



University of  
Zurich<sup>UZH</sup>

CEES  
Center for Eastern European Studies

# CEES

A World Class Party ... but for Whom?  
– Material Developments, Social Inequalities,  
and the 2018 Football World Cup in Russia

*Sven Daniel Wolfe, MSc, MA*  
*Dep. of Geography and Sustainability, University of Lausanne*

# Workshop IV

# HS 18

28.11.2018 | 12.15–13.45 Uhr | KOL-F-123  
Uni Zürich | Kollegengebäude | Rämistrasse 71

Why do nations host mega-events like the Olympics or the World Cup, and what happens when they do? Though each host nation's rationales are contingent on their specific political economies and social contexts, in general we see a tendency to use mega-events as engines for urban development and for the purposes of image enhancement in both domestic and international domains. These rationales are all the more salient as mega-events have moved away from the Global North and into territories previously deemed unsuitable for these prestigious and costly affairs. Away from the glamour of international sport and the celebrations of the transnational business class, beyond the official rhetoric of government and hosting authorities, what actually happens to the people and places that host these events? This paper discusses some common pitfalls exemplified in recent mega-events before moving to the 2018 Football World Cup in Russia. Drawing on three years of documentary and qualitative field research, the paper traces official hosting rationales and explores the mixed outcomes of World Cup preparations on the ground, while delineating some of the difficulties and dangers in conducting politically sensitive research in modern day Russia. In providing examples of notable material improvements in several host cities, the research has discovered disparities and growing inequalities that escape the Russian Federal and Regional governments' narrow definitions of development. The paper argues that the 2018 World Cup has had mixed results as a regional urban development program and that it has come at tremendous human and financial cost.

Studierende und Interessierte sind herzlich eingeladen.

**Um Anmeldung wird gebeten: [cees@hist.uzh.ch](mailto:cees@hist.uzh.ch)**