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Trans-urban Networks of Learning, Mega Events and Policy Tourism: The Case of Manchester's Commonwealth and Olympic Games Projects

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Abstract

This paper argues for a rethinking of our understanding of what and where go into the 'urban' in the New Urban Politics (NUP). It contends that these issues have always been more complex, complicated and, most importantly, contested than has sometimes appeared to be the case in the literature. Using the example of one trans-urban policy learning network—that around the city of Manchester's bids for the Olympic and Commonwealth Games—the paper makes the case for taking seriously the politics around comparison and referencing in making possible the NUP. It argues that there is a need to study the circuits, networks and webs in and through which urban knowledge and learning are constituted and moved around, and that often underpin the territorial outcomes that have been the traditional focus of scholars working on the NUP.

> If the approach of the 1970s and the early 1980s encouraged a focus on struggles in and against the state, around issues of collective consumption and social reproduction, the late 1980s saw a shift towards an analysis that encouraged a focus on the local politics of business and the importance of local elites (Cochrane, 1999, p. 111).
>
> So, 'local' policy development now occurs in a self-consciously comparative and asymmetrically relativized context. The boundaries of local jurisdictions and policy regimes would seem, therefore, to be rather more porous than before (Peck, 2003, p. 229).

1. Introduction

Seeking to embody the new go-getting and entrepreneurial spirit that was permeating the public and private corridors of power in

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the city, Manchester City Council in 1990 unveiled a new slogan: 'making things happen'. As well as highlighting the new attitude of the city, such wordplay also sought to shake off the council's association with municipal socialism and its image as a bureaucratic and parochial local government (Cochrane *et al.*, 1996). From the late 1980s onwards, attempts to revive a city experiencing deindustrialisation, unemployment and poverty would be spearheaded by aggressive place marketing and the development of its city centre and selected run-down neighbourhoods (Peck and Ward, 2002; Williams, 2003). Issues of collective consumption and social reproduction were suppressed—but were still important of course—and emphasis was placed on economic development. The city's governance would also subsequently be reconfigured with emphasis placed on 'joined-up working' between public and private agencies and the introduction of a bewildering array of public–private partnerships (Peck and Tickell, 1995; Quilley, 1999). The private sector and business interests more generally would exert greater influence over the city's future economic development. This account of Manchester should sound familiar: these are the kind of trends identified by Cox (1993, 1995) in his foundational work on the New Urban Politics (NUP), and which form the basis of this Special Issue (MacLeod and Jones, this issue).

Perhaps Manchester's best-known NUP projects were the (unsuccessful) bids for the 1992, 1996 and 2000 Olympic Games and the (successful) bid for the 2002 Commonwealth Games. For Bob Scott, the chairman of the Olympic and Commonwealth Games bidding committees, the bids sought to unleash the "miraculous regenerative powers" of the Games to Manchester (quoted in Isaac, 1992, p. 12). Hosting the Olympics or Commonwealth Games, so the story went, would help to firmly (re)connect Manchester into the global economy by providing an unprecedented global platform on which to promote a positive image of itself as well as to encourage gentrifiers, investors and tourists from elsewhere to the city (Carlsen and Taylor, 2003; Cambridge Policy Consultants, 2003).

While the Olympic and Commonwealth Games projects were classic examples of what Cox (1993) famously called the NUP, a related but far less understood aspect of Manchester's governing territorial alliance was its position in trans-urban networks of learning and how these informed the Games projects and the development of the city more generally. As this paper will detail, Manchester's Olympic and Commonwealth Games projects were, and continue to be, deeply embedded in trans-urban networks. On the one hand, Manchester officials would seek inspiration from, visiting in the process, a number of other Commonwealth and Olympic cities from Los Angeles to Lillehammer as part of the Olympic and Commonwealth Games projects. On the other hand, Manchester's hosting of the 2002 Commonwealth Games and the associated regeneration of east Manchester would also serve as a point of reference for other cities seeking to host major sporting events and regenerate inner-city areas.

The aim of this paper, therefore, is to provide a partial insight into how and why city officials learn—acquire knowledge that is used to make change (Campbell, 2008; McFarlane, 2009)—about mega events and economic development from other places and what role and importance *visiting* these places, as a form of policy tourism, have in the learning process. Theoretically, it does this to challenge traditional understandings of 'the urban' that have been present in much of the NUP literature. The paper is in three sections. The first situates it in relation to the NUP literature. It synthesises existing work on the relationship between economic development, bidding and hosting mega

events, and the making mobile of urban policies. The second discusses the assembling of Manchester's Olympic and Commonwealth Games bids and the way those in the city learnt from the experience of other cities. The third turns to Manchester as a city that other cities' officials have visited and from which they have learnt. The early bid work in the city set the context for a transformation in how it approached economic development and, in the longer term, its embracement of neo-liberal urbanism, Manchester-style. Taken together, the paper offers a glimpse of the trans-urban micro politics behind the NUP and, to paraphrase Manchester's old slogan, how things are made to happen.[1]

2. Assembling the Games: the New Urban Politics, Mega Events and Learning from Elsewhere

> Many of the innovations and investments designed to make particular cities more attractive as cultural and consumer centres have quickly been imitated elsewhere, thus rendering any competitive advantage with a system of cities ephemeral (Harvey, 1989, p. 12).

The Summer and Winter Olympics and the Commonwealth Games, as Chalkley and Essex (1999, p. 369) have noted, are "much more than … sporting competition[s]". Since the modern-day revival of the Olympics in Athens in 1896 and the start of the Commonwealth Games in Hamilton (Canada) in 1930, they have made an increasingly large imprint on the political, economic and social fabric of the host cities. Focusing on the Olympics, studies have shown that from the 1950s onwards and particularly so after the Barcelona 1992 Olympics, organisers have used the Games to realise what Gold and Gold (2008, p. 302) have called "wider ambitions" for the city, viewing it as a catalyst for urban economic development and transformation (Chalkley and Essex, 1999, 2004; Gold and Gold, 2007a, 2008). A "politics of fantastic expectations" (Eisinger, 2000, p. 326) surrounds the Games whereby élites 'commonsensically' state that hosting the Games *will* bring private and public investment, tourism, jobs and opportunities for place promotion to the city. Using the example of Berlin's failed attempt to host the 2000 Olympics, Alberts (2009, p. 508) argues that the Olympics also provides a positive legacy for failed bid cities, giving them "an opportunity to carry out or speed up urban development projects that might otherwise not be realized or only much later". The Games are presented as a solution for variety of urban ills and are legitimised as being 'good for all' (Black, 2008). However, these claims have not gone unchallenged. Some scholars have pointed to how 'mega events' constitute the public sector effectively subsidising the interests of business (Cochrane *et al.*, 1996; Lenskyj, 2008). A focus on revalorising downtowns, investing in retail and entertainment complexes and gentrifying unattractive neighbourhoods often accompanies these events, creating conditions more conducive for capital accumulation, than for social redistribution.

The Olympic and Commonwealth Games can then be seen as part of a wider set of ambulatory 'mega events'—or 'hallmark events' as they are also known—alongside sporting World Cups (for example, football, cricket, rugby), Expo and World Fairs and the European Capital of Culture, among others (Gold and Gold, 2005). They are one instrument of many through which the New Urban Politics of entrepreneurial urbanism has been played out (Owen, 2002). They are symptomatic of—if not a much more frenzied variant of—the intensification of interurban competition whereby cities aggressively compete with one another to increase inward

investment. To use Harvey's (1989) phrasing, they embody a 'politics of place' which prioritises the flirtatious appeasement of privileged élites elsewhere over the needs of local populations. They are entrepreneurial in the sense that they are pump-priming economic-development-orientated strategies, but also because they are highly speculative (Jessop and Sum, 2000); they take what Gold and Gold (2007b, p. 6) call "a seldom-admitted gamble", with no guarantees that they will bring the cited economic and social benefits to the city. The Games are also reflective of the new power structures of urban governance whereby the private sector has become increasingly involved in bidding and organising the Games, alongside occupying a more prevalent position in governing cities and distributing services more widely. The private-sector are enticed by the potential for future capital accumulation, with their presence legitimised by arguments that they will bring increased private-sector commitment and funding as well as their efficiency, creativity and understanding of the market (Cochrane *et al.*, 1996; Surborg *et al.*, 2008).

Within this NUP literature, there has been little recognition of the role of elsewhere, of other cities, in the constituting of the 'urban'. Cox (1993, 1995, 2001), on his own, and with others (Cox and Mair, 1991), has acknowledged non-territorial conceptualisations of space. Likewise, so has Harvey (1989). However, this work—and much that has followed it—has stopped short of considering the sorts of trans-urban arrangement that have facilitated the kinds of economic development activities pursued by territorial alliances since the late 1980s. It is one thing to note briefly that "local[ities] paradoxically seek uniqueness by copying others" (Cox and Mair, 1991, p. 207); it is another to have that as the object of your study. Within the narrower studies of Games bidding and delivery, the issues of 'good practice' and the circulation of 'expertise' have received only passing attention. Monclús (2003), for instance, reflects on 'the Barcelona model' which many associate with its hosting of the 1992 Olympics. He argues that although the model has been widely cited as a singular entity, its constitutive elements are rarely fixed as it circulates, being moved from one city to another. Surborg *et al.* (2008), meanwhile, briefly highlight how, as part of the bidding and preparation for the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics, the Vancouver Board of Trade brought in former Olympic (public and private) organisers from other (mainly Anglophone) places to advise and make presentations in the city.

One body of work that has begun to address some of these concerns is that emerging on the mobility of urban policies. Drawing on, but advancing considerably, work in political science on policy transfer, it considers how and why policies and practices situated in particular towns and cities are 'mobilised' and re-embedded into new political-economic contexts (for example, McCann, 2004, 2008, 2011a; McCann and Ward, 2010, 2011; K. Ward, 2006, 2007, 2011; S. Ward, 2006; Cook, 2008; McFarlane, 2009; Larner and Laurie, 2010; Peck and Theodore, 2001; Prince, 2010; González, 2011). It shows that those involved in the making of 'local' policy often do so in a self-consciously comparative and relational manner, and that learning from elsewhere is not entirely without historical precedents (Nasr and Volait, 2003; S. Ward, 2010). McCann (2004) demonstrates how best-practice guides and league tables are frequently used in order to select places worthy of attention and emulation, while Cook (2008) and K. Ward (2006) note how city officials are often drawn to places that are held up as economic development 'success stories' in the

media. Furthermore, these studies show that the processes through which policies are transferred are never simply 'copy and paste' operations but often involve a myriad of people and institutions, and the outcomes are rarely the same in the cities across which they are moved (Peck and Theodore, 2001; Stone, 2004; McCann, 2011a).

As noted in McCann and Ward (2011), a useful way of conceptualising urban policy mobilities is through the productive tension between *territoriality* and *relationality* which involves the dialectical

> study of how urban actors manage and struggle over the 'local' impacts of 'global' flows and also the analysis of how they engage in global circuits of policy knowledge (McCann and Ward, 2011, p. xxi).

While the emphasis on global–local relations resonates with Cox's (1993) work on the NUP, this approach differs in that it opens up for consideration the ontological black box of 'the urban'. It views policies as being simultaneously fixed, or embedded in place, and in motion. One aspect of this making mobile of policies that has yet to be fully theorised, and which is generative through trans-urban networks of learning, is the role of policy tourism, whereby officials from particular places visit other places to look, learn and listen (K. Ward, 2011; González, 2011; McCann, 2011a). Although 'fact-finding trips' or 'study tours' as they are commonly known are a common feature of contemporary urban governance, relatively little is known about the role they have played in the key trends identified as the shift towards entrepreneurial urbanism or the NUP. To consider the role of relationships that stretch beyond cities in the constitution of the urban politics of economic development, we turn to an analysis of the Commonwealth and Olympic Games-themed 'learning and lobbying' visits undertaken in and out of Manchester since the mid 1980s.

3. Manchester Learns from Other Cities

In February 1985, a story circulated around the British media. Apparently, the then-Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher together with her Sports Minister Neil MacFarlane, were impressed by the profit-making, privately run and financed Los Angeles 1984 Summer Olympic Games—so much so that they thought that the UK, or more precisely London, should consider bidding for the forthcoming Olympics. On hearing this news in Manchester, Bob Scott, a well-connected theatre manager, decided that the Olympics must be hosted outside the capital city—in his view, in Manchester. In a matter of days, he assembled a private-sector-dominated bid committee that would attempt to win the rights to host the 1992 Summer Olympics in Manchester. The City Council would not commit public money, but did support the bid. Scott, like Thatcher, was impressed by the profit-making and, most importantly, the private-sector running and financing of the LA Olympics Games. These decidedly neo-liberal Olympics marked a radical departure from the Communist-era Moscow 1980 Olympics and the state-funded, debt-ridden Montreal 1976 Olympics and, in the minds of those in Manchester, London and elsewhere, it demonstrated that the Games could run at a profit (Gold and Gold, 2007a).

The LA Olympics would become an important point of reference for Manchester's 1992 bid and would continue to resonate in the subsequent bids—not least because Scott clearly admired Peter Ueberroth, the former travel entrepreneur and chief organiser of the post-bid preparations for the LA Olympics. So much so that

he, perhaps with a touch of irony, later stated in an interview, "I've read his book and I dream of being Peter Ueberroth" (quoted in Isaac, 1992, p. 12). As well as reading Ueberroth's (1985) autobiography, *Made in America*, Scott would seek out the methods of the LA Olympics from two key sources. First, Scott hired the Manchester branch of Arthur Young, led by Rick Parry, to act as management consultants for the 1992 and 1996 bids, a role the LA branch of Arthur Young fulfilled for the LA Olympics (Reeves, 1989). As part of the contract, Scott and his team would have exclusive access to Arthur Young's LA Olympic files and Arthur Young would prepare a report on how to emulate the success of the LA Games (Ellis, 1995). Secondly, Scott, Parry and other officials at Arthur Young visited Los Angeles on a post-Games 'fact-finding trip' to meet senior officials who ran the Games and to inspect the venues. They toured the facilities, spoke to those overseeing the project and reflected on how to translate these findings into some concrete proposals for Manchester. In doing so, Manchester conformed to a long-standing tradition for future host cities' delegations and, more recently, bidding cities' delegations to visit Olympic cities before, during or after the event. During the LA Olympics, for instance, delegations from three future Olympic hosts and 10 Olympic bidding cities were in attendance (Los Angeles Olympic Organising Committee, 1984). As Rick Parry noted, the trip not only provided an insight as to what to do, but also what not to do

> In Los Angeles the intention was to make a profit. When you visit there now it is difficult to find any trace of the games. We can learn from their expertise but our aims are different. We want the games to provide a sporting legacy for Manchester and Britain. We want to build new facilities which will be used by the people of the area. It will do wonders for the city (quoted in Palmer, 1985, p. 7).

Manchester's plans for the 1992 Games stressed the long-term legacy that the Olympics would have for the city-region. In particular, it would improve the sporting facilities and regenerate the still-floundering city-region, particularly the west of Manchester where the Olympic Stadium and main Olympic Village (athletes' accommodation) were planned. This, as Parry noted, juxtaposed with the more 'in-and-out' approach of the LA Games (see also Andranovich *et al.*, 2001) and, as a result, it was LA's private-sector-led board composition rather than its legacy aims that would prove the largest influence on Manchester's Olympic project.

Ultimately, Manchester's 1992 bid failed. Birmingham, which won the British Olympic Association (BOA) vote, subsequently finished fifth out of six candidate cities behind the winner Barcelona. Manchester would again bid, for the Olympics of 1996 and 2000 (Cochrane *et al.*, 1996; Law, 1994). The council would be more involved in these bids. This change in the level of participation reflected a broader shift in emphasis in UK urban politics, suggestive of a wider shift in emphasis in the public sector

> Most British cities, most local governments in the 1980s, had become very introspective … It was about focusing on internal problems rather than about how we solved the real problems of the city … There was a process of having to go out and sell Manchester, and to think, 'what have we got to sell?'. This changed our thinking process (ex-public-sector member of the Olympic Games bid committees, interview, December 2009).

Bidding for the Games was transforming the city's *modus operandi*: it was about the

public sector becoming entrepreneurial and the private sector becoming more involved.

The city received the official nomination of the BOA and was short-listed by the IOC on both occasions. It lost the final IOC vote in 1990 to Atlanta for the 1996 Olympics. And in 1993, with a bid for the 2000 Olympics which moved the proposed central sporting facilities and Olympic Village to redundant industrial land in the east of the city, Manchester would once again lose out in the IOC vote, this time to Sydney (for an outline of the BOA and IOC voting, see Table 1).

LA was certainly not the only place visited as part of the three Olympic bids. The promotional documents for the 1996 and 2000 bids fondly talked of the 'globetrotting' conducted by the private- and public-sector members of the bidding committee, as well as its 'bid ambassadors', such as Bobby Charlton, the former Manchester United footballer, and Princess Anne, the president of the BOA. As an ex-public-sector member of the Olympic Games bid committees remembers

> I don't know how many times I went to Barcelona … it must have been six or eight times. I went to Atlanta two or three times because the IOC meet in different places so you are not only talking to the … places that won the Games … but also the cities that were trying to get them at the time, such as Melbourne and Toronto. You also learn from what they are doing.

One newspaper reporter joked in 1989 that "Robert Scott's diary for next year contains details of more flights abroad than the log-book of most airline pilots" (Davenport, 1989, p. 8). Manchester, like all bidding cities, realised that producing glossy documents and videos was not enough; frequent face-to-face contact was deemed essential to gain the trust of the voting IOC members, to personalise their promotional message and to develop pseudo-friendships. As with every candidate city, IOC members were invited to visit Manchester where they would be met by a delegation of local élites, view staged 'community events' and be shown around the city. During the bidding for the 2000 Olympics, John Major, appointed Prime Minister in November 1990, would also hold receptions for IOC members, marking a departure from the 'hands-off' approach by his predecessor Margaret Thatcher during Manchester's 1992 and 1996 bids (Law, 1994), revealing how nation-states continue to be influential in a variety of ways in the bids produced by cities. Learning from past Olympic bidding campaigns elsewhere, Manchester officials also visited IOC members and attended events at which they presented.[2] Their visits included the Summer Olympics in Seoul (1988) and Barcelona (1992), the Commonwealth Games in Auckland (1990) and the Winter Olympics in Calgary (1988) and Albertville (1992), all of which were attended by IOC members. They also attended other events such as IOC sessions and regional meetings, and the congresses of numerous sporting federations and associations (Hill, 1992, 1994).

The primary focus for the majority of the 'globetrotting' trips was to lobby rather than to learn. IOC members would be cornered in corridors and taken out for drinks and meals, wooed with talk of envisioning strategies and legacies. Mobile face-to-face lobbying has been a long-standing practice in Olympic bidding, with Manchester officials often jockeying with other bidding committees at these events for the attention of IOC members. To quote the journalist Matthew Moore

> the press[ing] of prawns and an ample supply of liquor on anyone who has a say in who should host the games … [is] part of the

Table 1. BOA and IOC voting for the 1992, 1996 and 2000 Olympic Games (number of votes)

		IOC votes				
	BOA vote	*Round 1*	*Round 2*	*Round 3*	*Round 4*	*Round 5*
1992 Olympic Games						
BOA vote, London, 12 July 1985						
Birmingham	25					
Manchester	5					
London	2					
IOC vote, Lausanne, 17 October 1986						
Barcelona (w)		29	37	47		
Paris		19	20	23		
Brisbane		11	9	10		
Belgrade		13	11	5		
Birmingham		8	8	Eliminated		
Amsterdam		5	Eliminated	-		
1996 Olympic Games						
BOA vote, London, 19 May 1988						
Manchester	20					
Birmingham	11					
IOC vote, Tokyo, 18 September 1990						
Atlanta (w)		19	20	26	34	51
Athens		23	23	26	30	35
Toronto		14	17	18	22	Eliminated
Melbourne		12	21	16	Eliminated	-
Manchester		11	5	Eliminated	-	-
Belgrade		7	Eliminated	-	-	-
2000 Olympic Games						
BOA vote, London, 24 April 1991						
Manchester	28					
London	5					
IOC vote, Monte Carlo, 23 September 1993						
Sydney (w)		30	30	37	45	
Beijing		32	37	40	43	
Manchester		11	13	11	Eliminated	
Berlin		9	9	Eliminated	-	
Istanbul		7	Eliminated	-	-	

Notes: (w) = winner. Within the IOC vote, each IOC member has one vote. A candidate city wins if they have an absolute majority of the votes. If no city has an absolute majority, a new voting round will take place with the lowest-scoring city from the previous round eliminated. New rounds will continue until a majority winner occurs.

> lengthy political and social process that any city aiming to host the games must master (Moore, 1988, p. 17).

Nonetheless, the visits to Summer and Winter Olympics, as interviewees have noted, were to a degree Janus-faced as lobbying mixed with learning (although the learning 'face' was certainly smaller than the lobbying 'face'). While much time was spent in hotel lobbies seeking 'chance encounters' with IOC members (S. Ward, 2007), Manchester officials attended the Observer Programmes at most of these events. Run by the local Organising Committees, the Observer Programmes offered the chance for hosts-in-waiting and bidding committee officials to see close-up the 'behind-the-scenes' working of the Games and opportunities to liaise with the host officials. Being there, networking, socialising provided opportunities to learn and reflect

> It's the things that people don't put into the reports, on the Internet, those insights into what they have done either in getting the Games, winning the bids, or regenerating the city, which they will tell you over a glass of lager in a bar at 11 o'clock at night (ex-public-sector member of the Olympic Games bid committees, interview, December 2009).

A learning-focused visit in 1988 to Lillehammer, a town of 25 000 inhabitants in southern Norway which had just won the bidding for the 1994 Winter Olympics, seemed to leave a big impression on Bob Scott. In Scott's words, the trip *confirmed* to him—rather than *taught* him—the tactics through which to win the IOC vote. It also confirmed to him that 'less-global' cities (such as Manchester) could be successful

> The first thing I did when I got back to Manchester [from the Seoul 1988 Olympics] was to call the people from Lillehammer and make an appointment to talk to them. I spent two days there. I'm the only city that did that. That's amazing to me. They confirmed some things for me: Timing is critical. And if you peak too soon or too late—if IOC members visit so early they forget you or so late they have already made up their minds—you're dead (quoted in Johnson, 1990, p. 18).

Summarising an interview with Scott, Christopher Hill also noted the impression that the Lillehammer visit had made

> Scott was much encouraged by a visit [to Lillehammer] … It was two and a half hours from the nearest airport; it had fewer inhabitants than there were members of the Olympic 'family', and on the day before the vote experts had considered it a rank outsider. However, Lillehammer's lobbying strategy fitted very well with that being developed by Manchester: their team had confirmed that it was necessary to have a different marketing message for each IOC member and that the main objective must be to gain their trust and friendship, and they were convinced that the bidding team must be very small to avoid confusing the members (Hill, 1992, p. 112).

Learning from elsewhere, therefore, was not only about the *content* of the bid, but also its *presentation*. The Lillehammer-come-Manchester lobbying strategies did not prove effective for Manchester and, after losing the Olympic bid at the third attempt in Monte Carlo in 1993, it was quickly decided that Manchester would concentrate on bidding for the 2002 Commonwealth Games. In the words of Bob Scott, Manchester needed to "continue to 'think big'" (quoted in Rodda, 1993, p. 23). Although seen as less prestigious, a Commonwealth Games bid would utilise the private-sector buy-in and the

accumulated expertise, and would rekindle hopes of economic development through the hosting of a mega event. Echoing the 2000 Olympic bid, a (reduced-size) stadium and indoor arena in east Manchester, an Olympic-size swimming pool and a Games Village in the city centre were the main construction works planned.[3]

Instead of the BOA and IOC, Manchester had to convince the Commonwealth Games Council for England (CGCE) and the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) of its worth. Competition was less intense and there was less 'globetrotting' during the bidding stages. Manchester beat London by 17 votes to 7 at a meeting with the CGCE in February 1994 to become the English candidate city and was the sole candidate for the CGF vote. Despite the lack of competition, a series of trips took place to various CFG meetings and events that CFG members attended, including the Victoria Commonwealth Games (1994). These visits were understood to be necessary as Manchester officials still needed to convince the CFG that the city was a suitable host. Following an evaluation visit to Manchester by CGF members in July 1995, Manchester was awarded the 2002 Games in November 1995.

After Manchester was awarded the 2002 Games, Bob Scott stepped down as chair of the committee with Robert Hough, the chairman of Manchester Ship Canal, replacing him. Learning from elsewhere would become a key part of the preparations for the Games. For the organisers, this was necessary due to their lack of first-hand experience planning, *post-bid*, a major multisports event and to the limited guidance offered by the CFG. It also stemmed from a belief that it was unwise to 'reinvent the wheel'. Once again, they sought out (and were regularly offered) the services of what Larner and Laurie (2010) term 'travelling technocrats' who had experience of working on multisports events and a number were employed in-house or as consultants.[4] Indeed, one interviewee noted that Manchester sought to take advantage of this emergent specialist and highly mobile labour market, or "caravan of consultants" as he put it, which "goes around the world … from one sporting event to another" (ex-private-sector member, Manchester Commonwealth Games Ltd, interview, November 2009). Manchester delegates also visited a series of places and people hosting major multisports events. Large delegations from the city visited the Atlanta Olympic Games (1996), Sydney Olympics (2000) and the Edmonton Youth Championships (2001), and made several trips to Kuala Lumpur before and during the 1998 Commonwealth Games.

With the voting finished and lobbying no longer required, the composition of the delegations changed with newly employed 'operational' staff replacing the celebrity ambassadors. At these events, they would focus on how to deliver a well-organised Games, focusing on issues such as transport, security, accommodation, sponsorship, the volunteer schemes, ticketing, merchandise, catering, ceremonies, media and wider city cultural events. At the Sydney Games, a number of Manchester delegates took the role of volunteer workers to gain 'hands-on' experience of staging the Games (Manchester Commonwealth Games Ltd, 2000).

Lengthy detailed reports were written after the trips to Kuala Lumpur and Sydney, focusing on the positive and the negative aspects and the 'lessons for M2002'. Unlike the generally upbeat Sydney report, the Kuala Lumpur report was extremely critical about numerous aspects of its running, notably the lack of training and poor treatment of the volunteers (Manchester Commonwealth Games Ltd, 1998). The 'lessons for M2002' in both

went from very specific issues such as the location of sponsorship advertising inside and outside the venues to more overarching, more abstract lessons. The Sydney report, for instance, stated that: "Delivering a technically proficient sporting event in itself is not enough, we must create a sense of theatre, of occasion" and detailed how this must be achieved, *à la* Sydney

> We need to dress the City, we need banner banners and effective signage, we need to have information about the Games readily available in a variety of media, we need live, non-sport events to complement our programme (Manchester Commonwealth Games Ltd, 2000, p. 5).

Manchester would also take advantage of the wider moves by the IOC and the CGF to develop more formal structures to facilitate 'knowledge transfer' between Games. Following the Sydney Olympics, the IOC paid the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games to write 100 best-practice 'manuals' on how and how not to stage the Games, documents which would be circulated internationally and which would find themselves being discussed in the offices of Manchester Commonwealth Games Ltd (Lehmann, 2000). The IOC's knowledge-transfer programme has expanded since 2000 and now involves the publication of best-practice guides; the organising of seminars featuring keynote speakers from previous Games and the IOC; and, from Athens 2004 onwards, centrally orchestrated Observer Programmes and Secondment Programmes at each Games. The CGF also developed a similar knowledge-transfer system, its centrepiece being a Commonwealth Games Observer Programme, the first of which took place at the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester.

4. Other Cities Learn from Manchester

Manchester's Observer Programme commenced the week before the 2002 Commonwealth Games. Fourteen groups in the process of bidding for, or planning, major sporting events attended the Programme (Johnson, 1990). The participants included officials due to host the Athens Olympics (2004), the following Commonwealth Games in Melbourne (2006) and the Abuja All African Games (2003). Also present were officials representing New Delhi, Singapore and Hamilton, Halifax and Montreal in Canada, all with a view to bidding for the 2010 Commonwealth Games, as well as a South African delegation bidding to host the 2010 World Cup. The Observer Programme involved visits to all the sporting, media and accommodation sites used during the Games. It also involved two seminar days featuring presentations and question-and-answer sessions with all the senior organising officials, as well as social functions to 'network' with the Manchester officials, CFG officials and other participants. The participants were then free to watch the Games the following week.

For the local organisers and the CFG, the Observer Programme overcame the logistical and organisational problems caused by hosting several important groups who wanted to see broadly similar sights and to ask broadly similar questions. It also offered the hosts a chance to showcase their plans and facilities as the Commonwealth Games were about promoting Manchester to the world.

For those officials seeking to host the 2010 Commonwealth Games, the Observer Programme was seen as a valuable means through which to lobby and learn. One member of the Hamilton delegation reasoned that "it really is a starting-point to learn and spread the word that your city is

serious on bidding and hosting the Games" (interview, October 2009). Furthermore, he argued that it offered an invaluable opportunity to speak to people who knew how to bid for and organise a Commonwealth Games, providing advice on "potential landmines and co-ordination issues" and offering "a road map to organise your Games". For those visiting Manchester who were in the planning stages of organising a major sporting event—and echoing Manchester's post-1996 study tours—it was viewed as a good opportunity to learn about the more intricate and mundane ways in which a sporting event could be run, how the wider regeneration and boosterist city programmes could be rolled out and how the two could be integrated (Melbourne City Council, 2003). Such specificities, it was argued, could not be gleaned from the broad-brush media coverage of the Games (interview, ex-councillor, Melbourne City Council, October 2009).

While the closing ceremony took place on 4 August 2002, the study tours to the Commonwealth Games facilities and to east Manchester more widely did not finish there. Numerous practitioners and policymakers have visited east Manchester. This comes at a time when the city—and east Manchester in particular—has become a 'mecca' for policy tourists. Such tours have been organised by professional organisations in the UK (such as the Royal Town Planning Institute and BURA). Individual professionals and organisations from overseas (such as Hamburg City Council) have also arranged to visit east Manchester to see the economic development scheme up close. The tours have often involved walking tours and presentations by officials from the council, university and New East Manchester Company (the Urban Regeneration Company) whose well-rehearsed "protocols and packaged procedures … [are] efficient for the hosts and also edifying and enjoyable for the guests" (McCann, 2011a, p. 122).

Bidders and planners of major sporting events have continued to visit Manchester post-2002 to look, listen and learn. Several officials from Hamilton have revisited Manchester after the Games (Kernaghan, 2003, 2009). The rationale behind these trips stressed the 'common problems, common solutions' of the two cities, whereby both have sought to combat industrial decline through Games-led regeneration. This is a strategy that Hamilton has continued to pursue through bidding (unsuccessfully) for the 2014 Commonwealth Games and bidding (successfully), in partnership with Toronto, for the 2015 Pan American Games. The city was also assisted by developing friendships between officials in the two cities (interview, official, City of Hamilton, October 2009). A small number of visitors involved in the preparations for the London 2012 Olympics have also visited Manchester including a team from the Greater London Assembly seeking to learn how small businesses could benefit from the London 2012 Olympics (Greater London Assembly, 2005). In addition, the South African Portfolio Committee on Transport, with legislation to construct municipal transport authorities passed in early 2008 and the 2010 Football World Cup looming, visited Manchester in 2008 to consider how metropolitan transport authorities could ease transport problems during major sporting events (Portfolio Committee on Transport, 2008). And finally, officials from the forthcoming Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games visited Manchester in the summer of 2009 to learn from the city's achievements.

Nevertheless, it remains to be seen for how long Manchester will continue to be a reference point for other cities looking to use a major event as a catalyst for wider economic development. As Stephen Ward (2006, 2010) has argued, the construction of places and their successes as 'models' to emulate varies across both space and time.

5. Conclusion

According to Campbell (2008, p. 4) "the notion of learning … has been given too little attention in urban policy circles". We would concur. Our paper has argued that comparing, reference and learning have always been a part of the New Urban Politics (NUP). Moreover, it has made the case that the 1980s and 1990s witnessed a quantitative increase in activity in this field and a qualitative shift in its organisation. As others have noted, an industry of sorts has emerged to support and facilitate the movement of policies from one city to another. The foundational work on entrepreneurial urbanism by Harvey (1989, p. 10) observed the "repetitive and serial reproduction of certain patterns of development". His work and that by others at the time, such as Logan and Molotch (1987), Stone (1989) and Cox (1993)—which form the intellectual cornerstone for this Special Issue—successfully identified how territorial alliances of different stripes formed to protect exchange values and to maintain the conditions for capital accumulation. What this NUP literature underplayed was the ways in which *urban* politics is both territorial and relational. Cities are parts of circuits, networks and webs in and through which they compare and learn. It is through these that the "serial reproduction" about which Harvey (1989, p. 10) writes takes place, as cities as territories are constantly being assembled, disassembled and reassembled: fixity and motion *à la* Harvey (1973).

In light of these comments, this paper has sought to present a different account of contemporary Manchester, a city about which much has been written in recent years from a NUP vantage-point (Peck and Tickell, 1995; Tickell and Peck, 1996; Ward, 2000, 2003). Drawing upon McCann (2011b, p. 114), it has sought to demonstrate that, in order to understand Manchester's Olympic and Commonwealth Games projects, we must recognise how it is

> constituted by the very real and very local concerns of [Manchester] … but it is also shaped by travels to, stories from, and relations among a range of other places. The city's … policy and the politics that surround it are studded with these 'parts of elsewhere' and are, therefore, both territorial and global-relational assemblages.

Two important points about the making mobile of urban policies and the NUP can be drawn out of this paper. First, this paper constitutes a critique of the way in which work on the NUP has conceived of 'the urban'. It has argued that there is a need to look beyond the city limits to appreciate what/where goes into the assembling of 'urban politics', new or old. Evidence suggests that certainly since the late 1980s and early 1990s, what goes into the making-up of urban politics has been informed by city-to-city comparison, learning and references, albeit in the context of an environment of intensifying interurban competition. Situating itself in the burgeoning literature on policy mobilities, the paper has strived to show that policy transfer does not necessarily involve a single, linear, frictionless and literal policy movement from place A to place B, but can involve places using a multitude of points of reference elsewhere in terms of what to do and what not to do. Those involved in the Games visits in and out of Manchester did not just focus on what was happening in one destination, but were thinking about, reading about, visiting, discussing and comparing a variety of places. There are multiple points of comparison and multiple trans-urban networks of learning, both of which are constitutive of forms of contemporary urban governance.

Secondly, with regard to the methods of learning, the paper has shown that visiting

other places continues to be regarded as a valuable learning technique. Being *there*, so to speak, has not been diminished by the growth in mediated information that is available over the Internet. Gaining a 'first-hand' sensory understanding of how things actually look and work, as well as a (potential) opportunity to meet the 'experts' and ask focused questions, is still valued by those in the business of urban policy-making. Nonetheless, as the cases of Manchester's Olympic and Commonwealth Games projects have also shown, such visits are frequently used *in conjunction* with other methods of learning such as the employment of people with related experience elsewhere, the commissioning of 'fact-finding' reports, the reading of best-practice guidance, media reports and broadcasts, and the attending of 'how-to' conferences and seminars (McFarlane, 2009; McCann, 2011; K. Ward, 2006, 2007, 2011; Cook and Ward, forthcoming). Thinking about these issues in tandem, the ways in which geographically distant but relationally proximate places are implicated in the urban politics of economic development and the networks in and through which comparison, learning and referencing occur suggests one potentially fruitful way forward for work in this intellectual vein, as efforts to consider the virtues of the NUP in these (after) neo-liberal times gather apace.

Notes

1. Journal word limit precludes a detailed methodological discussion. Suffice to say, this paper draws upon a wider research project examining the use and ramifications of economic development study tours in and out of Manchester. On this theme, 20 interviews were conducted with three groups of public and private officials who: worked in Manchester and visited elsewhere on a study tour; visited Manchester as part of a study tour; or, helped to arrange or host a study tour in Manchester. So, methodologically, the paper draws from a number of different cities and sites, and attempts to follow learning along the network. The interviews are complemented by documentary analysis of 'fact-finding' reports and minutes and various newspaper, magazine and on-line reports of the visits. A triangulation of these methods provides a rich insight into the rationale behind the visits, the activities that took place on them, the 'lessons learnt' and their wider political-economic context.
2. The issue of IOC members' visits to candidate cities and visits by bidders to individual IOC members would become global news in November 1998 when it was revealed that, as part of Salt Lake City's successful campaign to host the 2002 Winter Olympics, a small number of IOC members used these visits to ask for, or accept, expensive gifts for themselves and their families from bidders in return for their vote (Mallon, 2000). From December 1999, IOC members would be banned from visiting candidate cities and from arranging meetings with candidate city representatives outside sanctioned international sporting events and meetings. A small 'Evaluation Commission' would make one trip of four days to each candidate city each and their technical evaluation report would be given to IOC members prior to the vote (see www.olympic.org).
3. The Games Village—which would be converted into student accommodation post-Games—was never built. Instead, existing university accommodation was temporarily used as the Games Village.
4. This apparent emergence of a policy mobilities 'industry' has been also noted by others (see, for instance, K. Ward, 2006; McCann, 2008, 2011; and Peck and Theodore, 2001).

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