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SOCHI AND THE 2014 OLYMPICS: GAME OVER?

Guest Editor Martin Müller (Zürich)

The Olympic clock is ticking… neon installation when entering Sochi, August 2009.
(Photograph by Martin Müller)

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We are going to build a new world-class resort for the new Russia – and the whole world!" Thus was the promise of Vladimir Putin when he made the pitch for the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in front of the International Olympic Committee in Guatemala in 2007. His speech, delivered in English and French, did not fail to impress, nor did the oil- and gas-fuelled record growth rates in excess of 8% that Russia logged in 2006 and 2007. The IOC members awarded Russia the much-coveted prize of becoming an Olympic host city, snubbing contenders Salzburg and Pyeongchang. Not mincing words, the Russian newspaper *Vedomosti* put what it perceived as the dominant attitude succinctly: "The world got convinced that there is a lot of money in Russia – that it becomes more and more – and that this man [Putin] controls it, whatever company it may formally belong to" (Vedomosti 2007). The order was a tall one: Sochi did not have a single sports venue that was fit to host an Olympic competition. Thus, it proposed to build all 14 major venues from scratch, plus a list of more than 200 objects to be constructed as ancillary infrastructure. The Olympics were meant to become a game changer on Russia's road to big push modernisation.

Fast-forward six years and six months to the present day. Sochi is covered in dust as workers toil in three shifts 24/7 on what is one of the largest construction sites in the world in the final three months of the run-up to the opening ceremony on 07 February 2014. From an initial estimate of USD 12 billion, costs have skyrocketed fourfold to USD 50 billion. And this is unlikely to be the final tally. As far as chasing records goes, this is probably the saddest one: the most expensive Olympics ever, Summer or Winter – even though the size and infrastructure requirements for the Winter Games are by numbers of magnitude smaller when compared to the Summer Games. A recent initiative, spearheaded by Boris Nemcov, unveiled some grotesque cost-overruns: the ski jumps, for example, came in at almost seven times the initial cost projection (Nemcov and Martynjuk 2013). What is more, numerous lucrative contracts were awarded to cronies of ruling elites, driving up costs even further and signalling the self-serving character of the event. Reflecting the essential ungovernability of the event, the chief of the state company responsible for delivering the construction for the Winter Games, *Olimpstroj*, was replaced three times in four years. 1.5 million hits in six months for the video clip "How much did they steal at the Olympics in Sochi?" (Сколько украли на Олимпиаде в Сочи? 2013) indicate to what degree the mismanagement of the Olympic Games has become a public issue.

Yet, the greatest costs of this gargantuan project are not monetary. Originally conceived as an event for the people, the Sochi Olympics have become anything but. Promises of modernization and improvements of quality of life ring hollow with the local population, who feels that the profits go elsewhere (Müller 2012). Resettlements have additionally soured relations between the local people and the administration (Karbainov 2013). Construction activities have blighted the protected areas in which construction was rubberstamped with the help of a special decree. Commitments to host the greenest Games ever, enshrined in the bid book and communicated to the public as a mantra, have been flouted on a regular basis (see Orttung and Zhemukhov, this issue; Müller 2014).

This is the backdrop against which the four contribution of this special issue are set. Bo Petersson and Karina Vamling (both at Malmö), who have also edited a book on the

subject (Petersson and Vamling 2013) open the suite of papers with an examination of how the Sochi Games are utilised in Russia's quest for great power status and how they are designed to shore up legitimacy for Putin's role as a Russian leader. Emil Persson (also Malmö) considers the image component of the Sochi Games and the tensions behind the projection of a harmonious, multi-ethnic nation. This is of particular relevance given the outright refusal to recognise or address historical wrongs done to the Circassian nation during and after the Caucasus wars in the area of Sochi (Richmond 2013). The prospects for civil society are at the heart of Bob Orttung and Sufian Zhemukhov's (both Washington D.C.) contribution. The preparation for the Winter Games has provided ample opportunities for people to voice dissent – all too often, however, to little avail. But Orttung and Zhemukhov conclude on a hopeful note, highlighting that activism has been able to stall at least some projects. In the final article, Sven Daniel Wolfe (St. Petersburg) takes us down to earth with his meticulous investigation of the divergent development of two villages that are caught in the middle of the Olympic development frenzy in Sochi – yet fall by the wayside at the same time. The contributions demonstrate the multi-facetted nature of the Olympic Games in Sochi, but also drive home the point that what was envisioned as a game changer is close to turning into the opposite: game over.

Martin Müller (Zürich)
November 2013

About the Editor

Martin Müller is a geographer and Research Professor of the Swiss National Science Foundation at the University of Zurich. He is interested in the planning and impacts of mega-events and has done extensive work on the 2014 Winter Games in Russia (e.g. Müller 2011, 2012, 2013). He is also editing a special issue on Sochi 2014 for *East European Politics*, to appear in 2014. In a new comparative project, he looks at knowledge circulation and impacts of the Olympic Games and the Football World Cup in Russia and Brazil.
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Display Window or Tripwire? The Sochi Winter Games, the Russian Great Power Ideal and the Legitimacy of Vladimir Putin

by Bo Petersson & Karina Vamling, Malmö University, Sweden

Abstract *President Vladimir Putin's claim and policies to resurrect Russia as a great power have been a cornerstone for the construction of the hegemonic position of power that he has for so long successfully exerted and upheld. This paper discusses the Russian great power ambitions in relation to national identity and popular appeal, and puts them in relation to the upcoming Winter Games in Sochi in 2014. The paper examines how this mega-event is discursively constructed as a manifestation of Russia's return to great power status, and as such is meant to convey certain messages internally as well as externally. The successful carrying out of the Games would no doubt constitute an important component in the undergirding of the – otherwise dwindling – legitimacy of President Putin. The event would be an important display window for manifesting the prowess of the Russian great power, and the location of the Games in Sochi by the Caucasian Mountains in the Russian South would have a deeply symbolical aspect. If the Games can be successfully carried out in a region that has for so long been experienced as volatile and unruly, then it must surely mean that internal order has been restored in the Russian great power. However, it is argued in the article that there are several potential tripwires on the way towards achieving these symbolically important goals. Problems of security, terrorism, geopolitical volatility, large-scale corruption and interethnic tension loom large, and may all turn out to be formidable obstacles and render the hosting of the Games a counter-productive enterprise.*

Bringing the Olympic Games to Sochi: Opportunities and Pitfalls

Political high profile involvement and campaigning have become increasingly commonplace when determining the location of prestigious international sports events (Markovits & Rensmann 2010). The successful Russian campaign for bringing the Olympic Winter Games in 2014 to Sochi was certainly no exception. Indeed, the Sochi Games have been characterized as President Vladimir Putin's "pet idea" (Müller 2011, 2095) and the pulling through of the project would probably have been inconceivable without him. Putin headed the Russian delegation to the Guatemala City IOC meeting in 2007 where the decision was made to let the Russian Federation and Sochi arrange the Olympic Winter Games. His address to the IOC – delivered in English and French – is believed to have played a crucial role in the process, not least his demonstration of highest-level political commitment to the project. Putin's speech included a powerful state financing guarantee of 12 billion US dollars (YouTube 2007). This made, already at this stage, the Sochi Games the most expensive Winter Olympics ever in the history of the Olympic movement (Müller 2011, 2095). For his part, Vladimir Putin has also on numerous earlier occasions shown himself to be keenly interested in personally promoting mega-events organized in and by Russia. When Russia was hosting the Eurovision Song Contest in 2009 he made e.g. a point of appearing personally on site to see to it that the preparations were in order (Avellan 2010).

On a more general level, the Sochi Winter Games are, just like other mega-events to be hosted by Russia such as the FIFA World Cup in football in 2018, prone to provide a stage for the delivery of the message that Russia has once again resumed its role of great power in the contemporary world. With his domestic legitimacy dwindling, as it was suggested during the long series of urban protests in connec-

tion with the parliamentary elections of 2011 and the presidential polls of 2012 (Sakwa 2012; Shevtsova 2012), the Sochi Winter Games may prove to be a welcome opportunity for Putin to display strength and resolve and demonstrate that his is still a much needed strong hand at the helm. As it has been suggested in the scholarly debate, Putin may otherwise run the risk of being compared to his Soviet-time successors during the Brezhnev period of stagnation in the 1970s and early 1980s rather than being associated with strength and dynamic power (Petersson 2012; Goscilo 2013, 182).

It might well be that the Sochi Games will provide Putin with the stage that he has been looking for to deliver his message. However, it will be argued in this article that the endeavor amounts to a high-risk gamble, and that several contextual factors may collude to render the enterprise of shoring up Putin's legitimacy through the Olympics counter-productive. In turn, we will consider the areas of economy and corruption, interethnic relations, and security to illustrate that several tripwires may get in the way for the realization of the President's ambitions.

Economy and Corruption

Apart from the state guarantees mentioned above, the financial platform of the Games has been bolstered by private initiative. From early on there was a keen interest among Russia's wealthiest business circles to make private investments in the Sochi region. The billionaire Vladimir Potanin, head of the Interros holding company, promised that his company would invest $1.5 billion into different projects in the region (Ivanov 2007). Oleg Deripaska, the owner of the Russian investment fund Basic Element and a personal friend of Putin's, bought 100% of the state-owned Sochi International Airport in 2006 (RIA Novosti 2006). Roman Abramovich, another well-known Russian financial tycoon, has also helped to fund the bid for the Sochi Olympics. However, while the backing by these actors goes a long way towards providing financial guarantees, it also sets the stage for allegations about shadowy commercial interests which relegate sports to the back seat, and about murky business deals, covert handshakes and corruption. Nonetheless, from the estimates of critical analysts it would seem as all sources of revenue will be sorely needed.

Thus, with half a year remaining to the opening of the Winter Games many observers note the extremely high costs involved in the construction works. According to Vladimir Dmitriev, head of the Vneshekonombank, the costs of some Olympic objects will exceed initial calculations by two or three times, and, added to this, almost half of the objects will be unprofitable (Titov 2013). Along with the huge rise in overall costs, it has frequently not been possible to finish construction works according to schedule. Vladimir Putin has certainly tried to project an image of a true mover and shaker, coaxing and cajoling the contractors at Sochi to deliver according to plan. At an inspection trip in 2012 he warned:

After the journalists leave, I will tell you what failures to meet the deadlines will amount to. I do not want to frighten anyone, but I will speak with you as people I have known for many years now (Putin 2012a).

The fight against financial irresponsibility or even embezzlement and fraud seems, however, to be one that not even Putin is likely to win. For instance, the RusSki Gorki Olympic ski jump complex was far behind schedule

at President Putin's inspection of the Olympic sites in February 2013, i.e. one year before the opening of the Games. This led to the dismissal of the vice president of Russia's Olympic Committee (R-sport 2013b). In early 2013 and to secure the preparations for the Games, Putin set up a special state commission under Deputy Prime Minister Dmitrii Kozak to deliver the Games according to plan (RIA Novosti 2013).

In the report "Winter Olympics in the Subtropics" the oppositional politician Boris Nemtsov and his co-author Leonid Martynyuk (2013) compare the Sochi Olympics with previous Games and discuss possible reasons for the striking differences in total costs. President Putin's initial estimation in 2007 was as mentioned a record USD 12 billion but the total bill will according to the authors probably be around 50 billion, i.e. more than four times higher. It is of course common that initial cost estimates do not hold, but as Nemtsov and Martynyuk argue, the cost increases in the case of the Sochi Olympics are exceptional and dramatic. Likewise, the costs of Olympic stadiums or other objects are approximately 2.5 times higher in Sochi than for comparable constructions at previous Games. Nemtsov and Martynyuk conclude:

[T]he price tag of the Sochi Olympics without theft would be USD 50 billion divided by 2.5. The cost of the Sochi Olympics without theft would thus amount to USD 20 billion. This means that USD 30 billion were stolen. …Thus, the overall scale of theft was around USD 25-30 billion, or 50-60% of the declared final cost of the Olympics. This corresponds to the normal share of kickbacks in Russia.

It is not only economic malfeasance that makes the costs run sky-high, however. The climate conditions make the construction works complicated, especially at high altitudes. Due to these severe conditions, the alpine Olympic village built by Gazprom was not expected to be ready until October 2013 (RIA Novosti 2012). Also, the mountain river of Mzymta has breached its banks and a protection dam resulting in heavy flooding close to the Olympic sites (R-sport 2013a).

Interethnic Tripwires

In contemporary Russia interethnic tensions are a growing problem, as discussed in a recent article by President Putin (2012b):

The reality of today is growth in interethnic and interfaith tension. Nationalism and religious intolerance are becoming the ideological base for the most radical groups and trends.

Xenophobic sentiments, mostly in relation to persons from the Caucasus and Central Asia, are markedly strong in Russia, not least in Moscow. A poll conducted by Romir in May 2013 shows that 70% of the respondents in the capital supported slogans such as "Russia for Russians" and 73% "Enough feeding the Caucasus" (Verkhovskii 2013). While the first of these slogans is self-explanatory, the argument of the latter is that federal subsidies be withheld from North Caucasus which should thus be left to its own devices.

It has been of vital importance for President Putin to retain the initiative in dealing with ethnic issues. Against this background he has established the Presidential Council of Interethnic Relations (President of Russia 2012). Putin is personally chairing the council, where one of the goals has been to work out a national strategy for the solving of interethnic conflicts (Obrazkova 2013). But what do interethnic relations look like on the ground, in the

region where the Sochi Olympics will be organized?

Russia's gradual conquest of the Caucasus and advancement to gain control over the strategic Caucasus Mountains and the Black Sea coast has had a long history. It started in the 18th century and was completed in the mid-1860s when the indigenous population of Circassians was finally defeated. Following the Russian victory, most Circassians were forced to emigrate to the Ottoman Empire and the Circassian lands were populated by Cossacks and other groups from Russia.

Krasnaya Polyana, where the last Russo-Circassian battle took place in 1864 and where the Russians celebrated their final victory over the Circassians, will in 2014 be the site of the Olympic ski slopes. It has been decided to build an ethnographical cultural centre in Krasnaya Polyana, in connection with the Mountain Olympic Cluster. However, the centre will not be devoted to the history and background of the fateful events of 1864, as could otherwise have been expected. It will instead be called "My Russia" and include ethnographic exhibition halls, offer traditional food and souvenirs from all over Russia (Kavkazskii uzel 2013b). The organizers of the Games thus plan to put the ethnic and cultural diversity of Russia on display for the visitors in a cavalcade of colorful, exotic elements – centering around traditional symbols of Russian culture. Moreover, representatives from all over Russia participate in different activities, some of which have started well ahead of the Games in events like "Russia.Sochi.Park" in London (2012) and the "Cultural Olympiad", spanning from 2010 to 2014 (Sochi.ru 2013). The approach is therefore not to give any special attention to indigenous groups from the region. On the contrary, the Circassians have been almost absent from the events with few exceptions such as a one-month exhibition in Sochi of Circassian culture (Kavkazskii uzel 2013a) and the performance of the ensemble of Kabardinka at Russia.Park in London (Russia-Park News 2012).

The Shapsugs, a Circassian group that traditionally have lived close to Sochi and still reside in scattered villages in the Greater Sochi district, now fight for their right to be recognized as an indigenous people of the region (Kapaeva 2012). The Shapsugs have approached the Governor of the Krasnodar Krai, Aleksandr Tkachev, with demands for recognition, but so far to no avail (Dzutsev 2013b).

Notably, the year of 2014 marks the 150th anniversary of the Russian conquest of the Caucasus, adding as it were insult to injury. The way the Circassians see it, the Olympic objects are literally constructed on the graves of their fallen ancestors. These facts have had a mobilizing effect on the Circassian diaspora, which has organized protests against the carrying out of the Olympics on their sacred lands. Paradoxically, the staging of the Sochi Winter Games, an event that the Circassian organizations in the diaspora claim that they wish to stop, may amount to their fifteen minutes of fame; the Circassians will own the limelight as seldom before and as they will certainly not do again for a long time to come. This is the chance that they will get to make the world listen; once the Games are over they will risk returning to the status of an internationally little-known minority that they have basically had until just a few years ago (Funch Hansen 2013). This is in itself an angle worth looking into in future research: what will happen after the visit of the circus to town?

Under all circumstances, the Games have had a mobilizing and unifying effect on the Circassians in Russia as well as the Circassian diaspora in Turkey and the US. As Tiago Ferreira Lopes (2013) underlines:

Circassian activists need to decide if the Sochi Winter Olympics 2014 are the end game, or just the commencement of a new game. Circassians have earned a lot of social capital that should not be disbanded solely because the goals towards the Sochi Winter Olympics might not be achieved.

Presumably, the development in countries in Russia's vicinity that harbor a large Circassian diaspora will have an impact on the situation in Russia's North Caucasus. The question of allowing a repatriation of Circassians to the Caucasus has been an issue during the whole post-Soviet period but it has recently received special attention as a consequence of the flow of refugees from Syria. The so far largely negative Russian stance on the issue has been a further source of Circassian disappointment and frustration (Polandov 2013).

Security Challenges

Sochi is situated by the foothills of the Caucasus Mountains. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the emergence of the three independent South Caucasian states of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, territorial disputes and ethnopolitical conflicts, including several separatist ones, have been prolific. The most violent and well-known conflicts to date are the two protracted and violent Chechen wars 1994–1996 and 1999–2009, as well as the short but eventful Russo-Georgian war of 2008.

As a consequence of the Chechen wars, instability has increased on a general scale in the area and spread to other republics of the predominantly Muslim and ethnically diverse North Caucasus. Bombings, armed attacks and other forms of violence, not only against the authorities, have become a part of everyday life. The risk of terrorist attacks against the Sochi Olympics has been highlighted by many observers. Devastating bomb attacks of recent years in sites such as the Domodedovo Airport and the Moscow Metro have been attributed to the Chechen connection, as has been the terrorist bombing of the Boston Marathon in 2013. If such attacks can be carried out in sites as remote from the Caucasus as Moscow and indeed Boston there is reason to fear their appearance also in and around adjacent Sochi.

In the summer of 2013 Doku Umarov, the self-proclaimed Emir of the so-called Caucasus Emirate and the leader of the Islamist resistance in North Caucasus, made a video proclamation targeting the Sochi Olympics. In this video he urges his followers to do their outmost to disrupt the Games:

They plan to hold the Olympics on the bones of our ancestors, on the bones of many, many dead Muslims – buried on the territory of our land on the Black Sea. We as mujahideen are obliged not to permit that, using any methods allowed us by the almighty Allah (cited in Bauer 2013).

From the official rhetoric surrounding the Games it seems that one prominent reason for the choice of location is to improve the infrastructure of the region and to give the area an economic boost, not only up to and during the Games as such but also after them. This is thought to provide a sustainable basis for development and relative affluence afterwards. One can here discern the rationale of achieving sustainable development and stability in a region long regarded as unruly (Petersson 2013). Krasnodar Krai, the region where Sochi is located in administrative terms, has itself seen a fair share of violence in recent years. The basic logic seems to be that if the economy could be boosted through the Olympic project, if jobs could be provided and the regional in-

frastructure in Krasnodar Krai and the North Caucasus in general considerably improved (so far, however, most jobs have been created for guest workers), the region would become more thoroughly embedded in the federation structure. Massive economic investments would then finalize what military operations originally set out to achieve, and money could buy what arms failed to enforce. If the calculus proves to be right, Putin will be able to live up to his image as a strong and resourceful leader. But what if it fails, and what if the Games amount not to a "mega-event but to a mega fiasco" (Trubina 2013)?

With less than one year to the start of the Games, despite measures undertaken by the authorities, experts do not see a decrease in instability and ethnic conflicts in the North Caucasus (Dzutsev 2013a, Vatchagaev 2013a). Rather, as the Games are approaching, the authorities are likely to downplay reports of violence in the North Caucasus (Vatchagaev 2013b). But the problem remains, and in the words of one analyst, the Games are likely to become the most security-loaded in Olympic history (Hedenskog 2013).

As if all this was not enough, there is also the more external aspect of security, with international implications. Only some 30 kilometers from the city of Sochi – and even closer to the sites of the Games – lies Abkhazia, an autonomous republic of Georgia during Soviet times but now a de facto state recognized by Russia after the Russo–Georgian war in 2008. The proximity of the Games to this volatile area, and the fact that Abkhazian territory has been used as a supply route for building material for the Olympic facilities, has been interpreted by the Georgian government as a provocative move by the Russians. Critical arguments have been heard that the Russian policy in this regard amounts to a step-by-step annexation of Abkhazia and only serves to increase tension in an already conflict-ridden region (Kukhianidze 2013).

Conclusion

The Sochi Games are likely to be the occasion for the display of Russia as an indisputable great power, capable of organizing strong, secure and maybe even brilliantly staged Games. The Olympics will be intended to mark and symbolize the comeback of Russia at the supreme world stage, and underline the importance of the leadership of President Putin in this endeavor. Indeed, it is hard to reach any conclusion other than that there is a very specific rationale behind the determination of the Russian authorities to organize the Games in Sochi in spite of all problems, economic, interethnic, security-related and others. The hosting can well be interpreted as a show of force by the Russian authorities to demonstrate firmly to the world who is in command. Seen in this context the choice of location is symbolic. If the Russian Federation can host Olympic Games on the doorstep of a region that has for so long been ridden by conflicts, violence and secessionist sentiments, then internal order can certainly be said to have been successfully restored. Still, even if the rationale does seem clear, the undertaking appears to be like walking a tightrope without a proper safety net. The stakes are high, to say the least.

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Tears in the Patchwork: The Sochi Olympics and the Display of a Multiethnic Nation

by Emil Persson, Lund University and Malmö University

Abstract *This article examines what image of Russia is being projected in official rhetoric about the Sochi Olympics. It is argued that the imagined community being displayed is a diverse, inclusive and tolerant nation, even an international example of ethnic conviviality. The article puts this narrative in historical perspective, relating it to the* ***mnogonatsionalnost*** *policies of tsarist, Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. This imagination, though explicitly very inclusive, rests on important exclusions and silences. By selective exhibitions of minority-groups the other is domesticated, stereotyped and reduced to kitsch and folklore, glossing over conflict-ridden histories and prevailing inequalities.*

Introduction

A mediated mega-event like the Olympics is about much more than sports. It is also about imagining communities and about creating attachment to such collective selves. The intended audience of this "project of belonging" is not only the outside world, but as much or even more, the domestic public, those who are interpellated or solicited to be part of this community. During recent years, Olympic Games have increasingly been used by host nations to manifest their own ethnic diversity and multicultural identity. This was the case during the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, whose opening ceremony featured members of First Nations tribes performing traditional dances, as well as the 2012 Summer Olympics in London, projecting the image of a hip, multi-coloured Britain shaped by a history of international migration. The 2014 Olympics in Russian Sochi continues this trend.

In the Olympic context, the multiculturalist theme feeds on an older narrative of internationalism and peaceful coexistence, which was one of the ideological foundations when the modern Olympic movement was formed in the late 1800s. However, the displays of multiculturalism which have become a natural part of contemporary Olympic Games are not unproblematic as they tend to rely on essentialist and stereotypical exhibitions of minority cultures to manifest the "cultural richness" of the host nation. In addition, in their idyllic depiction of harmonious conviviality these displays tend to glorify the "tolerance" of host states and deny legacies of colonialism and racism, as well as ongoing discrimination of minorities (cf. Heinz Housel, 2007; Hogan, 2003).

The aim of this article is to examine how Russia is imagined in the official narrative of the Sochi Olympics, more specifically how the symbolic boundaries for inclusion into this community are being imagined. The focus lies on discourses of multiculturalism, multinationalism and ethnic coexistence. To reconstruct an official narrative I analyse national media coverage, advertisements, commodities and museum exhibitions. Much of this material was collected during fieldwork in Sochi in May 2013.

After a theoretical discussion about media-events' role in creating belonging to political communities, a very short historical overview is given about nationality policies and discourses of multinationalism in tsarist, Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. Taking departure in these discussions, the following section analyses Sochi-2014 as a project of belonging which aims to construct and spread a certain image of Russia to its citizens and to the

world. The main argument of the article is that the Sochi Olympics are used to promote an image of Russia as an example of successful multiculturalism and ethnic conviviality, an image which however rests on important exclusions and silences, glossing over conflict-ridden histories and current injustices.

Media events and belonging

The notion *politics of belonging* is used by several authors (Anthias, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2011) to frame studies of identity, boundaries and social categorization in a globalized world. It emphasizes the political in boundary-making, that the construction of communities is an inherently conflict-ridden process intimately related to the distribution of power in society. According to Nira Yuval-Davis:

> (*t)he politics of belonging involves not only constructions of boundaries but also inclusion or exclusion of particular people, social categories and groupings within these boundaries by those who have the power to do this* (2011:18).

The focus on belonging does not a priori tie the construction of political collectives to one specific bond or marker. Although nationality remains the major organising principle of political communities in our days, we should not presuppose that this must always be the case, but allow for analytical openness as to which dimension of belonging – perhaps nationality, gender or religion - we should include in a particular study without beforehand defining which principle is the overarching one. Belonging involves, writes Floya Anthias, an affective dimension which has to do both with self-identification and others' recognition: "to belong is to be accepted as part of a community, to feel safe within it and to have a stake in the future of such a community of membership" (2006:21).

The media – widely conceived – play a crucial role in the politics of belonging as it provides the space where communities are imagined and where we are exposed to otherness (Anderson, 1983; Silverstone, 2007). The creation of imagined communities is, according to Stuart Hall, facilitated by "the spectacle of the other", by which he means the representation of other races, cultures or social groups as stereotypes, reducing them to a few simple characteristics represented as natural, thereby essentializing and freezing them as different (Hall, 1997:257f). Never is the media's importance for belonging and boundary-making more accentuated than during so called *media events*, described by Dayan and Katz as "high holidays of mass communication", monopolizing and centering media attention on one activity or occasion represented as "historic", and appealing to mass audiences (Dayan & Katz, 1992:1ff). Media events such as the Eurovision, Lady Di's funeral or in my case the Olympics can be vital forces of social integration, reasserting the legitimacy and desirability of particular modes of belonging to certain spatial imaginaries (Orgad, 2012:156). This does not mean that media events are always successful in establishing a sense of belonging, as audiences are diversified and sometimes appropriate the intended messages sceptically, ironically or in even more unexpected ways (Hepp & Couldry, 2010:12). How audiences interpret and receive the narratives of media events lies however outside the scope of this paper. The focus is on the integrative *claims* of the Sochi Olympics, how it is crafted as a project of belonging, imagining and displaying a certain version of Russia. Such an imagination, totalizing and idealizing, rests on important exclusions and silences. As Anthias writes:

… the collective places constructed by imaginations of belonging gloss over the fissures, the losses, the absences and the borders within them. The notion of 'imagining' also refers to the ways in which constructions of belonging serve to naturalize socially produced, situational and contextual relations, converting them to taken-for-granted, absolute and fixed structures of social and personal life. Such constructions produce a 'natural' community of people and function as exclusionary borders of otherness (Anthias 2006:21).

The ambivalence of Russian multinationalism

The idea of a community which harbours a multitude of cultures, languages and religions has a long history in Russia. It was a cornerstone in tsarist imperialism, not least was it a political necessity in order to get support from regional elites. In the 19th century, ethnographers explored and catalogued with great fascination habits and idioms in the vast empire. The celebration of cultural diversity existed in tension, however, with Russification policies aiming to create and strengthen Russian cultural hegemony. After 1917, the Bolsheviks intended to end Great Russian chauvinism and organized the new socialist state as a federation on ethnic principles. Every territorial body should "belong" to a titular nation, and the communists actively nurtured nation-building according to the motto "nationalist in form, socialist in content" (Slezkine, 1994). The SSSR has sometimes been called a country where multiculturalism prevailed (Malakhov, 2000). The ethnographic inventory was intensified, and where nationalist sentiment was found lacking, it was invented (Slezkine, 1994). Despite the anti-tsarist rhetoric, however, the Soviet state (especially from Stalin onwards) in many ways continued the imperialist Russian project, as ethnic Russians where given a special place in the "friendship of nations" that made up the SSSR, as symbolic big brothers or the first among equals (Karlsson, 1995).

Multinationalism (*mnogonatsionalnost'*) remains the official ideology in post-Soviet Russia. The civic-statist *rossiiskii* identity (as opposed to the more exclusive ethnocultural *russkii*) is supposed to encompass all ethnicities living in the federation. Tolerance is put forward as an ideal, but there is a scepticism against the Western concept of multiculturalism, which is often dismissed as "political correctness" with dangerous divisive consequences for society (Malakhov, 2002). Putin´s much-cited article on the national question, published before the 2012 election, takes departure in the alleged failure of Western multiculturalism, and points to a specific Russian experience dating back to tsarist times. Arguing fervently against ethno-nationalist calls to create a "Russia for the Russians", Putin writes that Russia is and must remain a multinational state, but that the ethnic Russians have a special role as a lead culture, holding together this unique civilization (Putin, 2012). When addressing foreign audiences (in diplomacy or commerce) official Russia stresses even more the multinational character of the country, aware that the idea of a ethnically diverse and multi-confessional Russia is more appealing to the world than a monocultural Orthodox-Slavic nation (Malakhov, 2012).

As we have seen, *mnogonatsionalnost'* has historically been tied to the Russian imperial project. Although emphasis has shifted, the idea that ethnic Russians are a lead culture with a special mission to hold together a multinational family has been official ideology for 150 years. Like many forms of Western multi-

culturalism, this ideology holds a primordialist view on ethnicities as naturally given ontological facts, and also presumes that ethnicity is the prime identity for individuals. Mnogonatsionalnost' is also often reductionist, restricting its celebration of diversity to superficial characteristics like folklore (Malakhov, 2012). Putin´s words about ethnic Russians as a lead culture indicate that Russian multinationalism is highly susceptible to a critique which some postcolonial scholars have directed against Western multiculturalism: that it is an ideology hiding ethnocentric values behind universalist claims, ready to "tolerate" diversity only as long as it can be accommodated within the norm and does not disrupt the master narratives of society (Bhabha, 1990:208).

Celebrating diversity with Sochi-2014

*Russia will show the visitors of the Games the best of Russian (**rossiiskoi**) culture*

The above slogan, in Russian, written over a map of Russia with an artistically designed patchwork pattern, was part of an advertisement campaign distributed on television, Internet, as well as on huge outdoor TV screens in Sochi during my fieldwork in the city in May 2013. The one theme in the official narrative about Sochi-2014 which is being disseminated most consistently – in the rhetoric of politicians and Olympic officials, in advertisements and slogans, in the merchandise products designed for the Games – is that Russia is a culturally diverse, tolerant and open country. In the section "brand" on the official webpage of Sochi-2014, we can read that the Games will promote an image of Russia as a "country that is committed to equality and celebrates diversity" (sochi2014.ru a). President Vladimir Putin, who since the start has invested much personal prestige in the Olympic project, expressed a similar idea in a speech in June 2013:

Image 1. The patchwork pattern of Sochi-2014

We are determined to organize a real celebration in 2014, a festival of sport, deserving of its unique mission: to unite people around the world with really significant values - a healthy lifestyle, tolerance and equality (sochi2014.ru b).

A recurring metaphor for ethno-cultural diversity in Sochi rhetoric is the "patchwork". The head of the organizing committee, Dmitrii Chernyshenko, has said that the cultural program of Sochi-2014 is devoted to

*…preserve and multiply the unique cultural richness of Russia, and to involve all residents in a grand celebration (…), show the world the "patchwork" (**loskutnoye odeyalo**) of cultural traditions in our country* (sochi2014.ru c).

Image 2. The patchwork pattern of Sochi-2014

The image-language used in connection to Sochi-2014 tells the same story. Advertisements, flags and posters, as well as official merchandise in the form of clothes, keyrings, stamps, bags etc make use of the patchwork pattern (see images 1-2), a practice which can be described as a commodification of cultural diversity.

In a similar vein, the Olympic torch is used to imagine a multinational community of belonging. During 2013 Russian state television and popular newspapers such as *Komsomolskaya Pravda* focused extensively on the selection process of torch-carriers from each of the 83 territorial units in Russia. We can expect that during the months preceding the Games, media images of the Olympic torch being carried by people of different skin colours through every part Russia, from the Arctic ice to the bottom of Lake Baikal to the top of Mount Elbrus, and even into space, will manifest a Russianness spanning cultures, races and religions.

It could be argued that the framing of Sochi-2014 as a celebration of Russian diversity and tolerance is merely make-up intended for a foreign audience, an artificial import of Olympic clichés which has little to do with Russian political realities. In my view, that claim would be too simplifying. It is certainly true that since the late 1990s multiculturalism – in a depoliticized and commercialized version – has become an integral aspect of Olympism, and that displays of ethno-cultural diversity are now an obligatory part of opening ceremonies at every Olympics (Giardina, Metz, & Bunds, 2012). The rich use of Olympic catchwords and citations of Pierre de Coubertin by the Russian hosts are part of the Olympic package and in this respect no different from, say, the rhetoric of Sydney 2000 or Vancouver 2010. However, this narrative chimes in harmony with the Russian *mnogonatsionalnost'* ideology, which has been official policy since tsarist times, and which is a central tenet for the current administration. Even if the word "multiculturalism" is seldom used in positive terms by Russian politicians, the idea of celebrating tolerance, ethno-cultural diversity and conviviality will not sound strange to a Russian audience but is already an important part of official ideology. The rhetoric developed around Sochi-2014 is an interesting example of how global and domestic narratives can reinforce each other. We will see below that the ambiguity and ambivalence characterizing Russia's multinationalism, to celebrate diver-

sity but simultaneously reinforce an ethnocultural *russkii* norm, is also discernible in the rhetoric on Sochi-2014.

Tolerance and inclusion are put forward as ideals not only when dealing with ethnocultural differences, but also when it comes to improving the situation for people with disabilities. The Games will, it is often held, lead to a more accessible society with fewer physical barriers, not only regionally but nationally (sochi2014.ru d). Nonetheless, there are strict limits regarding who is included in the openness promoted by Sochi-2014. Ironically, this project of tolerance is being launched at the same time as there is a nation-wide campaign – led by the power-holding United Russia party – to ban "homosexual propaganda", which was also the pretext used for prohibiting an LGBT organization to set up a Pride house during the Olympics (Persson, forthcoming). The inclusionist rhetoric of Sochi-2014 falls silent when it comes to sexual orientation and gender identity. Thus, when scrutinized, the universalist construction of belonging put forward in official narratives about the Sochi Olympics is more exclusive than it appears at first glance.

Druzhba narodov once again

The modern Olympic Games were conceived by visionaries who set new standards and found new ways for development. They believed that sport engenders trust and cooperation between cultures and nations. Sochi 2014 is striving to make Russia's first Winter Games an embodiment of peaceful, productive dialogue between peoples (sochi2014.ru a).

A strong leitmotif in the official narrative about Sochi-2014 is that the Games will promote understanding between peoples and nations. This idea feeds on the internationalism underpinning Olympism. The founder of the modern Games, Pierre de Coubertin, hoped that the Olympics would bring together all nations of the world and contribute to peace and reconciliation (Coubertin, 2000). The Olympic rings, which represent the five continents, symbolize this peaceful internationalism (Guttman, 2002).

Interestingly however, this internationalist theme also resembles the Soviet rhetoric of "friendship of peoples" (*druzhba narodov*). During the Cold war, this phrase was used as guiding principle both for the ethno-federal design of the SSSR and for the relations between the states within the socialist world. As ethnic Russians had a dominant political, military and cultural role within the Eastern bloc, it is quite easy to claim that the *druzhba narodov* rhetoric served imperialist aims, wrapping Russian interests and values in a more appealing package by presenting them as universalistic and altruistic. On many occasions, this narrative was used to legitimize interventionist and colonial policies (cf. Petersson & Persson, 2011), e.g. during the invasions of Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan. That the language of internationalism can still be used to legitimize expansionist policies is evident in an interesting statement by Sergey Markov, a member of the State Duma for the Putinist party United Russia, at a meeting on Abkhazia's role in the Sochi Olympics:

The Olympic movement is a peace movement, an international movement. All nations have to be involved in it, including the Abkhaz people. It cannot be isolated from the Olympic Games, for the latter are going to be held a few kilometres away from Abkhazian territory. So the very principle of the Olympic movement demands that the Abkhazian economy and residents of Abkhazia be integrated in the process (cited in Rytövuori-Apunen, 2013).

The internationalism inherent in Olympic ideology is state-centred, conservative and anti-radical. It fits very well into the rhetoric of dominant actors, naturalizing and depoliticizing the status quo and power claims of nation-states. At the same time, all kinds of counter-hegemonic actions, questioning some aspect or policy of the host-state, are labelled as "political" and thereby banned from the Olympics.

When talking about the role of the 2014 Games in promoting dialogue and reconciliation between peoples, the specific qualities of the geographic location are often mentioned. As many other places in the Caucasus, the Sochi region is home to a multitude of ethnic groups such as Armenians, Circassians and Estonians. The background is very complex, but wars, deportations and split-and-divide politics are part of the picture (cf. Coene, 2010). In official rhetoric, the multi-ethnic character of Sochi is put forward as making it especially suitable for the Olympics. At a forum devoted to sports and peace, the head of the local administration in Sochi, Anatolii Pakhomov, claimed that: "Sochi is an ideal location for this forum, because it is the home of more than a hundred different European, Asian and Middle Eastern cultures" (sochi2014.ru e). An article in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* wrote about a monument being built in Sochi, consisting of soil from all 83 regions in Russia (Gorelov, 2013), a story which played into the imagination of "Sochi as a Russian microcosm".

The portrayal of Sochi, situated at the foot of the Caucasus mountains, as an epitome of successful multiculturalism bears the potential of a symbolic re-loading of the term "Caucasus" (*Kavkaz*), a word which since the 1990s in Russia and elsewhere has gained the connotations of separatism, inter-ethnic strife and terrorism. The diverse Caucasus could have been presented to the world as a place of long-time peaceful conviviality and cultural interchange, not just conflict. However, in the narrative of Sochi-2014 Sochi is not presented as part of the Caucasus but of Russia. In fact, the word "Caucasus" is never used in the material I have studied. Thus, we should not expect the Sochi Olympics to contribute to such a symbolic re-inscription.

The spectacle of the other

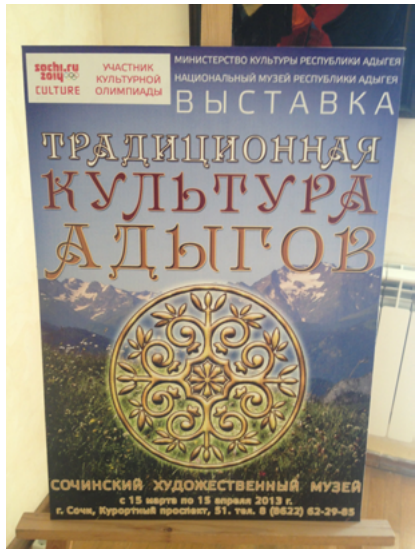

Image 3. The exhibition "Traditional culture of the Circassians"

An important aspect of the imagination of a diverse and tolerant Russia is the display of ethnic minorities and local cultures. According to Stuart Hall, we are fascinated by otherness, because the exhibition of other people as different from ourselves serves to fix boundaries and is necessary for the imagination of community (Hall, 1997:257f). One function of such displays is to delineate normality. By naming and pointing out certain groups, though nominally including them in the "us",

Image 4: The exhibition "Traditional culture of the Circassians"

their otherness is reinscribed and marked, and the ethno-cultural norm reinforced.

In May 2013, I visited an exhibition at the Sochi Museum of Arts, entitled "Traditional culture of the Circassians" (see images 3-4). The exhibition was presented as part of the cultural program of the Sochi Olympics. The Circassians (in Russian variously termed *adygeitsy, kabardiny, cherkessy*) are a Caucasian ethnic group which ruled the Sochi area until the bloody end of the "Caucasian war" in 1864, and have since then been to a large extent scattered in diaspora. Due to the 150th anniversary of what many Circassians call a genocide, and the fact that Krasnaya Polyana, where the skiing competitions will take place during the Olympics, was the place were tsarist forces celebrated the defeat of independent Circassia, this "skeleton in Russia's closet" (Dzutsev, 2011) has been revived by the Olympics. Sochi-2014 has mobilized Circassians abroad and in Russia to call for genocide recognition, and in some cases for an international boycott (Hansen, 2013). Simultaneously, the uprisings in Libya and Syria, two countries with large Circassian minorities, have led to a debate about whether Circassians whose ancestors were deported in the 19th century should have the right to return to Russia.

These sensitive issues were not the topic of the exhibition. Instead the museum focused on traditional costumes, weapons, handicraft, musical instruments and jewellery. In classical orientalist style, the Circassians were pictured as a noble but uncivilized tribal people, consisting of belligerent proud men and exotically charming veiled women[1]. The history of the Circassians in the Sochi region was traced back thousands of years, and maps showed the extension of Circassia in the 19th century. There was no mention of colonial wars, deportations, refugees or current Circassian claims for recognition.

The museum exhibition is a good example of how, by selective narrations, the other is domesticated and reduced to kitsch and folklore, and how conflict-ridden histories and prevailing inequalities are glossed over. At the

1 Such representations of a symbolic "East" (a role played alternately by The Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Far East), have a long tradition in Russian cultural history, spanning from Pushkin's and Tolstoy's romantic tales of mountain savages, to Soviet cinema and contemporary works of popular culture (cf. Layton 1995; Michaels 2004).

same time a norm is reinforced: by picturing the "ethnic" other as uncivilised and stuck in tradition, the Russian self emerges as civilized and progressive (cf. Oye, 2010). At the time of writing, the Olympic opening ceremony in 2014 still lies ahead, but my guess is that we can expect similar displays of "ethnic diversity", celebrating the otherness of minority cultures, but in a superficial, stereotyping and depoliticizing way, stripping them of any difference or history which cannot be accommodated within the master narrative.

Concluding remarks

This article has examined a particular media event – the Sochi Olympics – as a project of belonging, imagining and displaying a Russia which is diverse, tolerant and inclusive, whose history of ethnic conviviality makes it an example of successful multiculturalism. The narrative makes use of Olympic clichés of the kind obligatory at every Olympic Games nowadays, but is also firmly rooted in the official ideology of mnogonatsionalnost', which has been a legitimizing principle for the Russian state since tsarist times. Despite a universalist language, ethnic Russians are awarded a normative status in this multinational community, e.g. through displays of the otherness of minority peoples. This practice fits well into the ideological stance of the current Russian administration that ethnic Russians are a lead culture holding together a unique civilization. Recalling what Floya Anthias writes about how imaginations of belonging gloss over fissures, losses, absences and borders within them (2006:21) the official discourse of Sochi-2014 operates according to this logic of depoliticization. Political and social contingencies are subsumed into an image of completion, harmony and taken-for-grantedness. The Russia which is imagined and displayed – inclusive, tolerant, multicultural and peace-striving – is just there, emptied from contradiction and conflict. A closer examination, however, reveals silences and exclusions in the dominant narrative, things that do not fit in and therefore can expose the limits and incoherencies of Russia's Olympic dream.

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The 2014 Sochi Olympics and Russia's Civil Society

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Abstract *This article examines the impact of mega-events on civil society. Based on a case study of the 2014 Sochi Olympics, it concludes that mega-events provide a way for state-business alliances to impose their development preferences on society with little oversight or accountability. Environmental groups, in particular, find few opportunities to influence decisions. Nevertheless, activism is not completely futile because, in some cases, groups can use events like the Olympics as a platform to score small victories and to develop experience that can be applied in subsequent confrontations. Additionally, mega-events expand the repertoire of Russian organizations by giving them a central focus around which they can organize, though to date, they have not taken advantage of these opportunities.*

What is the relationship between civil society groups and the organizers of mega-events such as the Olympics? Activists in the field, and academics investigating them, have come to mutually contradictory conclusions. One side focuses on how civil society groups can use the massive investment made in the Olympics by others as a platform through which they can hijack the international media spotlight to promote progressive change that the event organizers did not plan (Price, 2008). The other side argues that mega-events work in just the opposite way – allowing states and corporations to limit the input of civil society while they take advantage of the scale and limited time frame afforded by Olympic planning to act with little public oversight or scrutiny (Lenskyj, 2008).

Efforts by civil society groups to exploit the Olympics to promote their own agendas take advantage of the fact that the Games stand at the nexus of a country's domestic and foreign policy. Olympic hosts decide to bid for the Games, in part, because they are interested in boosting their international image (Burbank, Andranovich, & Heying, 2001), which makes them susceptible to pressure from the international community. The most celebrated example of an Olympic event encouraging democratization was the end of military rule in South Korea just before the 1988 Seoul Games. Political protests in the summer of 1987 called into question Korea's ability to host the games the next year and the unprecedented international media attention on the country facilitated the declaration of military ruler President Chun Doo Hwan on 29 June 1987 to step down and call direct elections in December 1987 (Pound, 2008). With an eye to such global leverage, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as Human Rights Watch, regularly seek to capture the media attention of the Olympics to affect change on a wide range of issues, including labor abuses, media repression, religious freedom, and civil liberties (Worden, 2008). The Games are also seen as a mechanism for promoting environmental awareness and developing a green lifestyle in the host countries and among those who attend or view the competition on television. Even if efforts to promote such causes are not immediately successful, the Olympics provide a rallying point around which civil society organizations can develop experience to use in future campaigns (Fors, 2009).

While the Olympics may provide civil society groups with a platform to promote their causes, they also hand the state and corporations tools for limiting society's ability to exercise oversight and hold the officials account-

able. Researchers like Bent Flyvbjerg and his colleagues describe a world of "design by deception," in which mega-projects are frequently approved even though their sponsors underestimate costs, overestimate benefits, overvalue local development effects, and undervalue environmental impacts (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Once a city wins a bid for the Olympics, it has seven years to get ready. Since there is no flexibility in the schedule – the Opening Ceremony must take place at the appointed time – officials often shortcircuit ordinary accountability processes as they determine resource allocations in democratic countries (Lenskyj, 2008) and use the Olympic cloak to legimitize their actions in authoritarian countries, where there is little public accountability even under normal conditions. One recent study concluded: "There is, in other words, a well-established pattern here, spanning mega-events, continents, and regime types. The pattern is one where corporate profit and effective delivery are valued more highly in event hosting than the values of participatory democracy or social justice (Hayes & Karamichas, 2012, p. 21)."

This article will seek to sort out these contesting versions of the relationship between civil society and mega-events in authoritarian conditions by examining the role of Russian environmental organizations in the preparations for the 2014 Sochi Olympics. When does "platforming" work, allowing civil society groups to change the narrative of the Games that was designed by state and corporate Olympic organizers for other purposes? When do states and corporations prevail in using mega-events in ways that limit the role of civil society? Ultimately, this article concludes that mega-events create opportunities that civil society can exploit as well as new constraints on its activities.

The Olympic mega-event and state-society relations in Russia

Sports mega-events are typically defined in the academic literature as "large-scale cultural (including commercial and sporting) events, which have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance (Roche, 2000)." Such events have significant consequences for the host city, region, or country in which they occur and attract extensive media coverage (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006, p. 2). The Olympics and a handful of other events make it possible to reach a "global television" audience that is both large in size, numbering in the billions, and includes viewers willing to interrupt their daily routine for the event (Spa, Rivenburgh, & Larson, 1995, p. 209). Mega-projects are the massive infrastructure ventures, usually driven by public funding, associated with making such events possible.

Our definition of civil society distinguishes it from the state and corporations (Cohen & Arato, 1994). In particular, we focus on the organizations that serve as intermediaries between citizens, on one side, and state and corporations, on the other (Henry, 2010). This definition of civil society is particularly useful in authoritarian Russia, where the state frequently works closely with chosen corporations against broader public interests.

Typically Russia's environmental groups did not have anywhere near the resources or organizational infrastructure of the Olympic backers, making their interaction asymmetrical. The Olympics add to the conventional repertoire of the protest movement in Russia and benefit civil society because the Games deliver a specific event around which organizations can mobilize. Moreover, the Olympics provide a set of ideals that the Russian author-

ities claim to support and the members of civil society can hold them to these ideals.

For Russia's civil society, a central question is to decide whether to play by the regime's rules and work inside the system or instead to devote their resources to pressuring the regime from outside, using street protests and other means (Kozlovsky, 2013). Participating within the system is difficult because the regime elites have stacked the rules in their favor, making it extremely difficult for the opposition to win a contested election or gain access to meaningful decision-making processes. Even established democracies have blocked access by environmental groups. In several Olympic cities, the organizers set up consultative bodies to work with civil society groups and incorporate their input. However, it is not clear whether these groups had any real power to make changes in the ways that the Games were organized or were just designed to neutralize unwanted public criticism. In fact, some activists charge that the authorities' motivation behind establishing such groups is to prevent the opposition from having any impact on the management of the Games (Shaw, 2008, p. 11). Given the small chance of success, it is difficult to mobilize Russian citizens to participate in such "systemic" activities. Protests, on the other hand, can be dangerous for participants since they risk being beaten or arrested, making it difficult to turn out people in numbers that will make a difference in the political system. Given the choice between these poor alternatives, most Russian citizens decide not to participate at all (Howard, 2002).

In contrast to the relatively resource-deprived civil society organizations, the Russian state has an extensive tool kit that it can use in responding to citizen-led initiatives. These responses range from repression (arresting the key activists, forcing their emigration, or the use of violence against them), harassment (intrusive legal or regulatory investigations, hacker attacks on their websites), cooption (enducing groups to support regime preferences), ignoring, and even incorporating their input into the decision-making processes.

The Environmental Movement in Sochi

Environmental issues present a useful test of whether the Olympics serve as a platform for civil society groups to promote progressive causes or a mechanism for states and corporations to circumvent such input. The IOC had little interest in environmental issues before the 1990s, but the 1992 Albertville Games were an environmental disaster, prompting the Olympic movement to revise its policy and add the environment as the movement's third pillar, along with sport and culture. There is some anticipation that having environmental standards could promote international norms diffusion and raise expectations among domestic constituencies of a cleaner environment (Hayes & Karamichas, 2012).

The environmental stakes for the Sochi Olympics are high because the infrastructure construction associated with the Winter Olympics has a greater impact on the natural setting than the construction associated with the Summer Games, even though the Summer Games usually have a higher profile and more participants. The Winter Games take place in mountainous areas that are more ecologically fragile than the urban locations where summer events are held and usually require the construction of a man-made setting that is more difficult to manage (Dansero, Corpo, Mela, & Ropolo, 2012). Likewise, the winter events concentrate large numbers of people in

small places, which can put severe stresses on the surroundings. Sochi's ecological footprint is bigger than for most Games because its bid proposed an ambitious plan that would deliver all new sporting facilities and extensive infrastructure construction, including a new airport terminal, construction of railway and roads from coast to mountains, roads in the mountain area linking the sites, and significant upgrades to Sochi's sewer and electricity systems. Competitors from Austria, which also sought to host the Games, argued that the use of existing structures in Salzberg would limit environmental impact if their site were chosen (International Olympic Commission, 2007, p. 69).

Practice has not lived up to the ideals espoused in the concept of a "Green Games." At the Torino 2006 Games, organizers set up the Environmental Consultative Assembly with representatives of 13 environmental organizations and 10 local government institutions. The group was helpful in identifying problems with the Olympics and disseminating information. However, it had little actual impact on the organization of the Games beyond reducing the number of snow-making machines to limit their environmental toll (Dansero, et al., 2012). An analysis of the 2000 Sydney Games found that the bid laid out extensive environmental protections, but the New South Wales government legislation created loopholes and conflicts with the original guidelines, resulting in what watchdog Green Games Watch 2000 described as "selective compliance" to environmental requirements (Caratti & Ferraguto, 2012). Residents affected by Olympic construction could not file lawsuits against them and the project managers did not have to file the usual environmental impact assessments (Hayes & Karamichas, 2012). Another assessment found that in the cases of Sydney and Athens 2004, the events did not leave an ecological legacy (Karamichas, 2012). In neither place did the Olympics result in a culture change or the adoption of strategies to protect the environment. In preparation for the 2004 Athens Olympics, Greece altered its constitution in order to limit forest protection (article 24.1), ultimately circumscribing the power of environmental and citizen initiative groups (Hayes & Karamichas, 2012, p. 16). Similarly, the Beijing Games failed to stimulate a long-term solution to that city's air pollution problems (Rich, 2012).

Sochi's experience with the Games seems to be in line with previous Olympic experience regarding environmental protections: great promises are made up front, but there is little implementation afterwards (Müller, 2013). In its bid for the Games, the Sochi organizers claimed that "Sochi has developed an integrated and inclusive system for managing natural resources by working closely with public authorities and non-governmental organizations (Sochi 2014, 2007, p. 31)." However, the small but vocal environmental movement in Russia has criticized the deleterious impact the construction and associated activities will have on the natural surroundings of the city and the nearby ecology, including land allocation, water pollution, waste management, and other consequences of intensified human use. Even before the IOC accepted Sochi's application to host the Games, a group of 47 environmental groups from across Russia asked the IOC to reject Sochi's proposal (Kavkazskii uzel, 2007). The activists wrote that they had nothing against hosting the Games in Russia, but rejected the high environmental price of bringing the event to Sochi. They noted that seven venues were planned to be created in the Sochi National Park and the buffer zone to the UNESCO World Heritage Site Cauca-

sus State Biosphere Preserve. This problem, combined with the lack of positive environmental evaluations, the failure to take public opinion into account in making management decisions, and the violation of numerous Russian environmental laws in preparation for the Games formed the core of the complaints in an "anti-bid book" prepared by several environmental groups (Avtonomnoe Deistvie, Druzhina okhrany prirody MGU, Institute "Kollektivnoe deistvie", & Maikopskoe otdelenie VOOP, 2007).

Once the bid was accepted, Sochi's green movement lodged a number of complaints about the Games and the construction associated with them. In evaluating the bid, the commission expressed hope for continued dialogue with environmental NGOs on litigation that they had pending against the government. However, such state-society dialogue seemed unlikely in practice because the bid committee assured the IOC that "any action by the Supreme Court would have no effect on construction schedules and development of Olympic venues (International Olympic Commission, 2007)."

As noted above, a central dilemma for environmental organizations is whether to work with the event organizers in the hopes that they can reduce the environmental impact or to confront it head on through protests. Observers of mega-event planning have argued that the process is primarily top-down and citizens' participation typically consists of reacting to plans developed elsewhere (Hayes & Karamichas, 2012, p. 22). There was little citizen input in the U.S. games held in Los Angeles, Salt Lake City or Atlanta (Burbank, et al., 2001). In the case of Sochi, public opinion polling shows that participation and consultation in planning have been marginal and local support for the Games has shrunk from 86 percent in October 2006 to 57 percent by November 2010 (Müller, 2012). In spite of their promises to cooperate, the authorities ignored the main requests of the environmentalists. Already in 2008 the Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology changed the zoning of the Sochi National Park to allow construction there (Shevchenko, 2013), a decision that was reinforced on July 14, 2009, when the Sochi City Council adopted a new general plan for the city's development confirming this change (Perova, Karpova, & Aminov, 2009).

The big international environmental groups World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Greenpeace originally worked with the authorities, but subsequently became disillusioned with the state's failure to follow through on environmental measures discussed. On July 3, 2008, Igor Chestin, head of the World Wildlife Fund's Russia chapter, and Ivan Blokhov, a representative of Greenpeace, met with Putin in Sochi and he agreed to move the bobsled run and alpine Olympic Village from their planned location on the Grushev Ridge. After this meeting, Putin seemed to think that the Games would now have the environmentalists' stamp of approval and Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandr Zhukov declared that the organizations had no more claims against the Sochi sites (Naumov, 2008).

However, what seemed like a good start quickly fell apart. By 2010 the relationship had turned adversarial because the WWF felt that decisions agreed to at meetings with the authorities simply were not enforced (World Wildlife Fund, 2010a). The group noted, in particular, that the construction of the combined road/railroad from Adler to Krasnaya Polyana, the largest infrastructure project of the Olympic effort worth more than $6 billion, began without a sufficient analysis of the environmental impact. At that time, the United

Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) warned that the organizers were not doing enough to compensate for the environmental damage that the construction was causing (United Nations Environmental Programme, 2010). Subsequent efforts by UNEP to set up a dialogue between the environmental NGOs and the authorities in October 2010 failed, according to WWF, Greenpeace, Ecological Watch on the Northern Caucasus (a group that had consistly opposed the authorities) and other social organizations, because "as with previous Missions, the bureaucrats either ignored the meetings, created obstacles for the participation of society, or sent people with no power to make decisions to the meetings (World Wildlife Fund, 2010b)." In one case, the bureaucrats started a meeting that had been planned for 2 pm at 11 am without warning the NGOs in advance, thereby making it impossible for them to participate. By January 2011 the NGOs refused to meet with UNEP because they felt that such meetings would not solve environmental problems "but could be used for the purpose of providing 'green public relations' for the Olympics (World Wildlife Fund, 2011)."

A major problem for the environmental organizations is that Russia has hollowed out the institutions that typically organize Olympic Games, turning them into facades, and shifting power to other organizations that have even less accountability to the public (Robertson, 2011, pp. 194-197). In its January 2011 mission report to Moscow and Sochi, the UNEP itself complained that its main partner, and the institution that is supposed to be implementing the environmental plans, the Sochi 2014 Organizing Committee, in fact has little control over the construction and development of the facilities and that real power lies with organizations like Olympstroy and Russian Railroads, state-controlled corporations with little public oversight (United Nations Environmental Programme, 2011).

Activists working on environmental issues surrounding the Russian Olympics risked their own personal safety. One of the most prominent activists fighting against environmental damage caused by the Olympics is Suren Gazaryan, who represents Ecological Watch on the Northern Caucasus. Along with his colleague Andrei Rudomakha, he was detained by the authorities for several hours when he tried to block the illegal logging of protected trees in the construction of the road/railroad linking Adler and Krasnaya Polyana in August 2009 (World Wildlife Fund, 2009). Gazaryan also spoke out against the use of timber from the Sochi National Park and warned about the dangers of the dumps being created near Sochi. At the end of 2012, Gazaryan fled Russia for Estonia fearing imminent arrest for his efforts to expose the construction of a billon dollar vacation home in Krasnodar Krai, allegedly for Putin, and protests against illegal logging around the governor's dacha[1].

In a situation where the state authorities were both the key decision makers and unwilling to respond to ecological concerns, the environmental movement largely gave up its efforts to protest the games and the infrastructure construction around them. After 2009, WWF declared that "these Olympic games will never be 'green,' since they have already caused irreparable damage to unique ecosystems," although they still held out hope in that "there is still a chance to minimize further negative consequences and carry out territorial compensatory measures (expanding and creating special nature preserves) (World

1 See his blog: http://gazaryan-suren.livejournal.com/, particularly http://gazaryan-suren.livejournal.com/105213.html

Wildlife Fund, 2010c)." Activities by other groups also petered out. The Institute for Collective Action lists no Sochi related protests in 2013 through August 15[2] though the Ecological Watch on the Northern Caucasus continues to post news of environmental damage caused by the Olympic construction at its website (http://ewnc.org/) even though the Russian security services searched their office and e-mail on March 27, 2013, and warned them to register as a "foreign agent" (Human Rights Watch, 2013) under repressive anti-NGO legislation Russia adoped in 2012.

Despite these overall setbacks, civil society groups have won some victories. In one of the most prominent triumphs, the residents of Kudepsta protested against the construction of a gas-powered power plant from May 2012 to April 2013. In May 2013, when it was clear that construction would not be completed in time for the Olympics, Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Kozak announced that the project would be removed from the Olympic program and that all construction would be stopped (Human Rights Watch, 2013). He claimed that the electricity would not be needed after all. Protesters were also able to block the construction of a second port that would only create surplus shipping capacity that could not be utilized (Shevchenko, 2013). Similarly protests blocked the Evraziiskii company and its French partner Degremont from constructing a 4 billion ruble factory to burn sludge. The firms claimed the factory as part of the Olympic program and hoped to get state support. However, societial groups opposed the plant and what seemed like a sure thing in 2010 was cancelled in 2011, when the Russian government declared that burning such waste was not ecological (Shevchenko, 2013). While all these cases represent victories for the environmental groups, it is also possible that the organizers decided to curtail the projects for a variety on non-ecology related business reasons because it no longer made sense to proceed with the projects.

Conclusion

The experience of environmental groups in the preparations for the Sochi Olympics confirms the expectation that an alliance of state and corporation interests can use a mega-event to propel their pro-development interests while minimizing the extent of public input. Although Russia's overall political climate is hostile to NGO input in public-policy making, the Olympic time frame and expectations of a global audience provide an excuse for the authorities to further curtail the role of civil society. In this sense, the Olympics did not live up to the expectations of those who saw the Games as a platform to promote a variety of progressive causes.

However, while the environmental groups had little overall impact on the preparations for the Games, they were able to limit the extent of the environmental impact by blocking the construction of some facilities that had been included in the Olympic plans. In these limited cases, citizen action had consequences. Such experience helps Russian groups to develop skills and knowledge that will accumulate over time. The key question in defining future state-society relations, though, will be whether the regime learns to better deploy its repressive arsenal just as quickly as the civil society groups learn to focus their protests.

2 http://www.ikd.ru/taxonomy/term/92, accessed August 15, 2013

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Life On The Ground: A Comparative Analysis of Two Villages in Sochi During Olympic Transformation

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Abstract *This paper examines the effects of major infrastructure development for an international mega-event on two villages in rural Russia. The focus is on the experiences of people witnessing these changes firsthand, as Russia prepares to host the 2014 Olympics in Sochi. The work is grounded in field research, 19 ethnographic interviews, and government documents. Extensive interviews were conducted with Sochi locals living in two villages on opposite sides of the Mzymta River, between the Coastal Cluster of Olympic venues on the Black Sea coast and the Mountain Cluster of venues in Krasnaya Polyana. These villages have undergone radically divergent changes since Olympic development began, and contrasting the personal experiences of their inhabitants shines a light on the human element of the massive construction involved in hosting the world's most prestigious mega-event. It is concluded that, while much of the infrastructure development is needed and welcomed, many locals nonetheless feel significantly marginalized, excluded from the discussion, and not benefiting from their region's development.*

Keywords: Russia; Sochi; Olympics; Mega-Events; Kazachiy Brod; Akhshtyr'

Introduction

With a budget already exceeding 50 billion USD[1], the Sochi Olympics represent unprecedented levels of investment in a relatively under-populated, rural area. Major infrastructure improvements have been touted by official sources as a significant part of the legacy of the 2014 Olympic Games:

"By 2014 Sochi will have built and reconstructed more than 360km of roads and 200km of railways. New water treatment facilities are under construction in Krasnaya Polyana and Adler. New, ecologically clean power facilities are being built in the Mountain and Coastal Clusters.

The main Olympic artery will be the Dzhubga-Lazarevskoe-Sochi gas pipeline - a critical supply of gas for the city...The pipeline will provide 2.78 billion cubic meters of gas per year. This will bring gas to many settlements and will ensure a reliable energy supply for Sochi.

The legacy of the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi will include an improved network of roads and highways, a modern international airport, aerial tramways in the mountains, and a system of power stations."[2]

The official translation on the English version of the OlympStroy website, although less detailed, adds the following text: "*We have made a long-lasting positive impact on the development of the area. A legacy for everyone... a brand new infrastructure of energy, water, telecommunications and transport, international hotels...*"[3]

Further, the discussion of mega-events often focuses on macroeconomic results and

1 Thomas Grove, 2013. Russia's $50 billion Olympic gamble. Reuters [online], February 21. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/02/21/us-russia-sochi-idUSBRE91K04M20130221> [Accessed 21 September 2013].

2 OlympStroy evidence. O Korporatsii [About the Corporation]. [online]. Available at: <http://www.sc-os.ru/ru/about/> (author translation)

3 OlympStroy evidence. About the Corporation. [online]. Available at: <http://www.sc-os.ru/en/about/>

frames the impact of development in terms of tourism, GDP, and the benefits that an improved infrastructure will bring to economic development in the region as a whole. In a 2010 official interview, Dmitriy Chernyshenko, the president and CEO of the Sochi 2014 Organizing Committee, said "*the Winter Games will attract investment from around the world and open up unprecedented opportunities for the region's tourist and leisure industry*."[4]

This theme is evident in literature, government documents, and news reports concerning mega-events not just in Russia, but in London[5], China[6], Rio[7], and South Africa (Swart and Bob, 2004; Blackmore and Rottok, 2010). It is contended here that focusing solely on the macro level leaves out the critical human element, and that concentrating attention on the opinions and experiences of local residents adds depth and value, working toward a more comprehensive discussion of the wholesale effects inherent in mega-development. Müller (2012) has documented the positive and negative perceptions of Sochi residents in light of the preparations for the Olympic Games, and this paper follows in Müller's path by posing the following research question: How has Olympic mega-development affected the lives of local people in the very center of these changes? By focusing on the personal observations of affected individuals, we can improve our understanding of what it means to host major international events, particularly in rural areas where the necessary infrastructure development is more noticeable and the social, economic, and ecological changes are more drastic.

This paper focuses on the micro level of individuals and families in two neighboring villages in Sochi, both profoundly affected by Olympic-related development. These two villages, spatially and socially linked by a small footbridge over a river, have had a close, intertwined, parallel history. Since Olympic construction began, however, the two villages have undergone radical, divergent development, primarily due to differences in inherited infrastructure caused by their geographical location. Through detailed interviews with residents of these villages, a critical examination is developed of this fragmentation, framed in the lives and experiences of the people who are quite literally hosting this international event. Drawing attention to their own observations and opinions shows the divergent ways in which Olympic development has altered regular life, underscoring their perceptions of the uneven distribution of resources, and ultimately helping craft a more complete understanding of what it means to host a major international sporting event in a rural area.

4 Dmitry Chernyshenko, 2010. Quoted in Sochi 2014 Environment Popular Ecology Newsletter [online], issue 02, Winter 2010. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1aneZLH> [Accessed 30 October 2013].

5 Olympic.org evidence. Benefits of hosting London 2012 will be ongoing. Official website of the Olympic Movement [online]. August 12, 2012. Available at: <http://www.olympic.org/news/benefits-of-hosting-london-2012-will-be-ongoing/172370> [Accessed 30 October 2013].

6 Xinhua News Agency evidence. Beijing offers Olympic template for developing countries. Xinhua News Agency [online], August 25, 2008. Available at: <http://www.china.org.cn/olympics/news/2008-08/25/content_16327893.htm> [Accessed 22 September 2013].

7 IOC President Jacques Rogge. Quoted in Associated Press/Yahoo News article [online]. July 10, 2013. Available at: <http://yhoo.it/1dncUOu> [Accessed 30 October 2013].

Figure 1. Kazachiy Brod and Akhshtyr', between the two clusters of Olympic sites in Sochi, Russia

Mega-Events and Marginalization

The effects of mega-events on poor or marginalized populations is well-documented. Under the pressure of an internationally-visible deadline, host countries often conduct aggressive "beautification" projects in which impoverished local populations are displaced or hidden, and the international community has been guilty of failing to examine this tendency (Greene, 2003). Gaffney (2010) has detailed the radical transformation of land, the rapid construction of infrastructure networks, the behavior of organizing committees with access to resources, and the lack of legal recourse to people displaced or aggrieved by mega-events. Further, Kennelly and Watt (2011) have highlighted the contrast between the positive perceptions of the Olympics and the real-life consequences for homeless youth in the urban environments of Vancouver and London. In the context of this scholarship, this paper identifies two rural villages in the very heart of Russian Olympic construction and investigates the reactions and opinions of the people there.

Geographical Focus

Visitors to the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi will arrive either at the refurbished international airport or at the newly-constructed train station, both located in Adler, a district or sub-city of Sochi. The Coastal Cluster of Olympic sites has been built near these transportation hubs, but the Mountain Cluster lies approximately 40km away in the town of Krasnaya Polyana, at an altitude of 550m (1800 ft) above sea level. Until recently, there was only one road connecting Adler to Krasnaya Polyana, running into the mountains alongside the Mzymta river. As part of the development of Olympic infrastructure, a federal highway was built on the opposite side of the river, and a dedicated rail service between the clusters will be completed in time for the Olympic Games in February.

Although the entire city of Sochi and its districts are undergoing intensive construction and renovation, the focus of this investigation is on Kazachiy Brod and Akhshtyr', two small villages on opposite sides of the Mzymta river, situated 15km from the Coastal Cluster of Olympic sites in Adler and approximately 30km from the Mountain Cluster of sites in

Figure 2. Locals walking in Kazachiy Brod in 2013. New houses, new fences, new streetlights.

Krasnaya Polyana. Every spectator and athlete will pass these villages repeatedly during the Games; aside from helicopter, there is no other way to travel between the Olympic Clusters. Figure 1 shows the location of Kazachiy Brod and Akhshtyr' in relation to Adler, Sochi, and the rest of Europe. Figure 2 shows a snapshot of Kazachiy Brod in 2013. Every house visible in the picture was built after 2007. Figure 3 shows houses in Akhshtyr' surrounded by new power towers, along the construction road that leads through the village to the new quarry.

Parallel Villages, Divergent Development

Kazachiy Brod and Akhshtyr' are connected over the Mzymta river by a small footbridge, but they are following dramatically divergent paths in terms of government attention and development. The original road linking Adler to Krasnaya Polyana runs west of the river, through Kazachiy Brod. This road has been vital to the village. It has been paved since Soviet times and has always had bus service. In contrast, the main link between Akhshtyr' and Adler is a poorly-maintained dirt road. Because their own infrastructure is lacking or nonexistent, residents of Akhshtyr' routinely cross the footbridge to Kazachiy Brod to shop or to commute to the urban centers.

"People from Akhshtyr' came over the bridge every day. They would come to take the bus. That's how kids got to school, that's how people got to work. They'd come over the bridge and do their shopping and then walk back across the river and be picked up in a car. It's a far walk uphill."

(Author interview: Kazachiy Brod resident "A", August 25, 2013.)

Figure 3. Houses on the construction road to Akhshtyr' in 2013. New power lines and towers.

Despite the presence of a few small shops in Kazachiy Brod, both villages shared a common, relatively low level of infrastructural development: both villages had dirt roads in poor condition, ramshackle houses with asbestos roofs, and cows could be seen wandering even on the main road. Further, both villages have endured similar difficulties with the lack of public infrastructure. To this day, neither village has a connection to a municipal gas line; all cooking is done on electric ranges or via propane tanks, and houses are typically heated by wood-burning stoves. Until very recently, the water in Kazachiy Brod was not potable and was often shut off; if residents had money, they would have drinking water delivered by truck. Akhshtyr' had no water connection at all, but some of the fortunate residents had their own wells. Neither village could rely on the electricity supply and blackouts were a fact of life. These rural villages were not keeping pace with the urban seaside in terms of access to basic goods and services. This was the general living situation before the Olympics were announced in 2007.

Situated along the only transport corridor between the two Olympic clusters, the people in these villages theoretically stood to gain tremendous material advantages from the boom in development and tourism. Indeed, when it was announced that Sochi would host the Olympics, many residents expressed optimism, and some even made plans for business ventures.[8]

8 Author interview: Pogos Antonyan, Akhshtyr', August 4, 2007; author interview: Kazachiy Brod resident "H", August 7, 2007; author interview: Kazachiy Brod worker "K", July 1, 2013.

Kazachiy Brod: Booming and Unrecognizable

The existence of the road in Kazachiy Brod has fundamentally altered the village since Olympic construction began. On the way to Krasnaya Polyana, every piece of construction equipment and every worker has passed through Kazachiy Brod. The quiet country village has been transformed into a loud, turbulent mess, filled with construction, traffic, tourists, new stores, new houses, and a host of unfamiliar faces.

"*The construction is unbelievable. Kamazi [heavy duty construction trucks] are racing by 24 hours a day. There's dust everywhere, dust from the construction, dust from the trucks. You wipe the windowsill in the morning and in the afternoon it's covered in dust again.*" (Author interview: Kazachiy Brod resident "M", August 2, 2013.)

"*We've already forgotten what it's like to have a calm city. You can't even recognize anything anymore.*" (Author interview: Kazachiy Brod resident "H", August 2, 2013.)

"*Before, we knew everybody in Kazachiy Brod. You'd walk to Arut [the store on the main road] and there were no strangers. Nowadays, there are strangers everywhere. Guest workers rent rooms in houses that didn't exist two years ago.*" (Author conversation: Kazachiy Brod residents "M" and "P", July 18, 2013.)

A power substation was built on the banks of the Mzymta between the two villages. When construction began, workers started shopping at Arut, the main store in Kazachiy Brod. In the village itself, new houses with rooms for rent appeared on lots that had once been fields. Soon, other villagers subdivided their property and sold the parcels. These houses are sometimes occupied by extended

members of local families (itself a sign of increasing wealth in the area), but residents still complain about the number of Olympic workers renting rooms.[9]

The village now has a pharmacy and a shop for mobile phones, and ground was broken for a small shopping center - all unimaginable developments a few years ago. Local reaction to this increased activity is mixed. Clearly money is flowing to the area and some store owners are enjoying a boom. The situation is more nuanced for other residents, however. Short of renting out housing, there is little that villagers can do to earn money on this influx of workers and tourists. Thus many people focus on the immediately noticeable negative changes to their environment.

"*They've cut off the electricity almost every day this summer. Sometimes we sit all day without power.*"[10]

"*It's hard with all the construction and traffic jams. It's hard to get to work. I have to get up at 5:30 if I want to beat the traffic.*"[11]

"*It's never quiet anymore. You can hear them working all night in the quarry.*"[12]

"*Let the Olympics be over! We are being tortured here.*"[13]

It is worth noting that not everyone entertains such negative views, though the general mood in the village does seem pessimistic and harassed. Locals who are currently employed in Olympic projects - and therefore benefiting directly - have more positive opinions about the developments in the region.[14]

New improvements in the village include the installation of streetlights and the laying of new water pipes. For the first time, the village has been provided with public light and a source of potable water. It seems logical to credit Olympic infrastructure development for these improvements, but it has not yet been possible to find evidence to verify this specific causal relationship.

On the eve of the Olympics, Kazachiy Brod remains a village in confused transition. Despite some positive changes, people still face significant challenges in terms of infrastructure and access to resources, and they are tired of the endless construction activity. Electricity continues to be cut off regularly. The streets are in terrible condition and the culture of the village has been altered by the appearance of strangers. Ongoing construction is loud, disruptive, omnipresent, and relentless. At the same time, it is not accurate to say that material life has not improved. There is enough money for many people to improve their properties or to build new houses. There is municipal drinking water for the first time and the streets, though poorly maintained, are now lit at night. There are shops and restaurants being built. People in Kazachiy Brod have legitimate complaints about the changes in their village, even as they are benefiting from some of those changes. In sum, it appears as if the benefits they have received so far are

9 Author interview: Kazachiy Brod resident "P", July 3, 2013.

10 Author interview: Kazachiy Brod resident "M", August 2, 2013.

11 Author interview: Kazachiy Brod resident "C", July 1, 2013.

12 Author interview: Kazachiy Brod resident "A", July 2, 2013.

13 Author interview: Kazachiy Brod resident "N", July 4, 2013.

14 Author interview: Kazachiy Brod worker "K", July 1, 2013.

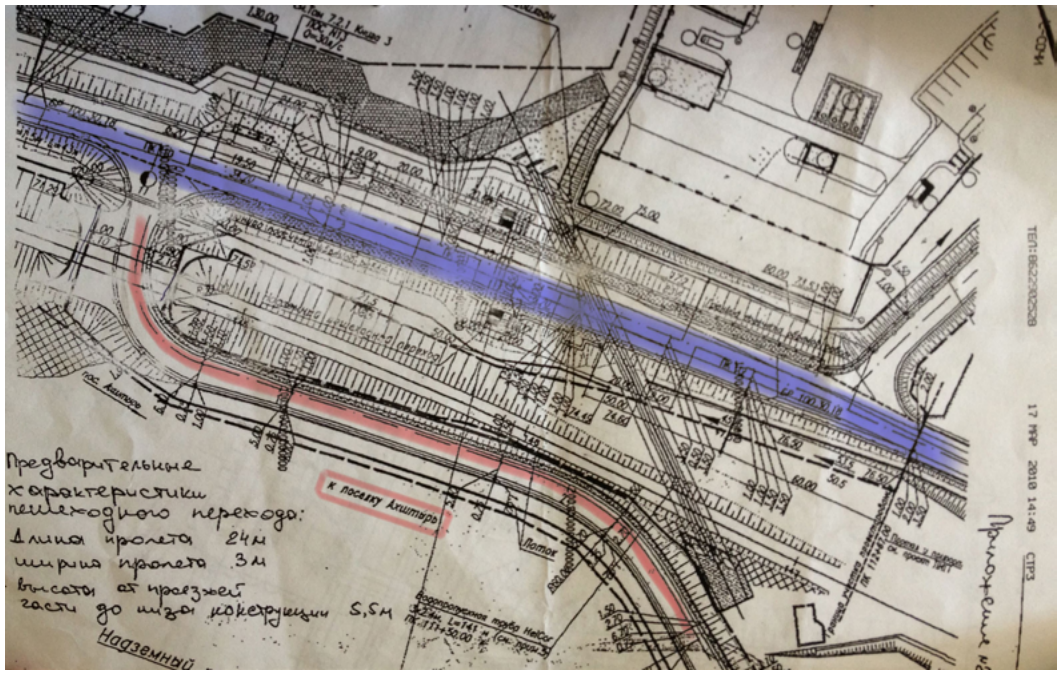

Figure 4. Federal highway marked in blue, onramp to Akhshtyr' marked in red.

not enough to outweigh the disruptions they are forced to endure.

Akhshtyr': Marginalized and Desperate

As part of the preparation for the Olympic Games, a new federal highway was built between Adler and Krasnaya Polyana, running along the east side of the river, approximately 500m from the village of Akhshtyr'. In the original planning documents, Akhshtyr' was to have access to this highway using an onramp, as shown in Figure 4.

Naturally, the people living in Akhshtyr' were enthusiastic about this project. "A road means life, and a good road means a good life."[15]

15 Author interview: Akhshtyr' resident "O", August 2, 2013.

The onramp was never built. In response, families submitted letters and petitions to local administrators, including the mayor of Sochi and executives in OlympStroy, the State Corporation responsible for the construction of Olympic venues. Their concerns have not been addressed.

"*We explained that there is a situation here but no one does anything. It doesn't matter that there was an onramp planned. There's nothing here now. Everyone says there's no money. The plan changed. But who changed these plans? No one ever wants to give us a real answer. They've told us, 'wait until the Olympics are over. Then you'll get everything you want.' But there is never anything concrete.*" (Author interview: Pogos Antonyan, Akhshtyr', August 2, 2013.)

Compounding matters, a new quarry was dug on the northern side of Akhshtyr', and a construction road was built through the vil-

lage (see Figure 5). The presence of the quarry is highly disturbing to residents. The drilling noise is ceaseless and can even be heard across the river in Kazachiy Brod, but in Akhshtyr' it is oppressive and inescapable. Work continues at night by the light of powerful spotlights. This activity creates a constant cloud of pulverized rock dust which is a daily disturbance to villagers. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the quarry itself represents the illegal destruction of a staggering amount of protected wilderness in a national park. Complaints from local residents and environmental activists have brought about no results.[16]

Figure 5. New quarry, set against the backdrop of the houses of Akhshtyr', 2013.

Another problem confronting the people in Akhshtyr' is the lack of water. Many families had personal water wells which were destroyed by the appearance of heavy industry in the area.

"*Now we get water from a truck once a week. We don't know where it comes from. We fill up containers and use that water. Next week the truck comes again. But after Olympic construction is done, those trucks will go away. What then? How will we go on? They drilled new wells but no water came up.*" (Author interview: Akhshtyr' resident "L", August 1, 2013.)

In protest, the residents of Akhshtyr' decided to block the federal highway and alerted the media. One young woman explained the results:

"*The evening before we were planning to close the highway, the police came around to every house in Akhshtyr'. They said, 'listen, if you go out onto the highway, we'll simply take you away. Just don't say we didn't warn you. You can feel free to go out onto the highway tomorrow if you want, but don't be surprised when you know what's going to happen.'*" (Author interview: Akhshtyr' resident "I", July 22, 2013.)

In the end the residents succumbed to this pressure and stayed home. No vocal protest took place, though people continue to write letters. In August 2013, Akhshtyr' residents learned that the authorities plan to use the quarry as a dump for construction debris. Currently they are circulating a petition against this plan, but they are not optimistic. The general opinion in Akhshtyr' regarding

16 Author conversation: Akhshtyr' resident "I" and ecological activists "Y" and "Z", July 22, 2013.

the Olympics can be summed up in the words of a man who lives in a house overlooking the new quarry:

"*I am very disappointed. There was supposed to be a new connection between Akhshtyr' and Kazachiy Brod. There was supposed to be an onramp to the federal highway. There was supposed to be gas, water, electricity, internet. All the things for a normal life. Nothing happened. There's no money for us. They're spending millions but there's no money here for the things they promised us.*" (Author interview: Akhshtyr resident "L", August 4, 2013.)

Locals are particularly frustrated by the unaccessible highway so close to their village, and they worry about their access to water after the Olympics are complete. People in Akhshtyr' feel significantly marginalized, and they have not seen any benefit from hosting the Olympics. On the contrary, by almost any measure, their lives have grown dramatically worse.

Conclusion

In examining the experiences of villagers in Kazachiy Brod and Akhshtyr', this paper attempts to explore the changes that occur in ordinary life during mega-development in a rural area. Despite sharing a common spatial bond and social history, the two villages have diverged wildly since Olympic construction began. People in Kazachiy Brod have legitimate complaints about development even as they build houses and businesses and benefit from certain infrastructure improvements. Across the river, people in Akhshtyr' have endured the loss of their water supply, the construction of an illegal quarry, and the threat of imprisonment for trying to bring attention to their plight. Regardless of the differences in their developmental trajectories, people in both villages are united by their almost universal desire for the Olympics to end.

The divergence between the two villages can be traced to the uneven distribution of resources, itself due to the historical legacy of the original road between Adler and Krasnaya Polyana. The existence of this paved road represents the critical difference between the villages. Because of its location along this road, Kazachiy Brod has been the recipient of investment and attention. This has inspired noticeable material changes in the lives of its residents. Despite the fact that residents' opinions are generally negative, no one can reasonably argue that people in Kazachiy Brod are worse off than the people across the river in Akhshtyr'.

In contrast to Kazachiy Brod, Akhshtyr' does not enjoy direct access to an important paved road. Indeed, the residents of Akhshtyr' traditionally have left their village and walked across the river into Kazachiy Brod to access the road and the associated benefits of transit and shopping. In context of Olympic development, this unequal relationship has become amplified. Whereas Kazachiy Brod is, for better or worse, a recipient of development, Akhshtyr' finds itself in the role of victim. The rock that is used to build Olympic infrastructure is taken from Akhshtyr', and the process of drilling that rock is hugely disruptive to local residents. Further, the construction equipment and heavy trucks that are necessary for this operation are responsible for destroying the village's wells and removing their access to potable water sources. Finally, the newly-built federal highway which could have integrated Akhshtyr' into the region runs past the village with no onramp or offramp. Access to any benefits of development is denied.

The key variable defining the differences

in recent development between Akhshtyr' and Kazachiy Brod is the original paved road. The existence of this road in Kazachiy Brod connects the village to certain fruits of Olympic development, while the lack of this road has left Akhshtyr' with no water, no reliable transit links, and the promise of an Olympic dump once construction is complete.

Using the opinions and reactions of local residents as the foundation for investigation, this work focuses on the geographical and infrastructural differentiation between these two villages in order to bring a more nuanced approach to the understanding of mega-event development in rural areas. Mega-events are not only about infrastructure improvements, increased tourism, and a more robust GDP; they are also about individual lives and land in the context of dramatic upheaval. Examining the micro level contributes to a more complete picture of the complex changes inherent in mega-development. Against the backdrop of events held in a spirit of international unity, there should be no room for local people to feel marginalized, forgotten, or ignored.

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