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Live sites in an age of media reproduction: mega events and transcontinental experience in public space

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Abstract

The proliferation of Live Sites, (also known as Public Viewing Areas), designed to expand and extend the scope of media audience participation, has raised a series of questions regarding the quality of this relatively new mediated-embodied experience. Commentary tends to be polarised over whether Live Sites enhance or lessen the spectator experience through a democratising effect of 'viewing from a distance', as opposed to the emotionally engaged superiority typically associated with 'being there' live at the event. In this paper we suggest that to assess the effects of Live Sites through such dichotomies, oversimplifies the experience offered by these new mediated public spaces. We argue that such debates are problematic insofar as they tend to treat the function of Live Sites simply as a matter of event reproduction and transmission, instead of recognising the constitutive role that the media play in them. This is particularly the case with regard to digital media's capacity to extend audience participation, and to transform the 'live' experience, through inclination, global reach, new forms of surveillance, and social media. Here, we advocate a more critically reflexive engagement with these technological innovations, contending that assessing the impact of Live Sites is not simply a matter of technical experiential quality but of understanding how mediated public viewing alters dynamic aspects of contemporary urban social life.

Introduction: screened, spatialised experience

Global media events, the most regular of which are of a sporting nature, operate in diverse ways regarding spatiality and temporality. Maurice Roche (1992: 564) has influentially defined these "mega events" as "large-scale cultural or sporting occasions designed to attract tourists and media-attention". These occasions privilege ceremonies and contests, such as the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games and the final of the FIFA World Cup, that take place in enclosed stadia in specific locations (Tomlinson & Young, 2006). This site of spectacle, which includes paying spectators as unpaid but essential "screen actors" (or, perhaps, 'extras'), is the pretext for myriad forms of mediated engagement with the event. Since the second half of the 20th century, especially with the advent of satellite television, mega sport events could be watched in 'real time' in many parts of the globe in various contexts, from private homes (first) in the more affluent societies to shared private and public spaces in those locations where access to television was restricted by technology, geography and resources (Rowe, 2004; 2011). In something of an historical irony, many of those with the means of watching major mediated live sport in domestic environments have recently sought something of the sociality of 'being there' by watching them in the kinds of public space once 'dedicated' to those who lack the means of private domestic viewing.

The emergence of Live Sites in the public domain also corresponds to the fact that social life in the 21st century is increasingly mediated through combined broadcast, mobile and other digital technologies, making the experience afforded to public viewing in the 'digital age' remarkably different to conventional conceptions of viewing live events. In these "media cities" (McQuire, 2010a), Public Viewing Areas (another term for "Live Sites") are claimed, paradoxically, to form part of the solution to the so-called "fall of public man" (Rowe & Baker, 2012a). At the same time, Live Sites have increasingly taken on some of the characteristics of the stadium itself in being subject to new forms of governmentality, including mobility restriction and spatial enclosure, a commercialised ethos, and provision of at least one "big screen" carrying sport action, advertising and sponsor logos (BBC, 2011).

Live Sites can be set up in various public spaces (and also for non-sporting purposes – McQuire, 2010b), from just outside the enclosed main event stadium to cities, countries and continents beyond the host location. In the event city itself, the rationing of the stadium experience is made particularly acute by its tantalising proximity. For example, in the case of the summer Olympics with its many simultaneous events and event spaces, while public access is readily available to more routine contests

and events, or less popular Olympic sports, the high demand, price and limited supply of tickets tends to perpetuate a cycle of elitism and exclusion. A case in point was the lead up to the London 2012 Olympic Games, where there was considerable popular frustration that the limited availability of tickets, in conjunction with those reserved for International Olympic Committee members, dignitaries, sponsors, and sporting professionals, prevented large sections of the public from participating in an in-stadium live experience. It has been estimated that nearly two thirds of the 1.9m people who applied for tickets to the London 2012 Olympics were unsuccessful in the first round of sales, with 1.2m applicants receiving no tickets at all, and only 700,000 (approximately 36 per cent) able to secure a ticket to the mega event (*Guardian*, 2011b). The desire of many of those who were unsuccessful in acquiring Olympic event tickets, and also of many who had not applied for them or who wanted to optimise the rare experience of a 'hometown' Olympics to take part in an "interactive event", ensured that the London 2012 Organising Committee (2011a) would facilitate the now-familiar arrangement of a Live Sites programme.

Counteracting the problem of finite inventories of tickets by establishing Live Sites, also enables hosts and sports organisations simultaneously to extend audience reach and profile through "big screens and event spaces in urban centres offering live information, video, news and community events" (London 2012 Organising Committee, 2011a). The twenty official Live Sites dedicated to the London Olympics at different locations across the UK, in addition to Community Live Sites, created multiple public venues designed to broadcast action and news from London 2012 live throughout the country (and in other cities, large and small, across the globe). This is alongside Olympic-related, interactive "cultural and sporting content" through the BBC's (2011) "Big Screens" collaboration with the London Organising Committee (LOCOG) and local authorities. However, although Live Sites make mega events visible and accessible to a broader public audience, such 'viewing from a distance' clearly provides a different experience to 'being there' live at the event (Rowe, 2000). This difference is typically thought to signify spectatorial inferiority, a lesser experience than exposure to "the original" itself (*Guardian*, 2011a).

In this article we analyse this question with reference to ethnographic fieldwork to compare the synthetic mediated-embodied experience afforded by Live Sites to that of a live event. Here, we aim to interrogate conventional assumptions that "viewing [a mediated performance at a Live Site] from a distance" is an inferior experience to 'being there' live at the event. Our analysis is informed by a case study¹ that we conducted in Sydney, Australia on a similar initiative by the world governing body of association football, FIFA, which broadcast the 2010 South Africa World Cup from six designated Live Sites across the globe (what it referred to as the International FIFA Fan Fest™, the official global sponsors of which were Coca-Cola, Emirates, Hyundai and Sony). We also situate our analysis in relation to comparable initiatives that have taken place in the digital age,² including the Public Space Broadcasting strategy launched in 19 cities across the UK in 2003, and the "Digital Theatre" Project, which was also initiated in the UK in 2009, in order to give our research wider currency beyond a specific, sport-related case study. We have structured this inquiry by canvassing themes that examine both the positive and negative implications of this relatively nascent media experience. Current public and academic debates tend to focus on the more obvious democratic benefits or (emotional-experiential) limitations of "viewing from a distance" (*Guardian*, 2011a) and, to a lesser extent, the new opportunities afforded by social media, as well as the issues of governmentality and commercialisation that impact on the embodied public and virtual spheres (Coleman & Ross, 2010). We argue that such commentary rather misrepresents both the forms and effects of mediated viewing. Here we contend that, instead of considering the purpose of Live Sites simply as a matter of reproduction and transmission, it is crucial to recognise the mediated dynamics of this proliferating viewing experience. Finally, we suggest that, in an age of putative individualisation and public culture decline, the extension of public viewing capabilities afforded through broadcasting mega events at Live Sites across the globe has the potential to become a significant cultural phenomenon in the 21st century by synthesising diverse experiences, sensations and interactive social encounters.

Broadening the public sphere – a democratic initiative?

Arguably the most positive dimension of Live Sites is their culturally 'democratising' capacity to make mega events more visible and accessible to a broad public audience. With big screens broadcasting popular cultural and sporting events at public spaces (typically in urban centres), Live Sites have the potential not only to extend public viewing beyond the specific time and space in which the live event takes place, but also to expand the scope of the public who participate in these events (although the variable distribution of Live Sites and privileging of major population centres counsels against overemphasising the democratic benefits of such initiatives). For example, while parents might be hesitant to expose their family to the male-dominated audience traditionally associated with association football (soccer) crowds, FIFA's Live Sites programme explicitly aimed to attract children to what it promoted as a "family atmosphere" (FIFA, 2010c). This process of divorcing football from its male, working-class origins and associations with violence and hooliganism, by making the environment "safe for its supposed new, quiescent, middle class, family audience", has been developing since the late 20th century (Dunning et al, 1990: 26; see also King, 1998, 2003). FIFA further reinforced this strategy at its official Live Sites by including popular modes of entertainment specifically designed to attract children through half-time performances, games, and competitions. It is difficult to assess independently the effectiveness of this strategy, although FIFA (2010e) declared that its commissioned market research at all its Live Site locations revealed that:

From the Copacabana to the Eiffel Tower, FIFA's International Fan Fest™ activities have been given a huge thumbs-up from those people who made the event a huge success – the fans!

This 'global' (in both senses) claim will be examined more closely, but it is apparent from our research that particular differences existed at FIFA's Live Sites in various spatial and temporal contexts across the globe.

For instance, despite FIFA's mission to publicise a "family friendly" atmosphere, context-based comment elicited by researchers during matches indicated that spectators were for the most part attracted to the "crowd atmosphere" offered by the Live Site. When asked about their motivation to attend the Final between Spain and Holland at FIFA's Live Site in Sydney, for example, a

group of three male Spanish supporters in their twenties responded, "Because of the atmosphere". This reason for attendance was reiterated by another group of five male Spanish supporters in their mid-twenties, who replied, "To be with the crowd".

Two female Dutch supporters who attended FIFA's Sydney Fan Fest to watch a match with their children, were among the few who alluded in casual conversation with the researchers to the "family friendly" atmosphere as their motivation for attending the Live Site:

Because our husbands are watching the game at 'Holland House' [a popular over-18s night club at Darling Harbour used by Dutch fans as a temporary venue to congregate and watch the Final from] and we can't take the children there.

Of course, "family friendliness" is not immune to the exigencies of global time zones – in Sydney the 64 World Cup games were broadcast at 9:30pm, midnight and 4:30am in the middle of the Australian winter something that was unlikely to be convenient for parents and children, especially those (the majority in the Great Sydney conurbation, with its demographic centre 25 kilometres from the Darling Harbour Live Site) who would have to travel considerable distances to attend. While "interactive family activities" such as including football workshops, clinics and displays, cultural performances, live entertainment and "fun competitions", were run during the day, in the evening and at night, the main focus of the event – live, screened football matches – occurred at times likely to be inconvenient for parents of infants, children and teenagers. Indeed, the aggregate data commissioned by FIFA found that, while 21 per cent attended a Fan Fest site with members of their family, only 3 per cent explicitly mentioned that these fellow spectators included children (FIFA, 2010e).

Accordingly, while the former response demonstrates that FIFA's "family friendly" Live Sites were able to broaden the public experience of this sports mega event to encompass families and children, this was not, on the evidence of the largely adult composition of the crowds at the televised football matches in Sydney, the dominant reason for their attendance on these pivotal occasions. Moreover, participant observations at FIFA's Sydney Fan Fest confirmed that the audience attending the Live Site consisted of, for the most part, male youths whose above-quoted, sampled comments indicate that they were more interested in attending the Live Site in order to experience a "crowd atmosphere" with other fans who also identified themselves as part of a transnational sporting community (consistent with the 70 per cent of Fan Fest attendees who felt "part of a larger global event" – FIFA, 2010e).

A comparable, non-sport oriented recent attempt to broaden the public experience of live events through broadcasting them at public viewing areas is the UK's "Digital Theatre" project. Launched in 2009, Digital Theatre allows media users across the UK and overseas to view its performances live in cinemas, and to download high-quality productions from some of Britain's leading theatre companies. The primary aim of Digital Theatre (2009) is to use the latest digital technologies in order to produce films of high quality in order to make the experience of live theatre available to mass (global) audiences. For the theatres involved, this was an opportunity both to expand their audience by extending the longevity of their season and the geographical spaces in which these performances could be viewed. Just as Live Sites functioned as part of FIFA's "global strategy" to extend their public audience, Digital Theatre makes the experience more affordable, and extends the temporal and spatial boundaries of the live performance, thereby enabling a greater public audience to attend or 'consume' the performance. Discussing the merits of Digital Theatre, Hermione Hoby, an arts writer for the *Observer*, pointed out that:

Most importantly, screenings like these allow people who wouldn't otherwise see shows – for reasons of money or geography or inclination – to experience them (*Guardian*, 2011a).

Influencing 'inclination' then, becomes an important rationale for these initiatives. In this respect, not only are such mediated performances designed to extend audience numbers (through a process of what Giddens (1991) refers to as "dis-embedding" the live performance from boundaries of time and space), crucially these initiatives aim to expand the very public interested in viewing these performances in the first place through the "dis-embedding" and "re-embedding" mechanisms that Featherstone and Lash (1995) consider to be characteristic of modernity. This 'untapped', 'disinclined' public might be children and families at Live Sites, or those individuals and collectives uninterested in physically attending theatres but attracted to viewing Digital Theatre live from a site of cinematic exhibition. The irony of course, is that in these instances media are not only held to be responsible for the so-called "fall of public man" (Sennett, 1977), but prove vital to the process of 'reviving' public life in the 21st century, digital age (Rowe & Baker, 2012a).

There are nevertheless, important differences between these types of mediated spectatorship that reveal key variations of cultural form and engagement. While Digital Theatre (2009) merely endeavours to reproduce (in some respects) and disseminate the live performance, a production may be replayed at various intervals throughout the calendar year, thereby making the form less reliant on 'live' ('real time') spectatorship than, say, a sports mega event in which the unpredictable outcome of the contest is a key feature. Moreover, whereas the public that views Digital Theatre from a cinema encounters limited forms of emotional exchange ('corroborated' laughter, clapping or crying, for example), the emotional dimension of the 'crowd atmosphere' at the Live Site is fundamental to the experience of spectator sport. Emotions have conventionally been considered part of the appeal of sports spectatorship, particularly when understood through the (admittedly crude) work-leisure dichotomy (Dunning, 1999). Those attending FIFA's Sydney Fan Fest were similarly, as revealed in the researchers' interactions with them, found to consider the success of the Live Site contingent upon the extent to which it was able to 'replicate' the emotional dimensions of sociality and interactive exchange typically associated with 'being there' as a crowd member live at the event. From this perspective, despite the democratic imperative of mediating mega events for mass audiences, the emotional experience of the Live Site requires strategic work to ensure that the collective atmosphere associated with live events may be 'actualised'.

The emotional experience of the Live Site

The apparent limitations associated with the democratising move to expand and extend the scope of live events through mediated forms of spectatorship suggest that the latter can never replicate, let alone rival, the emotional experience of being present at the former. The primary reason for this discrepancy appears to reflect the largely manipulated relationship that constitutes 'viewing from a distance' compared to the intimacy associated with 'being there' live at the event. It is a paradoxical feature of Live Sites that, while becoming an active viewer of the live performance, audiences cede substantial control over the mediated dynamics of the spatial situation that they inhabit. Having relinquished the possibility available to them of watching live performances in domestic circumstances over which they can exert some control, those attending Live Sites are unable to manage their viewing experience through such routine audio-visual variables as brightness, contrast, volume, replay/pause/split-screening (for those with digitally enabled television sets), and viewing posture. At the same time, although the experience of the Live Site context technically enables communication with other crowd members, it does not permit presence to be registered directly with the athletes performing in front of them – for example, by chanting or gesturing in shared stadium space in ways that inevitably 'reach' the performers and help shape the event for them and for those watching via distance-based viewing platforms such as television. It is precisely this isolated, mediated communication of the live event that theatre critic Mark Shenton considers to be one of the primary shortcomings of Digital Theatre:

In essence, the cinema or TV experience lacks liveness. The audience outside the theatre is not sharing the same air as the performers – and crucially, they simply cannot complete the circuit of communication between stage and audience in a way that one can so directly affect the other. The cinema audience may effectively watch a show from the best seat in the house, since that is where the cameras will be positioned; but the choices of what to look at will be made for you as well. Instead of watching from a fixed position, you will also be afforded different perspectives and close-ups that edit the experience for you ... While the onscreen version of a stage performance may bring it to many thousands more people, there's no doubt that it's a second-best and also second-hand experience they are receiving ... it's not what the theatre is uniquely there to provide: a living experience of a live performance (*Guardian*, 2011a).

The significance of this gap between the co-present and mediated nature of experience is magnified in the case of live football matches by the active displays of partisanship that invest them with the crucial quality of 'crowd atmosphere'.

The point here is that, while mediated performances may help democratise the live event by increasing the public accessibility of the live performance and, it should be noted, offering many additional perspectives to those available when viewing the event from a single vantage point, it is this very mediation that may attenuate the affective experience of the live performance. These arguments are not new, of course; Walter Benjamin (1936) influentially correlated the 'progressive' ³ move to democratise art through mass production (that is, by 'emancipating' the object of art from its privileged ancient ritual function and fixed space of encounter) in an age of mechanical reproduction with the supposed decline of the 'aura' of the original. ⁴ While contemporary sports mega events are designed for – and indeed, are economically and culturally dependent on – reproduction, and thus not as susceptible to destroying the aura of the original to the same extent as, say, Digital Theatre, the belief persists that Live Sites provide a "lesser experience" than 'being there' live at the event (*Guardian*, 2011a). What these perspectives tend to neglect, though, is that the aim of Live Sites is not merely to use media to replicate or reproduce the original production, but to mediate the event and, thereby, deliberately or incidentally alter the very experience of 'live' viewing itself.

Digital technologies have also introduced new benefits associated with experiencing these performances from a distance, which may take the form of expert commentary, close-ups, replays, and contextual player and match analysis typically unavailable to unmediated audiences. In some instances, digital media do not only capture and relay the live performance, they also advance it, as those fans viewing Zinedine Zidane's notorious head butt during the 2006 World Cup Final live from the Berlin arena discovered (Baker, 2010; Rowe, 2010). Deprived of media commentary, spectators attending the live match commonly resorted to calling and messaging friends overseas to discover what had occurred given that "no one in the stadium understood what had happened" (Toussaint, 2007: 13). Ironically, in this instance the mediated experience appeared to be more affectively potent (and accurate) than the information deficit and uncertainty created by 'being there' live at the stadium insofar as, "the only ones who did not know what had happened were those in the stadium" (Cohen, 2006: 1).

Not only do digital audio-visual (including 3D) technologies communicate certain aspects of the live performance imperceptible to the senses from the back row of a small theatre or in the 'bleachers' of the stadium, the introduction of new social media in the 21st century has enabled novel forms of communication at these "interactive events". Characterised by user-generated content and new modes of social networking (through sites such as Facebook and Twitter, and the practice of 'texting'), social media can influence how spectators perceive and experience the live performance. This communicative exchange may take the form of live comment (as the Zidane incident exemplifies), online collaboration with fellow spectators, or new levels of public interaction in what has been characterised as the "transnational public sphere" (Rowe & Baker, 2012a; 2012b). It is not only Live Sites that have been affected by new social media, with the experience of 'being there' live at the theatre and stadium augmented by emergent media in the form of big screens, advertising, and 3G mobile handsets, which enable online social networking 'live' at the event (Baker, 2010; Rowe & Baker, 2012b). These new technologies are ubiquitous among both those who are 'there' and 'elsewhere', entailing that one medium does not simply displace another, just as digital (or 'virtual') communication does not replace the salience of physically occupying public space – as the global 'Occupy' movement further demonstrates (Baker, 2011; 2012b).

So, while 'viewing from a distance' may not 'reproduce' precisely the emotional intimacy or the aura of 'being there' live at the event, mediated spectatorship can complement the live experience in novel and unexpected ways by facilitating dialogue with other human subjects to whom a spectator may not have been exposed at the live event itself. Reflecting on her experience of viewing a British National Theatre production via Digital Theatre in New York, Hermione Hoby points to these new possibilities

of Digital Theatre:

There was the thrill, then, of being part of the present audience, but there was also the thrill of knowing that the performance we were watching had a whole audience back in London ...The great power and pleasure of theatre is, of course, that sense of shared experience, so it seems almost reactionary not to want to include more people in that, now that technology allows it (*Guardian*, 2011a).

From this perspective, the 'mediation' of public space does not simply result in a better or lesser experience, but can have a more thoroughgoing influence on the nature of contemporary social life (Rowe & Baker, 2012a). This view is supported by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) – an independent UK organisation whose mission is to make Britain more innovative – which conducted an in-depth study of the two National Theatre Live pilots that were broadcast in 2009: *Phèdre* (25 June, 2009) and *All's Well That Ends Well* (01 October, 2009). In their report: *Beyond Live: Digital innovation in the performing arts* (2010), NESTA suggested that Digital Theatre is likely to accentuate spectators' "emotional engagement" with the production more than viewing the performance live from a theatre:

The research shows how this innovation has allowed the National [a British theatre] to reach new audiences for theatre, not least by drawing on established relationships between cinemas and their patrons all over the country. It confirms the centrality of 'live' for the audience experience – both in the theatre and in cinemas. Cinema audiences report even higher levels of emotional engagement with the production than audiences at the theatre. They also claim that they are now more likely to visit the theatre in the future, suggesting that there may be positive spillovers on the wider sector. All this suggests an appetite for cultural experiences that are live, going against the prevailing logic of "consumption on demand", where individuals are free to choose the place and time where they access content, but do so detached from the unique circumstances where it was produced in the first place.

While NESTA's findings suggest that Digital Theatre can provide a richer emotional experience than "being there" live at the performance, our research at a sport event indicates that the same did not apply to those sporting spectators "viewing from a distance" at FIFA's Live Site in Sydney. As discussed, being part of a crowd at a live sports event has typically been associated with Durkheimian ([1912] 2001) feelings of *collective effervescence* – namely, rhythmic bodily movements (especially in stadia that permit standing) and cheering for (and booing) players who can both see and hear the crowd – thereby establishing a symbiotic relationship between players and spectators. This experience of 'viewing from a distance' at a Live Site is distinguished from "being there" live at the event, where the screen both connects and stands between performers and spectators at different geographical locales, in that the capacity to both see and be seen is not universally distributed. More specifically, the extent to which spectators interacted at FIFA's Live Sites was affected by the types of spectator that attended the matches; that is, whether spectators desired principally to view the spectacle of the football tournament, or to be part of the advertised "festival atmosphere" (FIFA, 2010a) in which the sport contest may be largely incidental. According to our site observations, there were many instances in which spectators seemed to be more absorbed in viewing the screen spectacle of the world game rather than embracing the atmosphere offered by the site. It became evident, as will be discussed below, that the level of public engagement at FIFA's Sydney Fan Fest was shaped by a range of conditions, rather than being consistent throughout the tournament. Despite their importance, such variations are rarely taken into account in general assessments of the impact of Live Sites on participant-spectator experience.

The level of social interaction experienced at FIFA's Live Site in Sydney was contingent on a series of temporal and spatial factors. As might be expected, the density of the crowd varied according to the popularity of the teams featured, in addition to the timing of the live matches. The frequent early starts and weekday matches, for example, prevented many spectators from attending due to work or education commitments. With security prohibiting umbrellas from being brought into the site, cold and wet weather conditions reduced crowd attendance except for 'must see', heavily promoted events such as those involving the home national team (whose first match against Germany at 4.30am, 14th June occurred on a public holiday, making attendance easier and leading both to filling both the main site and the adjacent spill-over site, with a large crowd unable to be accommodated also viewing from outside the perimeter fence). The lack of seating and restrictions imposed on the consumption of alcohol appeared to be deterrents for some fans, who opted to watch the World Cup from pubs, restaurants and other commercial venues (several of which were open for extended hours and proximate to the enclosed Public Viewing Areas).

The temporal dimensions discussed above also influenced the spatial dynamics of the Live Site, with the low spectator attendance during the early morning matches translating into relatively minor levels of crowd interaction. The majority of the observed spectators formed clusters of two to three people, rather than operating as a large, interactive crowd in which many fans engaged in collective rituals such as chanting and orchestrated movement. For the most part these gatherings consisted of established relationships of families and friends, leaving little room for spontaneous encounters between diverse strangers in unknown circumstances that form the essence of public life according to scholars such as Rousseau (1759) and Sennett (1977). Despite patronage reaching and even exceeding capacity during some of the matches involving national teams with large followings in Sydney, the extent to which FIFA's Live Sites were comprehensively 'public' remains arguable. Our observations suggest that the crowd was characterised by audience fragmentation, encapsulating Riesman's (1961) notion of the "lonely crowd" and Simmel's understanding of the "stranger":

The stranger is close to us insofar as we feel between him and ourselves similarities of nationality or social position, of occupation or of general human nature. He is far from us insofar as these similarities extend beyond him and us, and connect us only because they connect a great many people (1908: 147).

Simmel's conception of the metropolis as a space of strangers, who essentially remain strangers, was reconceptualised by Giddens' (1991: 152) notion of "civil indifference", in which the public and private are distinguished when a "society of

strangers" becomes the norm, and so the concept of "the stranger" as a unique social type is made obsolete. Such civil indifference at FIFA's Sydney Fan Fest, in conjunction with a spatially dispersed configuration of partisan team supporters among the crowd, meant that there was little partisan-induced tension – or even jocular exchange – evident between spectators. The main source of conflict arising during the more popular matches featuring Australia, and the Final, involved relatively minor rivalry over spatial locations or what could be termed "scarcity of view" as it related to the main television screens at the site. The general civil obedience and passivity characterising most spectators' conduct at FIFA's Sydney Fan Fest, it can be proposed, resulted from the high level of crowd control and management applied in a context where the binary dynamic of opposing team supporter cohorts was largely absent.

Governmentality and commercialisation of the Live Site

A high level of policing at the point of entry (including bag searches and the banning of fold up chairs), and a conspicuous police presence (including a mounted police detachment beside the main site entrance) at the Live Site, was redolent of the intense process of governmentalisation evident in actual football contests. The Live Site's architecture and environmental design divided the crowd into manageable segments, and encouraged an easy flow through and out of the venue using barriers and security staff. The control and policing of violence and incivility, in addition to the limited distribution and consumption of alcohol, and careful organisation of access and egress involving interception and inspection, meant that crowd rhythms and mobilities were predictable and restrained. The visible presence of law enforcement agencies, security and volunteers effectively managed potentially 'deviant' spectator behaviour, but perhaps at the expense of a vibrant collective atmosphere or of spontaneous forms of fandom. It has frequently been argued within social science that such state attempts to manage sport and mega events in the name of social order maintenance have resulted in a certain loss of spontaneity and playfulness as the social price paid for the "civilising process" (see Elias & Dunning, 1986; Huizinga 1938; Shilling, 2008). Some social psychologists have though, suggested that excessive police force can produce the unintended consequence of exacerbating violence by facilitating a large-scale 'us' against 'them' mentality with Clifford Stott (2009: 1), for example, arguing "that collective conflict can emerge during crowd events as a consequence of the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of police force." The catalytic ingredients for such crowd disorder were not apparent at FIFA's Sydney Live Site, unsurprisingly given, as noted above, the considerable spatial and relational fragmentation of the spectators present.

Apart from the substantial state presence and regime of control, commercial enterprises clearly play a significant role in the production and experiential moulding of Live Sites, and so are open to the familiar accusation that they exploit and in some way 'degrade' the experience (Horne, 2006). For example, London's 2012 Live Sites were positioned as highly commercialised from the outset, with the screens 'erected and run in partnership between the London 2012 Organising Committee, the BBC and the various cities, in association with London 2012 partners BT and Lloyds TSB, supported by Cisco and with funding from the National Lottery through the Olympic Lottery Distributor' (London 2012 Organising Committee, 2011a). Commercialisation also had an impact on FIFA's Sydney Fan Fest, both through its aforementioned corporate sponsors and its promotional role regarding the Federal Government-endorsed bid for Australia to host the World Cup.⁵ The New South Wales (NSW) State Government's endorsement of the Live Site was also a tourism-related strategy that specifically relates to Sydney's competition with Melbourne as an inbound tourist destination (SMH, 2008).

Just as with intensive governance and policing, commercialisation can negatively affect the live experience when spectators and crowds are too highly regulated. It would be an oversimplification however, only to focus on the negative implications of commercialisation. Without such commercial sponsors, Live Sites and mega events would not be possible unless, improbably, the (national, regional and local) state underwrote the entire cost. Moreover, as Panasonic's new 3D technologies suggest,⁶ sponsors can also enrich the live experience by enhancing the audio-visual sensory experience of 'viewing from a distance'. Here we suggest that the implications of commercialisation on the live experience – as also applies to the governance of crowds by the state – should not be generalised, but requires careful examination and empirical analysis of the particular conditions in which the live event is produced.

With regard to our case study at FIFA's Live Site in Sydney, it was apparent that commercial sponsors aimed to engender the "festival atmosphere" typically associated with viewing spectator sport live at a stadium. For example, the pre-and-post-match entertainment advertised on the official FIFA Fan Fest website promised to "take the audience on a global journey through music, performance and vision to highlight the world game and its ability to reach diverse cultural groups" (FIFA, 2010c). That the site's press releases were also available in Arabic, Greek, Italian and Korean is suggestive of its interpellation of a multicultural audience. Yet, while promoters boasted that the site "offers something for everyone", including the daytime shows for families and children mentioned earlier, the lack of entertainment and crowd atmosphere during the evening and early morning matches, when most of the games were broadcast, largely undermined the advertised "festival atmosphere" (FIFA, 2010d). Infrequent attempts by sponsors such as Hyundai to heighten crowd participation through their "Fan of the Match" campaign (where the most 'passionate' fans in the crowd were asked to perform a 10-second routine for the audience at half-time) were patently unsuccessful. Instead, the crowd's lack of enthusiasm epitomised spectators' blasé attitude both to strangers and to FIFA's International Fan Fest Global Sponsors: the indifferent "psychic phenomenon" that Simmel (1903) considered to characterise metropolitan life.

Those supporters at FIFA's Live Site who appeared to be more interested in being part of the spectacle atmosphere, rather than viewing the screened spectacle of the World Cup, were observed to be a minority. Such spectators were mainly youths attempting to perform exaggerated multicultural displays of fandom (such as comically accentuated forms of national costume) for a public audience and the media alike. These "spectacle-driven spectators" were attracted to the more popular matches where they would have a larger audience for whom they could perform. Such heightened displays of fandom could be read as embodiments of what Riesman (1961: 19-20) earlier termed "other directed types" – emblematic of a broader cultural trend towards conformity "to be found among the young" in the metropolitan centres of the advanced industrial countries (although

it is arguable as to whether this 'type' was characteristic of the general public audience attending the Live Site). Achieving self-consciousness inter-subjectively through the presence of 'others' positions the symbolic communication of emotions as fundamental to the development of the reflexive spectator (Gerber, 1979; Goffman, 1959; Maguire, 1992). Yet, despite appearing integrated by means of symbolic attire and display, these spectators also lacked the noisy engagement and enthusiasm typically associated with live sport crowds, with the relatively low levels of social interaction between strangers at the Sydney site undermining the 'public' quality of the event as discussed above.

The arrangements and conditions outlined above meant that FIFA's Sydney Fan Fest fostered little interaction with strangers, and in some ways deterred it. Instead, a large majority of avid supporters chose to watch games from other venues located in the Sydney Central Business District, such as for the Spain versus Holland Final, at the Spanish Club (at the southern end of the Central Business District) and at the aforementioned "Holland House" (only 150 metres from FIFA's official Live Site). Other fans (such as the Brazilian and Italian) congregated at suburban ethnic clubs and community halls (or even at cinemas showing selected matches in 3D). The exclusive territory, national comradeship and relatively deregulated surveillance at these alternative venues suggest reasons why spectators chose to view the World Cup from these sites rather than FIFA's Fan Fest. This 'retreat' into more homogeneous affective territory, combining mediated sport with exclusive in-group, co-present interaction, offered a different experiential permutation – viewing the sports spectacle from a distance with the intimacy of group identity unaccompanied by the sharing of spectatorial space with others who do not share one's nationally-constituted football team affiliation.

Conclusion: sport, public space, media and experience

In this article we have examined the many contexts and forms in which global mediated mega events can be experienced. While the experience of 'being there' remains highly prized, it is one that by its nature is limited to a small number of mostly privileged citizens of the world. The provision of viewing sites in public spaces across the globe has the capacity to simulate elements of the live event, offering a level of communal sociability unavailable to viewers in private homes (while, of course, enabling access to the live mediated event for those who desire it but do not have it). One of the advantages of Live Sites, then, is that they democratise public viewing by both expanding and extending the scope of the audience participating in the live event. It would be naïve, however, to regard the advantages of these arrangements as universal and their socio-cultural complexion as fixed. For example, Live Sites remain visible and accessible to a minority of the 'global' *demos*, and, as indicated by our field observations in Sydney, the attachment to sport among participants in Live Sites is highly variable, with the sporting dimension largely incidental for some and frequently subordinated to group/self performance and projection. Also, as in the stadium experience itself, tight control and close surveillance by the state in the name of order imposes clear constraints on the playfulness of the experience, while the intrusion of unwelcome commercial campaign strategies can compound resentment at manipulation and exploitation.

Nonetheless, it is equally naïve to imagine that a pure, unmediated, ungoverned experience of mega sport spectatorship is now feasible in any context – not least that of the stadium itself. Indeed, the fact that such "mediated crowd" membership is embodied in 'real' time and space highlights that the media (virtual) communication comprising the "digital age" has not displaced more traditional forms of physical interaction and emotional exchange (Baker, 2011; 2012a). Multiple, combinatory use of old and new media technologies in dynamic spatial locations open up novel possibilities for social interaction that may operate alongside more traditional forms of personal and public exchange. From this perspective, while Live Sites may comprise part of the response to the so-called 'crisis' of modernity, the media do not merely reproduce reality, they help constitute it by underpinning the very experience of the live event. As such, our case study cautions against generalising the 'quality' or effect of Live Sites, for each case is contingent on a range of temporal and spatial factors while being heavily structured by the organising committee and policing authorities who manage the spatial locale. Furthermore, the constellation of public broadcast and personal mobile media involved is far more consequential than the distanced reproduction of the 'original'. Here we contend that each case must be examined through close empirical investigation⁷ in order to study the social repercussions of making events available 'from a distance' at Live Sites by contributing to new forms of public life and, indeed, of global/transnational civil society (Giulianotti & Brownell, 2012).

The observational research reported here illuminated both common and specific aspects of sport-based Live Sites. FIFA's (2010e) marketing research that 86 per cent of those who attended the International Fan Fest™ 'wanted to experience the atmosphere' was broadly borne out in Sydney in 2010, but there was apparently less family-oriented attendance than that recorded in Brazil. In South Africa, 51 per cent of sampled fans attended matches and visited the FIFA Live Site in host cities, but this opportunity is clearly confined to host nations, while the limits of simultaneous global experience are exposed by time zone sensitivity. Other complexities are revealed in the staging of non-sport, cross-national and transcontinental theatrical events discussed above. The nature of the social spectatorial experience is therefore, conditioned by much more than 'being there' or 'elsewhere', and it is necessary to take into account such factors as distance from the physical live event, regimes of site and crowd control, the composition of spectator cohorts, and access to display and interactive, 'social' media. Under such dynamic circumstances, the embodied experience of sport is intricately governmentalised and mediatised across shifting global and local terrains.

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Footnotes

1. The primary analysis of these findings is based on an observational study at FIFA's official International Fan Fest Live Site in Sydney during a four-week period in June-July 2010, involving a team of four researchers attending thirteen matches during the World Cup tournament. This research has been reported in other publications (Rowe & Baker, 2012a; 2012b), but the emphasis of this article on the ethnographic dimension and the wider Live Site phenomenon is original and not covered elsewhere.
2. Assessing the impact of the digital age, NESTA (2010) explain that 'The UK has in recent years undergone a digital revolution. New technologies such as digital TV, music downloads and online games are ripping up established business models ... In all cases, digital technologies have produced seismic changes in consumer expectations and behaviour, and social media platforms are becoming more important as venues for the discovery and discussion of creative content'.
3. Benjamin suggested that film was a powerful agent for reform and under the right direction could be socially progressive.
4. For Benjamin, the term 'aura' referred to the authenticity of an artwork or historical object which, he argued, 'withers' when an artwork is reproduced as a plurality of copies and disseminated for mass consumption in the age of mechanical production.
5. At the time of the 2010 World Cup, though, Australia and Sydney were actively campaigning as the Asia-Pacific region's most suitable 2022 World Cup host.

6. The London 2012 Olympic Games were the first to involve HD 3D live broadcasts, allowing 'audiences around the globe to witness the world's greatest sporting event in immersive 3D', and covering 'major events such as the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, athletics, gymnastics, diving and swimming', (London 2012 Organising Committee, 2011b).

7. Even Rousseau (1759: 12-13), who encouraged civic participation at public festivals, acknowledged that: 'To ask whether public entertainments are good or bad in themselves, is too vague a question; it is examining a relation before we have ascertained the terms. Public entertainments are made for the people, and it is only by their effects on them that we can determine their absolute qualities'.

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