



# Strategic planning before and after a mega-event

**Bill Bramwell**

*Centre for Tourism, School of Leisure and Food Management, Sheffield Hallam University, Totley Hall Lane, Totley, Sheffield, S17 4AB, UK*

**This paper examines strategic planning in Sheffield, England around its hosting of the 1991 World Student Games, considering this before and after the mega-event. Aspects of strategic planning considered in this case study were identified from three theoretical perspectives on strategy: the classical, processual and systemic. The paper focuses on three aspects of Sheffield's strategic planning around the 1991 Games. The first aspect is the extent to which strategic planning was effective in linking the Games investment with the development of tourism for urban regeneration. The second is the degree to which there was a clear strategy around the Games investment both in advance of, and following, the Games. The third aspect is whether strategy emerged from formal analysis and decision-making or by learning, accident and political processes. The social and political circumstances affecting Sheffield's planning are also central to this assessment of strategy. The final part of the paper examines potential lessons from Sheffield's strategic planning. © 1997 Elsevier Science Ltd**

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Strategic planning is widely regarded as important for the successful development of tourist destinations.<sup>1</sup> Murphy<sup>2</sup> argues that tourism planning:

is concerned with anticipating and regulating change in a system, to promote orderly development so as to increase the social, economic, and environmental benefits of the development process. To do this, planning becomes 'an ordered sequence of operations, designed to lead to the achievement of either a single goal or to a balance between several goals.'

Many advantages may follow from adopting such a strategic approach to tourism planning. It allows for the selection and specification of objectives to work towards, an overall approach, and a system to monitor and respond to change.<sup>3</sup> Measures may also be identified against which the performance of tourism may be judged. Strategic planning may also provide a sense of ownership among stakeholders in the selected objectives and approach, and the chosen framework may encourage stakeholders to determine their role and work cooperatively.<sup>4</sup> In the context of a changing environment, such strategic planning may help tourist destinations to optimize

the use of human and natural resources and take into account the needs of all stakeholders.

Research studies of mega-events or hallmark events as components of tourist destinations also highlight the need for effective strategic planning.<sup>5</sup> Hall<sup>6</sup> argues that:

planning is an essential ingredient not only for the short term success of the hallmark event itself but also in realizing the longer term benefits that can accrue to a community in the holding of such events

Getz<sup>7</sup> has made a case for 'a more systematic approach to events tourism planning'. It has been suggested that evidence:

of the failure of planning or a lack of planning on the hosting of hallmark events are seen in the costly 'white elephants' that are often left, once an event has concluded.<sup>8</sup>

Mega-events are considered to be large and internationally-known events such as the Olympics and World Fairs. According to Law,<sup>8</sup> in an urban context the term mega-event describes 'large events of world importance and high profile which have a major

impact on the image of the host city'. Indeed, it is the profile which large-scale events can offer the hosts that often provides the dominant rationale for hosting them. Mega-events are also usually viewed as a highly significant tourist asset for a host area, with the event directly attracting participants and the resulting raised profile of the area also indirectly encouraging increased general visitation.

This paper examines strategic planning in the English city of Sheffield related to its hosting of a mega-event, the 1991 World Student Games. Three aspects of strategic planning are evaluated, with these aspects identified following a consideration of different theoretical perspectives on strategy. The first aspect is the extent to which strategic planning in Sheffield was effective in linking the Games investment with the development of tourism for urban regeneration. Did the city's planning identify and encourage the processes and mechanisms for the Games investment to stimulate tourism and also broader urban development? Hence, strategic planning of this mega-event is studied in relation to the city's overall fortunes. The second aspect to be examined is the extent to which there was a clear tourism and city regeneration strategy around the Games investment both in advance of, and also subsequent to the Games. An area investing in a mega-event may well want to reinforce its legacy by incorporating it into their strategic planning after the event is over. A recent study of tourism in European cities concluded that:

large-scale once-only events do not make a fundamental contribution to the local tourist industry unless they fit into a long-term strategy which also provides for a follow-up.<sup>9</sup>

The legacy of the World Student Games is a prominent issue in Sheffield as the event involved a £147 million investment in new and refurbished facilities. The third focus for analysis is to examine the degree to which Sheffield's strategic planning around the Games investment resulted from formal analysis and decision-making or else emerged by learning, accident and political processes. Consideration is also given here to the social and political circumstances surrounding Sheffield's planning around the Games.

Roche<sup>10</sup> has previously analysed selected aspects of Sheffield's Games strategy. The present paper extends Roche's work in three ways. First, this analysis examines and then uses different theoretical perspectives to assess the planning process, these being the classical, processual and systemic perspectives. Second, a much more sustained analysis is provided here of the extent to which Sheffield's Games strategy identified and promoted the links between the Games and tourism and between these

and general city developments. In particular, Roche does not examine in any detail local approaches to tourism planning. A third difference from Roche's paper, is that the present analysis of Sheffield's strategic planning around the Games investment does not stop soon after the Games, as it also covers a full 5 years after this mega-event. This facilitates a detailed assessment of the effectiveness of Sheffield's planning around the Games strategy in the post-Games phase. Consideration over 5 years since the Games of Sheffield's strategic planning also provides a longer-term perspective from which to examine potential lessons to be learnt, and these are examined in the final section of the paper.

The discussion is based on evaluation of numerous local documents from the mid-1980s to mid-1990s, including the internal reports, policy and planning documents, and publicity materials of several organizations and local government departments in the city. Examination was also made of local newspapers, including a complete run of one local weekly newspaper over the pre- and post-Games periods. In 1995 the author also conducted semi-structured interviews with six managers involved with Sheffield's tourism development. Care is taken in the analysis to identify where it was considered there are tensions in views about the city's strategic planning.

### Perspectives on strategic planning

As already noted, this analysis uses insights from three theoretical perspectives on strategy: the classical, processual and systemic. These perspectives provide differing conceptions of what strategic planning involves, and related to these are varying normative prescriptions of how to conduct strategic planning. Interpretations of strategic planning in the tourism literature often combine ideas related to more than one of these perspectives. However, it is important to be aware of their differences as they each emphasize different elements of the strategic planning process and they each provide an alternative view on how one should plan strategically. Each of the three perspectives highlights different aspects of strategy, and it is these different aspects which are assessed in this case study of Sheffield's strategic planning around the Games investment.

From the *classical perspective* on strategic planning there is a requirement first to formulate a strategy and only then to undertake action. This is seen as a formal and deliberate process of explicit analysis and decision-making based on working logically and sequentially through a number of steps to develop and then implement a plan.<sup>11</sup> These steps may progress from a definition of purpose to a situation analysis, determination of strategic goals, specification of strategies to meet the goals, identification

of specific objectives, actions and targets, and then to implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review.<sup>12</sup> Several texts on tourism planning advocate similar steps to these. Inskip<sup>13</sup> suggests the stages of study preparation, determination of objectives, survey of elements, analysis and synthesis, policy and plan formulation, and implementation and monitoring. Steps proposed by Getz<sup>5</sup> for event planning include an event inventory, product evaluation, market assessment, identification of goals, action plan and a revision process. Strategic planning from the classical perspective is regarded as a 'detached', 'rational' or even 'scientific' process, with great confidence placed in analysis, order and control. The focus of this perspective is inward-looking as success or failure is seen as determined internally through the quality of managerial analysis and decision-making.<sup>14</sup>

Strategy in the *processual perspective* emerges more from continuous and pragmatic processes of learning, accident, politics and making compromises, as distinct from strategy being established from the outset.<sup>15</sup> A basic premise is that the classical perspective ignores the imperfections of human life. Instead, it regards people as unlikely to unite around and then carry through a predetermined plan as they vary in their interests and outlook, are limited in their cognition, careless in their actions, and also need to use their own intuition and creativity. Strategy also evolves retrospectively as people learn and as circumstances change, and it is best conceived as an emergent process of learning and adaptation.<sup>16</sup> Many tourism texts commend aspects of a processual approach. While they also endorse a formal approach to tourism planning, Gunn<sup>1</sup> argues it should be flexible, continuous and interactive, and Haywood<sup>17</sup> contends it should:

use an incremental or organizational learning process to improve mutual understanding, to explore the problem, and possibly to evolve a consensus.

On event tourism planning, Getz emphasizes formal stages but also indicates that 'effects must be evaluated to yield a continuing refinement of goals and policies.'<sup>7</sup> Both classical and processual perspectives tend to be inward-looking, in this latter case with a focus on the adjustment of organizations to internal and external changes.<sup>14</sup>

The *systemic perspective* regards strategic planning as embedded in society's social, economic and political structures, emphasizing the social system as the context shaping the interests and outcomes of strategy. This relativist position indicates that strategy must be interpreted with sociological and political sensitivity. This perspective is perhaps less pessimistic than the processual view about the capacity of organizations to plan forward and to act

effectively on a plan in the context of their environment.<sup>14</sup> It also differs from the classical view as it rejects the concept of detached 'rationality' as anything other than inextricably part of the specific social context. Both tourism planning and event planning literature increasingly emphasize these external influences. Choy<sup>18</sup> concludes from a review of tourism planning that 'the planning process is highly political', while Hall contends that 'hallmark events are undoubtedly political'<sup>19</sup> and that 'wide ranging policy analysis of events at all levels is required'.<sup>20</sup> Unlike the other two perspectives, the systemic approach is fundamentally outward-looking, emphasizing the influence of external social, economic and political environments.

### Strategic planning around Sheffield's Games investment

These three theoretical perspectives are used to identify the three aspects of strategic planning around Sheffield's investment in the 1991 World Student Games which are the focus of this paper. While the classical perspective emphasizes formulating a plan from the outset and then implementing its elements, the processual perspective gives more prominence to strategy evolving in pragmatic and retrospective ways. Hence, one aspect examined here is the extent to which a clear strategy was in place in Sheffield which linked the Games investment with the development of tourism for urban regeneration. A second, related aspect to be assessed is the degree to which there was a clear tourism and city regeneration strategy around the Games investment both in advance of, and also following, the Games. The third aspect arises from the emphasis in the processual perspective on strategy evolving in more continuous and practical ways. This aspect involves considering how far the Games-related strategic planning in Sheffield has resulted from deliberate calculation, as emphasized in the classical perspective, or has emerged more by learning, trial and error, accident and politics. The systemic perspective highlights such external factors as the influence of politics and interest groups on strategic planning and the organizations involved in planning. Hence, consideration is also given to ways in which strategy-making has depended on Sheffield's social and political circumstances between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s.

### Strategic plan formulation

The classical approach to strategy emphasizes the importance of having a formal plan from the outset. To what extent was Sheffield engaged in a formal planning process around the Games investment, and one that linked it with tourism and broad city development, in the periods prior to bidding for this

event, leading up to hosting it in 1991, and also subsequently?

### *Before the Games*

Sheffield had previously given little prominence to mega-events, and when it successfully bid during 1986–1987 to host the World Student Games it did so without a substantial formal planning process to assess the costs and benefits of investing in this strategy. In particular, the strategy was not evaluated against an overall vision for Sheffield and the opportunity cost of a substantially reduced ability to invest in other, possibly more effective urban regeneration projects. At the time of the bid and also leading up to the event itself, the Games were depicted by local planners as providing a catalyst for a broad economic and social regeneration of the city. However, neither the overall vision nor the more specific objectives and precise mechanisms to achieve it were drawn together in a substantial formal plan.<sup>21,22</sup>

Before hosting the event, city politicians and officials attached a general importance to three objectives which began to link the Games investment with tourism and general city development, although often these were not fully articulated.<sup>21–24</sup> First, it was hoped the Games event itself would prompt favourable media interest, promote positive images of Sheffield and be a symbol of the city's regeneration. Large numbers of competitors, officials and spectators were also expected to visit and spend money in the city. Importance was attached, secondly, to the use of the major sport facilities built for the Games for subsequent events (for entertainment and cultural as well as sport events) which would attract tourists, develop a stronger tourism industry, and enhance the city's image for many years. Third, the new sport and other facilities built for the Games were seen as a legacy for the long-term use and benefit of Sheffield people in their leisure time. Through these general objectives the Games investment was beginning to be integrated with tourism and with an overall approach to city regeneration, although limited attention was paid specifically to tourism prior to the Games.

Before the Games there was also only limited formal planning linking the Games investment with other strategic plans for the city. The 'Sheffield 2000' strategy began to make such links, identifying as one of five 'growth networks' for urban revitalization a 'leisure network', which included the Games facilities, a commitment to wide public participation at these facilities, and the growth of tourism.<sup>25</sup> While this strategy provided a useful overall vision for the city, it was not formulated until 1989. It was also vague about connections between these 'growth networks' and about where responsibilities lay for implementation, and it coincided with a period when

the scope for implementation was severely limited by strict restraints on public sector spending.

Despite the successful bid in 1987 for the 1991 Games, Sheffield was also slow to develop a formal plan specifically for tourism. It was 1990 before a Director of Tourism was appointed, the first tourism plan for the city with proposals for funding and for an organization to implement it was only published late in 1990, and the city's Visitor and Conference Bureau was not established until after hosting the Games.<sup>26,27</sup> In the 1990 tourism strategy, sport events were identified as one of five tourism strengths to be further developed and promoted.<sup>28</sup> Little formal analysis was undertaken before the Games of the long-term difficulty of getting spectators at events in the new facilities to stay overnight when England's small size means much of the country's population can reach Sheffield as a day visit destination. However, attention was paid to designing flexible Games facilities, so they could accommodate many different events over subsequent years, bringing visitors and visitor spending to the city in the long term. For instance, the Arena is a £34 million indoor facility which, as well as sport events, hosts concerts, exhibitions, shows and conventions.

### *After the Games*

After hosting the 1991 Games there was further delay before a formal strategy was in place linking the Games investment with the development of tourism for urban regeneration. However, in 1994 a report by Friel,<sup>29</sup> a consultant advising on Sheffield's marketing, developed a strategy for both general and tourism promotion of the city which concentrated on its year-round events programme. An important justification for this strategy was that it made full use of the major investment in Games facilities. In this way, the strategy specifically linked events held in the Games facilities with tourism as a means of promoting city development. The Friel report made explicit use of a formal situation analysis to develop recommendations, but it was only an outline strategic plan and it recommended Sheffield should refine it further in a more 'comprehensive city marketing strategy'. Friel's report was endorsed by the City Council and led quickly to greater cooperation between sport event organizers and tourism staff in the Visitor and Conference Bureau.

In 1995 the approach proposed by Friel was developed into a much fuller formal strategic plan covering a 5 year period which linked event-led city and tourism marketing to city development.<sup>30,31</sup> The strategy uses a few events each year — which may be sport, cultural or business events — to 'profile' positive and distinctive characteristics of the city, with the intention that the resulting images will secure economic benefits both directly from tourism spending and indirectly from the city's enhanced

image in the media and among business and government decision-makers. A number of these 'profile' events would take place in venues built for the Games. The plan document includes a situation analysis and identification of strategic mission, specific objectives, target markets, marketing-related actions, and monitoring and evaluation tasks. There is also specification of criteria to select the 'profile' events and associated target audiences, marketing messages and communication channels.

To some extent the formal strategy documents of 1994 and 1995 simply clarified, brought together and formalized approaches and practices which had already evolved among major event organizers and tourism professionals in the city. These characteristics of evolution and of retrospective learning and reflection are prominent in the processual perspective on strategy. The 1995 plan also concentrated work further on the identified approach, set performance targets, identified potential monitoring systems, and was intended to enhance coordination of staff effort. The development of these formal strategies was greatly assisted by the emphasis given to strategic vision and the strategic planning process by the city's Director of Tourism, who was also the Managing Director of Sheffield's Visitor and Conference Bureau. In addition, the Bureau's Managing Director was able to convince politicians and local authority officers that sport and event-related activities, which are organized by the local authority, should be developed in close cooperation with tourism activities led by the Bureau, which is a public-private sector agency. The influence of the leadership of individuals in strategic planning is also seen as important in the processual perspective on strategy.

The 1995 event-led city and tourism marketing strategy was also developed in the context of a strategic plan for Sheffield's wider economic regeneration, 'The Way Ahead', published in 1994 by the City Liaison Group, a public-private sector partnership organization.<sup>32</sup> Sport, tourism and city marketing were elements of this broader city plan, although they were not central to it. The current strategic thrust of the city's economic development now gives more emphasis to consumer services such as cultural industries, sport, retailing and tourism, but they remain fairly fragmented policy arenas, with a continued need for more consideration of linkages.<sup>33,34</sup>

### Research and monitoring in strategic planning

The classical perspective on strategy suggests that information provision through research and monitoring is necessary for successful decision-making. Strategy in the processual perspective emerges more from a continuous learning and inter-

active process, and this is facilitated by a constant flow of information on changing circumstances. To what extent has Sheffield undertaken research and monitoring activity before and after the Games?

#### *Before the Games*

Prior to bidding for the Games, Sheffield did not undertake substantial research to evaluate the merit of this urban regeneration strategy. Roche<sup>10</sup> describes the very limited research and evaluation for the Games bid as having 'largely by-passed conventional planning processes, moving directly to the decision and implementation stages'. While more research was conducted between Sheffield being awarded the Games and its hosting of the event, this was far from comprehensive. A detailed study assessed the projected economic and social impacts of the Games investment, and a number of feasibility studies were conducted on current and potential demand for individual Games facilities.<sup>22,35,36</sup> A number of tourism studies were also completed during 1989 and 1990, although these came too late to have much practical effect for the Games.<sup>37-40</sup>

Early estimates of the cost of the Games facilities proved considerable underestimates. The outline budget prior to the Games bid predicted capital costs of £29 million, but this estimate had risen to £110 million by 1988, and the actual final amount was £147 million.<sup>24</sup> Much of this escalation was due to the specification of facilities being increased as the staging of the Games event began to be seen as a matter of civic pride and a unique opportunity in a period of public sector spending restraint to secure state-of-the-art facilities.<sup>10,24</sup> In the end, the pre-bid estimate of the loss on running the event itself (between £3-14 million) was very near the actual loss incurred (£10.4 million). However, the pre-bid report estimating this potential loss had not been made available at the time to the majority of City Councillors or to residents, so decision-making was not made on the basis of all the (limited) available information. This was strongly criticized in national media coverage in 1990.<sup>41,24</sup> There were also problems in monitoring income and expenditure on running the event, as the organization responsible for this did not reveal their mounting difficulties in raising TV and sponsorship income, difficulties that eventually led to the organization's collapse amid a blaze of negative publicity.<sup>42-44</sup>

#### *After the Games*

No substantial research has been conducted after the Games on a range of actual economic and social impacts of the Games-related investment (as opposed to pre-event estimates). There has been only limited monitoring of the economic effects of events held in the facilities built for the Games, with these usually using only event attendances and

simple estimates of spectator expenditure. Monitoring of paid admissions to events has been undertaken for the main new venues, with the numbers in 1994 totalling 900 000 at Sheffield Arena (indoor arena), 880 000 at Ponds Forge (Olympic standard swimming and diving pools, leisure pool and sports hall), and 239 726 at Don Valley Stadium (athletics facility).<sup>45</sup> Information is available on spectator attendances for the two new professional sport teams established at venues built for the Games. For example, the Sheffield Steelers ice hockey team attracted an average crowd of 7851 to matches in 1994–1995, with the team winning the three top British ice hockey honours in 1995–1996.<sup>46</sup> Over 4 years after the Games, the city's sport programme had included ten world and six European championships and, based on simple estimate procedures, is estimated to have added £31 million to the local economy and gained TV coverage worth £85 million if paid at advertising rates.<sup>47,48</sup>

More detailed research in 1993 on the European Swimming Championships and UK Special Olympics suggests these generated £1.7 million of expenditure in the city.<sup>49</sup> Work was commissioned in 1996 using more sophisticated methods to assess the economic impact of two major sport events held in the city that year, the World Masters Swimming Championships and three European Football Championship matches. Preliminary results suggest the football resulted in £4.5 million of spending in the local economy, and the swimming brought £4 million.<sup>50</sup>

Since the Games, research on aspects of tourism in the city has been commissioned by the Visitor and Conference Bureau Managing Director. A large baseline survey of Sheffield's visitors was conducted in 1992, examining such aspects as purpose of visit, activities while in the city, impressions of the city, and estimates of overall visitor numbers.<sup>51</sup> Images of Sheffield held by visitors to the city have been surveyed more recently to help improve the city's tourism product and marketing images and to provide information against which future trends may be assessed. Visitors in the survey were asked whether the major new sports facilities had made Sheffield a much more attractive place for visitors, and as many as 73.6% agreed or agreed strongly, 4.1% neither agreed nor disagreed, 3.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 19.2% did not know.<sup>52</sup>

However, several gaps remain in research required to assess the effectiveness of the Games investment following the event and of the current event-led city and tourism marketing activities. For instance, no detailed study has been made of the effects of the Games investment on sport and leisure participation by different social groups in the city, notably by the less advantaged.

## **Social and political context to strategic planning**

The systemic perspective on strategy regards planning as embedded in society's social, economic and political structures. According to this perspective, the effective strategic planner must be highly sensitive to their social and political context. Hence, an assessment is now made of how Sheffield's social and political circumstances between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s influenced strategies around the Games investment. Particular attention is given to the influence of politics and interest groups on the organizations involved in this strategic planning.

### *Before the Games*

A strategy involving a major shift to service sector employment was encouraged by the loss of nearly 60 000 jobs in Sheffield between 1971 and 1988, many in traditional industries. There had also been a change in the city's Labour leadership in the mid-1980s, and they were looking for a new vision for the city's regeneration.<sup>53,10</sup> Roche<sup>10</sup> identifies other influences in the mid-1980s likely to have favoured the use of a mega-event for regeneration. At this time the Conservative government was vigorously promoting tourism for job creation, and a number of other Labour controlled British cities were investing in flagship events, such as Glasgow with its 1988 Garden Festival and designation as 1990 European City of Culture. The apparent success of such large events as the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984 was also much discussed. Darke<sup>24</sup> also suggests the local economic effects of sport arenas in US cities was seen as a potential model for Sheffield.

Much of the Games planning involved partnership organizations, bringing together the public sector, business and other influential agencies in the city, such as higher education establishments and the trades council. Circumstances encouraging public-private partnerships in Sheffield in the mid-1980s included the departure from the city of some politically radical figures, central government pressure on local government to work in partnership with business, and recognition that central government restrictions on local government spending meant the City Council needed a greater private sector contribution to urban regeneration work.<sup>53</sup> The first attempt to integrate the Games investment with other strategic plans, the 'Sheffield 2000' strategy, was developed by a key partnership organization, the Sheffield Economic Regeneration Committee. Two trusts were also established to develop the Games facilities (Sheffield for Health) and to organize the Games event (Universiade GB), with half their board members being drawn from the business sector. The trust developing the Games facilities had the important advantage of being able

to secure substantial loans when central government controls strictly limited local government borrowing powers.<sup>22,24</sup>

#### *After the Games*

A joint public-private Visitor and Conference Bureau was established for tourism promotion almost immediately after Sheffield had hosted the Games. This partnership organization is outside direct City Council control, which may help explain why it was quite slow to work with the City Council Events Unit to develop accommodation packages for sport events. However, these organizations were brought much closer together following the recommendations of the 1994 Friel report. At the end of 1994 the Events Unit moved into the same building as the Visitor and Conference Bureau, and they also now work together on an Events Working Group. Specific collaborative arrangements between them were also identified in the 1995 events-led city and tourism marketing strategy.

#### *Partnership organizations before and after the Games*

The systemic perspective on strategy emphasizes that organizations involved in strategic planning can be affected by politics and interests groups. An important influence on Sheffield's planning before and after the Games event was the involvement of public-private sector partnership organizations. Unlike local government councillors, many board members of public-private sector partnerships are not democratically elected or accountable, and they could be inclined to use partnerships to secure personal gains rather than to promote community-wide benefits. Hence, Sheffield's Visitor and Conference Bureau could be inclined to promote business tourism and events at venues as its board and commercial members who run accommodation or venues then secure sales for their own businesses, while the Bureau also gains commission income for placing bookings.<sup>54,55</sup>

Several commentators have suggested that the growing influence of business interests in urban regeneration organizations in British cities may have reinforced a general policy shift from social welfare concerns to making cities more attractive for commerce.<sup>56</sup> The objective for the Games investment to make Sheffield more attractive for business probably improved the climate for partnership organizations in the city. However, a second prominent objective for the Games was to leave a legacy of leisure facilities for the benefit of Sheffield people, reflecting a continued concern for social welfare issues. Many Labour councillors in Sheffield have remained wary about giving business a substantial influence on policies and there has perhaps also been a relatively weak business representation on Sheffield's partnership organizations.<sup>24</sup> Recently, Lawless<sup>57</sup> has argued that Sheffield lacks a substan-

tial, independent, publicly-minded business community, and that, while this community has strong views, the City Council appears to have continued as the key actor.

The increased importance of partnership organizations in Sheffield since the mid-1980s has widened the range of stakeholders involved in decision making for the Games and event tourism strategies, but it did not widen consultation by involving local people in these decisions. As Roche<sup>10</sup> has stated, the City Council did not use a referendum or other large-scale, direct consultation device to seek residents' views about whether they wanted the city to invest in the Games and associated facilities. Nor were they asked if they approved of the city increasing its tourism promotion. As a result, the local political legitimacy certainly of the Games investment has been reduced, and this may help explain why the Labour party in the city has lost seats in local elections against the national trend. Five years after the Games, the decision to make this investment remains very controversial in the city. A recent small survey of views of Sheffield residents suggests that the majority are pleased with the new sports and event facilities and see them positively as tourism assets, but many consider the city should have invested in other things in order to regenerate the city.<sup>52</sup>

#### **Potential lessons from Sheffield's strategic planning**

Each of the three theoretical perspectives on strategy explained in this study highlights different aspects of strategy. These different aspects were used to analyse strategic planning around Sheffield's Games investment both before and after the event. In particular, the classical perspective emphasizes the importance of deliberate calculation and decision-making and of the importance of formulating a plan from the outset, the processual perspective gives more prominence to strategy evolving through learning and trial and error, and the more outward-looking systemic perspective highlights such external factors as the influence of politics and interest groups on strategic planning and related organizations. A number of potential lessons may follow from the examination of Sheffield's strategic planning, and these may have wider relevance for other cities considering investing in a mega-event or other large, tourism-related 'flagship' scheme:

- *Too limited use of formal strategic planning may hinder decision-making:* Sheffield's initial decision to bid for the 1991 World Student Games was not based on a substantial use of formal strategic planning, such as to research and assess the costs and benefits. It was also 3 years after the Games before the city developed a substantial formal plan

integrating the Games investment with tourism development for city regeneration. Instead, Sheffield relied in its early decision-making on 'muddling through' without a clear formal plan and with insufficient research. This has probably been a factor contributing to the Games sometimes being depicted as crisis ridden, incompetent and financially highly questionable.<sup>60</sup> The city has probably also missed some city development opportunities by being slow to have a clear and adequately funded strategy linking the Games investment with tourism and city development. For instance, the city's Visitor and Conference Bureau and the Events Unit were quite slow to assemble a range of accommodation packages with events in order to promote staying visits, although they have collaborated successfully on this for such major events as the 1993 European Swimming Championships and 1996 World Masters Swimming Championships.<sup>58,59</sup>

The processual approach to strategic planning has many advantages, but Sheffield's experience suggests that the adoption of such an approach should not mean a simple rejection of such formal procedures as identifying a strategic vision and undertaking research and evaluation before decision-making. It indicates that a more flexible and responsive approach to strategy must continue to recognize the value of aspects of formal planning.

● *Research and monitoring are needed before and after a mega-event:* Research and monitoring are important from the classical perspective on strategy in order to provide information necessary for the formal processes of analysis and decision-making, and from the processual perspective they facilitate planning as a more responsive learning activity. However, in Sheffield no substantial research and monitoring was undertaken to inform decision-making before the bid for the Games, and research and monitoring remained fairly limited in the period before hosting the event and subsequently. From the outset, consideration should have been given, for example, to the opportunity cost of the Games investment, as this expenditure reduced the city's ability to meet other challenges and demands for capital and resources which might possibly have led to a more effective regeneration of the local economy. The low priority initially given to research may have been influenced by perceptions that the city urgently needed to secure the Games and then had a tight timetable to prepare itself for hosting this mega-event. The reluctance more recently to devote large-scale resources to research has certainly been influenced by an acute shortage of public sector funds, but it could possibly also have been affected by anxiety that the findings might be unfavourable.

Because a substantial and continuing programme of research and monitoring was not established, it has been difficult for the city to assess the effective-

ness of their tourism and city development strategies around the Games investment. This research gap has also been a severe constraint before and after the Games on the ability of the local authority to respond with substantive evidence to the critics of this mega-event among local residents, politicians and in the media. For instance, the local authority lacks information to react to accusations that it has been spendthrift and incompetent and had the wrong priorities during a period of cuts in public services.<sup>60-62</sup> While city managers may be reluctant to devote time and money to research and monitoring work, this case study illustrates its considerable importance.

● *A more strategic approach to the Games investment has evolved retrospectively:* Strategies around the Games investment have emerged retrospectively through pragmatic learning and trial and error, and were influenced by local politics and the leadership of key managers. The event-led city and tourism marketing strategy was not developed until 3 years after the Games, but this delay has benefited the strategy in so far as it could reflect the accumulated experience of managers in the city who by then had been attracting and managing events and promoting tourism in the city over several years. Its approach and organizational arrangements had emerged based on lessons learnt, including an understanding of local politics and funding opportunities in a difficult financial climate. To some extent the formal plan documents of 1994 and 1995 simply refined and formalized approaches and actions already in place or developing. They were initiated by the Managing Director of the Visitor and Conference Bureau who has a commitment to 'vision-directed' economic development and to the value of strategic planning. It could also be suggested that one reason for the development of these formal plans was for the city's Visitor and Conference Bureau to enhance its credibility and political influence in the city, including to cement closer links between sport and event activities in the public sector and tourism activities which are coordinated by this public-private sector agency.

Many advocates of processual strategy see it as being crafted through leadership, constant action and an interactive flow of ideas and energy through all relevant organizations.<sup>63</sup> Haywood<sup>64</sup> argues that the logic of strategy from this perspective is not necessarily to develop plans and then seek commitment and capabilities; instead, it is to build commitment and capabilities and then foster the development of plans for building on them. The initial building of commitment and capabilities in urban planning prior to plan formulation has become increasingly important over the 1990s due to urban governance becoming more fragmented as the role of local government has declined and that of a variety of agencies, associations and households



has grown.<sup>65</sup> However, in Sheffield it remains to be seen whether the emerging strategic approach linking the Games investment with tourism and urban development will develop further, can be adopted by sufficient people and organizations, and will secure adequate funding and resources.

- *A mega-event should be integrated with broad development planning:* Sheffield's planning is now taking a more integrated approach to the linkages between the Games investment, events programmes, tourism, and city imaging and promotion. This is important to ensure that the city exploits to the utmost for its long-term revitalization both its investment of £147 million in the Games facilities and its tourism industry. Integrated planning around a mega-event should encourage the building of connections, identifying common concerns, capacity building, coordination of effort, and planning which is related to an overall vision for the local area.<sup>65</sup>

- *Mega-events require participatory planning processes:* The political legitimacy of the Games investment was reduced by the lack of wide consultation with Sheffield residents before the city bid for the Games. Subsequently, consultation has not widened to any great extent, and the growing involvement of public-private sector partnership organizations has meant more decisions are now taken by individuals who are not democratically elected or accountable. Participatory planning processes are very important for large-scale tourism projects as these projects can change the structure and meaning of place and residents' relationships with their community and locality. Staging a costly mega-event is a high risk strategy and it can easily appear to residents as 'municipal stupidity' as large sums are spent on prestige schemes. In an industrial city a degree of hostility to investment in sport and tourism jobs might also be expected as some people may perceive these as in competition with 'real' jobs in manufacturing.<sup>33</sup> The high profile of these projects means that residents are likely to have strong views about them, and they have potent potential to strengthen or weaken the hegemony of local elites and local government and subsequently to promote development approaches that are bold and innovative or tentative and conservative. Too much is at stake to by-pass consultation and community participation.

Sheffield's leaders were also not particularly effective at explaining to the city's residents that the Games investment had two distinct components: the Games event itself and also then the use of the resulting facilities for tourism and community leisure over subsequent years in order to assist in the city's long-term regeneration. Hence, with the Games event attracting less positive media exposure than was hoped for and making a financial loss, it appears some people may have concluded that the whole strategy was relatively unsuccessful, despite it

being too early to judge the long-term effects of the overall strategy.

- *Importance of a long-term perspective on mega-events:* It is tempting to draw final conclusions about the relative success of a mega-event soon after it is held and media attention has peaked, but the full impacts can only be assessed some considerable time later. Sheffield's investment in the Games facilities is a dramatic and bold approach to city development. Although the city was slow to develop a strategic planning approach, 5 years after the Games there are indications that this investment has brought some significant benefits and could continue to do so in the future. In an enquiry into the future of major sporting events in Britain, a central government, all-party National Heritage Select Committee concluded that, despite the resulting burden of debt for the city, the Games investment did appear to be successful.<sup>66</sup> The city has been designated by the national Sports Council as the country's first 'City of Sport', there is an extensive future programme of national and international events using the Games facilities, the city has made bids for public funding for a £17 million national ice hockey centre and a National Academy of Sport (both located adjacent to Games facilities), and a £20 million private sector leisure scheme is planned next to the Arena facility. These recent developments are just one indication that it is still too early to make a final assessment about impacts of the Games investment.

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