Unconventional Wisdom

Considering National Political Conventions as Tools of Urban Revitalization

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Our Research Goal:

Using the Republican and Democratic National Conventions held in Philadelphia and Cleveland as case studies, our goal is to quantify the benefits associated with hosting these evens to try and gauge the success of spotlight events as tools of urban revitalization.

Why Political Conventions?

Philadelphia’s leveraging of its host position in the 2000 RNC convention was a key component to the city’s 21st century revitalization. While most of the literature on assessing the viability of the mega-event, or spotlight event, strategy as a tool of urban revitalization highlights the consequences of hosting major sporting events (i.e. The Olympics or The Super Bowl.), our research on the impact of hosting Political Conventions shows that there are in fact events that can provide meaningful benefits to their hosts.

Why Philadelphia and Cleveland?

Philadelphia and Cleveland are both Legacy Cities, a term used to describe America’s postindustrial regions in social and economic decline.

Cleveland, which hosted the RNC in 2016, is a city in a state of development like that of Philadelphia in 2000, the year it hosted the convention, allowing us to compare the hosting experience of the two cities.

In studying Philadelphia’s hosting of the DNC in 2016, we can see how host cities benefit differently at different stages of their growth and revitalization.

Tangible and/or Short-Term Benefits

The Intangible Benefits (“Urban Boosterism”)

Tangible vs. Intangible Benefits from Hosting Political Conventions