figure 31: Continuity and (dis)appearance of predominant narratives accompanying the 2018 World Cup, over time.

For Russia, these international developments represented an existential threat to the World Cup and prompted periodic outpourings of concern in the domestic media that the games would be taken away (AIF 2015; Ivanov 2016; PolitOnline.ru 2017; Slyusarenko 2016; Vesti.ru 2018). Despite their notable silence in regards to political matters, organizers made occasional statements that framed these threats against their World Cup as simply another weapon employed by antagonistic foreign powers in their attempt to weaken Russia. In an interview an executive in the federal LOC explained: "It is like the sanctions, but it is not that serious… Of course they will never take away the World Cup," (F93). In referring to the economic punishments enacted against Russia by the West, this organizer implicitly restated the World Cup as a Russian state project: an attack against the World Cup and an attack on Russia were one and the same.

The idea of combining Russia with the World Cup was not limited to members of the organizing committees: I witnessed these narratives reproduced among the resident population of the host cities as well. In Ekaterinburg, a football fan told me, "This is

politics. They don't want Russia to succeed… [The World Cup] is a victory for us and that is unacceptable" (K166). Along the same lines, a journalist in Volgograd framed the periodic attempts to remove the World Cup from Russia as a strategy directed from England, where people could not accept that they lost the bid in 2010: "It is very simple to explain: it is jealousy against Russia… The English are always complaining and yelling that they are ready to take the championship," (V105). These statements echo the narratives produced at the upper echelons of the central state, fusing the World Cup and Russia into a single entity that could not be divided.

This conflation of mega-event and nation carried with it another benefit for organizers: in the politically-charged post-Maidan context, few Russians would believe that foreign actors could have Russian best interests at heart. By framing international criticism of World Cup developments as part of an orchestrated information war waged against Russia, organizers could defend themselves even against legitimate criticism. In this way, credible allegations of human rights violations during World Cup stadium construction (Human Rights Watch 2017; Melnæs 2017; Ruggie 2016) were disarmed by pointing to the hardly disinterested or impartial positions of those who were leveling the criticism. From her post at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Zakharova became adept at these arguments:

> "I always treat labor and civil society human rights organizations with great respect. I am against these organizations when they are used not according to their intended purpose, but simply as an instrument of political pressure and blackmail or, as in the current case, an informational campaign." (TASS 2018b)

In Russian officialdom, then, anything that contravened the central state's framing of the World Cup was dismissed as a baseless and coordinated attack on Russia. Still, these strategies introduced narrative contradiction in relation to the large number of foreigners coming into the host cities for the World Cup, and for whom national hospitality – grounded in the narratives of openness and readiness – still applied. All at once, foreigners were a threat to the World Cup and the nation, but they also had to be welcomed and honored guests.

These paradoxes were resolved by dividing foreigners into two groups. The first was the good group, that is, those tourists who loved football, who wanted to see Russia with their own eyes (and disabuse themselves of western anti-Russian propaganda), who loved

Russian culture and history, and above all, who were apolitical – unless they supported the current political system and the Russian president, in which case they were celebrated as enlightened (Kharunova 2018; Uzbekova 2018). In contrast, the second group was comprised of bad foreigners, meaning those who defied official narratives, who broke laws or norms, who were politically engaged, or who questioned or criticized the World Cup. Dividing these groups was the Red Line, fluid, contingent, largely invisible, and dangerous. This is why I – alongside other foreigners who had strayed across the line – was presented as an example of how western security services were warring against the Russian World Cup, part of an army of malevolent foreigners scouring the country for negative news about Russia and the World Cup (Mamotina 2017; Polyanichko, Baldenkova, and Karpova 2017).

Examining the predominant World Cup narratives from bidding to hosting reveals how unstable soft power projects can be. Over time, the Russian federal state defended the original World Cup narratives (of hospitality, openness, as well as the benefits of the multifarious World Cup development program) by employing narratives of national pride and the Russian history of unity in the face of external threats. In the midst of this maneuvering, the narratives of international integration and Russia as a new and developing nation, which were mostly targeted towards FIFA and most applicable during the bidding phase, disappeared. In the Russian case, the changes in the composition of the World Cup soft power narratives were spurred by unrelated events but, due to the international nature of both the political troubles and the mega-event, the Ukrainian crisis overlapped with the World Cup and gave rise to narrative contradictions. In other words, the second half of the World Cup preparatory period revealed the unstable nature of soft power narratives, as the preparations became a jumble of narratives of openness, inclusion, and development, mixed with nationalism, caution, and isolation.

The Ideological Pipeline and its Leaks

In this chapter I have worked from the understanding of soft power as an equation that involves the elements of narrative generation, transmission, and reception; explained the 2018 World Cup soft power project as a product of the Russian central state; demarcated international and domestic audiences; identified the predominant narratives in the World Cup; and traced the development of these narratives over time. In so doing, this chapter has departed from the majority of the literature on soft power and mega-events, which

tends to omit the facets of narrative transmission and reception, deemphasize the domestic audience, and elide the notion of time. But I have not yet explored the mechanisms by which the Russian World Cup soft power narratives were communicated, nor have I examined their effects on the residents of the host cities.

To make sense of these processes, I introduce the notion of the ideological pipeline, a concept that draws attention to the constructed nature of narratives and helps illustrate how those narratives were carried to various audiences. The ideological pipeline was a mechanism for the transmission of soft power narratives. As it was mobilized in the preparations for the World Cup, the ideological pipeline mirrored the organizational structure of the LOC, as shown in Figure 32. Like the LOC structure, the ideological pipeline both reflected and was a product of Russia's centralized power vertical. In this way, narratives flowed top down through the hierarchy, from the federal LOC to the regional LOCs, and from each of these LOC levels to national and regional media outlets, until finally reaching the general population.

To be sure, not all narratives were created purely at the federal level, and it would be inaccurate to ignore the influence of international actors such as FIFA and the multinational corporations who sponsored the World Cup. Nevertheless, despite the sometimes uneasy coalition of necessity between these actors and the federal government, ultimate control over which narratives were distributed through the ideological pipeline remained with the central authorities, particularly given the trend of increasing government control over the Russian media landscape (Deibert and Rohozinski 2010; Vartanova 2012). Further, since this notion presupposes a high degree of government control over the media landscape, it would have to take stock of local political economic specificities in order to make sense in other cultures and countries. In western countries without overt media control, elite actors can still use various media outlets to manufacture consent (Herman and Chomsky 2002). It would require adjustments the ideological pipeline to these altered conditions in order to make the notion transportable outside Russia.

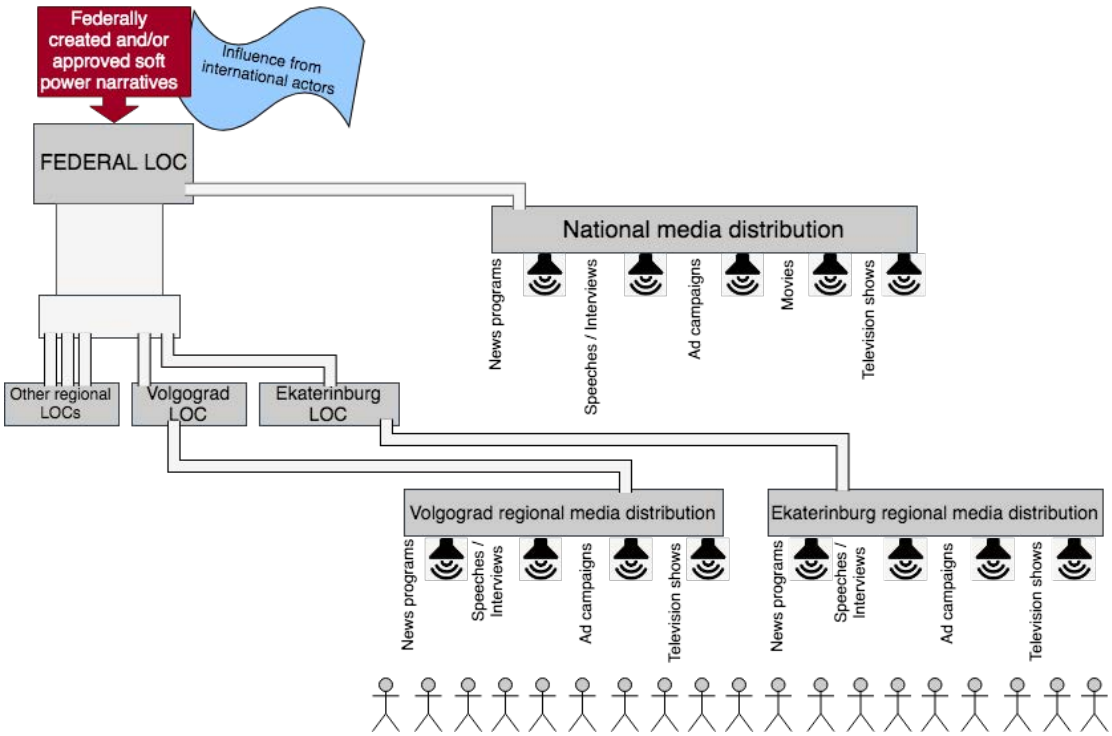

Figure 32: Diagram of the ideological pipeline, showing narratives transmitted down through national and regional structures and targeted at domestic audiences.

Looking at the predominant World Cup narratives over time, one of the most durable, important, and oft repeated was the idea of developing infrastructures. The goal here was to communicate the narrative that infrastructure developments represented a long-term benefit for the host cities specifically, and for Russia overall. As demonstrated above, this narrative was formally introduced in the bid book:

> "The FIFA World Cup will be a catalyst for the completion of infrastructure projects that will benefit the entire country. The bid features venues that will be used far beyond 2018, ensuring that there are no 'White Elephants'… Our excellent public transportation system will be even further improved, providing a world-class network and infrastructure for fans and local residents. Our airports will be modernized more quickly as the FIFA World Cup comes to Russia."
> (Russia 2018 World Cup Bid Committee 2010 vol.2, p.149)

This narrative frames the World Cup development program as a benefit, highlighting the value of transport infrastructures in particular, and assuring that event venues would continue seeing use. These arguments are consistent with other mega-events, not only in terms of presenting the value of event-led infrastructure development (Smith 2012), but also regarding the dangers of overlarge and underused infrastructures, particularly after the Olympics in Athens and Beijing and the World Cups in South Africa and Brazil (Alm et al. 2016; Brittain et al. 2018). Aside from these continuities, what is noticeable here is

how consistently this narrative was reproduced throughout the various levels and outlets of the ideological pipeline, even over time. For instance, at an LOC supervisory board meeting, president Putin said:

> "We have created modern airports, train stations, roads, highway interchanges, and advancements in digital technologies and smart management systems. It is important that this infrastructure will be integrated harmoniously into the country's transport framework and that it will serve the dynamic development of our regions, our cities, and the business activities of our country as a whole. And, of course, that it will improve the quality of life of our people."
>
> (Kremlin.ru 2018)

Coming on the eve of the World Cup, the president's words represented a narrative discipline and consistency that lasted almost nine years. This consistency persisted despite the changed geopolitical circumstances and the subsequent disappearance and appearance of other narratives. This indicates the importance placed by authorities specifically on these narratives as an explanatory factor for World Cup developments. I interpret this as a continued example of discursive Potemkinism; it would be impossible to convince the average citizen that Russia's infrastructure was as developed (or modern, with all that implies) as Europe's, but at least authorities could communicate that these processes were underway, and that the World Cup was part of these improvements.

In this instance, once the president (re)stated this narrative, the apparatus of the ideological pipeline churned to life, pumping the message down the line. First, the president's words were reproduced verbatim in press releases and news reports with a national reach, distributing the narrative to audiences around the country (as in RIA Novosti 2018a; Russian Federal Ministry of Sport 2018; TASS 2018a). Aside from this, and following the hierarchical flow of the ideological pipeline, this narrative was also repeated – sometimes using the same phrases but sometimes in their own words – by members of the federal and regional LOCs, for example LOC CEO Alexey Sorokin (Gubsky 2018) and Volgograd regional governor Andrey Bocharov (Novie Izvestiya 2018b). Further down, the narrative was divorced from the speeches and interviews of leaders and reproduced more anonymously in countless news articles, press releases, broadcasts, and reports about the World Cup, framing the preparations in general and transport infrastructure developments in particular as an unquestioned long-term good. In some instances, these benefits were portrayed in vague and aspirational terms, but in others they were presented as measurable progress, for instance as improvements year-

over-year in a host region's quality of life ratings (Novosti Volgograda 2016). Beyond the news, this narrative also made appearances in television shows, for instance in specials about the host cities. In one such special broadcast on the Rossiya24 station, presenter Yuliya Makarova took viewers around Volgograd, starting with the *Rodina Mat' Zovyot* monument and then showing the World Cup stadium, before spending the bulk of her program discussing the long-term benefits to be derived from the city's improved infrastructure, including roads, airport, train station, and accommodation facilities (Rossiya24 2018a).

This process was repeated for all the narratives illustrated in Figures 29 and 30. Depending on how appropriately a particular message fit a given medium, these narratives could be perceived in various forms ranging from news reports to advertisements to films (see RIA Novosti 2017a for an example of a football sports drama that aired nationally on state television, timed to the World Cup and containing several predominant narratives). In this way, and targeted at domestic audiences nationwide, the ideological pipeline worked to transform soft power ideas into discursive and material realities.

At the same time, the ideological pipeline was neither as monolithic nor as efficient or effective as national leaders may have hoped. Just as the rollout of the World Cup itself was a paradoxical blend of centralized and decentralized characteristics, so too was the ideological pipeline employed for customized and area-specific ends. For example, regional and municipal organizers took the national narratives of the value of infrastructural developments and wrapped them in classic arguments about urban entrepreneurialism and attractiveness:

> "Preparing for the 2018 Football World Cup will give an impulse to the development of infrastructures in Ekaterinburg and all of Sverdlovsk oblast, raising awareness and the investment potential of the middle Urals region, and facilitating the improvement of the quality of life of the people."
>
> (Sverdlovsk Gubernatorial website 2018)

Visible in this statement were the predominant national narratives of the value of the World Cup as a national urban development project, but here they were customized to fit the specific conditions found in Ekaterinburg and the Sverdlovsk region. The narratives that originated at the top of the ideological pipeline, then, did not necessarily travel

unmolested down the mechanism. Instead, actors at various positions in the hierarchy could attempt to modify the product as it passed, or even to create their own versions or interpretations of the World Cup narratives. This is what Ekaterinburg's head of the Department of Urban Design was doing as he attempted to enact the citywide building façade renovations, elaborated in Chapter 5 (Svechkov 2017). Independently of any national project, this municipal administrator employed many of the predominant national narratives, endeavoring to frame the controversial local project as beneficial for the city over the long term (Yakino 2017).

Though national level figures had more clout due to their superior status within the hierarchy, and thus more ability to access the ideological pipeline at higher points in the system, organizers and authorities at all levels could use the ideological pipeline as a mechanism to communicate narratives. That the narratives surrounding the Ekaterinburg façade project failed to resonate with city residents speaks to a larger question regarding the ideological pipeline. The final step in the soft power equation – that is, the reception and adoption of narratives among the target populations – was not a foregone conclusion. In other words, there was no guarantee that narratives originating at the top (or the middle) of the centralized government hierarchy, and then travelling in various forms down the pipeline, might actually have the desired effect on domestic audiences.

Thus, national level organizers like Sorokin and Djordjadze engaged narratives about the World Cup benefits by focusing on the long-term value of, for example, transport infrastructure improvements in the host cities (Samofalova 2018). Down the pipeline, nation, regional, and municipal actors repeated this narrative in original form or modified for local conditions (Novie Izvestiya 2018a; RIA Novosti 2018b). At the end of the ideological pipeline, however, host city residents often failed to absorb these narratives: "How can we host an international tournament without normal roads?" (E216). This question reflected a double concern. First, there was the idea of national disgrace, in that it would be an embarrassment to invite international guests to a city with roads in such poor condition as, in this case, Volgograd. Second, the question pointed to a spatial inequality in the transit improvements, since the central thoroughfares were being upgraded but many other roads (particularly in areas further from the tourist center) were left unrepaired.

It is notable – though perhaps self-evident – that in the ideological pipeline, residents were restricted to the role of audience. The flow of information down the ideological pipeline was one way only, and residents were unable to participate in the creation or distribution of narratives. The only significant opportunity for residents to find discussions that questioned the official narratives – much less participate in debates themselves – was through independent media outlets, or by contributing to blogs, making youtube videos, and posting to instagram. On these and other social media outlets like facebook and vkontakte, residents expressed views that revealed the incompleteness and superficiality of the picture painted by authorities through the ideological pipeline:

> "No one needs this championship. It's nothing but an excuse to steal from the budget. What else do you expect from these criminals?" (S167)

Discussions of corruption and elite criminality in Russia are common enough in personal conversation, but with the exception of the occasional high profile arrest, it is rare to see Russian corruption covered substantially in the national media. This was particularly the case for any hint of corruption in World Cup preparations, discussions of which were notably absent in the major press. This absence was due to the trend of increasing state control of media in general, combined with a substantial and growing pressure against independent media (Gehlbach and Sonin 2014; Pasti, Chernysh, and Svitich 2012). The lamentable conditions of the press in Russia have led the country to be ranked 149 out of 180 countries in the 2019 Press Freedom Index (RSF 2019), though comparisons with western ideas of media independence only give a partial picture of the uniqueness of Russia's media landscape (Arutunyan 2009). Still, this substantial control of the national media allowed the central government to shape narratives or control them outright (Enikolopov, Petrova, and Zhuravskaya 2011), which led to a notable degree of narrative conformity across the national media landscape.

Social media (including blogs, local online citizen journalism, and so on) represents an alternative to these high degrees of media control. Scholars are divided on how effective online outlets can be, however, with some demonstrating that online spaces can be used to shape debates in favor of the state (Gunitsky 2015), or that actors within the central government can easily redirect citizen outrage to lower level bureaucrats (Toepfl 2011). Other scholars, however, maintain that online citizen efforts can in fact discipline state actors and restrain corruption (Enikolopov, Petrova, and Sonin 2018). In regards to the

World Cup, social media represented a legitimate and even popular means to discuss mega-event-led developments, though they had a vastly smaller reach than that generated through the ideological pipeline (Medialogia 2017b, 2017c). Because of this, most independent media concentrated only on local or regional issues, resulting in a situation where there were few appreciable, organized, nationwide alternative narratives to be found. Notable exceptions to this were when social media amplified local controversies to such a degree that the issues demanded national attention, as in the case with Volgograd's Widow's Park, and to a lesser extent Ekaterinburg's façade renovation. In both of these cases, however, as soon as the controversy reached national scales, the central government – personified in the form of the Russian president, as usual – stepped in to settle the matter. Subsequently, the narratives communicated through the ideological pipeline were ones of order maintained, as central authorities resolved difficulties in the periphery.

As they were distributed through the ideological pipeline, the official narratives played a dominant role in legitimizing World Cup developments. These narratives had insignificant competition for mindshare, and alternative narratives were generally independent, haphazard, and regionally restricted. Nevertheless, as suggested by the critical resident quoted above, the ability of these mechanisms to transmit a narrative whole or in part, starting from the top levels of government in Moscow all the way down to the host cities, did not mean that those narratives would actually be absorbed by residents. Instead, and in spite of impressive mechanisms of nationwide narrative control, residents commonly held their own council when it came to interpreting World Cup developments, as I will explore in the following chapter.

Despite the limits of its effectiveness, the ideological pipeline contributes in four ways to our understanding of the Russian World Cup and mega-events more broadly. First, the ideological pipeline illustrates the mechanisms by which soft power narratives were communicated to audiences, illuminating a process that is generally left unexplored in the literature. Next, the domestic audience has been mostly neglected in studies of mega-events and soft power, in preference for a focus on international perception and/or geopolitical dimensions. In this, the ideological pipeline serves to reorient mega-event analyses beyond the international by reminding of the importance of the domestic. Third, the ideological pipeline reflected the paradoxical relationship between standardized and

area-specific features seen in other aspects of the articulation of the Russian World Cup. The structure of the ideological pipeline mirrored the organizational structure of the LOC and the power vertical more broadly, but beyond this it also embodied the tensions between centralized and decentralized characteristics. Finally, in its inability to reach residents, the ideological pipeline highlights the final component of the soft power equation, even as it demonstrates the gaps and failures of centralized ideological control. In other words, the ideological pipeline can be seen as a mechanism through which authorities attempted to construct a superficial surface. In the next chapter, I illustrate more fully the incomplete reach of the ideological pipeline by exploring beneath and beyond the Potemkin surface to examine the micro level of the everyday lives of residents in Ekaterinburg and Volgograd.

8: QUOTIDIAN EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC SOFT POWER

The World Cup Through the Everyday

In 2016, Aviators' Highway into Volgograd was still a two-lane road, though recently repaved. Work had begun on two expanded lanes, but this extra space was blocked off by construction barriers and not in use (see Figure 33). The traffic backed up and we slowed to a stop. I commented that the road looked nice but the driver snorted:

> "Well, they just finished this part but it's already crumbling, see? This is Volgograd, after all, what do you expect? And don't worry, the road will need to be repaired after the championship. They're building *very* high quality… It's a jobs program, you see…" (C68)

This ironic comment, delivered with offhand humor and a dose of sarcasm while we crawled in traffic, speaks to many themes salient for this thesis. Here were effects at the individual level of the central state-led urban development program to make the regions competitive in a quasi-neoliberal restructuring. Here too was the unpalatable underside of the polished Potemkin surface. And finally, this comment revealed the distance between official rhetoric and lived reality, highlighting the failure of the ideological pipeline to communicate the value of the government's World Cup narratives. In this chapter I focus on the individual and the everyday to highlight moments like these. In the same way that a higher-level view would miss the cracking asphalt of the newly repaved Aviators' Highway, I argue that an analysis of World Cup developments without this micro perspective is incomplete.

Figure 33: Volgograd Aviators' Highway under construction in 2016. At this point the expanded lanes had not yet been opened for use, but the newly repaved parts of the road were already cracking. Source: author.

My attention to the individual here is intended as the final component in the soft power equation, an exploration of what was hidden underneath the Potemkin surfaces created

by organizers and authorities and, ultimately, as a continuing effort to transcend the binaries inherent in traditional Potemkinism. My explorations are informed by the paradigm of everyday life, the general collection of theories centered on the taken-for-granted world of human thoughts and activities, with "an explicit ethico-political stance and… considerable stress on the potential for individual and collective agency to transform existing social conditions" (Gardiner 2000, 9). This is grounded in a politics of resistance but, notably, not one that focuses on overt revolutionary action, nor even on small-scale confrontation against a dominant force (Scott 1985). Protests against the World Cup were practically non-existent in Russia and residents generally did not engage even in small acts of active resistance. Instead, what I found in attending to the everyday was a pronounced separation from the World Cup; it simply was not a matter of concern for most people I spoke with, and when developments actually impinged on the conduct of their daily lives, they responded in a variety of small ways that seemed, at first, insignificant. It was only after some time that I began to understand these responses as tactics, in the sense elaborated by de Certeau (2011), and oriented around a quiet subversion.

There is limited conceptual utility, however, in merely labeling these behaviors as tactics, so I propose three interrelated moves in order to advance beyond this simple categorization. The first is a grouping of these tactics. In time spent with residents, I began to notice patterns and similarities across interactions with disparate people. When I reached a level of saturation and no new or otherwise significant responses came to light, I sorted these tactics into groups but did not yet understand how to arrange them. This leads to the second move, which is an attempt to grasp the meaning behind residents' tactical reactions; there is, after all, a symbolic dimension to quotidian practices, as everyday life "cannot simply be written off as the realm of the trivial and inconsequential" (Gardiner 2000, 16).

An attention to the everyday can reveal acts of rebellion against the forces of increasing bureaucratic and technocratic regimentation and rationality that are, for Lefebvre (2004) among others, defining features of modernity. Lefebvre notes how, in the processes of modern capitalism, humans are alienated from themselves, or in other words, they, their activities, and their relations are all transformed into things (Lefebvre 2014, 501). Lefebvre describes a dialectical movement, rather than a stable state, between various

degrees of alienation and disalienation, as a person struggles to regain the freedom and selfhood they have lost – a cry that includes the demand for agency over one's city (Harvey 2008, 2010; Lefebvre 2015). My second move, then, is ordering host city residents' tactics into a taxonomy predicated on degrees of detachment from World Cup preparations, as communicated through the ideological pipeline. Or, to put it in Lefebvrian terms, I order these tactics along a spectrum of alienation and disalienation.

The third move is a general sensitivity that frames the first two moves, an orientation toward the quiet rebelliousness that can be found in the everyday ways that people resist the commodification and homogenization of experience (Gardiner 2000, 15). This is grounded in an understanding of the ways that individuals create:

> "…a space in which [they] can find ways of using the constraining order of the place or of the language. Without leaving the place where [they have] no choice but to live and which lays down its law for [them], [they] establish within it a degree of plurality and creativity." (de Certeau 2011, 30)

In this, I seek to highlight the ways that individuals appropriate and recreate themselves within the restraining conditions of alienation. This is a focus on the creativity that can flourish within the cracks of the World Cup development program, manifesting itself as tactics of resistance and disalienation. I argue that this is particularly fitting given Lefebvre's approach to the (dis)alienating potentialities in festival and leisure. Further, this commitment fits with an analysis of the World Cup that is, as a top-tier mega-event, a globalized and commodified festival leisure *par excellence*. This sensitivity to the quiet rebellion of the everyday spotlights residents' resistance to the commodification of experience and reveals the emancipatory potential of individual and private defiance even in adverse conditions. In this way, my emphasis on the quotidian – particularly but not solely during moments of disruption to routine (Gardiner 2000, 20) – endeavors to show that the tactics of the weak (de Certeau 2011) are not restricted to direct action, but also encompass a spectrum of internal resistance behaviors that demonstrate a rejection of domination.

Tactics: Two Approaches to Normality

The first group of resident responses does not belong in a taxonomy of tactics at all, as these were people who repeated official narratives as distributed through the ideological pipeline. In some cases this did not surprise, for instance when speaking with officials

who might occupy space within the mechanism of the pipeline itself. So when a regional administrator explained that "We are developing the tourist attractiveness of the region" (T46), I took this as another example of restating the neoliberal legitimations of inter-urban competition. Even when faced with citizen pushback, this member of the Ekaterinburg LOC refused to deviate from the narratives of the ideological pipeline:

> "The World Cup is absolutely beneficial… It is about improving the attractiveness of our city. We are increasing our tourist potential… It is an impulse for developing the city… People always say it would be better to build kindergartens, or open shopping malls… People always complain! If it were only possible to explain it to them, they would understand!" (S118)

In this interview, the official complained that city residents did not or could not understand the value of the mega-event. I also found his demeanor interesting in that he paralleled the paternalistic tone adopted by national level officials (like Vitaly Mutko, among others) on their inspections to the peripheries. This official's interpretation of the World Cup was clear: hosting benefited the city, full stop, and residents who wanted something else – kindergartens, for example – simply did not understand how the world (and the World Cup) worked.

Journalists occupied a more malleable space within the ideological pipeline. Some of those who spoke with me only reproduced official narratives, such as "the World Cup is a chance to improve the quality of life in our city," (B414). Variations of this view – devoid of many specifics – were commonly repeated. In an informal conversation with me, however, one Volgograd journalist stood out for her unwillingness to endorse the official rhetoric:

> "Really, I don't think the World Cup will change anything in the city. It might, though, partially… They are cleaning up the center, that's good, but the center was already in normal condition… Things are different in *Kirovsky* [the district where her family lived, far south of the city center]." (N274)

Here, the journalist shared her perspective on the unevenness of developments, a view informed by her daily commute. Driving with her to the center from her family's modest flat in a shabby residential block, I understood what she meant. Our trip started by navigating through a maze of poorly paved roads that led from her parking spot in a forest of nine-story apartment buildings, out to the main street. Weaving with practiced ease around deep potholes, she took us to the third *prodolnaya,* one of the Volgograd's major arteries that ran parallel to the river. This was three lanes in each direction that led

us past scrub brush growing on empty lots, neighborhoods of tumbledown shacks with "For Sale" banners slung over windows, small stores or the occasional glassy shopping mall, and everywhere many signs of neglect: dirt pathways with broken curbs instead of paved sidewalks, overgrown bushes and trees, and potholes in nearly every road that connected to the *prodolnaya.* Conditions improved as we approached the center, where I noticed a smoother quality of asphalt and newly installed and painted fencing to protect pedestrians from traffic. The buildings looked better too, with fresh coats of paints on many apartment blocks, new construction periodically visible, and stores offering cell phones and not just beer. By the time we reached the central district, with its monumental Stalinist architecture overlooking the recently repaved pedestrian areas around the Alley of Heroes memorial, I understood what the journalist had meant. Even though exploring a residential courtyard in the center revealed many familiar markers of neglect and disrepair, at least the exteriors here were in better shape. This was particularly noticeable in the tourist and memorial areas by the river, which had clearly benefited from more regular upkeep, with new streetlamps, benches, trash cans, and sidewalks. Despite the obvious connections to traditional Potemkinism, where the exteriors had been improved but the courtyards remained shambolic, the center was, in her words, *normalno* – in normal condition. In contrast, the distant district where she and her family lived was bleak, dark, and crumbling, both inside and out.

Aside from the journalist's comment that preparations for the World Cup were improving areas that hardly needed improvement, what stands out in her comment is this notion of normality: *normalno.* I often noted this word used in reference to World Cup developments in both Ekaterinburg and Volgograd, though with a context-dependent difference in connotation. One group of people used *normalno* to denote a condition of acceptable quality that would not cause embarrassment particularly in the face of international guests. Commonly they referred to the condition of the roads, since these repair and expansion projects had the most tangible impact on the conduct of their daily lives. Typical conversations in this line were: "Finally, we'll have normal roads," (H246), and "I can't stand the traffic… Let them build normal roads, you know what I mean," (S29). The idea here was that existing conditions were unsatisfactory and, at last, the time had come to bring them up to acceptable standards of quality. *Normalno* was used to explain what the hoped-for future or current reality entailed and, crucially, also to justify the inconveniences and disruptions: "The traffic [due to World Cup construction] was

unbearable… It took almost three hours to get home! But soon everything will be *normalno*" (P163). In this, the problems of today were answered by the promise of an improved tomorrow.

Notably, these improvements were not framed as a kind of utopian vision of progress, but rather as a simple (and overdue) membership into proper, "normal" conditions. In other words, this was an argument for a particular understanding of modernity, and this version of *normalno* brings to light a non-elite view on this state-led urban development project. Following Koch's (2014) analysis of what is excluded in the promotion of a certain vision of modernity, I argue that Russian host city residents who used this version of *normalno* were working to erase the disarray of the post-Soviet chaos and collapse. Residents of major peripheral cities like Ekaterinburg and certainly Volgograd still suffered from many of the material deprivations and disadvantages that affected Moscow and St. Petersburg in the 1990s and early 2000s (Fest 2017). In this light, the World Cup was seen as a modernizing impulse, a state spatial project directed from the center to enact developments in the peripheries (Golubchikov 2017; Golubchikov and Badyina 2016). This was one of the key narratives dispensed through the ideological pipeline, and residents who felt upset at existing conditions, as well as those whose routines were disrupted by construction projects, could justify these conditions by rationalizing them through the notion of *normalno*.

There was another usage of *normalno*, however, based less on rationalization and more on resignation. This was used more cynically, by people who seemed aware of developments but less inclined to believe in the promise of lasting improvements or coming modernity:

> "We can do things once, if you kick us, but to make something systematic is impossible… We'll clean up for the World Cup and make everything *normalno* but then it will go back as before." (K78)

This man was referring to the immense effort involved in preparing for the World Cup that, at the time, was less than a year away. All at once, he was certain that the mega-event would be conducted without issue, but he failed to believe in the long-term transformative potential of hosting. In his view, systematic improvements were impossible, and Russia would always remain as it has been: a little broken, a little dirty, a little backwards. In other words, Russia was not *normalno* – not modern – even though the country could, under pressure, adopt those affectations for a while.

People using this version of *normalno* expressed more detachment from the narratives of the ideological pipeline. In this, they displayed the distance between their concerns and World Cup preparations, a gulf sometimes so wide that it seemed as though preparations were happening in a separate city, as conveyed by this Volgograd resident:

> "Not far from where I live [in the Krasnooktyabrsky district], there is a monument, on Bogunskaya Street, that marks a common grave… It is in terrible condition… it's a disgrace, but this is *normalno* – why should bureaucrats take care of monuments? … They can't even water the plants once a month." (O88)

Though this statement seems entirely disconnected from the World Cup, this man was making the point that he did not trust organizers to consider the needs of residents during the preparations for hosting. For him, this was noticeable in the lack of care given to Volgograd's military heritage; if municipal authorities could not maintain the monuments to Volgograd's wartime sacrifices, how could they be expected to do anything properly in the city at all? Moreover, this lack of care was presented as the regular state of affairs, as *normalno*. In this view, the World Cup could not be expected to alter substantially the conditions of life for residents. Considering the numerous other priorities and problems in Volgograd, spending money on hosting seemed, to many, a waste:

> "Why are young people leaving? Why is there trash everywhere?… But of course they find money for the World Cup… This is *normalno*." (Y133)

This woman cited two prominent issues for Volgograd: the piles of refuse commonly seen around the city (particularly in the less touristy areas) and the outflow of residents to other cities with better opportunities. Again, framing these conditions as *normalno* reveals a sense of resignation about the city's prospects, and demonstrates the failure of the ideological pipeline to connect to residents. Instead of addressing issues of concern like these, the ideological pipeline kept residents informed of the decisions that were made for them and the progress that was being made towards fulfilling those decisions.

Typical examples of this alienation could be found in government press releases, for instance from the Ekaterinburg municipality, where officials reported the degree of completion of numerous World Cup development projects and shared logistical details of how the coming event would take place (Ekaterinburg Municipality press release 2017). A similar example came from Sverdlovsk Oblast after a meeting of the regional

LOC, where authorities relayed the basic facts of progress on the stadium and road repair projects, while the governor spoke of the importance of seeing through the project to the end without slowing pace (Sverdlovsk Oblast press release 2018). In this context, residents used the resigned *normalno* as a means to explain developments in their cities even as these explanations expressed their alienation caused by the World Cup development program. Of all the residents I spoke with, the *normalno* groups were the least detached from the official World Cup narratives and thus the most alienated. In other words, the more people were connected to the ideological pipeline, the less detached they were from the World Cup development program – and the more alienated they were from autonomy, agency, and self.

Tactics: Indignation

Beyond the two flavors of *normalno*, there was a third category of tactics I noted in residents' responses to World Cup developments. These are best understood as indignation, and came most often from people well informed about World Cup developments, though they did not support them. I noted this level of indignant awareness even among people who might be expected to support the World Cup, such as amateur football players and fans of the local Ekaterinburg premier league team, FC Ural:

> "It's been years since I've been to a game at Central Stadium… The new stadium will be impressive, no doubt, but why make us wait for so long? The previous stadium met all international requirements. Why couldn't they keep using that one? I'll tell you why not – money." (P216)

This fan was indignant over the general misuse of funds in constructing the World Cup stadium and the poor execution of developments overall, based on planning that did not take into account his (or the city's) needs. Specifically, he was upset as a football fan because of the many years of construction that took Central Stadium – FC Ural's home – out of commission. This is part of a decade-long saga surrounding the reconstruction of Central Stadium, and while a complete retelling is beyond my scope here, a brief overview is necessary in order to understand this man's indignation.

Originally completed in 1957, Central Stadium was protected as an architectural and historical monument for its iconic neoclassical façade (Zvagelskaya 2007). The stadium fell into disrepair during the 1990s and was closed for reconstruction in 2006, originally

planned to last three years and cost RUB 1.4 billion, or USD $23.5 million (Expert Ural 2007). That project was late and over budget – at a reported cost of RUB 2.5 billion (USD $41.9 million) – stranding fans without their iconic home stadium until the reopening in 2011 (Viktorov 2013). This was a grand affair, timed to the 288th City Day celebrations in Ekaterinburg. Vitaly Mutko flew in from Moscow and gave a speech where he said he hoped to see victories here in the upcoming World Cup, since the Russia 2018 bid had just won hosting rights. Meanwhile, 700 musicians from military orchestras around the nation took to the new field to play FIFA's anthem, and local media trumpeted the news that Central Stadium fulfilled all of FIFA's World Cup qualifications (OTV 2011). Soon after, however, stadium director Vadim Vorobyov gave an interview where, despite praising the quality of the stadium, he admitted that while the facility fulfilled requirements for European tournament matches, it would have to be expanded for the World Cup (Interfax 2011). Vorobyov promised this reconstruction "will take only around a year and will cost about two billion rubles," or about USD $33.5 million (Bakin 2011). Local media took up the message and promised a reconstruction would be *berezhno*, meaning careful, gentle, or mindful (OTV 2014). This wording was meant to convey the limited scope of the project and mollify the fans who would have to see the newly reopened stadium close again. Within a year, however, the stadium was entirely demolished, save for the protected historical façade, as shown in Figure 34.

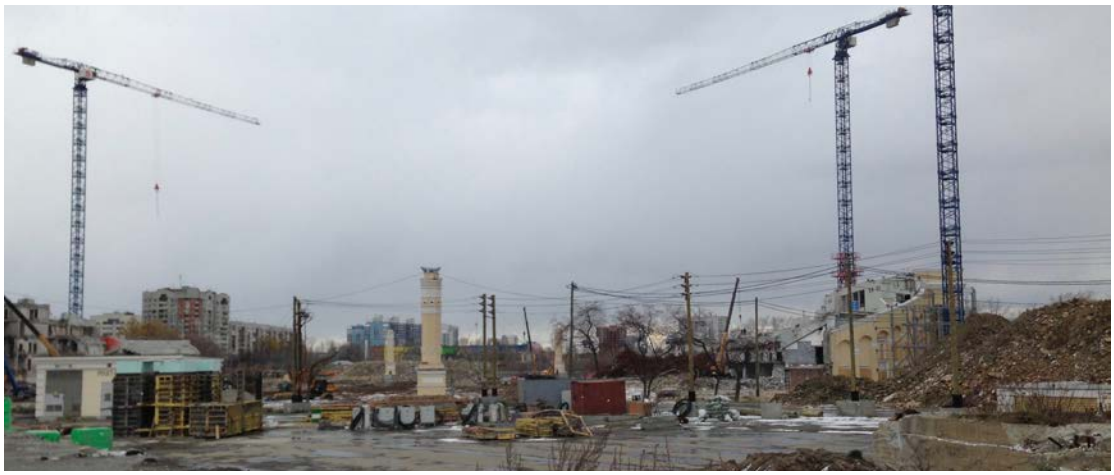

Figure 34: Remnants of the newly reconstructed and then demolished Central Stadium in 2015. Only the protected façade remained, along with a pair of columns. Everything else would be rebuilt from scratch, even though the previous reconstruction had just been completed in 2011. Source: author.

This second reconstruction project ballooned from a two billion-ruble project to a reported final cost of 13.1 billion rubles (USD $219.7 million), and the new stadium was only opened in early 2018 (Batalova 2018; Panin 2015; Stanina 2015). Aside from the short respite between reconstructions, Central Stadium had been largely unavailable from

2006 until 2018, to say nothing of the absurdity of demolishing a newly rebuilt stadium. Many residents expressed shock and indignation at the scale of waste, poor planning, and alleged corruption that resulted in this series of demolitions and reconstructions (Nakanune TV 2013). In this light, the football fan's feelings make sense – if not coming across as surprisingly restrained. When talking with me, he blamed greed for the lengthy and costly developments that prevented him from watching football in FC Ural's home stadium, and he was indignant that he and other fans had been forced to commute further away to a different stadium to watch their team. He knew about the World Cup development agenda but, from his position and an informed football fan, he did not support it.

I noted similar expressions of informed indignation regarding other World Cup-led infrastructure projects, for example this woman who complained about Ekaterinburg's airport renovations:

> "I read that they are building a new VIP hall at the airport… They just renovated it [the airport]! They say it's needed for the World Cup. Well, money will always be found for some nonsense or other, but not for the second metro line." (X42)

Here, this commentator's indignation centered on the multiple VIP reconstructions for Ekaterinburg's Koltsovo airport, balanced against the city's need for an expanded metro system. Ekaterinburg's metro had only a single line since opening in 1991, although the map in every train and station optimistically displayed three lines, with the two non-existent tracks marked "prospective." Nevertheless, the system regularly serviced almost 10% of Ekaterinburg's population every day (NSK Metro 2015), and over the decades, city administrators periodically promised an expansion to satisfy resident demands. Within the development program of the World Cup, organizers initially planned for the second metro line to be opened with one or two stations near Central Stadium, giving visitors increased options to see the games and at the same time kick starting the long awaited expansion. Due to a lack of crucial federal funding, however, the metro expansion could not come to pass – despite the fact that it would have serviced the World Cup stadium and benefitted the city in the long term (E1.ru 2013). Thus, regardless of the narratives of long-term benefit for residents, the metro expansion remained unfunded while the city's airport benefited from numerous VIP upgrades, leading to resident indignation.

This situation resonates with the notions of the landscapes of priority (Gentile and Sjöberg 2006), whereby certain territories or economic sectors benefit from extensive state attention and funding, while others deteriorate from neglect. That the metro languished while the airport received funding reveals the priorities of organizers, regardless of the narratives of benefits communicated through the ideological pipeline. Resident disappointment and indignation were strong, and local news even published a satirical article celebrating the opening of four metro stations on the new line, before admitting that this was the article that they should have been able to write if authorities had done their jobs properly (Panin 2018b). Despite this, authorities still continued to promote the idea of tying urban development to hosting mega-events. Restating the role of the federal government in these affairs, President Putin himself promised that Ekaterinburg would receive federal funding for the new metro line if the city were chosen to host the 2025 Expo (Geyn 2018). For comparison, during the World Cup preparation period, Moscow opened almost ten new metro stations. So, while the capital was expanding its metro rapidly and consistently, the Sverdlovsk regional governor tried to get away with calling a new express tram "the new metro" because it was higher speed than regular trams, and promised that the second line would be opened "in our lifetimes," (Panin 2018a). Glimpsing the stark unevenness of these developments marked a moment of alienation for residents, and it underscored the distance between them and any kind of agency in determining the direction of World Cup developments. Their indignant responses were tactics that represented the level of their detachment from the World Cup, and at the same time, their degree of alienation. In contrast to those who framed developments as one of the versions of *normalno*, these residents worked towards disalienation through indignation.

I witnessed the tactic of indignation in Volgograd residents as well, in relation to a World Cup development project near their new stadium. To the west of Volgograd Arena, across from Lenin Prospekt (also known as the first parallel or *prodolnaya*), there was a patch of trees and unmown grass. Standing between the new stadium and *Rodina Mat' Zovyot*, this was a memorial known as Widows Park, or Stalingrad Widows' Park, originally planted in 1965 on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the victory. Legend had it that Lyubov Plastikova, a worker at the Volgograd Tractor Factory, planted the first tree in honor of her fallen husband. Following her inspiration, thousands of residents who had lost loved ones in the war planted trees there. Whether or not this

origin story was apocryphal, the grove certainly played a role in local and national memory, immortalized by the writer Inna Goff and composer Jan Frenkel in a Soviet song:

> *"In a park by Mamaev Kurgan, a widow planted an apple tree*
> *She hung a little plaque, and on the plaque she wrote these words:*
> *'My husband was a lieutenant at the front, he was killed in forty-two,*
> *Where his grave is I know not, so here will I come to weep.'*
> *A girl planted a birch tree, 'I did not know my father,*
> *I only know he was a sailor, and he fought bravely till the end.'*
> *A woman planted an ash tree: 'He died in hospital from wounds,*
> *But my love have I not forgotten, so I go to visit the Kurgan.'*
> *The years might erase these writings, none might be able to read,*
> *The trees will stretch towards the sun, in spring the birds will fly,*
> *And the trees will stand like soldiers, in blizzard and in blazing heat,*
> *And the trees will revive the memory of the fallen as they come alive each spring."*
> (Goff and Frenkel 1968)

A key element in the emotional power of this song is that survivors were honoring their dead independent of any official direction or permission. In the song, planting the trees and hanging the memorial plaques were not organized or state-sponsored ventures, but rather accomplished solely through the individual need to mourn and to remember. This need brought mourners together so that their individual suffering became acknowledged as a shared experience, contained within the grove of trees they planted in remembrance. The closing lyrics communicate that this communal remembrance would continue even after the individual memories fade, through the trees that would outlive them. Again, this was not presented as a sanctioned endeavor; it was initiated at the individual level and focused on loss, grieving, and remembrance. Because it was independently organized, the action was remarkably free from the politics of patriotism or militarism. Instead, it was quiet, mournful, and unofficial – almost the opposite of the triumphalist military parades that can be seen in recent Victory Day celebrations.

In the intervening decades, various state initiatives resulted in the construction of official remembrance sites, including the Panorama Museum to the Second World War and the *Rodina Mat' Zovyot* statue and memorial complex on Mamaev Kurgan. Meanwhile, the grove of Widow's Park suffered from poor upkeep and outright neglect – one of the drawbacks of not having official recognition. By the time I began visiting Volgograd, Widow's Park looked so much like another one of Volgograd's countless patches of overgrown and untended land that I never paid attention to it, despite my visits to the

stadium site across the street. Nobody took me for a walk there or recommended I visit; it did not seem to be on the radar to recommend to tourists. Nevertheless, it drew immediate local and then national attention when, in the course of preparing for the World Cup, the trees of Widow's Park were cut down and the land was bulldozed, apparently on order from the regional governor (Cherepanova 2017).

The controversy and indignation began almost immediately. The morning when they were cut, a passing resident snapped pictures of the piles of dead trees and shared them on social media, creating enough of a stir that local media covered the story (see Figure 35). Because of the enduring potency of the Battle of Stalingrad, national media picked up the controversy as well (Abramov 2017; Bloknot 2017; Borisov 2017).

Figure 35: Felled trees in Volgograd's so-called Widows' Park, with Rodina Mat' Zovyot and the World Cup stadium in the background. Sources: v1.ru, Natalia Latishevskaya.

Residents reacted with indignation, accusing local and regional governments of disrespecting the memory of the war. On social media they discussed how politicians had sold decency and honor for short-term profit. As the story gained traction, local authorities explained that the land would be transformed into three things: a broadcast center for the event, an overflow parking lot for the stadium, and a new memorial park with winding paths and freshly planted lawns. Resident indignation was effusive:

> "This is the worst kind of barbarism. As though there aren't any other places in the city for a parking lot… We can't sink any lower." (X266)

> "There can be no forgiveness for those who destroyed these trees… Volgograd bureaucrats will say that everything is excellent and that this reconstruction only helps the park." (L109)

These two quotations exemplify a set of reactions that were centered on indignation and distrust. The people quoted here had no faith in municipal or regional government and saw the destruction of the park as the latest example of official misdeeds. In particular, the second quotation was notable for the way that the speaker predicted the triumphalist government spin to come, demonstrating his weary familiarity with politics in the city. Other residents were similarly indignant towards politicians, but took their scope to a more national level:

> "This is symbolic destruction… They don't give a damn about our history… Putin flies in before an election, takes a picture in front of Mamaev Kurgan, and then flies away… We are a patriotic background, nothing more!" (P87)

This man expressed his awareness of the power of Volgograd for the national memory, and resented politicians at every level for taking advantage of the city's wartime suffering for their own ends. His complaint was a familiar one in the city: if Volgograd is as special as bureaucrats claim, then why is life here so bad?

The controversy around Widows' Park took a turn for the surreal when Volgograd authorities, now under national pressure, responded not by apologizing for the park's destruction but, instead, by claiming that Widows' Park did not actually exist. The regional administration released a statement that was carried nationwide:

> "The territory everyone is talking about is an empty space with dead trees by a tram stop. It is not part of the memorial park and there were no memorials there. In spring we began work on developing the territory. There will be a new park there instead of dead and dried out trees." (Lenta.ru 2017)

In this, the official response fulfilled the earlier speaker's prediction that government would spin the destruction into an event that benefited the park. Despite his cynical familiarity with political maneuvering, I doubt that even he expected that authorities would deny the park even existed. Yet this was indeed the central thrust of the government line, and in the following weeks versions of this argument were repeated by various officials and communicated down the ideological pipeline. The director of the Battle of Stalingrad museum commented on the controversy:

> "There were plants there but everything was ugly. Trees don't live so long – half of them were dead and the other half dried up. Moreover, no one could walk there… [Widow's Park] is a myth. There is no documentary record of the existence of such park, not even in the archives." (RIA Novosti 2017b)

The choice of speaker here was significant, as the director of one of the city's most famous war museums gave this statement added weight. Moreover, his appeal to the documentary record was a strategy to assert official authority, as not many residents would have access to the archives to verify. These, and many similar messages communicated through the ideological pipeline, were crafted to mollify the nation by assuring them that authorities understood the circumstances better than Volgograd residents. For many within Volgograd, however, these statements contradicted popular memory and a number of historical mentions, including Goff's song. In this way, official claims to authority were predicated on the idea that local memories were faulty and not to be trusted – hardly an effective strategy to calm an indignant populace.

In response to the official arguments, proponents of the parks also engaged high profile individuals to bolster their case. For instance, a representative of the All-Russian Society for the Protection of Historical and Cultural Memorials claimed that the trees had been destroyed without consulting the proper authorities, while the deputy director of the Heroes of the Battle of Stalingrad on Mamaev Kurgan memorial ensemble insisted that "there absolutely was a park," (Cherepanova 2017). She explained that her group had even made a tally of all the trees and bushes, though she noted that it was never called Widows' Park, but rather Memorial Park, and suggested that this might be the source of the confusion. Among the people I spoke with, only one person stated that the land had been unused; everyone else, even if they had never seen the park themselves, were indignant that authorities had destroyed a wartime memorial:

> "I took photos of the trees they cut. They were young and healthy." (X147)

> "It seems that some terrible people decided to commit ugliness, like with everything in our city… We could probably appeal to Putin, but what good would that do?" (L101)

These statements are notable because they demonstrate tactics of resident resistance to the official narratives. In the first quotation, the woman insisted on her version of reality and took pictures for proof, countering government discourse with tangible photographs. In this way she refuted the argument that the trees were old and dead, and

her indignation at the official hypocrisy placed her as more detached and less alienated. In the second quotation, the man tried to make sense of the developments and put them in context with other poorly executed projects in the city. In a familiar historical argument, he floated the idea of appealing to the president, but dismissed the idea as being impractical. In this, he was espousing the resigned flavor of *normalno*, admitting that this situation was simply the way things were in Volgograd.

This man was not far off in his thinking, however: the local controversy grew to such proportions that it did reach Moscow. With respect for the memory of the war at stake, President Putin and the General Prosecutor promised to investigate the affair (AIF 2017c). This moment signaled the immediate end of the controversy, as expressed by this resident in regards to Moscow's involvement:

> "That's it. The local bureaucrats screwed up and now the Muscovites will come and straighten things out… Everything will be *normalno.* There won't be any problems because the World Cup is coming." (P74)

This speaker understood that reaching Moscow meant that the issue was tabled. The speaker invoked the rationalized version of *normalno* to explain that Moscow represented order and proper functioning, and that officials from the capital would soon sort out the incompetent or malevolent bureaucrats in the periphery. Moreover, the pressure from the World Cup and all visiting foreigners meant to him that local problems were more likely to be fixed, and quickly. In the end, no legal consequences came of the investigation, and Widows' Park became only one of several city parks and monuments bulldozed and developed during the preparatory period (IARegnum 2017b). The broadcast center and parking lot were built, and the new memorial park was opened to the public in time for the World Cup, as shown in Figure 36. Ultimately, Moscow's involvement represented a restatement of the pattern in which customized and area-specific developments were brought under control of the standardizing force of the central state, as the capital came to bring order again to the peripheries.

Figure 36: Aerial view of Volgograd, showing [1] the new World Cup stadium, [2] the old Spartak swimming pool, [3] Lenin Prospekt, [4] the new parking lots and broadcast center, [5] new memorial arches, and [6] new memorial park. Areas [4][5] and [6] comprised Widows' Park. Source: Alexander Blinkov.

Tactics: Humor and Leaving

Aside from those who repeated the official narratives as communicated through the ideological pipeline, so far I have elaborated three tactics of individualized resistance to the World Cup development program: rationalized *normalno*, resigned *normalno*, and indignation. These tactics represented three means to mark a person's alienation within World Cup developments, counterbalanced against their detachment from those same developments. There are now two final tactics to discuss, both located further along the spectrum of more detached and less alienated.

The first of these centers around humor, though not framed as a tactic of non-violent political resistance to oppression (Sørensen 2008, 2016). Nor am I examining the use of political humor – primarily through online activity – to register dissent or effect change in authoritarian spaces (Dağtaş 2018; Pearce and Hajizada 2014). Instead, what I saw in Volgograd and Ekaterinburg was more akin to a cathartic humor – not exactly black but often on the darker side – intended to relieve pressure and assert a freedom of the mind in painful or even traumatic conditions (Morreall 1983; Rowe and Regehr 2010; Tapley 2006).

In Ekaterinburg, one resident joked with me about the difficulties in completing the metro expansion: "We used to have five year plans, but now we have thirty year plans. Tell me that's not progress!" (L172). Referencing the continual progress heralded under Soviet-era centralized economic planning, this quip framed current political developments within the history of bureaucratic inefficiencies in the USSR. I heard

similar jokes about the dubiousness of progress when heavy rains battered Volgograd on July 15, 2018. By this time, Volgograd had already hosted its four World Cup matches and there were few if any football tourists remaining in the city, as the tournament continued in other locales. As France and Croatia were squaring up in Moscow for the final game of the tournament, rains flooded many areas of Volgograd, even washing out the foundation underneath the newly built World Cup stadium and causing a mudslide that covered the new *prodolnaya* on the banks of the Volga (Gazeta.ru 2018; Lenta.ru 2018; V1.ru 2018). Over video chat, a man in Volgograd explained the situation in terms of Russia's wealth: "Look how rich we are. We're building disposable stadiums now!" (H40). Instead of expressing indignation that the city's new world-class stadium had not even made it out of the tournament unscathed, this resident ironically reframed the situation as another sign of Russia's wealth and international prestige. With this joke, he appropriated and repurposed the official World Cup narratives distributed through the ideological pipeline. This catastrophe was caused by a combination of poor construction and bad luck; in response, this man's humor represented a significant detachment from these grim events, and exerting his autonomy over the predominant narratives marked a move towards disalienation.

Beyond humor, I noted a final tactic expressed by residents: that of leaving. This tactic was reminiscent of Hirschman's (1970) conceptualization of three responses to dissatisfaction within the context of an untenable situation, that of *exit* (removing oneself from the situation entirely), *voice* (attempting to enact change from within), and *loyalty* (a balancing factor that delays exit in order to bolster voice. In the tactic of leaving, residents did not necessarily remove themselves from the World Cup host cities (a drastic step that was rare among my participants, although it did occur). Rather, leaving played a discursive role mostly disconnected from the physical act of moving to a different city or country. The idea of leaving either the city or Russia entirely came up quite often in discussion with residents, but one of the most notable incidences was in conversation with a group of World Cup volunteers in Volgograd. In a wide-ranging conversation, we discussed not only leaving, but every other tactic mentioned here as well. Moreover, this debate also touched on most of the themes salient for this thesis.

Every World Cup relies on volunteer efforts, ranging from participation in the LOC during the planning phases to welcoming and helping visitors once the games begin.

"There isn't a single area of the organization of the World Cup where volunteers are not engaged," explained an organizing committee member in an interview. "They are the face of the tournament, of course, but they also work with us for many years before that" (P31). The 2018 World Cup broke FIFA records for volunteer engagement, with over 220,000 applications received and, ultimately, 35,000 volunteers working the games (Russia 2018 World Cup Organizing Committee 2018b). They were a presence in every World Cup-related activity nationwide, but as volunteers and not actual members of the organizing committees, they represented something of a blend between organizers and residents.

Speaking with student volunteers in Volgograd, I identified two distinct postures in relation to the World Cup-led national development projects, or more specifically, to the landscapes of priority. The first group of volunteers was largely supportive of developments, indicating an acceptance of the predominant narratives of long-term benefit for the host cities as communicated through the ideological pipeline:

> "They're renovating a lot of façades, especially in the center. And we also have a lot of work going on in parks… Things are improving, for example in the Kirovksy district, and in Krasnoarmeysky also… Mostly they're repairing old parks rather than building new ones, but the work has needed to be done for a long time." (S28)

This volunteer highlighted that long-needed maintenance and modernization work was occurring around the city under the World Cup city beautification program. Notably, the districts she mentioned were not in the center, where most tourists would be, but actually in residential districts where the improvements would benefit residents. Another volunteer spoke about a different set of improvements:

> "There are a lot of entertainment centers opening. These are mostly in the center, or maybe 10 minutes from the center… They're also opening shopping centers, lots of them, all over the place… These will stay after the event… We go there a lot. It's not just shopping, you see, but also fun things to do. I like to go bowling, for instance, and on Saturday there will be a board games night." (P75)

Beyond park renovations, then, the landscapes of priority also involved attention paid to shopping and entertainment centers. These were concentrated more in the central areas, underscoring the predilection for planning authorities – at all levels of government – to favor the center at the expense of the peripheries. This speaks to the spatial selectivity inherent in entrepreneurial urbanism (Ward 2003a, 2003b), where the retreat of the

national state is accompanied by urban redevelopment through consumption and the expectation of private profit. Displayed here were moments in which both officials and residents were speaking about their city entrepreneurially. Moreover, what stands out here is the volunteer's understanding of the temporary nature of the World Cup. He emphasized that these new shopping and entertainment centers would remain in the city for the long term, even as the World Cup would come and go. This underscores his adherence to the predominant narratives communicated through the ideological pipeline, which framed the developments in terms of long-term benefit for residents.

The other argument I found in conversation with the volunteers, however, was focused on the flipside of the prioritized areas. In contrast to their more optimistic colleagues, these volunteers were more reserved about the changes occurring in Volgograd. They expressed these concerns using a variety of the tactics of detachment, as demonstrated by one volunteer complaining about the changing transit situation:

> "One thing is that they're changing out the *marshrutki* for buses… Unfortunately, this change is not entirely for the better… They decided that instead of several routes, they'll cut many of them. The idea is to consolidate routes… But the result is that for the majority of the population, their rides got longer and they have to transfer… For example, I live in Krasnoarmeysky and in order to get to the center, I need to transfer two times. Before, I didn't have to. Before, I would just get on and ride, no problem, for an hour. Now, I have to waste time on transferring and waiting." (O56)

The *marshrutki* mentioned here refer to minibus taxis that were, until recently, ubiquitous in post-socialist cities. There has been a wholesale push to replace these with other forms of transport (see Sgibnev and Vozyanov 2016 and, more broadly, the international *marshrutka* project). Within the host cities, parts of this process have been wrapped up in the preparations for the World Cup – another articulation of the landscapes of priority involved in this state-led entrepreneurial project.

As this volunteer explained, however, the transport changes resulted in increased inconveniences for her, and she was not the only one. Numerous people I spoke with in Volgograd – not just the World Cup volunteers but also residents from a variety of backgrounds – complained about the changes to public transit. Within the volunteer group, a debate emerged about the value of these changes:

> "You see, it's not very efficient, what the system was before. We had double, triple overlaps on each line. That can't be."
> "Yes, but to be honest, for me personally the new system isn't very comfortable. Because, for example, *marshrutka* number 10 used to come very often to my house. And now it's been replaced by bus 85, and this is extremely inconvenient because that bus runs very rarely."
> "This is unfortunate, yes, but every city has its own peculiarities."
> "Of course, but before I could go to the top of Lisaya Gora [the hill where Volgograd State University is located], but now I have to walk up myself. Ok, that's not a big deal, but still, honestly, when it's -20 or +30 it's not terribly pleasant."
> "But this is just you and your situation, I'm sorry. On the whole the changes are better for everyone."
> "But there are many similar problems! Like the buses should be able to hold 100 people, but this is uncomfortable, especially because it's terribly hot right now. They say there's air conditioning in the buses, but this isn't always true, and it doesn't always help." (W144)

This debate illustrates different degrees of resident alienation centered on two different tactics. The first volunteer argued for system efficiency when he explained the problems of the former system, where numerous overlapping transit routes jockeyed for position on Volgograd's crowded streets. In his interpretation, the transport changes simplified and unified the transit landscape, and any resultant inconveniences were legitimized for him by the benefits to the system as a whole. In embracing the narratives of overall benefit, he located himself as less detached from the World Cup development projects, and argued for the state of alienation wherein an inconvenience to one is justified by a supposed advantage to all.

For the other volunteer, however, these changes were the source of significant problems. Instead of being able to ride directly to university, she now had to climb the hill to campus, and she complained that this was not always easy in inclement weather (to say nothing of the difficulties for persons with limited mobility). Moreover, consolidating all passengers on larger vehicles created, for her, a less comfortable travelling environment, as many dozens of people were packed together in non air-conditioned buses. These changes might seem small from the outside, but taken at the individual level they were a significant inconvenience. Further, multiplying these individual inconveniences by the number of lives affected throughout the city reveals the scope to which these prioritized improvements engendered widespread inequalities. Further, in expressing her indignant detachment from the predominant narratives, she established herself in a process of

attempted disalienation whereby, through stating that the progress touted by authorities was not as beneficial as promised, she asserted her right to agency in her city.

Beyond transit, the World Cup volunteers also discussed problems with employment and the overall prospects for building a life in the city. As before, the group divided roughly around two arguments: one emphasizing the benefits accruing in the landscapes of priority, while the other highlighted the problems in what could be called areas of neglect. The most visible of these areas for the volunteers was the loss of the city's industrial backbone:

> "It's really a shame that everything in our city is falling apart… *KhimProm, Traktorny, LikyoroVodochny* – these are all closed down, and no new manufacturing is opening up… But, you know, there's a shopping center on every corner, and you can buy beer wherever you want. This is, you know, *normalno*." (D51)

As this volunteer said, the city's chemical plant, tractor factory, and local distillery – all with storied histories – had indeed been closed. She did not expressly connect this with the World Cup, however. Instead, she understood these as two distinct situations in Volgograd: the World Cup was coming and, separately, the city had problems with its manufacturing base. Notably, she framed the declining fortunes of the city as normal, expressing her resignation toward the current state of affairs. Other volunteers, however, understood the World Cup as the answer to these problems, deliberately linking the hosting of the mega-event to improving the city's prospects:

> "I think it is all connected, really. The championship is important and will bring tourists here… and then in order to develop the tourist part, they also will need to develop the industrial part… We are, let's say, still an industrial city – in our mentality, let's put it like that… Business in our country isn't very well developed, so everything needs support… The World Cup will support business!" (T91)

The argument here is the familiar trope that hosting a mega-event can revitalize a city, following in the footsteps of Barcelona and transforming an industrial base into a tourist capital. Several volunteers echoed this idea, even referencing how the 2014 Winter Olympics transformed Russia's Black Sea resort: "Maybe what happened in Sochi can happen here, and everything will be *normalno,*" (N09). In Volgograd, these volunteers had pinned their hopes on the World Cup to stop their city's decline and bring new energy, purpose, and possibility. In other words, even as this group agreed with their more detached colleagues about the grimness of the current situation, they believed in the transformative power of the World Cup-driven landscapes of priority – possibly even

making the city as modern and wealthy as Sochi. This was the rationalized usage of *normalno*, with the speaker thoroughly embracing the narratives from the ideological pipeline. Those who worried about the areas of neglect, however, were unswayed by these narratives and asserted their detachment accordingly:

> "But Sochi is a resort city, and what they built there is functioning because it's a resort. People already come there to relax… It's completely different from Volgograd! Our city isn't exactly built for relaxation… What are they going to do, tour the ruins of *Traktorny*? …So there is a big problem with what we're going to do after the championship." (B108)

This perspective underscored the difficulties in shifting from an industrial to a tourist base, as Volgograd – despite its riverfront and swimming opportunities – had nothing approaching Sochi's ability to attract visitors. The humorous tactic here centered on showing tourists around the ruins of a closed factory, indicating the speaker's low appraisal of the city's tourist potential. Instead, Volgograd's tourist profile seemed to center only on its military history, as this volunteer understood:

> "This is a big problem. We need somehow to attract tourists. But what do we have to attract them aside from historical monuments, the panorama museum, Mamaev Kurgan… Really, we don't have anything other than that." (F69)

With a declining industrial sector and little to draw tourists outside of the war memorials, these volunteers worried that Volgograd could not offer sufficient services to sustain enough tourism to replace their flagging industries. This view represents a significant detachment from the predominant narratives accompanying the World Cup, where the mega-event was seen as a means to transform the cities into hotspots of tourist consumption.

More than the loss of industrial heritage, though, this situation presented young people with an existential problem regarding opportunities for their future. All volunteers agreed that the economic situation in Volgograd was less than ideal and currently offered little in terms of job prospects. Where they differed most significantly was in their understanding of the landscapes of priority: one group supported the World Cup-led attention to these areas and believed this would be the spark to change their fortunes, while the other group – despite their enthusiasm for the World Cup itself – were markedly more reserved about the potential changes to the city. This group repeatedly drew attention to the areas in Volgograd that suffered from neglect. In other words, they located

themselves in different places along the spectrum of tactics, being more or less detached from World Cup developments and therefore less or more alienated.

It was this second, more detached group of volunteers that began discussing concrete problems with construction projects in Russia. Framing their arguments in the tactic of indignation, they moved the discussion beyond the World Cup and onto broader issues in the country:

> "What we suffer from is a lack of quality in what we make. For instance, we make roads, but even though we use the same technology as abroad, the roads don't last as long. Since the quality is lower, we have to pay and pay in order to maintain things." (A22)

This low appraisal of the quality of the country's infrastructure was met with universal agreement, even among those who believed in the transformative power of the landscapes of priority. The difference between these groups was best explained through the tactics of detachment: those belonging more to the rationalized *normalno* group understood the low quality of work as a fact of life that was in the process of changing through the World Cup, while those expressing indignation felt there was no excuse for current conditions. One volunteer had a clear idea of where to lay the blame: "It's no secret that Russia suffers from corruption. It's a major problem," (Q37). This shifted the discussion into a more controversial space, leading to this judgment from a volunteer in the indignant group:

> "All of this holds us back. So, for instance, if you want to stay in the region, in Volgogradskaya Oblast, but you want to open your own business, you run into a lot of obstacles that you have to overcome. And this is the same thing with the World Cup… But if we have the strength to agitate for our interests, then something good could happen… We hope it will be better. We need to create some sort of system of responsibility in the government." (D76)

Here, the volunteer connected the overall problems under discussion – the Russian periphery's generally poor level of infrastructural development, the low economic prospects, the endemic problems of corruption, and the inability of government at all levels to improve these situations – with the World Cup. Thus, she saw the World Cup development program itself threatened by the same processes of corruption and stagnation that have stymied other efforts to modernize or develop the country. In other words, this volunteer was questioning one of the fundamental narratives behind hosting the World Cup – that of the mega-event's lasting value and benefit. Moreover, she placed

the blame for this threat on corrupt government officials and businesses. This represented the starkest yet statement of detachment from the World Cup.

When I asked if they felt these issues of corruption in their everyday lives, or if this was only connected to large development projects, the volunteers answered unanimously that these issues were omnipresent. Even those who put their hopes in the World Cup's landscapes of priority did not deny that these were problems that threatened their country in both the short and the long term. From here, the discussion moved immediately onto the most controversial topic: leaving.

Volgograd and Ekaterinburg are regional capitals, and many people I spoke to in both cities had moved there from smaller cities or towns in the oblast, due to increased economic opportunities and higher quality of life in the big city. In this, they already had experience in leaving and starting afresh. The desire or need for moving did not dissipate for everyone once in these regional capitals, however, and the possibility of starting again in St. Petersburg, Moscow, or abroad was a regular topic of conversation. In general, Russia has been undergoing a wave of outward migration: recent independent research claimed that the State Statistics Service figures for migration were too low, and instead showed that 1.7 million people have left Russia in President Putin's third term (Savina 2019). Volgograd residents in particular seemed keen to communicate their feelings about better prospects in other cities. They commonly related that Volgograd was dirty, brutal, and had little to offer. One resident explained this by calling the city *Kozlograd*, from the Russian word *Kozyol*, or goat:

> "Nothing but mean people here. It's a dead city. No, literally! It is a city built on bones! … And nothing is happening. I can't wait to get out of here." (Q261)

This pessimistic view on the city took a different approach to Volgograd's military history. Instead of the glories of the war, this resident emphasized the human cost of the victory. Further, she drew a direct line between the losses of the war and the grimness of contemporary life, seeing Volgograd as a dead place with no opportunities for entertainment, good jobs, or relationships. For her, the World Cup would not change the situation, and there would be no opportunities for betterment. Instead, she saw her best option as leaving. The idea of Volgograd as something of a swamp from which people tried to escape was common: "This place is a hole. Anyone who can leave, does," (J27).

For this speaker, leaving was something that everybody wished for but only the successful could attain.

Back with the World Cup volunteers, the idea of leaving the city once again divided the students into two groups. The first group's opinions were exemplified by this statement: "Speaking honestly, it's pointless to stay when there are more opportunities in other cities… You are wasting your energy here," (K119). This student was convinced of the hopelessness in Volgograd and made it clear that he was leaving for St. Petersburg as soon as possible. This refutes every narrative communicated through the ideological pipeline. It reveals this student's absolute detachment from developments and represents a solid attempt at disalienation, as he – despite his position as a volunteer – refused to see the World Cup as anything but a boost for his résumé, a springboard to help launch him into better circumstances in a different city.

In response, another volunteer argued for the necessity of staying in Volgograd despite the less than ideal conditions: "If you leave, then there will be no one to improve things… If everyone leaves then nothing will remain at all," (Q82). This was a persuasive argument for many students, particularly those who expressed less detachment from the ideological pipeline and subsequently believed that the World Cup presented a legitimate opportunity for systemic improvement. One student phrased her hopes for the World Cup in this way: "I want the world to see that Volgograd is a beautiful place," (B61). This represented the most idealized form of the narratives, the idea that the World Cup would bring the world to Volgograd and Volgograd to the world. It is notable that not everyone in the room shared these hopes, given that these were young university students and could easily be seen as true believers in the promise of World Cup. Yet many of them still expressed doubts about the narratives communicated through the ideological pipeline, and about the potential for the World Cup to bring substantial change to their city. The most extreme of these doubts manifested as the tactic of leaving, representing the ultimate detachment from a situation and the most solid assertion of disalienation.

Arrayed on a spectrum of more or less detached from developments, resident opinions revealed a variety of tactics at various degrees of alienation and disalienation, as shown in Figure 37. These tactics addressed fundamental questions surrounding the World Cup. The first of these was the idea of neoliberal restructuring: could the World Cup

reposition the host city on the global map? There were also questions of state-led urban development: would attention to the landscapes of priority improve the city's fortunes? And there were issues surrounding the domestically targeted soft power narratives, as examined through an attention to the individual: how well did the ideological pipeline function? Moreover, residents revealed that just as their tactics were not always as discrete as I have presented them here, but often were fluid and multiple, so too did World Cup developments defy easy categorization.

Figure 37: Tactics of individual resistance to World Cup narratives and developments, arranged on a spectrum of more or less detachment and more or less alienation.

Beyond their value as a means to reveal further dimensions within the theoretical and empirical engagements presented in this thesis, these tactics exemplified a space of autonomy and independence for host city residents. While it did not grant them any agency over World Cup developments in the city, nor did it offer a viable political alternative to Russia's increasing authoritarianism, these tactics – like humor in a grave situation – nevertheless represented a viable strategy for making do. Through the tactics of *normalno*, indignation, humor, or leaving, host city residents created a form of resistance that was not organized, though it was widespread. These tactics generally were solitary responses of quiet subversion, performed by atomized individuals throughout the host cities. They were tactics enacted anarchically by people who were making sense of the distance between World Cup rhetoric and the developments (or lack thereof) in their own lives. They did not change the trajectories of World Cup preparations, but still I contend that this was a victory, however fleeting. It was, to put it in Lefebvrian terms, a means to return the self that was torn away, to return from being transformed into a thing, and – in a small but significant way – to regain one's freedom.

9: CONCLUDING THE WORLD CUP

The trouble with every party is that, once the guests have gone, the hosts have to deal with the mess the morning after. This is all the more salient for mega-events where, after the games end and the tourists go home, host cities are often afflicted by something like a post-event hangover. In recent years, scholars and organizers alike have begun paying attention to this so-called legacy period (Grix 2014; Horne 2017; Mangan and Dyreson 2013; Tomlinson 2014b), for instance examining in retrospect the attempt to link hosting to urban regeneration (Brittain et al. 2018; Evans 2016; Wagg 2016). As of this writing it is too early to say what the long-term effects of the 2018 World Cup will be, but nonetheless, as I have detailed in this thesis, many aspects of its organization and articulation have already revealed developments that advance the scholarship on mega-events in at least two domains: neoliberal restructuring and soft power.

First, many scholars tends to present mega-events as the leading edge of global processes of neoliberalization (C. M. Hall 2006; Lauermann and Davidson 2013; M. Silk 2014; Vanwynsberghe, Surborg, and Wyly 2013). In the shift to more entrepreneurial modes of urban governance, mega-event cities experiment with attempts to attract new flows of capital, tourism, and consumption, all in the context of increased global competitiveness (Andranovich 2017; Gold and Gold 2008; Hiller 2000b; Raco 2014; Surborg, VanWynsberghe, and Wyly 2008). And throughout, the urban takes precedence over the national, as part of the processes of state rescaling (Brenner 2004) inherent in the increasing commodification and market-oriented transformation of cities (Brenner, Marcuse, and Mayer 2011).

And yet, processes of mega-event-led neoliberalization and state rescaling look different in Russia. The nature of the Russian World Cup as a state project troubles the traditional understanding of mega-events, particularly when unpacking how it was actually governed and deployed. Given its impetus from the central state, this mega-event – instead of being what Zirin (2014) calls a neoliberal Trojan horse – shares much in common with other top-down state-led projects (Bunnell 2002; Koch 2014; Müller 2011; Saito 2003). But the idea of the Russian World Cup as a purely state-led project is not entirely satisfactory either. Instead, this was something in between: a state-led entrepreneurial project where actors from the federal government in Moscow employed neoliberal

narratives of urban development and competition in order to use the mega-event as a lever in a centralized state spatial project to modernize peripheral cities (Golubchikov 2017). Further complicating matters, these national state-led impulses collided with local impulses on the ground in the host cities, resulting in a mega-event that defied traditional understandings. As a state-sponsored neoliberal project, then, the Russian World Cup presents a different view on the idea of mega-event-led restructuring. Thus, the contradictions inherent in the articulation of the Russian World Cup help advance our understanding of mega-events as they are seen as part of the processes of neoliberalization.

The second domain in which my analysis of the Russian World Cup advances scholarship is that of mega-events and soft power. Many of these studies remain on the international or geopolitical level, framing the mega-event primarily in terms of foreign policy objectives (Chitty 2017; Grix and Lee 2013; Grix and Houlihan 2014), particularly when dealing with Russia or the other new generation of host cities (Chari 2014; Orttung and Zhemukhov 2017; Qing et al. 2010). Thus, the soft power potential in hosting mega-events is commonly seen as a means for states to reframe their image on the world stage (Black and Westhuizen 2004; Cornelissen 2010; Friedman, Andrews, and Silk 2004; Grix and Lee 2013). This narrow view elides the majority of the soft power equation, which is predicated on the relationship between agent and target (Nye 2011), and should comprise the creation, transmission, and reception of narratives. Further, in perpetuating the framing of soft power as only a tool of foreign policy, most mega-event studies neglect the domestic aspects of soft power projects, effectively telling only part of the story (Grix and Kramareva 2015).

To be sure, scholars have addressed nation building and domestic identity formation within the context of hosting mega-events (Alekseyeva 2014; Hyde-Clarke, Ottosen, and Miller 2014; Koch 2013a, 2017a), but it is not so common to frame these as soft power per se. By neglecting to analyze these domestically targeted efforts as soft power, these studies miss the opportunity to conceptualize all elements of the soft power equation, potentially leading to an incomplete appraisal of the motivations, messages, methods, and aftermath of hosting. Moreover, since many observers outside of the academy persist in viewing mega-events through the soft power/foreign policy lens (as seen, for example, in countless western media articles referring to "Putin's Games"), advocating for a domestic

application of soft power serves to bring nuance to what can otherwise be an overly simplistic narrative.

Going further, in order to account for a fuller understanding of the multiplicity of soft power projects, I argue for an attention to the micropolitics of the individual and the everyday. This is similar to Koch's (2018b) approach to the soft power project surrounding the Cycling World Championships in Qatar, where a focus on the micro reveals geopolitical dimensions that would otherwise be missed. In Russia, however, my attention to the micro level is not oriented around external or geopolitical considerations. Instead, the soft power component of this thesis is intended as an acknowledgement of the domestic focus of the World Cup project, and as an assessment of its ambitions, successes, and failures.

All of this requires two moves: the first is a categorization of the Russian mode of mega-event hosting, while the second suggests how the existing literature would need to be adjusted in order to account for these developments. To start, my comparison of developments on the ground in the host cities with the neoliberal narratives that launched and accompanied the Russian World Cup underscores the distance between rhetoric and outcomes. This speaks to the Potemkin nature of this mega-event, not just in terms of the visual difference between superficial surface and inadequate interior (Broudehoux 2017), but also related to both discursive and locational Potemkinism and, ultimately, moving beyond the binary approach of surface vs. substance. This move beyond the binary is predicated on the capacity of mega-events to transcend the limitations of dualistic thinking and, instead, encompass potential multiplicities. Though much of the mega-event can be explained by the dichotomy between surface and substance, other aspects defy this *either/or* categorization, moving instead to *and*. In this way, we can understand how the power of the spectacle, though artificial and superficial, can simultaneously be genuine, substantive, and generating real effects.

Next, exploring the unevenness of developments in the host cities recalls the spatial selectivity of the Soviet-era landscapes of priority (Gentile and Sjöberg 2006). The legacy of past planning practices remains salient today and informs the statist underpinnings of the Russian World Cup. This speaks to Sýkora and Bouzarovski's (2012) conceptualization of post-communist transformations and serves to remind that these

multiple transitions (institutional-social-urban) do not necessarily occur in linear fashion. Instead, just as the neoliberal restructuring lens reveals contradictions within the articulation of the Russian World Cup, so too do the landscapes of priority highlight the incomplete, uneven, and sometimes paradoxical processes of transition.

The seemingly paradoxical constitution of the 2018 World Cup illustrates the particular challenges facing contemporary Russia in a globalizing world economy: it can neither participate fully in the global economy, nor exist in isolation. The current system of Russian governance is not a dictatorship, but it is also far from a functioning democracy. In Chapter 4 I classified contemporary Russia as semi-authoritarian, before discussing the lived experiences of this partial authoritarianism on the ground and focusing on the challenges of conducting research in the spaces of political closure. Now, in order to understand this Russian mega-event, it is time to flesh out the relationships between the World Cup and this somewhat ambiguous definition of a system of governance. Scholars have established that contemporary Russian authority comprises a personalized power vertical centered around the president, that it is pervasively corrupt, and that it exists on fragile economic ground (Cheloukhine and King 2007; Gel'man 2015a; Shlapentokh 2013; Sidorkin and Vorobyev 2018). At the same time, this categorization elides the fact that, overall, Russia over the past two decades has experienced dramatic improvements in quality of life, access to education and technology, increased economic and social progress and participation in public life, and even selective advancements in the nation's law-enforcement and justice systems (Paneyakh and Rosenberg 2018; Rogov and Ananyev 2018; Sobolev and Zakharov 2018).

Yet these transformations in Russia do not present a story of a "modernizing" country, on a linear track from dictatorship towards liberal democracy. Attitudes in Russia are often mixed and sometimes outright contradictory, favoring both increased liberalization and global integration, while also demonstrating preferences for a strong leader and centralized control (Inglehart et al. 2014; Levada Center 2018a). Russia's leadership is beset by the problem facing every non-democratic regime – managing discontent among the general population – while the Russian president, typical for an authoritarian ruler, works to ensure the stability of his position by minimizing elite threats. These are understood as the problems of authoritarian control and authoritarian power sharing (Svolik 2012) and they are by no means unique to Russia. What is noteworthy in the

Russian case is the paradoxical relationship between the tendency toward openness and global integration and the tendency towards closure and national isolation. For me, the conflict between these tendencies defines contemporary Russia and goes a long way toward explaining the constraints and capabilities of Russian decision makers. More to the point, the tension here informs and explains many aspects of the Russian World Cup as well. And the World Cup, in turn, exemplifies and highlights these dynamics that are at play in Russia more broadly.

Treisman (2018a, 28) sees the current Russian administration as "forged by modernization, [but] whose top officials now seek to reverse the social consequences of development." Like Treisman and many others, I mark Vladimir Putin's third term as the point where Russia's leadership shifted decidedly towards a politics of authoritarian closure. This is not to say that certain closures were not enacted previously to the third term and to the Bolotnaya protests, but rather to note that the third term is when these closures became impossible to ignore and were felt more broadly across the country. The nationalistic fervor that accompanied the 2014 events in Crimea served to distract and unite the populace for a time, but these measures cannot be sustained indefinitely, despite the effective appeals to traditionalism and orthodoxy (Kolstø and Blakkisrud 2016; Mitrofanova 2016). In other words, nothing changes the fact that Russian people remain connected to the world outside their borders, both online and through travel (Federal State Statistics Service 2017, 236), and on the balance are more oriented towards a Western model of government rather than any other regime type (Levada Center 2016). Having asserted unmistakable authoritarian control during President Putin's third term, authorities in the Kremlin now "face the challenge of promoting premodern values in a world of postmodern technologies" (Treisman 2018a, 17).

This raises the question of how Russian authorities have attempted this feat. Gel'man (2015c) sees the regime maintaining power through a politics of repression and fear, best symbolized through the assassination of opposition politician Boris Nemtsov in 2015. Conversely, Guriev and Treisman (2015) maintain that mass repressions are unsustainable in contemporary authoritarianism, and instead argue that modern autocrats retain power through informational control, convincing the population that the leadership is, above all, competent and benevolent. I find it notable that mega-events and sport do not figure into either of these accounts, nor into the majority of work on

authoritarian Russia (though Koch 2017a is a welcome exception, both for Russia specifically and for authoritarian states in general).

Still, the lack of discussion overall regarding the linkages between mega-events and authoritarianism seems striking, particularly as hosting both the Olympics and the World Cup in Russia highlighted and exacerbated contemporary Russia's paradoxical tendencies between integration and isolation. The preparations for the World Cup exemplified the challenges faced by Russian authorities in negotiating the tension between openness and closure, illustrating the ways in which the semi-authoritarian system of governance contorted under pressure from increased interchange with the world beyond its borders and, ultimately, serving to maintain power for the ruling elites. And finally, continuing with my valorization of the micro scale and the quotidian, the World Cup provided a means to ground discussions of contemporary Russia into something more approachable than abstract discussions of regime type and political economy. In other words, mega-events provide multiple entry point into political, economic, and social life. More broadly, as they operate at multiple scales and localities, mega-events can allow for a more nuanced understanding of how power is maintained under contemporary authoritarianism. Thus, in order to make sense of the heterogeneous developments involved the preparations, I propose that the 2018 Men's Football World Cup in Russia be understood as an *authoritarian mega-event*.

This conceptualization is inherently relational, based on the premise that the specificities of a given host nation's political economic structure affects the articulation of the mega-event (as elaborated in Chapter 2, Figure 5). The authoritarian framing provides a new vocabulary for understanding why mega-events are hosted in certain states and how they are deployed. It also proposes an explanation for how lucrative construction contracts are distributed among elites (Wolfe and Müller 2018) and explains why, in the Russian case at least, criticism of the mega-event by Russians and foreigners alike was treated so harshly – practically as an attack on the state itself (Stewart 2017). In this light, it makes sense why defying the official narratives surrounding the World Cup meant crossing the fluid and contingent authoritarian Red Line, as discussed in Chapter 4. Finally, the notion of authoritarian mega-events is timely, offering the possibility of richer explanations of mega-events in other (semi-)authoritarian environments, from Qatar to China and

beyond, as well as delivering a novel interpretation on mega-events in countries where authoritarian tendencies may be on the rise.

For Russia, the key dynamic in the World Cup was the tension between openness and closure. Broadly speaking, the state benefits from a lack of transparency and oversight, but these are difficult conditions to maintain in the glare of international media and critical scholarship that accompanies mega-events. For this reason, Russian organizers expended considerable effort in constructing a carefully managed and presented image of the World Cup. This sanitized and curated presentation was created and distributed through the ideological pipeline, engaging in what Guriev and Treisman (2015) have called "informational autocracy." In this light, an authoritarian mega-event can be seen as a bid to shore up domestic perceptions of the leader or leadership as competent and benevolent. This was demonstrated in the preparations for Russia 2018, as hosting was universally presented as a boon to the host cities and a stimulus for long-term urban and economic development. At the same time, this strategy carries risks, as bringing in a mega-event exposes the interior of the nation in ways that clearly trouble national and regional leaders. For their part, administrators in FIFA have shown that their interests lie predominantly with keeping the event lucrative, and they are little concerned with the political intricacies of the host nation so long as the profits continue to flow. As discussed earlier, in some cases decision makers in FIFA may even prefer authoritarian states over more democratic alternatives, given the lack of public participation and the possibility of protest – all of which might be construed to threaten the bottom line.

On top of the relatively standard political economy approach to understanding mega-events, a specific methodological toolkit is needed in order to perceive these developments on the ground. As mentioned previously, this is an effort to valorize the quotidian and the micro scale, as well as to render visible the often abstract and theoretical analyses of neoliberal urbanism (Erdi and Şentürk 2017) and geopolitical developments (Rokem and Boano 2017). Thus, an inclusion of the micro serves to remind of the unique specificities of the Russian World Cup and, subsequently, every mega-event – on its own merits, contingent on its own trajectory. This is a move away from much of the literature which strives to theorize mega-events as a totality and, implicitly, to apply a singular, universalizing gaze toward any mega-event in any city and any country. In contrast, I contend that mega-events are singularities, and that analysis

should begin by acknowledging the inherent differentiation of each mega-event (predicated on spatial, cultural, political, and economic factors), in a comparative gesture that stems from the goal of making theory light (Robinson 2016a, 2016b). Thereafter, inductively, common traits and other family resemblances can be distinguished between given mega-events, whether authoritarian or otherwise.

In this context, I deployed a framework for the study of mega-events, as elaborated in Chapter 2. Through an overall framing of a host culture's *uniqueness*, I situated the 2018 World Cup in Russia's specific characteristics, broadly speaking, and more concretely in the uniqueness of the two host cities where I sited my work. Ekaterinburg and Volgograd, like many Russian peripheral cities, have been in need of substantial infrastructural investment ever since the fall of the USSR, and this influenced to a large degree the articulation of the World Cup.

Further, according to the element of *governance*, I examined how the World Cup was leveraged as part of a centralized strategy of urban and regional development. I also engaged with *narratives* to understand how the ideas of infrastructural investment were framed as valuable and necessary, and how these notions were distributed to the population. And last, I explored *everyday life* to trace the effects of these efforts on the individuals who inhabited the host cities, as the preparations reshaped the built environment around them. In the case of the Russian World Cup, investigating the micro and the quotidian revealed that many residents employed tactics to detach themselves from the predominant World Cup narratives during the preparatory period. In this way, an attention to the elements of *uniqueness, governance, narratives,* and *everyday life* unlocked otherwise invisible dynamics in the 2018 World Cup. As a light and transportable framework, these four elements are intended to sensitize future researchers to under-examined aspects of mega-events, and may be employed to unpack other mega-events, whether authoritarian or otherwise, both in Russia and beyond.

Moving on, this thesis also has wider implications for scholarship on post-socialist cities and their integration into global urban theory. This is a move against the universalizing tendency within Anglo-American urban geography that considers certain cities in the Global North as paradigms against which other cities are measured (Amin and Graham 2004; Edensor and Jayne 2012). Following post-colonial scholarship that attempts a

theorization from anywhere (Chakrabarty 2007; Comaroff and Comaroff 2012; Connell 2007; Parnell and Oldfield 2016; Roy 2009, 2016; Roy and Ong 2011), I attempt to understand Russian World Cup development through a relational comparative urbanism (Robinson 2004, 2011, 2016a; Ward 2010). This approach acknowledges the open, relational, and politically constructed nature of cities, abandons quasi-scientific methodologies when placing them in conversation with one another, and composes comparisons lightly in order to theorize not from a position of unassailable authority, but instead by making "provisional, modest and revisable claims about the urban" (Robinson 2016a, 196).

There have been debates, however, about the so-called fetishization of provincialism in post-colonial urban thought, and criticism of scholars in this tradition who call for a "worlding" of theory while simultaneously and paradoxically reinscribing the Global North/South binary which they purport to dismantle (Peck 2015; Storper and Scott 2016). In partial agreement with these critiques, I too note a problem in the post-universalistic project of urban theorizing from elsewhere, where many scholars in this post-colonial project have – unwittingly, to be sure – reified a South-North binary. Alongside other scholars working on and in the Global East (Müller 2018), my contention in this debate is that the South-North binary privileges both hemispheres in different ways, but ignores many countries of Central and Eastern Europe. These cities and nations remain largely invisible for urban theory, despite much important work to emphasize post-Soviet and post-socialist experiences (Ferenčuhová and Gentile 2016; Hörschelmann and Stenning 2008; McFarlane and Robinson 2012; Robinson 2014, 2016c; Stenning 2005). From a viewpoint that places western cities in the superior position, whether labeling them as *developed*, *modern*, *advanced*, or merely implicitly thinking them as *normal*, post-socialist cities are too often seen as regressive, backwards, problematic, or lagging behind in an endless race to catch up with the west (Robinson 2006; Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008). Nearly thirty years after the fall of the Soviet Union, if they are thought of at all, there is still a tendency to associate the cities of the Global East with socialist failure (Murawski 2018).

In this light, using the term the Global East is a bid to destabilize the conception that these cities mainly exist as importers – of urban theory, popular culture, or durable goods – rather than competent actors capable of creating valuable contributions on their own

(Sjöberg 2014). It is a move towards fulfilling the original potential in post-colonial thought, that is, that theorizing can – and should – come from anywhere. There is, after all, no inherent reason why Baltimore or Manchester should be privileged over Ekaterinburg or Volgograd. Instead, alongside scholars of the Global East, I argue that theory should be judged on its own merits, not on whether it arises from within a select few northern and western nations – or, for that matter, from a certain set of southern cities. The relative invisibility of post-socialist work – particularly regarding anything beyond the constraints of the literatures on political and economic transition – is all the more problematic because post-socialist cities have long been part of global conversations, debates, and the so-called modern capitalist economy. In this light, even using the term *post-socialist* serves to reinscribe Cold War-era thinking, relegating these debates into a particular silo away from the mainstream of urban geographic thought (Gentile 2018). Overall, I follow Golubchikov (2016b), who began his conceptualization of post-socialist urban transition by gently chastising scholars of post-socialist urbanism for lamenting their limited impact on wider scholarship. Rather than indulging in these melancholy fantasies, I endeavor to valorize research in the Global East for what it is and what it can do. For instance, the very fact that Russia and other nations of the Global East have been hosting mega-events at all is proof that the Global East belongs in the mainstream of urban theorizing. But more than this, it should not require hosting a mega-event for the Anglo-American academy to recognize the inherent value of places outside the immediately familiar.

This, then, is the goal of the provincializing gesture: not the elimination of generalizable theory as Storper and Scott (2016) contend, but rather the creation of an academic landscape where urban thought need not originate in the Global North in order to count. Instead, as I hope to have shown, cities of the Global East have their part to play as well.

★ ★ ★

I have not yet been able to return to Russia to investigate life on the ground myself, but I have continued discussions with residents from afar. One friend I spoke to in Ekaterinburg lamented the end of infrastructure investments tied to the World Cup: "Now they won't do anything anymore… *Uralmash* [the northern district where she lives] still looks like after a war," (B149). In this, she was complaining that the mega-event – heralded as being for the benefit of residents – had passed without improving her street.

Moreover, she lived near the metro and was indignant that organizers had ignored this area, as World Cup tourists had rented flats near the station and had witnessed the poor conditions there. Still, and certainly in relation to other Russian cities, Ekaterinburg seemed economically strong – the region is one out of only ten in Russia that contribute more than half of national GDP (Feynberg 2018). Perhaps because of this, the residents I spoke with never seemed overly downtrodden about their city's prospects. To be sure there were plenty of complaints and much criticism about the ways in which the city (and country) were run, but they never expressed a sense of gloom regarding their future.

In contrast, Volgograd residents communicated a sense of resigned hopelessness after the World Cup. Particularly galling for them was the rapid crumbling of newly built infrastructure. This did not apply only to the ground beneath the stadium – by far the most spectacular and symbolic failure – but also to other areas of the city that had seen investment and supposed improvement. For instance, Kubinskaya street – a residential lane on the opposite side of *Rodina Mat' Zovyot* – was repaved in preparation for the World Cup. Not six months later, potholes appeared there, as they have in many newly redone city streets. "They built it as you would expect," a friend told me. "To be honest it is surprising that nothing fell apart during the tournament," (N187). Statements of this kind – echoing the tactic of resigned *normalno* – were applied to many areas around the city. Even months after the event, some areas still had World Cup decorations on display, though time and climate had taken a toll (see Figure 38).

Figure 38: Potemkinism uncovered: abandoned building in Volgograd with a Coca-Cola building wrap that read "Volgograd! Get ready for the games!" Source: Viktor Yastrebov.

The building shown in Figure 38 embodies the Potemkinism that pervaded this World Cup. It was a blighted structure not far from the FIFA protocol route, wrapped with an advertisement from a multinational corporate sponsor of the World Cup. There was a huge image of Russian fans, faces painted with the *tricolor* flag, celebrating football victory with bottles of cola, alongside the call: "Volgograd! Get ready for the games!" In the months after the World Cup, the elements had shredded this façade to reveal the broken windows and incomplete structure underneath. Time played a role here, as the Potemkin surface – in fine condition for the games – did not survive long past the final match.

The symbolism on display here is stark and striking, but this building was not an isolated instance in Volgograd. Local media reported on similar development throughout the city: newly redone building façades that cracked and crumbled, construction materials abandoned on pallets in the tourist center of the city, and World Cup security fencing lying on the ground around monuments and fountains, where they had been knocked down weeks or months before. At the same time, the regional LOC spent 4.5 million rubles (USD $75,500) on medals to award the governor, the mayor, and 28 other functionaries for exceptional performance during the preparations for the World Cup (Bloknot Volgograd 2018a, 2018b; Laboykova 2018). The award ceremony took place in the new memorial arches built on the old Widows' Park, with the World Cup stadium in the background – though its crumbling foundations were not visible from where the politicians stood and received their medals. I spoke about this contrast with a Volgograd journalist:

> "Our city is poor, yes, but that doesn't determine everything... You can be poor and still take care of things. You know, there could be a grandmother, okay, and she doesn't have money to renovate her kitchen… But you can always keep things clean, you know, wash the curtains, or buy a can of paint and paint the walls… Or you could live like a drunkard, you know, you piss in the sink and forget about everything… Look at the *Krasnooktyabrsky* district… The whole city looks like a drunk you would find by the train station." (A163)

During the preparations, this journalist remained unmoved by the World Cup developments, and the aftermath did not change her opinion. Yet, as indicated here, she was of the mind that conditions could change if there were a shift in the mentality of residents. Low infrastructural quality did not mean people had to litter, for example.

On the balance, however, it appeared that not much changed for Volgograd in the shadow of the World Cup. To be sure, there was a new airport built, with a new road (and new potholes) connecting to the city, but this did not carry much weight for those residents who did not often make use of the airport. Instead, these and other infrastructure investments seem targeted at people like me, visitors (whether domestic or international) who could fly in, stay in a hotel in the center, enjoy the newly redone pedestrian tourist areas, visit a limited number of war memorials, and then leave again. A Volgograd shop owner put it this way: "I think the beautifications [for the World Cup] are for foreigners, not for us," (Y19). This judgment stood in defiance of the efforts of major segments of the state apparatus, from the president down to municipal administrators, all communicating through the ideological pipeline to convince the population of precisely the opposite. In a similar vein, a friend in Ekaterinburg offered her explanation of why authorities were successful in the narrow definitions relating to the World Cup but markedly less so in terms of overall benefits: "For me, this is just one more foolish image project. We simply have fanatic energy in the wrong places," (K04). These phrases encapsulate the central problem with Russian World Cup developments: despite the narratives that aimed to convince residents that hosting represented a long-term benefit for them – and regardless of the temporary enthusiasm or mania in which the superficial merged with the substantive – it was impossible, over time, to ignore the crumbling structures underneath the polished Potemkin exterior.

My closest friend in Volgograd was born and raised there. Over numerous visits, he showed me places that I never would have found and told me secrets about the city that I never would have learned. It was because of this man and his family that I got to feel a connection to the city, to glimpse its painful but victorious past, and to come to grips with its troubled present. During the course of my research, over many nights sleeping on their guest bed, he and his family shared with me that they were thinking about moving. They made several exploratory visits to other cities and finally, only a few months before the World Cup, they found tenants to rent their Volgograd apartment and they moved to Moscow. In early 2019, we were catching up over video chat and I asked him if he missed Volgograd, the hero city of his birth, and if he ever thought about returning. He answered without hesitation, "Never. I don't miss it at all."

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"Many people think that they think" – Graffiti far from the renovated tourist areas in Volgograd. Source: author.