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**Cities, Olympics, Democracy**

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*Abstract:* This paper is concerned with the effects of change on politics in cities, particularly when cities bid for and then host the Olympic games. Although the impacts of the Olympic games are often discussed in terms of the economic costs and benefits, we examine the political impacts, focusing on urban democracy and the “right to the city.” Our examination of the three US cities with recent experience of hosting mega events – Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Salt Lake City – permits us to compare citizen participation schemes in urban governance. Our examination of these cities assesses the original reasons for to host the Olympic games as expressed in the bid process, the governance “model” used to put on the games and the legacies, and the specific ways in which citizen participation fed into the hosting of the games.

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## Introduction

On February 19, 2013, the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) sent mayors in 35 American cities a letter informing them that the US might field a candidate city to compete to host the 2024 Summer Olympics. The key element of this letter states:

The staging of the Games is an extraordinary undertaking for any city, with operating budgets in excess of \$3 billion, not including costs associated with venue construction and other infrastructure. Among the many requirements are:

- 45,000 hotel rooms.
- An Olympic Village that sleeps 16,500 and has a 5000-person dining hall.
- Operations space for over 15,000 media and broadcasters.
- An international airport that can handle thousands of international travelers per day.
- Public transportation service to venues.
- Roadway closures to allow exclusive use for Games-related transportation.
- A workforce of up to 200,000.

While the Games require a formidable commitment, they also provide an unparalleled opportunity for a city to evolve and grow. The Games have had a transformative impact on a number of host cities, including Barcelona, Beijing and London. They enable the creation and implementation of a new vision and provide a powerful rallying point for progress. (Livingstone, 2013)

The narrative provided by the USOC reveals the powerful lure that hosting mega-events has on urban development. Hosting the Olympics requires a massive tourism and amenity infrastructure. *Investment is place specific, it raises many issues regarding whom this development will benefit, and it calls into question the decision making processes used to proceed with this sort of development.* But the rise of sport as an instrument of urban development is undeniable as cities pursue consumption-oriented strategies to find or mark their place in the global economy. In large part a consequence of the economic restructuring whose pace quickened over the last three decades of the twentieth century in the context of the neoliberal policy changes and funding cuts made during the same period (Caraley, 1992;

Eisinger, 1998), the political terrain shifted away from the politics of redistribution – fighting poverty and inequality – and toward the politics of becoming more competitive in the global economy.

As city leaders have pursued this path of rebuilding for tourism through entrepreneurial policies, a number of thorny questions remained unanswered. Chief among these is whose interests are served by these policy decisions? Pursuing a policy path that regenerates urban centers – in terms not only of the built environment, but also enhancing social and cultural capital and facilitating the processes of democratic politics – presents major challenges to local public officials, city residents, and businesses. More often than not the relations between the state, the community, and the market are divisive and the processes for creating policy often lack mechanisms for understanding and addressing these divergent interests. Thus, there is greater potential for conflict when public policy decisions are made regarding whether to build or upgrade facilities, where and how to provide new infrastructure for improved accessibility to these facilities, or when trading off the commercial value of sports and entertainment for community use values when making decisions about land use. In addition to these policy decisions over the built environment, cities also have engaged in unprecedented levels of city marketing to compete in the global economy. City images, and the processes for developing these images, open other avenues for political conflict because images support a powerful narrative and rationale for the allocation of scarce public resources, focusing economic development policy making (Pagano & Bowman, 1997). Although the autonomy of local institutions varies within and across national contexts, there are important local impacts that occur in the pursuit of sports and entertainment development, including the opportunity costs of using public funds (or tax expenditures) for these sorts of projects.

This paper is concerned with these impacts, particularly when cities bid for and then host the Olympic games. We argue that Olympic impacts are really conflicts over the right to the city. As Lefebvre put it, the right to the city is more than the right of transit; it is the right to urban life that favors the place of encounter and privileges use value over exchange value (1996, p. 173). The \$3 billion that the USOC is estimating it will cost to hold the 2024 Olympics will have an impact on this everyday urban experience. This type of expenditure requires a particular expertise and administrative know-how to make it work. A critical question about the right to the city is: who decides the future of the city? How are solutions to issues such as this negotiated? *The model of governance, then, becomes a central issue not only in bidding for and then hosting the games, but also in understanding the changing nature of our democracy.* This paper examines the evolution of democracy in cities. To understand this evolution, we examine the three US cities with recent experience hosting mega-events: Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Salt Lake City. Our examination of these cities includes their original reasons for wishing to host the Olympic games as expressed in the bid process (which allows us to assess images and city marketing narratives to see whose interests are privileged) and the governance infrastructure that was used in each city (and whose interests are privileged). The three host city experiences also provide a window into the history of our times: Los Angeles hosted the games during the Reagan years when the free market ideology shaped an emergent urban entrepreneurialism; Atlanta's games reflected tensions in the new information economy; and Salt Lake City's winter games took place in the post 9/11 world, where security concerns elevated the role of surveillance and the opacity of government in cities.

## **Democracy and the right to the city**

The literature on democracy identifies a number of challenges for politics. Barber's (2003) description of thin versus strong democracy, for example, raises the issue of how our underlying values offer conflicting images and aspirations of an abstract democratic society (which exists to promote individual interests) when compared to our actual practice of democracy (the search for common interests). The thinness of our democratic practices stem from the uncritical adherence to abstractions, which, to paraphrase Rousseau, are easier to digest than the consequences of taking action: accepting the myth of the invisible hand of pluralism, working in a market-like way through our representative legislatures upholding *my* individual liberty absolves me, and us, from the harder obligations of taking an active role in articulating a common future. If strong democracy supports the politics of "process" that can provide a path toward defining a common good, it also threatens the status quo as it asks us to re-organize our politics in significant ways.

Our most recent big experiment in re-organizing democracy in American cities in significant ways – the Economic Opportunity Act (OEO) of 1964's call for maximum feasible participation through the community action program, a part of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty – is largely seen as a cautionary tale at best (Berry et al., 1993; Kleinberg, 1995; Patterson, 2012). At the time Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1969) wrote *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding* and attributed the OEO's legacy of failure to the lack of desire by the public to participate. Berry et al.'s (1993) assessment of Moynihan's critique of this effort is worth reviewing. The four charges at the heart of Moynihan's critique were: (1) community action promoted conflict and violence; (2) government did not understand; (3) the bureaucracy perverted congressional intent; and (4) the poor were not ready. Berry et al. point out the

exaggerations and inaccuracies in each of the these charges, beginning with the fact that the makeup of the community action agencies was completely overhauled between 1965-1967 to reflect the interests of communities that were being served instead of power brokers' interests (1993, pp. 24-31). Berry et al. note that although participatory programs for the poor were damaged by Moynihan's work, participatory programs for the middle class were not. In large part this is because the debate over participation focused on democracy, and the critical question was, do you want more democracy or less? In the 1970s, Congress enacted 150 new citizen participation programs (Berry et al. 1993, p. 34). By 1980, however, the focus of the debate shifted and public participation was described as an impediment to business as well as a marker of "big government" by the Reagan administration. What was clear at that time was who was doing the talking.

Alan Wolfe (2006) analyzes the shift toward a more conservative democracy that the Reagan era ushered in and he notes that America has shifted in its politics as well – vituperation, polarization, and domestic warfare characterize our current form of conservative democracy. Not only have we become more conservative as a nation in our political views, but we have changed the way our politics are practiced. Pragmatism has given way to extremism and solutions are held up to strict ideological standards. Voter ignorance, weak conceptions of accountability, poorly functioning intermediary institutions, pervasive distrust that undermines commitments to neutrality, and fears of violence that weaken commitments to social justice are part of the trajectory that also sees greater communication and the use of more invasive techniques to bring these politics further into everyday life. Wolfe wonders "whether the quality of our democratic life has improved as the quantity of democratic life has expanded" (2006, p. 14). For Wolfe, one of the changes that negatively impacted democracy is we do not always know who is doing the

talking. Wolfe (2006, p. 117) cites the argument made in the *Paradox of American Democracy* (Judis, 2000), noting “democracy works best when elites are visible and influential, and it works poorly when they are not.”

These challenges are at the heart of Lefebvre’s discussion of the right to the city. As Lefebvre describes it, urban politics essentially is about the resolving the conflicts between use value and exchange value, between the users of space and the owners of space (1996, p. 86). Urban life is about the chance encounter as opportunity; this opportunity provides the basis for fulfillment. This means that access to all parts of the city, for all people, is paramount to his argument for the right to the city. Furthermore, the right to the city suggests that those who inhabit the city, and more specifically, urban neighborhoods, ought to have a say in what happens in their neighborhoods. However, the concerns of inhabitants of the city are under constant pressure from property owners, developers, and city government officials who seek higher profits, rents, or tax revenues. This pressure creates conflict over the form of the city itself. Lefebvre notes that urban society is built “on the ruins of the city.” By this he meant that the production of urban space was contested: buying, selling, speculating; building, renovating, tearing down – often these processes form a backdrop to our everyday lives and we do not give them a second thought (see Beauregard, 1993; Gottdiener, 1985; Harvey, 1985). The fact that we take these processes for granted helps give economic exchange value such power in urban life. Lefebvre argued that the processes underlying the production of urban space should be understood as taking place across time and at the same time encompassing three levels that have become as blurred as the old distinctions between town and country (1996, pp. 126-132). These are economic globalization and urbanization, the form of the city itself, and the ways of living in cities. For Lefebvre, the blurring of these analytically distinct but interrelated processes masks

the contradictions in the conflicts between the city as a place of encounter and community on the one hand, and a place for the exchange of products on the other. One consequence is that the ideological and material power of exchange suppresses the role of “encountering” and results in the privileging of economic production and exchange value at all three levels (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 132). Examining recent trends in economic development policy making, Modarres posits that we are seeing “perpetual development” resulting in “development-dependent democracy, capital-driven social justice, and economic citizenship” (2003, p. 46). But it does not have to be this way.

Amin and Thrift describe this challenge quite simply as “people and places script each other” (2002, p. 23). Following Lefebvre’s lead, Amin and Thrift describe five kinds of countervailing tendencies evident in urban life (2002, pp. 128-129): (1) urban life is not made up of large forces pressing down, but of many smaller forces working things out; (2) urban life does not take place in stable networks that channel activities, but consists of fragile relations that often break down; (3) urban spaces are places of chance encounter and improvisation and can result in new responses; (4) urban governance is both rule-based and anthropological, indicating that systems of control are not systems of knowledge; (5) the result of these complex interactions can lead to emergent forms of social (and we add, political) organization. Taken together, these countervailing tendencies describe the contingent nature of democracy in cities. Protecting the city as a place of encounter and use value in the face of capital-driven urban economic development is the project of the right to the city.

### **Mega-events and urban economic development**

The Olympic games are particularly attractive to cities seeking to improve their global

competitiveness. The required sports, tourism, and amenity infrastructure and the global media exposure are major drawing cards for city leaders. In addition, because the Olympics are often seen by the international public as representing social progress (Walker et al., 2010), city leaders hope to draw benefits from this universally approved value. The Olympic image thus presents an important opportunity for a city's economic development strategy. Because "city image" provides a rationale for the allocation of scarce resources (Pagano & Bowman, 1997), it allows cities to focus economic development activities and attention for competitive gain and obviates the need for long explanations. These factors have led to the emergence of the mega-event strategy: a plan to bring a short-term, spectacular external event to the city to gain prestige, tourism revenues, and redevelop city space. Redevelopment is often a key feature of this strategy because being selected to host the Olympics provides the opportunity to leverage event preparations to promote an array of economic development projects that might not otherwise be politically or economically feasible. The competition to host these mega-events is fierce and this competition raises the specter of overselling the potential benefits and understating the potential costs. Because mega-events entail bringing in an external event, cities must bid for the right to host. Although hosting the Olympic games may be appealing to many cities, the requirements to host the games are substantial. In American cities, for example, the bid process involves first competing against other US cities to gain the endorsement of the USOC and then competing against other cities from around the world to secure the games from the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

The bidding process itself is sometimes used simply to put a city "on the map," but the time frame between bidding and hosting provides the chance for intervening events to complicate city politics. The global financial crisis that erupted in late 2007 is such an example,

as the Olympic (Vancouver 2010 and 2012) and the World Cup (2012) had a more difficult time than expected attracting corporate sponsors because of these changing economic conditions. But mega-events provide another challenge to local politics: winning a bid to host the Olympics puts pressure on a city to complete its event preparations, and this can put stress on the normal planning process, and on the allocation of resources for urban development projects. In the time between awarding the Olympics and their manifestation in the host city, the process of organizing the event pits the longer-term urban future against the shorter-term exigencies of place making for the host city's debut before a global television audience. In this policy environment, the politics of place promotion and the development of the city's amenity-infrastructure can lead to serious questions about democracy in cities.

The potential benefits of hosting the Olympics include tangible benefits such as the development of infrastructure and amenities, city branding and image development, increased tourism and the visitor economy, promotion of trade and business investment, and the enhancement of managerial skills needed to stage future global events. Intangible benefits can include feel-good effects, national or local pride and self-confidence, civic engagement, and the psychological benefits of collective imagination about the future (Andranovich & Burbank, 2011). These outcomes are not assured, however, and may not be beneficial to city residents, or to the city as a whole (Heying et al., 2005). Olympic outcomes will not be homogeneous and are likely to be contingent on local, regional, national, and international institutions and interests attaching their own meaning to the event's outcomes (Holden et al., 2008).

Still, it is the urban impacts of hosting the Olympics that have the potential to affect urban politics. The overall concern of critics of the games is that local interests are pushed aside as the interests of corporate sponsors or international sporting bodies are given primacy in policy

making (Eisinger, 2000; Jennings, 2000; Lenskyj, 2000; Lenskyj, 2004; Shaw, 2008). If these concerns are accurate, hosting the games provides another mechanism for benefits to be extracted from cities, fostering uneven development and furthering inequalities. In studies of the effects of Olympic urbanization, Rome, Tokyo, Munich, Montreal, Sarajevo, Seoul, Calgary, Barcelona, Lillehammer, Sydney, Beijing, and London are host cities that have seen noticeable urban impacts. The regeneration impacts have included automobile and mass transit development, airport expansion, physical rebuilding, expansion of cultural facilities and tourism amenities, and parks and open space development. Simply spending a lot of money, however, does not always lead to successful regeneration. Of the cities mentioned, Tokyo, Barcelona, and Beijing were the biggest spenders and spent the most in non-sports development. Liao and Pitts (2006) report that Tokyo spent 97 percent of its budget on non-sports urban development, while Barcelona spent 67 percent and Beijing spent 65 percent. These cities are also examples of cities that were transformed by the Olympic games, although it might be more accurate to say that these cities used the Olympics to further existing urban development plans.

Garcia-Ramon and Albet (2000) provide a commentary on how the Olympics were used in Barcelona's transformation (see also Calavita & Ferrer, 2000; Monclus, 2011). Barcelona's elected city council played a central leadership role in the design and management of the city's major transformation projects. They adhered to the Town Planning regulations to maintain legitimacy and project coherence. These regulations led to five considerations: the integration of projects within the overall vision for the city; connection and continuity of newly built areas with existing neighborhoods; renovation and rehabilitation of the Old Town area to avoid gentrification and maintain social coherence in the neighborhoods; the use of public spaces in the newly transformed areas to generate identity and foster social and cultural integration; and

upgrading peripheral areas via the restoration of squares, arcades, open spaces, and gardens. In addition, this process involved city residents in planning and as volunteers. Barcelona also benefitted from the active role taken by other medium sized cities in the broader metropolitan area to help balance the “polarities” of development. Finally, the Olympics provided an opportunity to position Barcelona globally through urban marketing promotional strategies. In sum, “interventions in public spaces to introduce elements of urban quality and social dignity and to promote values of tolerance, solidarity, and a sense of belonging to the city and to the community, can be successful” (Garcia-Ramon & Albet, 2000, p. 1334).

The example of Barcelona illustrates how the Olympics can contribute positively to urban regeneration and urban life. Yet, not all host cities have the commitment of national resources or the cooperation of local actors to accomplish such a transformation. In the United States, for example, cities are not likely to see substantial national resources provided for urban regeneration. US cities, however, are still eager to bid for the Olympics and have sought to use the games to rebuild a city or its image. In the following section we examine how American cities have used the Olympics to facilitate urban development and regeneration. From the perspective of the right to the city, what does this tell us about the effects of mega-events on urban governance? We examine two dimensions of governance: image proffered in the bid, and the matrix of organizations with decision making authority and how that authority was used to organize the games.

### **The Olympic image**

The Southern California Committee for the Olympic Games (SCCOG), originally established after the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles, made several attempts to bring the games

back to the city before seeking the 1984 games. As one SCCOG member explained in an editorial in the *Los Angeles Times* newspaper, the committee's motivations for seeking the games were: (1) to give the city of Los Angeles the chance to display its attractions on a global stage; (2) the opportunity to increase revenues from the influx of new visitors; and (3) the “intangibles” that would enhance the city's position in history and contemporary society (Rood, 1977).

The SCCOG raised nearly \$160,000 from private sources to finance bid activities leading up to selection by the USOC, but it also needed the endorsement of city leaders. Because this effort was occurring when the city of Montreal was going into debt to organize the 1976 Olympics, elected officials in Los Angeles were chiefly concerned with avoiding any commitment of public money to bid for or host the games. Mayor Tom Bradley and the city council were supportive of the bid with the understanding that it would be privately financed.

The issue of the financial responsibility of American cities was an especially sensitive one for the IOC because it had already been forced to move the 1976 Winter Games from Denver to Innsbruck after voters in Denver passed a city charter amendment preventing public money from being spent on the games. What prevented the LA negotiations from reaching a deadlock was that the LA bid committee offered the alternative of a privately-financed games. By using corporate sponsorships and a portion of the television revenues, the bid committee maintained that it, rather than the city, could be responsible for funding the games. Although the negotiations were difficult, an agreement was reached after Mayor Bradley publicly threatened to withdraw the city's bid and the IOC agreed to suspend its rule requiring the city government to bear the financial risks. The IOC awarded the 1984 Olympic games to Los Angeles in October 1978. Shortly thereafter the LA City Council approved modest tourist related tax increases to provide the city some funds for the games and at the same time Olympic skeptics on the council

had Proposition N placed on the city election ballot. Proposition N was intended to prevent any other public money from being spent on the games, and it passed easily in November 1978. One commentator at the time called these the “capitalist games” (Nixon, 1988).

Atlanta's bid for the 1996 Olympics was inspired in part by the success of the 1984 games. Olympic boosters in Atlanta saw hosting the games as a way to put the city on the global map. Yet unlike Los Angeles, Atlanta did not have an Olympic bid infrastructure in place ready to be activated nor was there strong support initially from the key actors in the city's power structure. Much of the early work was done by a small group of acquaintances of a local lawyer, Billy Payne, who became the city's Olympic entrepreneur. Payne's group worked to attract the support of members of Atlanta's business and political elite. A key early convert to Payne's cause was Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young. After he left office, Young became chairman of the Georgia Amateur Athletic Foundation (GAAF), an organization formed to promote Atlanta's bid. After the GAAF won the USOC's endorsement, the Atlanta Organizing Committee (AOC) was formed with Billy Payne as president and CEO, Andrew Young as chair, and Gerald Bartels, president of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, as secretary. By persuading a number of key business and political leaders that hosting the games would raise Atlanta's international standing, Payne ensured that the AOC was able to draw on the considerable private resources of Atlanta businesses as well as the political connections of leaders such as Young to support the bid through a demanding IOC competition.

AOC leaned on Atlanta's distinctive regional character and its record in civil rights (Whitelegg, 2000). But in addition to these symbolic representations, AOC emphasized the technical merits of the Atlanta bid, and hoped that these solidified the perception of Atlanta as a city well versed in the new information economy. CNN provided legitimacy with its state of the

art telecommunications and media services. Hartsfield International Airport, one of the world's busiest, and the high-speed rail system, MARTA, already linked the airport to the city center and a majority of proposed venues. Atlanta was convention-tested, an NFL Super Bowl host city and home to national political conventions, and was ready to take its place on the international stage.

Before being selected by the IOC to host the 2002 Olympics, Salt Lake City bid for the 1972, 1976, 1992 and 1998 Winter Games. The city's earliest bids were mostly to attract attention for the area's ski resorts. After the success of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, the idea of using the games to establish the city's image and promote tourism took hold among political and business leaders. In November 1988, the USOC announced that it was opening the selection process for the 1998 Winter Games. Anchorage had been the USOC's designated city for the 1992 and 1994 competitions but the USOC wanted to make its selection dependent on a commitment to build winter sports training facilities regardless of whether the city was actually chosen by the IOC to host the Olympics. Anchorage balked at this commitment, but Olympic bid proponents in Salt Lake City did not. In response to the USOC actions, the mayor of Salt Lake City convened a new bid committee whose key actors were a small group of local business people and Olympic entrepreneurs who supplied the leadership and resources. The bid committee's immediate challenge was to find a way to get a funding commitment to build Olympic-quality facilities for a ski jump, bobsled track and speed skating oval. Members of the committee approached the state legislature with a plan to divert sales tax revenue that would otherwise go to cities and the state government in order to create a \$56 million fund to build sports facilities. A bill to achieve this was introduced by the speaker of the Utah House, who also was a member of the bid committee, and it passed the legislature overwhelmingly with the provision that the plan be subject to a public referendum. This commitment of public funds by

the legislature helped convince the USOC to select Salt Lake City as the US city for the 1998 and, if needed, the 2002 winter games competitions. The public referendum on the sales tax diversion was approved by 57 percent of the voters in November 1989. In contrast to LA and Atlanta, Salt Lake City's bid depended on a commitment of public funding for sports facilities, which was regarded as a public investment to get the Olympics and to promote the winter sports industry. During the debate over the referendum, Olympics proponents made the argument that with or without the games, this use of public money would be an investment in making Salt Lake City a "winter sports capital" (Jardine, 1989).

In all three cities, the bid committees were made up of private sector and public sector elites operating outside of government, but with the verbal and symbolic support of government. These elites relied on tangible and intangible benefits to sell the idea of bidding for and hosting the games: the Olympics would generate more visitors to the city, and these visitors would generate profits for businesses and tax revenues for government. Each city also would enhance its visibility around the world, and hosting the games would be a prestigious moment for the city. In addition, two out of three cities promised "no public revenues" and in one city, the voters of the state agreed to use public money for an investment in winter sports.

### **Organizing the games**

The Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee (LAOOC) was the nonprofit organization set up to organize and run the games. The LAOOC's plan had two essential features: (1) to raise sufficient funds from television revenues, ticket sales, and from a limited number of large corporate sponsors to stage a "spartan" games; and (2) to minimize costs by using existing or temporary facilities whenever possible. Because local governments insisted that

they avoid financial responsibility, the LAOOC was largely free from government control and from the expectation that Olympic money would be used to benefit city residents. This “arm’s length” approach depicts a governance arrangement where local government is the junior partner in a private-public partnership.

Because of the approach taken by Olympic organizers, the 1984 Olympics did not affect the built environment in Los Angeles or Southern California. Hosting the games did help bring some development projects to fruition more quickly, such as completion of the upper deck of LA International Airport and the installation of fiber optics for telecommunications, but these projects would have happened even without the games. Similarly, the limited involvement of local government in the bid and conduct of the games meant that the Olympics did not produce any transformative change in LA politics. Efforts by Mayor Bradley to push for development related to the games in the Sepulveda Basin did exacerbate anti-LA sentiment in the San Fernando Valley, which culminated in the 1990s with a plea for secession and the adoption of a new city charter in 2000. In the Exposition Park community, the LAOOC’s Community Action Program was a neighborhood boosters program, and there were no neighborhood benefits beyond individual compensation for any displacement that occurred. More positively, a substantial portion of the LAOOC’s \$232 million surplus was retained and used to fund the Amateur Athletic Foundation (later renamed the LA84 Foundation). This money continues to promote sports competition and sports education throughout Southern California. Perhaps most importantly, the success of the 1984 Olympics brought attention back to Los Angeles and helped the city and region develop a sports tourism infrastructure that has become a sizable component of the area's economy.

Although there was substantial support for hosting the Olympics during the bidding process – including a new state organization supported by businesses, MAOGA, whose task was to help organize Olympic construction – after the games were awarded in 1990 it became clear that there were conflicting visions for the Atlanta Olympics. For Young and others on the organizing committee, the primary task was to put on a successful athletic event (Newman, 1999, p. 153). Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson, on the other hand, spoke of the games as the “twin peaks of Atlanta's Mount Olympus” with the first peak “to stage the best Olympic Games ever” and the second peak to “simultaneously uplift the people of Atlanta and fight poverty in the process” (Roughton, 1991, F3). Jackson's more expansive view reflected the expectations of many, especially inner city residents, that hosting the games should also mean improving the city for its residents. The efforts by Atlanta city government to use the Olympics as a vehicle to improve the city for residents, however, were largely unsuccessful. While the nonprofit Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG) had substantial resources for creating Olympic venues, ACOG did not intend to use its resources to promote development “outside the fences” of those venues. The city government established the Corporation for Olympic Development (CODA) as a vehicle to spearhead development efforts within the Olympic Ring neighborhoods but this organization suffered from a late start, changes in leadership, and a lack of resources. CODA attracted \$76 million in public and private funds, but only \$8 million of that was spent directly on neighborhood improvement (French & Disher, 1997, p. 388). In contrast to LA, the Atlanta games required more Olympic-related development. Within the city, the development of the Olympic Stadium and the creation of Centennial Olympic Park largely served the interests of ACOG's business partners but resulted in the displacement of as many as 16,000 poor inner-city residents when public housing units were demolished (Burbank et al., 2001, p. 112).

The physical legacy of the games was positive but social costs were extracted from the poor. The games were instrumental in overcoming political resistance to infrastructure investment. Reversing a 25-year history of failed bond measures, Atlanta voters passed an infrastructure bond totaling \$375 million that helped the city to secure state and federal matching funds to reverse years of disinvestment in street, sewer, and water systems (GAO, 1999; Ray, 1995). ACOG generated revenues of \$1.7 billion, spending roughly a third on local construction and the rest on operations. In addition the federal government contributed close to one billion dollars, with \$371 million going to improve Hartsfield International Airport and much of the rest going to other infrastructure. Local and state government added another one billion dollars in matching funds for infrastructure and the private sector contributed \$400 million, nearly half of this accounted for by its investment in the mixed income residential housing that replaced public housing units.

Although there were improvements to the city and region associated with hosting the games, in a larger sense Mayor Jackson's vision of using the games to uplift the people of Atlanta and fight poverty did not succeed (Beaty, 2007; Burbank et al., 2001, pp. 102-113; Keating & Flores, 2000; Rutheiser, 1996). In addition, the crashing of the electronic reporting system, transportation problems, security issues, a controversy over street vendors, and the overt commercialism of the Atlanta games brought negative publicity. Of course, some organizations in Atlanta did benefit including the quasi-public Georgia World Congress Center, which owns and maintains Centennial Olympic Park, businesses such as Coca-Cola and Turner Broadcasting, and universities such as Georgia Tech, Georgia State, and Clark Atlanta. Yet the hope that poor neighborhoods would benefit was not realized and Olympic development reinforced a legacy of ill will in neighborhoods such as Summerville, Peoplestown, and Mechanicsville that

experienced displacement and lost housing (Beaty, 2007; Burbank et al., 2000; Keating & Flores 2000).

Due to the infusion of public money, Salt Lake City had more public infrastructure in place than either Los Angeles or Atlanta. The Salt Lake Organizing Committee (SLOC) was the nonprofit organization responsible for staging the games, but there were three other state organizations in place. The Utah Sports Authority (USA) was created to build and manage the publicly funded sports facilities, the Utah Athletic Foundation (UAF) was created to assume ownership and operation of those facilities after the games, and the Utah Sports Advisory Committee was created to provide legislative and local government oversight. While the USA and the UAF were important in the pre-games and post-games periods respectively, the Utah Sports Advisory Committee did not provide any serious public oversight during the build up to the Olympic Games and SLOC was able to organize the event in a manner consistent with its goals and largely free from public oversight of its actions. Public officials in Utah were obligated to get involved in the leadership and management of SLOC, however, when media reports began to circulate about the tactics used by the bid committee to get the games. The Salt Lake bribery scandal, as it became known, prompted investigations by a local ethics commission, the USOC, the IOC, and the US Department of Justice. The negative publicity generated by the bribery scandal prior to the 2002 Olympics illustrated the difficulty of controlling the coverage of an international mega-event.

The approach to Olympic development in Salt Lake City was more extensive than in Los Angeles and, in contrast to Atlanta, local government made no attempt to use the games to address urban inequality. Local governments and Olympic proponents did, however, leverage the Olympic timeline to advance specific projects such as the federally funded construction of a

light rail train line in Salt Lake City, a controversial federal land exchange to allow expansion of Snowbasin ski resort, and efforts to link a large private development near downtown Salt Lake City to the Olympics in order to justify the use of additional public money for the development. In the end, the Olympics were conducted with the private resources raised by SLOC, more than \$1.3 billion in federal money for transportation and security, and the initial public investment in building winter sports facilities.

The 2002 Olympics by SLOC yielded an operating surplus of nearly \$100 million for the organizing committee. Part of this surplus was used to pay back the public money invested by the state and local governments from the sales tax diversion and to endow a legacy fund for use by the UAF to continue to operate the speed skating oval, ski jump and bobsled track. Although Salt Lake City itself gained little by way of tangible assets from having served as the host city, the city and region did benefit from investments of public and private funds in transportation and tourism related infrastructure. Furthermore, the city and state have attempted to leverage the games by assisting in the creation of the Utah Sports Commission as a vehicle for attracting sports related events to the area as part of the tourist mix. But, as the publicity associated with the Salt Lake Olympic bribery scandal illustrated, the effort to project a new global image for the city produced rather mixed results. Despite the early investment by the city and state to build Olympic facilities to attract the games, there was very little public investment to carry out a longer-term development strategy based on tourism following the games.

### **Citizen participation and the Olympics**

Olympic investment is place specific, it raises many issues regarding who benefits, and calls into question the decision making processes used in this sort of development. Citizen

participation in the three American Olympic cities followed the channels of thin democracy that Barber describes, and this is partly due to the nature of economic development policy making. In an era of entrepreneurial decision making, the privileging of exchange value in both image development and policy decision making were evident in the three Olympic cities.

The LAOOC approached the games in a businesslike manner, and treated communities no differently than it treated local governments: at arm's length. In terms of community participation, the LAOOC developed a substantial public relations plan called the "Community Action Program" (LAOOC, 1983). The largest component was the Olympic Neighbors program involving 21 neighborhood advisory committees; this was, however, a boosterish effort that involved communities surrounding Olympic venues. One of the community concerns in poorer neighborhoods, such as the Exposition Park community surrounding the most important venue of the games, the LA Coliseum, was that without the involvement of local elected officials, community interests might be dismissed in the run up to the games. However, the LAOOC conducted an impact assessment in Exposition Park and found that the community concerns revolved around lack of employment opportunities, security and crime issues, and the potential negative impact on housing supply. Instead, LAOOC's approach included not leaving a permanent mark on the community, using regular communication to alleviate animosity, and considering temporary benefits at least equivalent to the effects of any dislocation (LAOOC, 1984). The implementation of this approach included using personal, one-on-one contact run out of the neighborhood office; dealing with community concerns on a case-by-case basis; supporting existing community programs, organizations, and leadership; and encouraging employment opportunities instead of funding them. Community concerns were addressed

indirectly and the LAOOC saw itself as a temporary presence in the Exposition Park neighborhood. This approach was true in wealthier communities as well.

Mayor Maynard Jackson's announcement that Atlanta would scale the twin peaks of Mt. Olympus in the 1996 games set high expectations in the city's 15 downtown neighborhoods that had been left behind in the rapid growth of the Atlanta metro area in the two decades preceding the games. However, the biggest challenge facing the city wasn't \$1 billion estimated cost of downtown regeneration or the fact that the city's Corporation for Olympic Development in Atlanta (CODA) was organized two years after the games were awarded and had no dedicated funding source; it was that government, neighborhood and business leaders didn't share the same goals (regeneration, housing and jobs, and amenities, respectively). Turnover at the top of CODA, and limited funding meant that the business leaders' interests were implemented, supported by \$15 million in federal funds for pedestrian corridors connecting commuter rail to Atlanta University campuses. Then, CODA asked the Atlanta city council to declare parts of some neighborhoods "slum areas" to expedite city cleanup and condemnation processes, but this led into confrontations in the neighborhoods. In the end, CODA spend \$76 million; 46 percent was improving streets and parks in the downtown business areas, 31 percent went to pedestrian corridors leading to Olympic venues, 14 percent went to other markets, parks and public art, and 9 percent went to neighborhood streets (Burbank et al., 2000, pp. 92-93). The *Atlanta Journal Constitution* explained why: the expectations of neighborhood groups were not met because they were not realistic.

Salt Lake City's organizing committee was publicly led, with the Salt Lake City mayor and Utah's governor taking the lead. The approval of public monies for building a winter sports infrastructure added a level of public oversight; an institutional structure of public and public-

private partnerships was created to take responsibility for spending tax dollars and overseeing the use of these facilities. Given the rural venue locations, the land use controversies were environmental. However, in the run-up to the games a 1989 referendum forced a deal between Olympic proponents and environmentalists to protect certain areas from Olympic-related development. The referendum stated there would be no development of Olympic venues in the environmentally sensitive Big and Little Cottonwood Canyons. This deal neutralized the use value of the environment as a focal point for opposition to the Olympics, because environmental groups feared that if the referendum failed, a future Olympic bid might resurrect proposals for development in these canyons. When the issue of affordable housing was raised by a coalition of community groups, the Salt Lake City Council passed a resolution pledging to assess growth impacts and create a community planning committee. The coalition then asked for greater diversity on the SLOC board, and this led to conflict between the mayor who supported the coalition's demands and governor, who did not. After a bit of back-and-forth, the conflict was eventually resolved by expanding the size of SLOC. However, the three other organizations involved with the 2002 games – the Utah Sports Authority, the Utah Sports Committee, and Utah Athletic Foundation – had overlapping memberships with SLOC to encourage a common long-term view toward the games and the venues. While government played a more directive role in the public-private partnership that organized the games, SLOC tended to focus on the games and supported the interests of corporate Utah, but it did address the concerns of community groups.

### **Olympic impacts: Whose city is it?**

Host city Olympic governance in the three American cities shows a shift from an entrepreneurial, private sector business model where decisions were made independent of local

elected officials and communities, to a model in which government involvement shifted to be more directive of infrastructural investment. This should not suggest that somehow, with public officials involved, that the right to the city will be observed and use values will be privileged. With the city government on the outside looking in, the LAOOC ran a “private” games, and decisions were made by the organizing committee with no outside interference. This was as clear an example of the entrepreneurial city as there is, and the idea of citizen participation was not important to the conduct of the games. While the LAOOC’s Community Action Program was clearly not intended to enhance the prospects for citizen participation, Atlanta city government’s CODA made a series of missteps that alienated it from the communities whose interests it was purported to serve. The lack of strong public leadership, coupled with the narrative focused on redistribution, doomed these efforts. Although Atlanta is the capital of Georgia, the state legislature and city government were not on the same page when it came to communities and democracy in the city. In fact, there were clear indicators of trouble even during the bidding process when Old and New South cultural values clashed, and during the run-up to the games when Centennial Olympic Park was proposed and built. In contrast, a number of early organizational and political (ballot box) efforts solidified the success of the games in Salt Lake City. Although there were issues concerning citizen participation, Salt Lake City exhibited a politics of process to resolve these.

Democracy, and democratic practices in cities, is an ongoing project. The right to the city does not promise one outcome over another, but it does ask that the politics of process be used. Citizen participation puts a heavy requirement on people, and the burden is heavier on poorer people. Whether the Olympics are an economic benefit or not is a separate question from whether the right of people living in the city have the right to continue living their lives in their

neighborhoods, with access to enjoy all the public spaces in the city, and with the possibility of being heard in decisions that may change their future. Enhancing democracy in cities is about enhancing the process of addressing these concerns. There were no Barcelonas in American Olympic cities.

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