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Brett Neilson

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Bodies of Protest: performing citizenship at the 2000 Olympic Games

Brett Neilson

University of Western Sydney

At the end of September 2000, after years of hype and speculation, the Sydney Olympics closed without major controversy. To oblige the burgeoning pride of Sydneysiders and sports-loving Australians in general, the President of the International Olympic Committee, Juan Antonio Samaranch, described the 2000 Games as the best ever. Sydney had managed to stage the world's largest peacetime event with minimum disruption: no terrorist attacks, no transport clogs, not even the expected disturbance of street demonstrations. Among enthusiasts of the Games, the perception that they had not become a platform for protest groups was a particular point of celebration. In the years leading up to the Sydney Games, the threat of protests at the Olympics had become a familiar feature of Australian political life. Most memorable among these warnings was the Indigenous activist Charles Perkins' April 2000 declaration that Sydney would 'burn, baby, burn' during the event. Not surprisingly, governments and Olympics organizing agencies took steps to forestall protest action. New legislation was passed restricting the right to public assembly on Olympic sites and making provision for the deployment of military forces against civilians. The Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) moved to diffuse Indigenous protest by awarding the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, one of the city's most active Indigenous groups, the contract to stage the official Indigenous cultural display in the Olympic Park. As the Games approached, politicians and Olympics officials began a war of words against protesters, characterizing their proposed activities as unAustralian, a term that was also being bandied about to describe the planned S11 protests at the World Economic Forum in Melbourne. The present paper explores the way in which this rhetoric and the nationalist sentiment to which it appealed shaped the protest activities that were planned for the Olympics. My basic premise is that these activities were indeed unAustralian, not in the sense that they contravened mythical qualities such as mateship or the fair-go but because they involved performances of citizenship that exceeded the constitutional frame of the Australian nation-state. Contrary to mainstream belief, the protests surrounding the Sydney Olympic Games were quite successful. It is just that these activities did not take the expected form of street demonstrations, but sought rather to avoid violent conflict while working through the communicative networks of the media.

Sydney—Globalization and Citizenship

In an article entitled 'Whose city is it? Globalization and the formation of new claims' (1996), Saskia Sassen argues that the contemporary city is emerging as a site for the constitution of new forms of citizenship. Due to the combined forces of economic and cultural globalization, she claims, urban space has become increasingly denationalized, giving rise to a new politics of contestation that is embedded in specific places but transnational in character. Particularly among urban groups that do not owe their sole or

principal source of identification to the nation, the city emerges as a strategic terrain for the development of new forms of community, membership, and entitlement. While not all cities are strategic in this regard, there are a growing number of societies in which cities have a different relationship to global processes than the governing bodies of their containing nation-states would be prepared to endorse or admit. For Sassen, these tendencies are most pronounced in the world's major financial and business centres: New York, London, Tokyo, Paris, Frankfurt, Zurich, Amsterdam, Los Angeles, Sydney, and Hong Kong. The inclusion of Sydney in this catalogue is hardly surprising, since for over a decade the city has regularly featured in lists of the world's global cities. In the Australian national context, however, there has been little discussion of the possibility that the city is engendering new forms of citizenship that are at odds with mainstream ideologies of national membership. Certainly, there has been much commentary on the growing inequality in the concentration of strategic resources and activities between Sydney and the rest of the nation, a phenomenon sharpened by the city's staging of the Olympics. But the assumption that Sydney presents nothing more than a peculiarly urbanized version of a wider Australian multiculturalism has generally remained intact. This chapter takes the occasion of the protest activities surrounding the Olympic Games to question this assumption. I examine the way in which protest groups used particular urban sites as a stage to gain global publicity for their disagreements with the legal and constitutional codes of the Australian nation-state. Special attention is paid to the interaction between these social actors and the transnational media organizations responsible for disseminating their message around the world.

Ever since the announcement in September 1993 of Sydney as the host-city for the 2000 Olympics, the possibility of protests at this event emerged as an important factor in Australian public life. Most prominent among the communities who threatened protest at the Games were Indigenous groups. With the election of a conservative national government in 1996, Indigenous Australians experienced a roll-back in Native Title legislation, the Prime Minister's refusal to apologize for the Stolen Generations, and a consequent stalling in the process of reconciliation. The Olympics presented Indigenous groups with a singular opportunity to make their predicament known to the world. Here, the hope was that global media exposure would generate international pressure that might expedite legislative or constitutional change in Australia: amplified land rights legislation, for example, or a treaty spelling out the terms and conditions of Indigenous sovereignty. As Lyall Munro (2000) of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council put it in a seminar on Olympic protests at the Institute of Criminology, University of Sydney: 'We ain't gotta truck with the world, we gotta truck with this country.' Munro's comment highlights the complex dynamic of national and transnational identification that marks Olympic protest events. Opposition to national legal and constitutional codes prompts a mode of activism that seeks maximum publicity through transnational media coverage. As Ray Jackson (2000a, p. 8) explains in an issue of the *Newsletter of the Indigenous Social Justice Association* published just weeks before the Games, Indigenous protesters seek the right 'to truthfully educate the overseas and Australian media' about the history of Aboriginal people in Australia since colonization.

In addition to Indigenous groups, a host of other organizations also planned protests at the Games. These groups, loosely affiliated under the Olympic Impacts Coalition, were various in number and political orientation, ranging from neighbourhood groups through to experienced anti-capitalist protesters. They included organizations such as Rentwatchers, the Anti-Olympics Alliance, Copwatch, the National Union of Students, Bankstown Bushland Society, Reclaim the Streets, Critical Mass, Meals on Wheels, PISSOFF (People Ingeniously

Subverting the Sydney Olympic Farce), environmental groups, churches, civil rights lobbies, NCOSS (Council of Social Services of NSW), and the Bondi Olympic Watch. Foremost among the concerns of these groups were the adverse effects of the Games upon Sydney: the displacement of the urban poor, the introduction of stringent security measures, environmental degradation, or the diversion of funds, resources, and public spaces to the Olympic movement. These organizations took issue with a series of disruptions to the inhabitants' rights to the city, repackaged and dished up by governments and Olympics coordinating agencies as temporary sacrifices that would facilitate long-term economic growth, public safety, and the furtherance of so-called Olympic values such as world peace. Although there emerged important differences and even conflicts of interests between these predominantly white groups and Indigenous protest bodies, their mode of operation was essentially the same. Protesters utilized urban space as a staging ground to enact their grievances before a global media audience. In so doing, they sought to circumvent national processes of decision making and conflict resolution, taking their complaints to a higher court of appeal, the global sphere of communication, media production, and information exchange.

These tactics of protest need to be understood in the wider context of capitalist globalization and its effects upon Sydney. Within the past decade, Sydney has emerged as a site of intense capitalist speculation, partly due to a property market boom fuelled by preparations for the Games. Not only has the city become an important financial centre but it has also established itself as a regional headquarters for transnational corporations and foreign banks. In concert with these activities, there has emerged a variety of producer services complexes, including accounting, law, management consulting, and data management firms with the international experience and expertise needed to service international financial markets (Murphy and Watson, 1996). As in other large cities, these processes of internationalization were accompanied by a reorganization of urban space. Sydney experienced the gentrification of inner city areas, the establishment of vast suburban estates on the city fringes, the burgeoning of smaller urban business zones such as Parramatta, Blacktown, and Chatswood, and the creation of communication- information hubs such as the Pyrmont-Ultimo area. As Sassen notes, however, globalization has an impact upon cities not just in the financial, economic, and geographical spheres, but also in terms of culture, identity, and citizenship.

Even before the preparation for the Olympic Games, Sydney exhibited key features of the global city, largely due to the concentrated diversity of its ethnic communities, which dwell among long-established Aboriginal and Anglo-Celtic populations. The preparation and staging of the Olympic Games have arguably accelerated the transnationalization of urban space in Sydney, adding other distinctive features of the global city to the area's diverse population base. Most prominent among these features is a widening gap between the rich and the poor, facilitated by the rapid escalation of property prices, particularly in the so-called Olympic Corridor stretching west from the city centre towards the Olympic site at Homebush Bay. While many residents have undoubtedly profited from property speculation in this area, there has been a correlative effect of displacement among the urban poor. This provided one precedent for protest at the Olympics, featuring as a concern among groups such as Rentwatchers, which complained of skyrocketing rents, evictions, increasing homelessness, and the reshaping of inner city areas for the work and leisure activities of the professional class. Admittedly, the international media attention that galvanizes such protest activity is short lived, opportunistic, and nomadic, but the transformations described above are structural and irreversible. As such, Sydney provides an appropriate site on which to explore

the emergence of new forms of citizenship that contest national (and nationalist) ideals of sovereignty and belonging.

Protest—Tactics and Alliance

The struggle over the use of urban space for protest purposes began well before the Olympic Games were underway. Central to Indigenous protest efforts was the establishment of a tent embassy in Victoria Park, a recreational area on the main route between the city's central business district and the Olympic complex. A branch of the twenty eight- year-old Canberra Aboriginal Tent Embassy, the Sydney Aboriginal Tent Embassy was struck in July 2000, much to the dismay of South Sydney Council, the local governing authority. Only after a protracted dispute with the Council, centring on health and safety regulations, was the Embassy allowed to stay. At stake in this struggle were differing conceptions of citizenship. The Council's concern was to enforce existing regulations designed to make the parkland accessible and safe for its actual and potential users. The protesters, on the other hand, questioned the Council's right to control their access to this land, to which they claimed a sovereign right and which they intended to use as a site for airing their grievances before national and international media agencies. Not until late August, when it became clear that the already mounting presence of foreign journalists meant that an eviction of the protesters would occasion a media blitz, did the Council give way. In this instance, the Council's understanding of citizenship as a state-administered system of entitlements and obligations was compromised (and effectively eclipsed) by the Indigenous protesters' demands for a local ground from which to publicly project their civic performances in the transnational sphere.

These shifting conceptions of citizenship reflect changes that have affected the forms and practices of civic life in the era of globalization. Due to the heightened traffic of people, money, technology and goods across national boundaries, nation-states experience increasing difficulty in regulating the economic and cultural exchanges that shape their destinies. Consequently, the dominant modern conception of citizenship as a collection of rights and duties that define the individual as a member of a sovereign state has become inadequate for explaining experiences of community, solidarity, and alienation. Torpey (2000) notes that the historical efforts of nation-states to regulate flows of people and commodities across their borders were only ever partially successful, and that consequently non-state-governed concepts of citizenship have a complex history that pre-dates the latest round of capitalist globalization. But as Appadurai (1996, p. 27) argues, 'today's world involves interactions of a new order and intensity'. Particularly in large cities, where wealthy non-citizens often enjoy civil and socio-economic rights unavailable to poor citizens, who nonetheless perform the duties of national belonging (jury duty, military service, and so forth), the nation is no longer a successful arbiter of citizenship (Appadurai and Holston, 1996). This has led to a discrediting of the influential theory of T. H. Marshall (1950) by which citizenship comprises a bundle of entitlements and obligations that protect the individual from the vagaries of the capitalist marketplace, specifically through the mechanisms of the welfare state. One effect of globalization is the concentration of cultural diversity in cities and the engendering of new citizenship struggles around minority rights. Kymlicka (1995) attempts to reconcile the demands of minority groups with the liberal tradition of citizenship studies. As useful as this work is for assessing the impact of new claims upon democratic national polities, it needs to be supplemented by a finer grained approach that is attentive to the politics of place and performance in the assertion of minority rights. This means examining specific urban

struggles that, like the protests at the 2000 Olympics, pit themselves against mainstream nationalist notions of citizenship, identity, and belonging.

As Burchell (2002) notes in his contribution to this special issue, there has been a turn away from rights-based theories of citizenship to participatory or performative notions of citizenship that implicitly draw upon the Ciceronian concept of *res gestae* (emphasizing the deeds, actions, and comportment of the citizen). In *Nomadic Identities* (1999, p. 4), May Joseph describes the citizen as ‘a performed site of personhood that instantiates particular notions of participatory politics’. Turning her attention to the phenomenological experience of performance in everyday life, Joseph examines ‘the expressive domains inhabited by citizens... whether in the way one holds one’s body, the music one consumes, or the kind of theater one produces’. While recognizing that citizenly performance is constrained by the legal and constitutional regimes of the nation-state, she focuses on transnational participatory practices that generate anxiety about urban sites. At the centre of this anxiety is the living body of the citizen and its struggle to achieve democratic participation in the city. Far from representing the apotheosis of national belonging, the civic body emerges as the most intensely localized of all global sites, the very stuff of a performativity that struggles within and against the official constitutionalism of the nation-state.

By understanding Olympic protest activities as such expressive performances of citizenship, it becomes possible to assess the unstable balance of national and transnational forces that shape them. The Olympic Games are undoubtedly a global event, but they function according to a competitive protocol that pits nation-state against nation-state, as if they were interchangeable entities on a level playing field. Athletes compete as representatives of their nation and simultaneously participate as exemplars of supranational Olympic values in the global rituals of the opening and closing ceremonies. Media audiences are first addressed as loyal nationals who support their country’s team and second as spectators of the world’s best sporting performances. As Wilson (1996, p. 614) observes, the Olympics ‘involve a basic tension between the impulses towards nationalism and globalism, and it is never obvious which will dominate’. There is by now a large body of literature on sport and globalization that treats the Olympic Games as ‘one of the most important sources of ... transnational forms for constituting differentiated identities’ (MacAloon, 1991, p. 42). Specific areas of emphasis are the use of national mythmaking through Olympic sport to generate new habits among the citizenry, the politics surrounding the gendering and racing of Olympic sports bodies, the tensions between increasing corporatism and the utopian internationalism of the Olympic movement, and the role of the media in producing the Olympic spectacle (Macguire, 1999; Rowe, 1999; Miller *et al.*, 2001). Another important area of study concerns the way in which tensions between nationalism and globalism shape the media’s construction of the host city as spectacle, particularly its theatricalization of urban sites (Fensham, 1994). In the case of protest sites, the conflict between national and transnational forces is acute, although they may also work in tandem. Protesters must balance their desire to achieve maximum global publicity against multiple perils. Among these dangers are the possibility of negative representation in the media, the prospect of self-censorship, and perhaps most immediately and importantly, the susceptibility to national regimes of policing and surveillance (Head, 2000).

The interactions between protest groups, media agencies, and sovereign police forces are complex and it is best not to second-guess them. Although the state can restrict the possibilities for protest by means of policing activities, these strategies of regulation can only

go so far without resulting in bodily violence that itself creates a media spectacle. As protest activities actually unfolded during the Sydney Olympics, they involved a series of tactical agreements between police and protest organizations, in particular the Indigenous groups at the Victoria Park Tent Embassy. These agreements, which were designed primarily to reduce the threat of violence, had benefits for both parties. The police force was able to claim success in its programme of preventing the interruption of Olympic activities, while Indigenous protesters could freely conduct their performances on a transnational stage without risking a backlash from white Australians keen to see the Games proceed without disruption.

The preparedness of the Tent Embassy protesters to compromise with state forces was one symptom of the welcome reception that the rhetoric that described protests as unAustralian found in the national public sphere. In the week before the Olympics, the S11 protests against the World Economic Forum in Melbourne had been marked by violent clashes between police and demonstrators. Although police had initiated the violence, a number of politicians, among them Prime Minister John Howard, Steve Bracks, the Premier of Victoria, and Richard Court, the then-Premier of Western Australia, capitalized on the circulation of images of violent conflict, deploying the rhetoric of unAustralian-ness to swing national sentiment against the S11 protesters. It was this kind of negative publicity that Indigenous protesters sought to avoid by reaching a strategic agreement with the police during the Olympics. The deployment of this tactic does not mean that protests did not occur or that Indigenous activists backed down on their attempts to globally publicize their disagreements with Australia's legal and constitutional codes. Such a pact with the police attests only the constraints that the disciplinary regimes of the nation-state place upon transnational performances of citizenship. Clearly, there were advantages for Indigenous protesters in protecting themselves from political agents who disagreed with, or were threatened by, their agendas. Nonetheless, their representations to the international media continued to contrast official notions of national belonging that rest on claims of constitutional right, sovereign power, or equality before the law.

Also complex were the relations between Indigenous protesters at the Olympics and their white counterparts. While organizations such as the Anti-Olympics Alliance had made support of Indigenous protest part of their brief, this assistance was in the final instance refused by Aboriginal activists. In particular, the Victoria Park protesters, headed by Isabel Coe, a veteran of the Canberra Aboriginal Tent Embassy, the longest running Indigenous protest site in Australia, made a special effort to distance themselves from white protesters who were specifically opposed to the Olympics. Like the compact with the police, this decision also needs to be understood in the context of the nationalist sentiment generated by Australian participation in Olympic sport and the negative publicity received by the S11 protests in Melbourne.

Macguire (1999, p. 204) explains that sports 'act as "anchors of meaning" at a time when national cultures and identities are experiencing the effects of global time-space compression'. The nationalist triumphalism and affect aroused among white Australians by the victories of Olympic athletes such as the swimmer Ian Thorpe serve precisely to gloss over the instabilities of national culture and identity that result from the erosion of national sovereignty under globalization. Under these conditions, any attempt to protest against the corporate interests at stake in the Olympics functions not only to highlight these global pressures but also to deny the pleasures by which sport reinvests national identity with

meaning. The tactic of Indigenous protesters was to act their grievances before the international media while occasioning the least possible resentment from white Australians. The mainstream Australian media had drawn specific comparisons between anti-Olympics activists and the S11 protesters, characterizing both as anarchists, accusing them of violent intentions, and claiming that their planned actions were conceived by foreign activists who had orchestrated the anti-corporate globalization protests in Seattle, London, and Washington. While not all groups in the field of Indigenous politics were happy with this split from white anti-Olympics protesters, the decision reflected the dominant Tent Embassy rhetoric of healing and peace, calling for an end to the two centuries of war and genocide that mark race relations in modern Australia. Its primary effects were to reduce the size and impact of anti-Olympics demonstrations, which failed to attract foreign media attention, and to shift the field of Indigenous protest towards orchestrated media performances.

Although Indigenous protest did take the classical form of the street demonstration, such as the Tent Embassy march to the Prime Minister's office on the day of the opening ceremony, there was far greater emphasis on symbolic performances that aimed to capture the attention of the global media. In the lead-up to the Games, there was much talk about Indigenous protesters occupying the Bicentennial Park site in the Olympic complex at Homebush Bay. Although some protesters did manage to break into this site, most Indigenous activity occurred at a distance from the heavily secured Olympic Park. For instance, the peace walk from Lake Eyre in South Australia organized by 'Uncle' Kevin Buzzacott centred on a march through the inner city suburb of Newtown and an unofficial flame ceremony at the Victoria Park Tent Embassy on 3 September followed by an Aboriginal flag raising and smoking ceremony at Kurnell on 18 September. Similarly, on 15 September, the activist Trevor Close organized a canoe ride to, and flag raising ceremony on, Fort Denison in Sydney Harbour, an event staged specifically for the cameras of NBC, the US television network with broadcasting rights for the Games. Significantly, these protest activities involved the strategic placement of Indigenous bodies at key urban and suburban sites—symbolic places like Fort Denison and Kurnell associated with past Aboriginal suffering and the initial wave of white colonization in the late eighteenth century. They also encompassed mock Olympic ceremonies such as torch parades and flame-lighting ceremonies. In this respect they constituted citizenly performances that sought not simply to mock the rituals of Olympism but to utilize the global media apparatus associated with the Games to theatricalize local sites for transnational protest activities.

Reconciliation as Spectacle

Undoubtedly, there were missed opportunities for Indigenous protest during the Sydney Olympics, such as the failed plan to line the major thoroughfares around the airport with a human chain during the heaviest period of foreign arrivals before 15 September. This proposed action was the brainchild of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council or Metro, the organization that had been assigned the official role of displaying Indigenous cultures in the pavilion at the Olympic Park. Dismayed with Metro's acceptance of this role, Isabel Coe dissuaded people from participating in the human chain protest which, incidentally, had been planned by her sister, Jenny Munro. Whatever the family-personal politics underlying this debacle, it is only partly correct to claim that Indigenous protest was forestalled by the SOCOG strategy of incorporating potential protesters into its own ranks. Indeed, some of the most controversial and compelling Indigenous performances occurred in and through the official Olympic spectacle.

The conspicuous inclusion of Indigenous performers in the globally broadcast opening and closing ceremonies, for instance, was construed by many media commentators as a protest against national government policies, advancing the cause of reconciliation and heightening calls for constitutional reform. In the domain of sport, the gold medal win of Aboriginal sprinter Cathy Freeman, who had also been chosen to light the Olympic flame, was also understood as a victory for the Indigenous cause. Indeed, so strong was the rhetoric surrounding Freeman's athletic prowess that Prime Minister Howard was forced to issue an ineffective call against the politicization of the event. During the closing ceremony, the band Midnight Oil performed a song about Indigenous land rights, wearing tee shirts with the word 'sorry' emblazoned on them. It has to be remembered that these ceremonies were organized by agencies that were largely controlled by urban elites whose cosmopolitan values were highly attuned to the possibility of national embarrassment due to foreign media coverage of Indigenous issues. Thus, while SOCOG would tolerate no interruption to the official running of the Games, it was highly concerned to present the opening and closing ceremonies as vehicles of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

In part, this was purely opportunistic, exploiting the capacity of Indigenous cultures to act as a marker of Australian distinctiveness in international marketplaces; the only thing preventing the nation from being perceived as a vast British California, to remember the words of travel writer Pico Iyer. There is also a sense, however, in which the Olympic spectacle sought to effect a national catharsis in the face of the conflict and unsettlement that had unfolded during the derailing of the reconciliation process. Crucially, this ritual had to be performed before a global audience. If the elusive prospect of an overarching synthesis between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians had proved unattainable in the realm of national *realpolitik*, it was apparently obtainable in the fantasy realm projected in these globally broadcast images. Here, the conjectured possibility of apology, forgiveness, and national reconciliation was melded to the We Are the World values of Olympism as Indigenous dancers guided a young white woman, Nikki Webster, through a potted allegory of the nation's history. The desire articulated in these images inhabited the domain of media fantasy, but for many this fantasy became real when Cathy Freeman dashed across the victory line in the 400 metres sprint.

Miller *et al.* (2001, pp. 109–110) write that when 'women are given the mantle of national sporting symbolism, the result is always over-determined'. When nationalist desire is inscribed on the female Indigenous body the result is even more over-determined. More than any other event since the disappointed jubilation of the Sydney Bridge walk in May 2000, Freeman's gold medal win was imagined to have driven the nation towards an overcoming of its racial divide. Geoff Clark (2000), Chairman of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, proclaimed: 'If she's running for justice and she's running for us, I think we're winning.' Similarly, Kim Beazley (2000), then leader of the opposition Labor Party, which only weeks before had crossed Indigenous leaders on a Native Title deal with the Queensland state government, declared: 'For me, that was four hundred metres of national reconciliation.' Amid the chorus of praise, the Indigenous activist Ray Jackson (2000b) offered a lone dissenting voice:

Reconciliation in this country has a hell of a long way to go. OK, it was great that we had a bit in the opening ceremony; we had a bit on the closing ceremony; Cathy done us proud, as did our others. But I didn't see it actually advanced reconciliation one

millimetre ... What about Cathy's grandmother being taken? There's still no apology. We're still being spat on, we're still being slapped in the eye.

Similarly, the legitimacy of the conspicuous inclusions in the Olympic ceremonies was adjudicated differently by various Indigenous bodies. Djakapurra Munyarrgun (2000), one of the main opening ceremony performers, joined Geoff Clark in declaring that popular support for the Indigenous focus of the spectacle demonstrated that the time was right for the signing of a formal treaty between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Likewise, Isabel Coe (2000) praised the choice of Freeman to light the Olympic flame, claiming it alerted the world to the fact that Indigenous Australians still exist. By contrast, the poet Lionel Fogarty (2000) was more sceptical of Freeman's role: 'There are certain things that come into one's Aboriginal mind about Cathy Freeman. Why didn't she hold up our flag there, you know, when she lit the pool of fire or something like that? Was there an Aboriginal symbol there or was it just Cathy Freeman's face?'

No matter how one understands the complexity of Freeman's relation to Indigenous politics and protest, it is important to remember that the official institutions of the Olympic Games were not always open to Indigenous people who wished to alert the world to their condition. On 17 September, Lowitja O'Donahue, the high-profile organizer of the Journey of Healing, the official Indigenous response to the breaking of the Stolen Generations story, was refused access to the Sydney Media Centre, the SOCOG agency responsible for providing foreign journalists with information about Sydney and the Olympics. If Olympic organizing agencies were concerned to provide the world with images of Indigenous Australians, it was certainly on their own terms, with little consultation of Aboriginal groups who wished to represent the nation in anything but a gracious light.

Despite this, the overseas media were extremely active in disseminating stories about Indigenous people, particularly those concerning the Stolen Generations and the Prime Minister's refusal to apologize. As Michael Peschardt (2000), the BBC's correspondent in Australia explains: 'It's one of those stories that people around the world can immediately empathise with.' Much of the reportage of the Stolen Generations issue was done in the weeks leading up to the Games, partly as a result of local Sydney journalists who organized a Web-based Alternative Media Centre for disseminating information about this and other less positive Olympics-related stories to visiting reporters. For months, foreign journalists were supplied with press releases and images that documented the continuing desolation of Australia's Indigenous people. Many overseas reporters were also given the chance to explore conditions in the Block, the Aboriginal ghetto in the inner city Sydney suburb of Redfern and heart of urban Indigenous activism. As a consequence, much of the foreign coverage of Indigenous protests and the role of Aboriginal people in the opening and closing ceremonies was addressed to audiences that already had some familiarity with Australia's racial history.

UnAustralian Sovereignty

There can be little doubt that the Olympics raised international awareness regarding the plight of Indigenous people in Australia, a fact reflected in the growing pressure asserted by transnational organizations such as the United Nations on the federal government. It is too early and perhaps too optimistic to conclude that this pressure might facilitate legislative or constitutional reform in Australia. Thus far, the national government has reacted only by

withdrawing from UN committees on human rights and restricting the rights of UN officials to enter Australia, a move popular with nationalist voters who are wary of outside intervention in the Australian polity. Nonetheless, the global dissemination of the Stolen Generations story demonstrates the key role of media organizations in producing a field of public sentiment that transcends the borders of any particular nation-state.

Such a transnational dissemination of information is by no means restricted to the popular print and broadcast media, but also occurs increasingly in the virtual spaces of the Internet. Central to protest actions during the Olympics was the establishment of an Independent Media Centre, which published grassroots and independent reportage (articles, images, video, sound-files... whatever) on an indymedia.org Website. A separate affair to the Alternative Media Centre, which involved established journalists and academics providing information to their foreign colleagues, the Indymedia site allowed postings from all who cared to contribute. The site was linked directly to thirty others in the Indymedia network, serving as a coordinating node for activists, who used the medium to exchange information as well as to disseminate their views to whoever was downloading the page. Here the actions of small protest organizations such as the Anti-Olympics Alliance gained publicity with a more positive spin than that given in the mainstream Australian press. The site was also frequented by foreign journalists seeking information regarding Olympic protest actions. Indeed, postings to the Independent Media Centre were directly quoted in the *Guardian* newspaper, much to the dismay of the activist authors, who immediately responded, correcting and critiquing the British journalist's interpretation of their words.

While these Internet-based protest activities functioned differently from the Indigenous actions that aimed at direct performance before the overseas media, they involved a similar utilization of urban space. Premises had to be found in which to house the Centre, being at once open enough to allow users easy access and closed enough to hamper state authorities that sought to monitor or restrict its activities. This involved preparation months before the Games. In the technical sense, the Indymedia venture might have been run from an extra-urban space. But the Centre's eventual location in a residential warehouse in the Newtown-St. Peters area was the result of weeks of planning and discussion, ranging from issues of health and safety, security, accessibility to posters, the amassing of equipment, power supply, and funding. In reality, the Centre had to be readily accessible to bodies that were moving between urban protest sites, their habitual places of residence, and the hardware that allowed them to link into global computing networks. Working from the example of the Independent Media Centre that provided the nerve centre for the Seattle protests of December 1999, the organizers of the Sydney Centre sought to wrest urban space away from the nation, using it as a local ground from which to conduct political action in the global sphere of virtual communication.

Such protest activities, even when they involve a strategic compromise with state forces, as in the case of the Tent Embassy agreement with the police, embody a mode of citizenship that both challenges state power and recognizes its limits. Central to their operations is the realization that the state, despite the sovereign power invested in it, is weakened before the global media, which are capable of generating popular affect both within and across national borders. Indeed, there is a sense in which the global media possess a form of sovereignty that exceeds that of the nation-state. In *Empire* (2000), Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue that the decline of nation-state sovereignty under capitalist globalization does not mean that sovereignty itself has declined. They point to the emergence of a new global form of

sovereignty, composed of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a decentred and deterritorializing apparatus of rule. This new sovereignty progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its expanding frontiers, managing hybrid identities, flexible hierarchies, and plural exchanges through modulating networks of command. There are three main channels through which this system of imperial control operates: the thermonuclear arsenal, the world market, and the global networks of communication.

Of these, communication networks provide the central means by which productive forces are transformed and sovereignty is articulated. Hardt and Negri (2000, p. 348) claim that this 'dynamic produces an extremely open situation: here the centralised locus of power has to confront the power of productive subjectivities, the power of all those who contribute to the interactive production of communication'. The civic performances of protest groups during the Olympic Games might be considered one such locus of productive subjectivity. While locally situated, these protest activities are articulated in and through global networks, involving a productive corporeality that cannot be contained by a national body. This analysis applies even in the case of Indigenous groups that fight for sovereignty vis-à-vis the Australian nation-state. In seeking a sovereignty of their own, these groups struggle against state judicial and political apparatuses that effectively minimize their rights. It is inappropriate to understand Indigenous sovereignty as an attempt to shape multitudinous and internally differentiated communities into a single people that would constitute an alternative Australia. In the context of Olympic protests, the struggle for Indigenous sovereignty is articulated against the modernity of the Australian nation-state, combining claims that stem from pre-modern inhabitation of the land (contra *terra nullius*) with tactical performances that circulate in the sphere of global communication.

The fact that protesters broker compromises with the state to optimize the conditions for such local/global action does not mean that they admit the victory or rectitude of that same state. In the context of the contemporary Olympic Games, where nationalist sentiment is mobilized in the name of transnational spectacles and commoditization, the balance between national and global imperatives is highly unstable and materially inscribed within the production of urban space. By choosing to avoid violent conflict with the police, protesters at the 2000 Olympics did not forfeit on their mission to globally publicize their disagreements with the constitutional and legal codes of the Australian state. I construe the activities of these protesters as unAustralian in the most positive sense of the term—unAustralian in the performance of a citizenship that exceeds national boundaries, in the appropriation of urban space from the nation-state, and in the desertion of a sovereignty that derives its legitimacy from the fiction of *terra nullius*. Such a characterization of Olympics-related protest activity risks inviting precisely the response that politicians and other empowered bodies seek when they mobilize the term unAustralian. Nonetheless, it makes good sense in the context of a critical idiom that questions the continued capacity of the nation-state to act as an arbiter of citizenship in an increasingly globalized world. I wish to be perfectly clear that this attribution of the quality unAustralian to the protest activities surrounding the Olympics is my own. The use of the term is meant not only to counterpoint the nationalist populism that implies that that which is unAustralian is necessarily dubious but also to suggest that while such nationalist sentiment is dominant it is not hegemonic. During the Olympic Games, Sydney emerged as a site in which the transnational performance of citizenship was able to take place despite the most incessant celebration of national sports culture. It remains to be seen if, in the absence of the global media spotlight, the city will continue to produce citizens

who resist national forms of belonging and the attendant organization of subjectivity and identity.

Correspondence: Dr Brett Neilson, School of Humanities, University of Western Sydney, Penrith/AD, PO Box 1797, Penrith South DC, NSW 1797, Australia. E-mail: b.neilson@uws.edu.au

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