

Our stadium of four million

Anne Begg

In 2009, Prime Minister John Key announced that 2011 would be a milestone year for New Zealand, as it hosted one of the world's biggest sports events, the Rugby World Cup.¹ He also stated "the New Zealand Government is proud to be a key partner with Rugby World Cup Ltd in staging Rugby World Cup 2011 here in our Stadium of Four Million".² In an era of neoliberal globalization and media spectacle, the hosting of such a sporting mega-event is seen as all positive, as an integral component of a sound national development strategy and as a guarantee of perceived economic benefits, especially in terms of brand building, tourism and place marketing. Reference to 'perceived economic benefits' is important here, because the host country pays for the privilege of staging such an event, and it is only through the promise of potential, future benefits that the cost to local and state authorities can be justified. In neoliberal business terminology such mega-events are constituted as 'loss-leaders' that will "otherwise generate benefits for the host economy" (Hall and Wilson 134). However, as Hall and Wilson point out, "it is important to recognise that the loss, in the form of public debt, is usually borne by the state, and hence taxpayer, with the direct benefits being accrued by the private sector as part of a strategy of providing a so-called 'public good'" (134). In other words, although it is the local ratepayers and taxpayers who bear the brunt of the fiscal loss, it is global corporates and media moguls who profit most from the staging of such a media spectacle. In this article, I draw attention to the neoliberal and neo-colonial practices underpinning Key's announcement and highlight crucial links between notions of national identity, media spectacle and the production of a nation brand. I emphasise the role of audiences and spectators in the production of media mega-events and claim that it is their attention and affective investment that is the prime source of profit and brand value in today's media-driven, brand-based society.

This paper situates the Rugby World Cup 2011 as a fine exemplar of neoliberal nation-branding and addresses questions relating to the role of affect and affective biopower in productions of subjectivity and modes of media governmentality. I coin the term 'affective biopower' to link Michel Foucault's concepts of biopower and governmentality with affect and with the power inherent in productive sociality and in the human capacity for building a common. Affect refers to power, the power to act and to affect, or to be affected. Brian Massumi quotes Spinoza to speak of the body in terms of its capacity for affecting or being affected; he makes the point that these two capacities are not different, they always go together (2-3). Every affect then is a "doubling," an affecting-being affected, redoubled by an experience of the experience, which "gives the body's movements a kind of depth that stays with it across all its transitions – accumulating in memory, in habit, in reflex, in desire, in *tendency*" (3, emphasis in original). Each individual is a composite of drives and affective

states and our conscious knowledge is never a complete or adequate reflection of those states. Affects inform our consciousness, animate our experience and without our full awareness, underpin ways in which we act, react and feel.

In an era of media culture and informational capitalism, media functions by co-opting, amplifying and modulating affect, or as Massumi claims, “mass media are not mediating anymore – they become direct mechanisms of control by their ability to modulate the affective dimension” (15). Media governmentality is a concept that works to link networks of social power, both technologies of domination and strategies of the self, with media power and with the interactive systems of communication that infiltrate and influence all aspects of neoliberal society. It is not only the case that today’s dominant world economy is represented, or epitomized, in the mediatized production, circulation and accumulation of images but also, that these basic economic processes (production, circulation, exploitation and accumulation) are actually accomplished in and through the media. It is the transmissible aspect of affective biopower that seamlessly interweaves media-generated social interactions with face-to-face sociality to inform subjectivity, to form and transform social collectives and, in a neoliberal economy of culture, to inculcate brand value as social value.

There are several issues at stake here. The first is that sport, and rugby in particular, has always had a major role to play in productions of a New Zealand identity, in stirring affective investment in an imagined community and in providing a platform on which to build notions of nationhood. It is rugby’s deeply embedded hold on the social imaginary that is so attractive to international brands like Adidas, because it is affective investment and affective affiliation that underpins brand value and profit-making and that is essential to the mediatized operations of global capital. The second issue relates to the production of subjectivity and to the neoliberal ideals that normalize individualized, entrepreneurial self-branding and produce community as shared commitment to the nation-brand, as an identity option linked with leisure, pleasure, entertainment and media spectacle. The major issue is that the 2011 Rugby World Cup epitomizes the modern media spectacle through which the affective biopower of a national population is effectively prostituted to the profit-making mechanisms of global brands and media cartels, with the express permission and encouragement of the neoliberal state.

The All Blacks rugby team is one of the most effective and enduring symbols of national identity in Aotearoa New Zealand and is recognized not only as one of the most distinctive brands in international sport but also as the flagship of Brand New Zealand. When brand marketers link national identity with brand identity they tap into the articulation of a national imaginary and exploit this identity-building social collective for its ethical surplus and economic value. As Scherer and Jackson claim, “From the moment Adidas assumed sponsorship of the All Blacks in 1999 their print, televisual, and new media advertising strategies incorporated and colonized the team’s history, and the nation’s broader mythology” (60). Globalized capital transforms identity politics, re-inventing national identity as a marketable commodity and as a rich source of the affective investment and deeply ingrained loyalty that builds brand value. It is the power inherent in affect, in affective investment and in productive sociality that is crucial to the function and profitability of a brand and brand power is, therefore, constituted in and through the socialization of affect. Indeed, as Scherer and Jackson explain, “what is really for sale with the All Blacks brand, and

undoubtedly what appeals to the corporate sponsors of the All Blacks, is the affective heritage, past traditions, former players, and cultural identity that encompass the myths and memories of a national sporting mythology" (59). Key's reference to "our stadium of four million" mobilizes national mythology and (re)constructs a rugby-media-nation homology that will prove lucrative for corporate sponsors, media moguls and global capital.³

In November 2008, within two weeks of becoming Prime Minister, Key flew to London to officiate at the opening of Tourism New Zealand's latest promotional tool, a giant inflatable Rugby Ball, which was installed in the British capital for a week to promote the 2011 Rugby World Cup. The giant rugby ball represents far more than the promotion of the 2011 Rugby World Cup event. It performs nation-branding par excellence by aligning the intangible assets of a country, its distinctive cultural, sporting and creative characteristics, with its attraction as a tourist destination, and its trade and investment opportunities. As Simon Anholt claims, rather than focusing purely on economic issues and developing a two-dimensional brand image, of interest only to investors, tax exiles and currency speculators, "culture, heritage and sport provide the third dimension, giving places richness, dignity, trust and respect abroad, and quality of life at home" (5). In other words, the creation of a successful nation-brand is all about building an image or reputation that produces empathetic and affective reactions in both potential visitors and New Zealand citizens. The marketing of New Zealand in terms of rugby prowess and a shared rugby tradition works to do just that because nationhood and national identity are inextricably intertwined with rugby culture and All Black mythology, and contained within a reiterative production of imagined community.

The staging of a Rugby World Cup (RWC) extends the rugby-media-nation homology to the global stage and demonstrates how corporate brands increase market share and build brand value by being linked with national sports teams and, therefore, with the intense affective investment such international competition motivates. It also demonstrates how such globalized media events advance the processes of neoliberal globalization and normalize parameters of nationhood in which corporate logos perform alongside national flags as symbols of shared purpose and national unity. When the International Rugby Board (IRB) promoted the 2011 Rugby World Cup it leaned heavily on the tradition, legends and symbolic images associated with international rugby teams and especially with the host nation's team, the All Blacks, as is demonstrated in its official promotional video (Rugby World Cup, 2011).⁴ This video is loaded with nostalgic, affect-laden and patriotic symbolism and incorporates many of the marketing strategies used to generate investment in, and loyalty to, Brand New Zealand.⁵ For example, the Māori motif used on all World Cup merchandise, commissioned by an Australian advertising agency, creates a unique logo and links Aotearoa New Zealand symbolically with the World Cup event. This choice of Māori motif is significant because it mirrors the tattoos becoming increasingly popular with rugby players and so demonstrates how brand marketers seek inspiration for effective branding in emerging cultural trends, in what Stuart Hall calls new exotica. Brand marketers, like Adidas, pick up on deeply embedded cultural tradition and the Māori haka, long associated with the All Blacks and international rugby competition has also been utilized as unique marker of the All Black and New Zealand rugby brand.⁶ In an era of new media technologies, as Lewis and Winder claim, the haka has been "rejuvenated and professionalized into spectacular entertainment" and "represents a reworking of national and rugby identities – commodified, jazzed-up, assertive, media-centred and re-indigenized" (211). The All Blacks' haka works

effectively for Adidas to make the All Black brand instantly recognizable and distinct from any other national sports team. However, it also attracts ongoing controversy specifically because it represents the mediatized, commodification of indigenous cultural practices.

While the haka is a key feature of the IRB's promotional video, other images emphasize the scenic beauty of Aotearoa New Zealand, and reiterate New Zealand Tourism's '100% pure', clean, green image. The combination of music, images and imagery is also strongly evocative of mythical 'Middle Earth' and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001, 2002 and 2003) that was, of course, filmed in this country. For example, one image portrays kayakers paddling a lone canoe on a river flanked with impenetrable bush while background music invokes the theme music from *The Fellowship of the Ring* (part one of the trilogy). The next image superimposes the face of an ancient Māori carving on a shadowy background of native bush and is followed immediately by a clip of the All Blacks performing a haka. Other images include jet boating, bungy jumping, yachting and sand surfing. Such images are not directly associated with the Rugby World Cup, but they do link the event with adventure tourism and with the overall concept and promotion of Brand New Zealand. Rugby match flashbacks and glimpses of supporters wearing various national colours and waving national flags in massive, colosseum-like stadia set the Rugby World Cup as a major quest, as war by another name, and the World Cup itself, depicted at the end of the video as the ultimate prize, the Holy Grail, or golden chalice, symbolically elevates this event to the realm of legend. The overall image portrayed in this video is one of masculinist identity, of warriors, battle and heroism and, underlying all this, is the sense that rugby reiterates British colonial traditions and that, especially in Aotearoa New Zealand, rugby, national identity and tourism are inextricably linked. It is an image that is both deeply flawed and deeply embedded.

Linking colonialism, rugby and articulations of national identity

In their analysis of All Black rugby and its enduring brand value, Lewis and Winder claim "there can be little doubt that sport is a feature of New Zealand and New Zealandness, or that rugby figures prominently in the making of national identities" (208). They compare the 1905 All Black tour with the 2005 All Black tour and claim that tropes of British colonialism, white patriarchy and cultural commodification are at play in the staging of both events and such tropes have also always characterized articulations of national identity. In a 2010 review of the history of Māori rugby, for example, Grahame Armstrong explains that Māori were excluded from tours to South Africa in 1928, 1949 and 1960 and that during South Africa's apartheid regime, "the NZRU selected All Blacks for our country's top team to play South Africa on the grounds of race and colour, deliberately excluding any All Blacks of Māori descent". Armstrong also makes the point that in 2010, "in the year celebrating 100 years of Māori rugby ... the NZRU is refusing to apologise to former Māori players – and their families – for excluding them from past tours to South Africa on racial grounds, a position that has been dubbed arrogant by the Māori Affairs Minister" (ibid). In other words, notions of pioneering manhood and British entitlement, embedded in the colonial and liberal eras, continue to inform the social imaginary and underpin the contemporary marketing of a bicultural brand state. This is not to say that there exists a discoverable New Zealand identity dominated by a "male, white-settler other" or "forged by rugby" but, as Lewis and Winder argue, "this imaginary is prominent in the performance of culture and economy as well as politics, be it in aspirations towards or resistance against this identity" (211). All Black rugby identity is a political, economic and cultural construction, "more than a game, but also more than a business"; the game itself, plus the memories, legends and social histories linked with

it create economic and cultural value and it is this value that is captured to enhance the All Blacks brand (213).

Rugby lost some of its grip as a symbol of national identity during the cultural upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s and, in the face of anti-apartheid struggle and nationwide resistance to the 1981 springbok tour, became instead a symbol of parochial politics and national division. Significantly, it was the arrival of television and, crucially, “the social and national centrality of television” that would prove to have the most profound and enduring impact on both the development of rugby and on new formulations of cultural and identity politics (Hope 236). During the 1970s and 1980s, as Wayne Hope points out, the NZRU capitalized on television’s potential by selling All Black international telecast rights to Television New Zealand (236). Television New Zealand could “deliver large test match audiences to major advertisers” and, in addition, television’s “national centrality” could (re)conjure affective investment and rejuvenate All Blacks rugby as a symbol of national identity (ibid). The rugby-media-nation homology was effectively restored in 1987 with the staging of the inaugural Rugby World Cup, and it is around this quadrennial event that international broadcasting rights are now sold, and through which the All Black brand is marketed.⁷ The professional rugby/global media partnership began in earnest in the Southern Hemisphere in 1995 with the creation of the SANZAR group (combining South African, New Zealand and Australian rugby unions) and the sale of TV rights for two new competitions, the domestic Super 12 and the Tri-Nations, to Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation (and SKY TV).⁸ Satellite television, especially SKY TV in New Zealand, plays a crucial and central role in normalizing a neoliberal value system based on brand logic, competition, profit-motive, sponsorship and the complete commodification of the social.

Aotearoa New Zealand’s hosting (and winning) of the 1987 Rugby World Cup coincided with the development of global media networks and with a determination by media conglomerates to attract subscribers to growing pay-TV networks. In his account of the history of professional rugby in New Zealand, Gerard Martin (2005) explains how globalized media networks exerted their growing influence on the NZRU and the IRB by shaping the game and the administration of the game to fit global TV schedules and market imperatives. As Martin claims, “in the professional era, generating revenue drives the game itself” and the NZRU sells opportunities for sponsors and broadcasters that make the professional game viable (102). This is what the giant Rugby Ball promotion of the 2011 Rugby World Cup represents. The All Blacks may be national representatives, but they are first and foremost corporate employees, marketed and on-sold as a valuable brand.⁹ This is most obvious in the move of rugby away from free-to-air coverage to pay-TV because, as Martin explains, pay-per-view broadcasters now control All Black matches, and access is limited to “subscribers willing to pay for exclusive viewership, and to advertisers wanting to reach a sizeable affluent audience” (55). The reference to an ‘affluent audience’ is significant here because it speaks to a very real characteristic of consumerist society, one that classifies citizens and measures their subjective value in terms of their purchasing power and lifestyle practices. For example, although the Government subsidized the NZRU’s successful bid for the 2011 RWC, and despite the rhetoric that claimed New Zealand represents a ‘Stadium of 4 million’ rugby fans, tickets to the rugby final at Eden Park were exorbitantly expensive, ranging from NZ\$390 to NZ\$1250 each (RWC Tickets).

Staging the 2011 Rugby World Cup for Global Capital

Rupert Murdoch used sport to expand his pay TV subscriber based, secure multimillion dollar profits and build a global media empire, as is made evident in his acquisition of New Zealand television audiences. In November 2005, SKY TV announced that it was buying the TV channel, Prime New Zealand, a deal approved by the antitrust Commerce Commission in February 2006. The upshot here, as Scherer and Jackson point out, is that both “the live and delayed free-to-air rugby rights are technically under the SKY TV broadcasting umbrella” (225). Such a decision not only benefits SKY TV but also reflects the symbiotic relationship between global conglomerates and the neoliberal New Zealand government. The Minister for Broadcasting at the time, Dr Jonathon Coleman, displayed this connection when he claimed prevailing market forces were “workably competitive” and that there was “no need for regulation or any type of state intervention that could guarantee access to live sport for all New Zealanders” (Scherer and Jackson 86). In June 2007, however, Progressives party leader Jim Anderton welcomed a government review of free-to-air television coverage, and stated “the cultural development and heritage of nations shouldn’t be held to ransom by one company’s shares. If it’s only on SKY, then only people that can pay for it can see it” (Chang, 2007, in Scherer and Jackson, 86). Despite Anderton’s optimism and the expectation of vigorous public debate over the dominance of SKY TV, “a newly elected conservative National government abandoned the review altogether in April 2009” (86). Furthermore, a day after the National government abandoned the broadcasting review SKY TV was awarded the broadcasting rights to the 2011 RWC, an event being underwritten by the New Zealand government (90). Once again, elected representatives collude with global corporates demonstrating a neoliberal mandate that prioritizes market imperatives over any conceptualization of social benefit or public good.

Pay-per-view broadcasting epitomizes a neoliberal society in which amateurism and grassroots organizations are effectively disenfranchised or, as Anderton warns, “only people that can pay for it can see it” (Scherer and Jackson 86). Because SKY TV scored exclusive broadcast rights to RWC 2011 from the IRB, state broadcasters like TVNZ and the Māori Television Service (MTS) had to bid against each other to ‘win’ the right to be lead free-to-air broadcaster. In short, all free-to-air broadcasting of the 2011 Rugby World Cup took place in subservience to Sky’s pay-per-view supremacy and under Sky TV’s jurisdiction.¹⁰ MTS celebrated its selection with this press announcement, “Rugby is at the heart of the New Zealand nation and Māori Television is proud to be lead free-to-air broadcaster for Rugby World Cup 2011”.¹¹ Jim Mather, CEO of MTS, described SKY television “as host broadcaster, and our partners in the consortium” but, within the terms of this partnership, SKY TV broadcast all 48 matches live on satellite television (pay-per-view), while MTS were restricted to delayed coverage only of 32 of the 48 matches (Horan). In a fine example of neoliberal media governmentality, Sky Television exerts ultimate control, and State broadcasters must not only compete to screen free-to-air coverage but also limit that coverage to accommodate the profit-generating agenda of a global corporate enterprise. In other words, host broadcasters dictate the terms of an international event to the host countries whose citizens provide the venues, affect value and return on investment for both SKY TV and the IRB’s Rugby World Cup Limited. In this scenario, MTS performs with other state-funded broadcast television channels to provide a public service ethos and build a sense of nationhood that strengthens the affective affiliations crucial to any brand value, whether that brand is SKY TV, the IRB or Brand New Zealand. This also means that New Zealanders had to subscribe to SKY TV to see live coverage of most World Cup matches

despite subsidizing the RWC with their taxes and having to pay huge prices for tickets to stadiums. Neoliberal modes of governmentality work both to transfer public funds and authority into private hands while cultivating the “feel-good illusions of community participation and solidarity” (Jansen 132). Notions of nationhood, patriotism and team loyalty serve as affective mechanisms for generating audiences and ensuring profit for media moguls and corporate conglomerates.

The Rugby World Cup 2011 Ticket Prices Information Pack points out that the Host Union “incurs most of the costs associated with hosting the Tournament” and that “to offset those costs, the Host Union receives all revenue from ticket sales” (RWC Tickets). In this situation, the NZRU and the New Zealand government must walk a fine line between seeking to recoup expenses for staging the event, fulfilling the demands of the IRB and satisfying the expectations of rugby fans:

Full stadia will be an essential ingredient for a vibrant and successful RWC 2011. Given that ticket sales are RNZ 2011’s only source of revenue, it is essential that this opportunity is optimised. Full stadia will also reflect New Zealand’s love of Rugby and its place as a host of successful global events. (ibid)

The opening sentence of the above quote encapsulates and underpins the crux of my argument: it is the productive sociality, the creativity, the vitality of the social collective, their affective biopower that is an “essential ingredient for a vibrant and successful RWC 2011”. National and international television audiences link affectively with stadium spectators to boost and augment this essential ingredient, as do event volunteers, players and officials. The IRB, sponsors and media networks profit from the social labour provided by all these people, who in both direct and indirect ways, are paying not only for the right to participate but also for being seen to participate. All notions of national identity relate directly to the biopolitical management of a population and to the capture and manipulation of affective biopower. In the words of Jonathan Beller:

It is largely through *the rational calculus of affect* that capital organizes and reorganizes populations. The print nationalism of the Benedict Anderson variety was just the crude beginnings. Today, rational and irrational behaviour is rationalized for production through the mass dissemination and careful tweaking of structures of feeling (*Acquiring Eyes* 169, emphasis in original).

Beller encapsulates the crucial connection between structures of feeling and mediated mega-events like the 2011 Rugby World Cup when he posits the question, “What are corporations and politicians buying when they buy “airtime” if not, in the words of Antonio Negri, “productive social cooperation” (*Acquiring Eyes* 108). Beller claims that “the development of a media-environment that functions as the *mise-en-scène* for capitalist production via social cooperation – engineered both culturally and by the deployment of military hardware – short circuits, as it were, traditional forms of subjectivity (experience) and of objectivity (events, collective knowledge, reality)” (*The Cinematic* 265). Beller argues “Capitalism turns empathy into television and humans into images” (*The Cinematic* 274). It is socially produced affective biopower, or the capacity for co-operation and the creation of a common, that is constantly mined and undermined by the image-based, brand values of a neoliberal market economy.

Aside from stadium ticket sales, all other commercial rights associated with the RWC tournament, including sponsorship, broadcast, licensing, travel and hospitality remain with the IRB and its corporate body, the Rugby World Cup Limited. As the pamphlet also explains, these funds “underpin Rugby’s global growth driven by the IRB’s strategic investments programme including High Performance funding and development grants” (RWC Tickets). In other words, while the New Zealand Government and the New Zealand Rugby Union together accept the costs of staging the 2011 Rugby World Cup, income from the event is used to expand and develop rugby, as a global industry. As New Zealand taxpayers have learned, the RWC tournament is held less for the benefit of the host nation than for the benefit of the International Rugby Board (IRB) and global capital. The IRB, through its corporate body, the Rugby World Cup Ltd, operates a multi-million dollar enterprise, and determines which countries and corporations are granted access to the massive profits generated through hosting the Games. Furthermore, it required the New Zealand Government to protect its corporate interests and to legislate to that effect in the form of the Major Events Management Act 2007. The official guide to this Act explains that it “contains certain protections for Rugby World Cup 2011 (RWC 2011), to prevent unauthorised commercial exploitation and to ensure the smooth running of RWC 2011”.¹² Paul Gardiner writes in an online article entitled “It’s All About The Rugby, Yeah Right” that this was a law that “our government” passed to grant the IRB the right to fine businesses who breached the advertising “clean zone” rules (2011: 3). As Gardiner points out, “The beauty of the Act for the IRB is that our Ministry of Economic Development (MED) did all the dirty work in policing and fining for the IRB. It was a clever way for the IRB to be seen to be keeping its hands clean, don’t you think?” (3). Gardiner then goes on to list “some ridiculous examples of that IRB control:

- Samoan winger Alesana Tuilagi was fined NZ\$10,000 because he wore a ‘branded’ mouth-guard for a match
- A helicopter company was challenged by RWC organisers for taking aerial photos – it didn’t have IRB-sanctioned branding on the side
- Ambulances were required to ‘cover-up’ logos of sponsors not sanctioned by the IRB
- A strip club and its workers risked fines after scantily clad ladies in skimpy, pseudo All Blacks gear handed out leaflets in the ‘clean zone’” (4).

In a blatant example of corporate imperialism, the IRB not only expects the RWC host to police and shut down economic competitors but also requires that the host country block out the messages of their own corporate sponsors (Adidas, for example) so they cannot compete with IRB cartels (Seed, ‘About Rugby’ 3).¹³

Reiterations of a neo-colonial, racialized discourse

The 2011 Rugby World Cup serves to demonstrate not only that sponsors and global media are capitalizing on (re)productions of national identity, but also that racialized, imperialist, (neo)colonial attitudes reiteratively inform the staging of this globalized media mega-event. In an online article written during the 2011 WRC tournament, Tony Seed picks up on the discriminatory, inequitable and highly contentious system of match scheduling to argue that “The World Rugby Cup is providing yet another example that even the domain of sport is being brought under imperialist pressure” (‘Sport Today’ 1). He points out how both the coach of the Canadian national team, former All Black Kieran Crowley, and Eliota Fuimaono-

Sapolu, a centre for Samoa, claimed the scheduling was grossly unfair and was deliberately skewed in favour of the top teams. Seed explains how the IRB divide the competition between so-called Tier one and Tier two nations, relegating the least favoured teams to a Tier three level. Tier one, which is classified on the basis of possessing professional leagues, consists of teams from traditional rugby nations (England, France, Italy, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa) whose officials also happen to control the IRB. Tier one teams are awarded one week between matches. Tier two teams are forced to play two of their four opening round (knockout) qualifying matches on the basis of a three or four day turnaround. In other words, the teams from the big rugby powers award themselves twice as much rest time as their 'second tier' opponents. Seed also points out that the RWC schedule deliberately schedules Tier One games in prime-time weekend slots in order to maximize commercial revenue and also to meet the "demands and requirements of the global media corporations such as Murdoch's News Corporation, SKY TV" and, for the first time in 2011, "NBC Sports and Universal Sport in the USA" ('Sport Today' 2). In addition, as Seed claims, it is common for "Tier two" teams (Samoa, Fiji, Tonga and Namibia, for example) to be derisively described in the media as "minnows," "developing" sides and "other equally patronizing, chauvinistic and nonsensical terms" ('Sport Today' 1). As Seed points out, the tiered structure and unjust schedule "makes a farce out of the propaganda that this World Cup is a level playing field offering opportunity to the fish and minnows alike" (ibid).

Within the context of this contrived media spectacle, 'winners' and 'losers' are essentially predetermined, and corporate sponsorship can effectively dictate which national teams will get to divide up the lucrative revenues from the RWC and other IRB-sanctioned competitions. Scheduling organisers insist that the "needs of television and their advertisers are given first priority" and as second-tier teams are sacrificed to the demand for "a daily diet of live play," neo-colonial divisions between the haves and have-nots are (re)mobilized and perpetuated (Seed, 'Sport Today' 2 and 3). Eliota Fuimaono-Sapolu (playing in the RWC for Samoa) attracted international media attention when he denounced the schedule on Twitter: "Ok, it's obvious the IRB are unjust. Wales get 7 days, we get 3. Unfair treatment; like slavery, like the holocaust, like apartheid – U" (18.09.11). Fuimaono-Sapolu challenged the IRB to suspend him, saying it would be another injustice. However, before any action could be taken, Samoan officials, instead of defending their player, "apologized on his behalf and the organizers let the England-based centre off with a warning" ('Sport Today' 2). Seed castigates media coverage of Fuimaono-Sapolu's stance, noting that Associated Press reviled the athlete for "crossing the rugby board" and the London *Guardian* denounced "his grotesque comments" (ibid). He also notes "no such warning or media condemnation was given the polite Canadian coach" (ibid). Mainstream media works to uphold the status quo and, in doing so, participates in reiterative tropes of a deeply embedded, hierarchical and racialized discourse.

This is evident in other media coverage, as for example, when Fuimaono-Sapolu responded to questionable refereeing in his team's loss to South Africa by twittering, "What a ----- joke. RSC is b-----t. #kiss my ---- we were climbing a mountain all tournament!! You saw the game, B-----t" (01.10.11).¹⁴ An editorial from the *Herald on Sunday*, entitled "Sorry Samoa, but life's not fair," describes Fuimaono-Sapolu as "The Manu Samoa World Cup player" who "launched a one-man war against the International Rugby Board".¹⁵ It states that he "railed against the refs and the \$10,000 fine imposed on another Samoan player, Alesana Tuilagi, and his younger brother Manu who plays for England, for wearing a branded mouthguard"

(mentioned earlier). It trivializes these issues with the flippant remark that “the fine was over the top and referee Nigel Owens did make a couple of glaring errors in the match with South Africa”. In the next sentence, however, it claims that “the player needs reining in quickly” for his complaint regarding the tournament format. The editorial continues with a patronizing tone, “Fair? Of course not,” before arguing that “broadcasters and viewers were naturally more interested in the big weekend matches” that “put bums on seats and sparked the tournament into life”. What comes through here is a form of cultural imperialism that replays and reflects neo-colonial and neoliberal modes of governmentality. The RWC tournament is organised as a media spectacle, designed and orchestrated to supply audiences to advertisers and to access affective ‘spark’ for growing the nation-brand. The RWC media event capitalizes on the affective biopower that builds loyalty and commonality around a ‘national’ rugby team but simultaneously vilifies and undermines any solidarity or support for a team when it emerges to critique a racialized hierarchy and so threaten profitability.

Maurizio Lazzarato describes racism as a governmental technique arising from the “inability of capitalist economy to delimit and ground a territory, an identity or a sociality” (131). Following Foucault, he adds: “now it is a matter of economic policies relating to the production and reproduction of a population (biopower) rather than to the ‘organization of labour’ strictly speaking” (ibid). Lazzarato explains, “Foucault conceptualizes the recourse to the ‘social’, the ‘nation’, ‘civil society’ in terms of techniques that, in ensuring territorialization, allow the integration of the economic and the juridical:

The power of ‘capital’ rests upon the de-territorialization of social and political relations, and its weakness arises from the processes of re-territorialization which, to be effective, must appeal to dispositifs that are not at all economic. Only the social, civil society, the nation, the state, etc, can provide the territorial limits, the boundaries of ‘community’ and the social bonds that the economy lacks (129).

Underpinning the production and management of a national identity, is a necessity to mobilize the affective co-operation and social bonds that a capitalist economy works against but also seeks to exploit. Lazzarato argues that neoliberal society is founded on differentiation and insecurity, and that “it is racism that will secure the exercise of a sovereign power (the restoration of the power of life or death through the selection of who belong and who is excluded from the national community) and that will, additionally, enable biopower to be circumscribed within certain limits” (131). Racism endorses and explains “the political force of the appeal to ‘national preference’ as part of the neoliberal socialization of the economy” (ibid). This entails a form of state racism that condones systemic economic inequalities (local and global) and demonstrates massive contradictions, if not blatant hypocrisy, in ethical attitudes to human life. The structure of the RWC schedule and the shutting down of any critique from subjugated teams (or team members) demonstrates how neoliberal modes of governmentality infiltrate all aspects of everyday life.

It is in the comments following this online article that resistive ruptures appear and a groundswell of support for Fuimaono-Sapolu’s stance becomes evident. For example, one blogger writes, “Given that sport is supposed to espouse the value of fairness and fair play, it’s glaringly and now publicly obvious thanks in part to Fuimaono-Sapolu, that that value

does not extend to all teams in this 'world' tournament. What a shame." Another comment reads, "I agree that life is unfair. To know that life is unfair and then make sure it stays unfair is another. Who cares about who watches what at what time? People will always be drawn to watch a fair contest no matter who is playing." These comments highlight and critique glaring disparity in the administration of the 2011 RWC, but inequities and exploitation inform and influence every aspect of rugby administration (and international sport in general) as is evident in a widespread practice, commonly referred to as the "brawn drain" (Seed, 'Sport Today' 3). Rich professional clubs in Europe (and their agents) set up academies for the development of rugby in countries like Namibia and Samoa so that they "can get a hold of raw talent at a cheap price" ('Sport Today' 4). Seed explains, "Clubs recruit the rugby athletes from the developing countries for a song [then] go so far as to prohibit them from playing for their national side in world competition" (ibid). As Seed claims, such "development" and "aid" epitomizes a "neo-colonial and imperialist relationship" in which an orchestrated hierarchy of rugby-playing nations serves to "conceal the real transfer of wealth and talent from the poor to the rich and the concentration of power in their hands" ('Sport Today' 4).¹⁶ Many of the best players from rugby's second tier of nations then, are signed up to play for rival national teams in the 2011 RWC, as for example, Manu Tuilagi, a Samoan, representing England while his brother played for Samoa, and Toby Faletau, who comes from Tonga but played for Wales.¹⁷

When professionalized sport combines with global media to stage an inter-national competition, it is the spatial boundaries of nation-states and historically grounded local loyalties that generate partisan affiliations and affective investment. However, national players are often part of the 'brawn drain' process that means they do not necessarily represent their country of origin, but play instead for the country/brand/corporation with which they have a professional contract. In a micro-picture of neoliberal governance, rugby players are deterritorialized and reterritorialized in hierarchical structures that ostensibly accommodate and redress systemic disadvantage and disenfranchisement but actually (re)direct raw talent, capitalized human resources, to the elite beneficiaries of corporate enterprises. While national flags stir passion and generate bi-partisan affective intensity, (an essential ingredient for filling stadia and attracting television audiences), neoliberal market logic dictates the makeup of national teams and normalizes a brand-based, commodified form of identity politics.

Conclusion

This analysis of the corporate administration, state promotion and media control of the 2011 Rugby World Cup demonstrates how reiterative tropes of cultural imperialism, white male patriarchy and global capital continue to inform and underpin government of the social. It also demonstrates how media moguls like Rupert Murdoch manipulate neoliberal nation-states and utilize discursive productions of national identity to generate profit from a televisual spectacle. At stake here is the socialization of affect and the commodification of the social for a globalized media-driven culture industry. Leisure-time pursuits, sporting heritage and national affiliations are appropriated, packaged and branded for distribution to local and global fee-paying audiences. In this age of media governmentality, social productivity and productive cooperation provide the immaterial labour that now underpins capital accumulation. Jonathan Beller claims that the development of a media-environment "that functions as the mise-en-scène for capitalist production via social co-operation ... short circuits, as it were, traditional forms of subjectivity (experience) and of objectivity (events,

collective knowledge, reality)" (*The Cinematic* 265). Political potency, understood in a broad sense as socially produced ethical surplus, is harnessed and captured in forms of brand identity for the valorization of a capitalist political economy.

Social productivity has been and is being channeled into mediatized, corporatized and branded events as, for example, the 2011 Rugby World Cup, in exchange for a fantasy of national empowerment and/or publicity. As Beller argues, "along with life and labour, the very consciousness of our bodies has been and is being expropriated. For this we have become not just spectators, but specters" (*The Cinematic* 295). Countries do not compete for the right to host international sporting events like the Rugby World Cup because it will make money for the host country. They seek to host such media mega-events because they attract audience interest and bipartisan affective investment. Affective benefits accrue through social investment in a nation-brand, in 'our stadium of four million,' especially when the event results in victory for the host nation. Such affective investment is worth immeasurably more to private enterprise, and associated corporate brands, than whatever stimulus boost may be pumped into the local economy.¹⁸ Neoliberal capitalism finds its very conditions of possibility in affect-laden brand identities and in the facilitative public-private partnerships and modes of media governmentality that inform and underpin globalized mega-events like the 2011 Rugby World Cup.

Anne Begg completed her PhD at the University of Otago in 2012. She is currently working as a tutor and guest lecturer in the Department of Media, Film and Communication and is also assistant editor of the e-journal, *borderlands*. She can be contacted at anne.begg@otago.ac.nz.

Notes

¹ "Rugby World Cup is global Rugby's showpiece tournament, and one of the top three sporting events in the world. It is set to be the biggest sporting occasion in the world in 2011, when Rugby World Cup 2011 (RWC 2011) will be staged across 13 venues around New Zealand over a six week period. With a projected global television audience of over 4 billion spectators and more than 60,000 visitors anticipated to travel to New Zealand, RWC 2011 is expected to be the biggest event ever staged in New Zealand" (RWC Guide).

² Source: '2011 – New Zealand's Year' – Welcome Message signed by both Prime Minister John Key and Murray McCully, Rugby World Cup Minister, Ministry of Economic Development. September 2009. Web. 5 July 2012. <www.edanz.org.nz/template/rwc_media/media_pack.pdf>

³ I borrow the term 'rugby-media-nation homology' from Hope (2002) because it so well encapsulates the symbiotic relationship that reiteratively informs and continues to dominate identity politics in New Zealand.

⁴ The International Rugby Board (IRB) is responsible for upholding the laws of the game, sanctioning competitions, setting the code and programme for development and standards, and supervising the relations between the various national regulatory unions. I discuss the power and influence of the IRB in detail later.

⁵ Video clip source: Rugby World Cup 2011, International Rugby Board (IRB) promotion. 2011. Web. 5 April 2011. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4D20Ksgpsbw>>

⁶ Lewis and Winder explain that 'haka' is "the generic name for Māori group dance or performance, a composition played by many instruments: hands, arms, feet, legs, body, voice, tongue and eyes (Karetu 1993)" (210). They also explain "the All Blacks' haka after the national anthems at rugby internationals is performed as a challenge, to proclaim their strength, fearsomeness and fearlessness, and to seek to intimidate the opposition" (210).

⁷ The 1995 10-year contract for television rights to rugby matches was valued at US\$555 million (Scherer and Jackson, 70). In December 2004, SANZAR and News Corporation signed a US\$323 million, 5-year broadcast rights agreement that included an expanded super 14 competition, and a nine-test Tri Nations tournament (86). In April 2010, SANZAR extended its broadcast rights for the period 2011-2015. The five-year deal, which includes

Supersport (South Africa), Fox Sports (Australia) and SKY TV (New Zealand), is worth US\$437 million, an increase of US\$114 million on the previous five-year deal (225).

⁸ Sky TV is the dominant pay television broadcasting service in New Zealand. Its website reports, "SKY's principal business activity is the distribution of both local and foreign programme content to its subscriber base, predominantly through a digital satellite network ... As of 30 June 2010, SKY had a total of 802,397 subscribers, representing a residential household penetration of approximately 47.9%" (Sky Network).

⁹ Once the NZRU lost control of how its major matches would be scheduled and screened, it was subsequently forced to "heighten the commercial value of matches" (Martin 218). This has included rugby law changes designed to speed up play and increase the number of tries and a transition to night rugby that maximises television audiences, despite the fact that wintry evening conditions have a negative impact on the quality of games, both for players and spectators (ibid). In addition, commercial imperatives dictate that Pacific Island nations like Tonga, Samoa and Fiji must be left out of the SANZAR competition, and that provincial and club level rugby in Aotearoa New Zealand is impoverished by a feeder network that encourages top players to bypass club rugby for professional franchises. Perhaps the most contentious issue concerns rugby stadia and the pressures placed on local government to not only install floodlighting and "to build exclusive seating areas to entice high-revenue corporate patrons" but to also commit ratepayers' funds to the prerogatives of rugby, global media and corporate sponsors (ibid).

¹⁰ The Rugby World Cup 2011 Free to Air broadcast deal was confirmed on 3 March 2010 and according to Vanessa Horan: "The deal, which confirms that in addition to Sky TV's live satellite coverage of all 48 matches, Māori Television will be the lead free-to-air broadcaster working in partnership with TVNZ and TV3. It will see Māori Television broadcast all 48 games of the tournament and TV One and TV3 each simulcast seven key live games. Coverage on MTS will include 5-10% Māori language" (Horan).

¹¹ Source: Rugby World Cup 2011. Maori Television. 2011. Web. 18 October 2012. <<http://www.maoritelevision.com/default.aspx?tabid=579&pid=2037>>

¹² Source: Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Economic Development, September 2010. Web. 14 October 2012. <<http://www.mpa.org.nz/.../RWC-Major-Events-Management-Act-Guide.pdf>>

¹³ Tony Seed notes "the IRB even demands the host nation provide at least one 60,000 [seat] stadium and the 2011 event is expected to cost about NZ\$310 million to run and to generate NZ\$280 million in ticket sales. Incredibly, New Zealand will get little of this. The RWC is the largest sporting event ever held in New Zealand; in Auckland, the city where many of the most important games will take place, the costs to the local ratepayers alone has been estimated at NZ\$102 million. And this is a country with rising unemployment, inflation and discrimination against migrant labour" ('About Rugby' 3).

¹⁴ Source: 'How Samoa and Gloucester centre Eliota Fuimaono-Sapolu tweeted his way into trouble'. *The Telegraph*. 31 October 2011. Web. 17 October 2012. <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/rugbyunion/8861187/How-Samoa-and-Gloucester-centre-Eliota-Fuimaono-Sapolu-tweeted-his-way-into-trouble.html>>

¹⁵ Source: 'Sorry Samoa, but life's not fair' Editorial, *The New Zealand Herald*, 9 October 2011. Web. 17 October 2012. <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/opinion/news/article.cfm?c_id=466&objectid=10757609>

¹⁶ Seed notes: "Sixty per cent of the IRB's World Cup revenue comes from broadcast contracts. Of the UK£150 million revenue garnered by the IRB between 2009 and 2012, approximately 50 per cent goes to the ten tier-one nations. The remaining 109 member national unions are left to scramble over the other 50 per cent, according to their 'strength'. Such is the concept of 'parity' of the IRB" ('Sport Today' 3).

¹⁷ Source: 'The globalisation of rugby: It's a small world after all' *The Economist: Sports*. 26 October 2011. Web. 28 June 2012. <<http://www.economist.com/blogs/gametheory/2011/10/globalisation-rugby>>

¹⁸ A *New Zealand Herald* article reports: "Budget blowouts have pushed public spending on the Rugby World Cup well above \$200 million – without counting \$555 million in stadium upgrades and \$39 million in direct losses from hosting the tournament." It also reports that Prime Minister John Key defended the country's investment in the World Cup, saying it was "\$39 million well spent ... yes, the country has spent quite a bit of money upgrading its stadia, but they're long-term assets and I think for the marketing of New Zealand, the promotion of New Zealand, it's been well and truly worth it" (Dickison and Priestley).

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