

The social impacts of changes in the housing sector: Assessing the 2010 Winter Olympic Games—Summary of Proposed Research Robert VanWynsberghe, 2008

We propose to investigate the social impacts of mega-events. Social impacts are the human experiences and responses to an intervention in normal urban processes.³ Mega-events are a major one-time or recurring event of limited duration, such as the Olympic Games.⁴ There is a pressing need to analyze how host residents, and especially vulnerable populations, experience the social impacts of mega-events. We propose to perform this research by conducting case studies and cross-case analyses on the housing sector of the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver, British Columbia. Housing and homelessness (hereinafter referred to as housing only) are the two most volatile and contentious sectors in major cities in the world today, and mega-events affect these sectors significantly. For example, the Olympic Games impacts real estate values (Barcelona housing and rental costs alone rose 150%⁵⁻⁷ during the six year period surrounding the 1992 Games), and these changes lead to displacements, evictions, and marginalizations in the housing sector⁸ as seen also in other Olympic host regions including: Seoul,³⁵ Barcelona,^{5,9} Atlanta,⁹ Sydney,⁷ Athens,¹⁰ Vancouver,¹¹ Beijing,¹² and London.¹³ In Vancouver, Olympic-related trends have made housing the most critical reported priority for the host region.¹ Detached homes cost, on average, \$725,000 and there is an existing vacancy rate of 0.3% in the city.¹⁴ Significantly, it is estimated that 3200 people will be homeless by the time the Games arrive in Vancouver.² In a recent survey of 600 Vancouver residents, 25% identified homelessness as Vancouver's top priority over the next two years, and 17% identified affordable housing. When asked, "Which is the most important lasting impact of 2010", the highest response (32%) was "Help solve the homelessness problem."¹⁵ The social impacts of changes in the housing sector are mounting and the Olympic Games are more than 2 years away.

Research Objectives.

The current proposal will build upon a previously SSHRC-funded research program on community organizing and capacity in relation to the 2010 Games. Theories, survey instruments, sampling frames, and networks necessary for the current proposal will come from the initial research. There are two overarching research objectives for the current proposal. The first is to conduct four interrelated case studies on: 1) the 2010 Games' impact on residents' experiences of housing; 2) the market conditions that contextualize these experiences in the housing sector; 3) the host region's expressions of community dissent as it is related to housing issues, and; 4) the effects of policy strategies designed to address concerns about housing. The second major objective is to engage in cross-case analyses of the four case studies in order to develop a theoretically grounded and conceptually sound framework for analyzing the social impacts of mega-events and to make specific recommendations about protecting? housing during Olympic Games.

Outcomes of the Research.

1. Four graduate students will receive training in the areas of community-based research on housing issues, case study research, and cross-case analysis.

2. Four case study reports as described above.
3. Eight peer reviewed academic journal articles (two articles per case study).
4. A cross-case analysis of the four case studies of 2010 Games. This will help to provide a more complete picture of the Olympics and housing than could a single case study and inform the framework and recommendations described below.
5. A framework for pre- and post- social impacts analyses. Such knowledge will mark a significant advancement in the fields of mega-events.
6. Recommendations that will help organizers create mega-event commitments that better reflect host residents' expectations and concerns and will help host residents prepare for large-scale events.

The social impacts of changes in the housing sector: Assessing the 2010 Winter Olympic Games—Detailed Description

We propose to investigate the social impacts of mega-events, specifically with respect to housing. Social impacts are the human experiences and responses to an intervention.³ Mega-events are a major one-time or recurring event of limited duration, such as the Olympic Games.⁴ There is a pressing need to analyze how host residents, and especially vulnerable populations, experience the social impacts of mega-events. We propose to perform this research by conducting case studies and cross-case analyses on the housing sector of the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver, British Columbia. Housing and homelessness (hereinafter referred to as housing only) are the two most volatile and contentious sectors in major cities in the world today and mega-events affect these sectors significantly. The Olympic Games impacts real estate values (Barcelona housing and rental costs alone rose 150%⁵⁻⁷ during the six year period surrounding the 1992 Games), and these changes lead to displacements, evictions, and marginalizations in the housing sector⁸ as attested to by the other Olympic host regions of Seoul,³⁵ Barcelona,^{5,9} Atlanta,⁹ Sydney,⁷ Athens,¹⁰ Vancouver,¹¹ Beijing,¹² and London.¹³ In Vancouver, Olympic-related trends have already made housing the most critical priority for the host region.¹ Detached homes cost, on average, \$725,000 and there is an existing vacancy rate of 0.3% in the city.¹⁴ Most significantly, it is estimated that 3200 people will be homeless by the time the Games arrive in Vancouver.² In a recent survey of 600 Vancouver residents, 25% identified homelessness as Vancouver's top priority over the next two years, and 17% identified affordable housing. When asked, "Which is the most important lasting impact of 2010", the highest response (32%) was "Help solve the homelessness problem."¹⁵ There is a critical need to conduct research on the social impacts of mega-events because of the growing desire for major cities to host them and lack of analysis of their impacts on people in crucial sectors such as housing.

Research Objectives.

The current proposal will extend a previously SSHRC-funded research program on community organizing and capacity in relation to the 2010 Games. Theories, survey instruments, sampling frames, and networks necessary for the proposed research will come from the initial research. There are two overarching research objectives for the

current proposal. The first is to conduct four interrelated case studies on: 1) the 2010 Games' impact on residents' experiences of housing; 2) the market conditions that contextualize these experiences in the housing sector; 3) the host region's expressions of community dissent as it is related to housing issues, and; 4) the effects of policy strategies designed to address concerns in relation to housing. The second major objective is to engage in cross-case analyses of the four case studies in order to develop a theoretically grounded and conceptually sound framework for analyzing the social impacts of mega-events and to make specific recommendations for addressing housing issues in relation to mega-events and the 2010 Games.

Context.

2010 Winter Olympic Games. The 2010 Games is an ideal context for understanding the social impacts of mega-events. This large, expensive and popular, once-in-a-lifetime mega-event necessitates 7 new, 2 expanded, 2 renovated, and 2 existing sporting venues for spectators to watch 6,850 athletes and officials from more than 80 participating countries compete. With the exception of Lillehammer in 1994, the 2010 Games has the highest share of direct public funding, with more than 50% of the costs of the Games in Vancouver being funded by the public.¹⁶ Its size, compressed timelines, and funding requirements will magnify effects on the host city, making changes in the housing sector easier to detect.

It should also be mentioned that a special sensitivity to Vancouver's international image exists among its residents, as does a commitment to sustainability. Vancouver is considered one of the world's most "livable" cities.¹⁷ During the bid phase of the Games, Inner-city Inclusive Commitments were made, which our research team has shown obliges the Vancouver Organizing Committee (VANOC) to social sustainability,¹⁸ and the mitigation of negative impacts on housing.¹⁹ An intense debate on whether the Games cause homelessness and who should be responsible if it does has already begun. Community advocates have reported the first "official" Olympic evictions of the 2010 Games.²⁰ A cross-section of housing experts has published recommendations for addressing the 2010 Games' impact on housing.² A progress report, published by a community-based coalition that includes members of the current SSHRC-funded research team, was also critical of Games-related housing problems.²¹ Housing issues pose a genuine threat to the image and quality of life of residents of the city of Vancouver.

Theoretical Framework on the Impact of Mega-events.

According to our own research on the 2010 Games²² and others' elucidation of regime theory, mega-events are sought by host regions because an informal ruling coalition seeks to advance a growth agenda in the host region.^{16,23} The growth agenda involves branding the host city as "world class" using a consumption-oriented, image-based, economic development strategy.^{16,23} According to regime theory, winning bids to host mega-events enables cities to differentiate themselves visually and experientially from other cities and to harness economic flows by drawing in corporate investment and leveraging scarce resources from government.²⁴ Investments are forthcoming due to the prospect of garnering international media attention. New monies fund the rapid

construction and repair of infrastructure (e.g., sports facilities and transportation routes) that in turn are anticipated to enhance the experience of tourists and encourage additional investments.^{23,25}

The Olympics are a well-utilized cause that proponents use to incorporate mega-events into a growth agenda. The Games provide the ruling coalition access to the popular symbolism of the Olympic movement, an international, elite amateur sporting event that, for some, reflects the epitome of human aspirations for peace and international goodwill. Elite cities of New York, Paris and London have competed to host the 2012 summer Games, signaling that the Games are prized acquisitions.²⁶ The Olympic Games, however, might be unique among mega-events because they also represent a “catalyst” for positive social change in the host region and around the world, supplying additional symbols and images with which to attract capital. The Games’ five interlocking-ring symbol, for example, connotes universality, brother/sisterhood, peace, and friendly competition,²⁷ and the International Olympic Committee has added both culture and sustainability as key pillars of the Games.¹⁸ It should be mentioned that these meanings can backfire, as perceived inequities among the host region’s community members (e.g., gentrification and displacement, etc.) can counter and even resist the growth agenda.²⁸

In summary, this proposal is theoretically grounded in the understanding that mega-events, such as the Olympic Games, are a powerful opportunity for corporate investment, government funding, and international attention. The local growth regime and its opposition extract their own meanings from the heavy symbolism of the Games in order to push for specific impacts in the host region.

Literature Review on Social Impacts of the Olympics. The popularity and sheer size of mega-events continues to grow despite the risks that host cities bear from both their heavy reliance on public funds²⁹ and low degrees of community involvement.^{24,30} There are other properties of mega-events, which compound their impact. These properties include the emergence of high levels of inter-governmental cooperation to provide the financial assistance and other kinds of support necessary.^{31,32} In addition, there is a conspicuous and massive packaging of distinctive local histories to create positive images.^{33, 34,35} Finally, an itinerant network of highly experienced and international private consulting firms come to the forefront to advise local organizers and businesses.³¹ Not surprisingly, there are numerous categories of impacts of mega-events, including: physical infrastructure, environmental, economic, tourism destination, image enhancements, social, cultural, political, and urban renewal. Each of these impacts varies according to the context (place, time and nature) of the host region. *Social impacts refers specifically to the human experience and changes in the quality of life that result from the intended and unintended outcomes of the intervention*³⁶, in this case, *mega-events*. In a hypothetical mega-event scenario, inspired by critiques of the Sydney Games of 2000,^{37,38} 250 social housing units are lost to become hotel rooms for tourists during the Olympics. Skilled workers from various regions of the country move into the host region and build venues for the mega-event. Also attracted to the location are young employables who see opportunities for consumptive leisure. In this hypothetical scenario, an outcome of the Games is the demolition of homes and construction of hotels. The *social impacts*; however, are the meanings ascribed to the

loss of a single family home, the increased demands on shelters, and renovations in lower income housing stock to short-term rentals.

Other suggested social impacts of Olympic Games include: the meso-level impacts of emotionally moving experiences,³⁹ increased enthusiasm, cosmopolitan identity, and sense of community.⁴⁰ Regional impacts include international recognition,⁴¹ global attention,⁴² revitalization of poor neighbourhoods through the creation of new social housing,⁴³ and the creation of volunteer opportunities.⁴⁴ *While a number of social impacts of the Games have been suggested, there is strikingly little empirical evidence of these impacts.* This may be because much of the social impacts reporting have been the domain of consultants who may be serving public relations, rather than a research function. In addition, there is a lack of research that provides an after-the-fact assessment of the predicted social impacts of the Games. For example, some of the social impacts forecasted (but never assessed) by Games organizers include: a stronger sense of community involvement,⁴⁰ greater support for arts and culture,⁴⁵ and gains in social capital for communities.⁴⁶ London 2012 hired PriceWaterhouseCoopers to conduct a pre-Games social impacts assessment; this publication has predicted improvements in social integration and cooperation as a result of the Games; however, there does not seem to be plans in place to assess these impacts after the Games.⁴⁷ The imbalance in assessment (compared with economic assessments) is problematic because mega-events have impacts on society's quality of life, and positive impacts cannot be assumed to flow from a mega-event.

Significance.

The proposed study is significant because *a systematic and comprehensive measurement of the social impacts of mega-events has never been done in the field.*^{34,48-52} Specifically, there is four weaknesses in the field of mega-events, which are addressed in the proposed study. First, more must be understood about the individual experience of the changes that accompany mega-events in order to develop theory about, and maximize, the practical benefits to residents and especially vulnerable populations. Second, a more precise adherence to an accepted definition of social impacts must be employed to empirically delineate between the outcomes of a mega-event and its actual impact on people. Third, both a pre- and a post-analysis of the social impacts of the mega-event must be conducted in order to exact greater accountability for the impacts of the mega-event. Fourth, positive social impacts must be on record to understand the full range of the mega-event's impacts.

Methodology.

Four longitudinal comparative case studies will be conducted in order to achieve the research objectives, with data collection and the first analysis occurring in 2008-2010 and another round of analysis and communication of results occurring in year 3. The case studies will be: experiencing housing and homelessness, regime theory and the housing market, community dissent, and housing policies and policy implementation. Case studies enable researchers to circumscribe the unit of analysis (i.e., the main entity for which data is being collected).⁵³ The unit of analysis is particularly important here to ensure that human experiences (fear, sense of possibility) are the key foci, as opposed to commonly reported changes (e.g., loss of housing stock).⁵⁴ Maintaining a

focus on actual experiences of the changes that incur from a mega-event will support research into the social impacts in the lead up, hosting, and aftermath of the 2010 Games. Furthermore, longitudinal comparative case studies provide rich pictures of “instances in action,” and this is important to the research because it encourages triangulation within and across cases. Longitudinal comparative case study research also has the ability to advance theory by identifying the class to which an instance belongs,⁵⁵ generating new typologies,⁵⁶ and constructing working hypotheses.^{57,58} In relation to a study on the social impacts of mega-events, research outcomes can include a typology of impacts that provides a framework for future analyses.

Case studies and Data Collection Methods.

Case Study 1 (Experiencing Housing and Homelessness). As previously mentioned, the research objective of this case study is to investigate the 2010 Games’ impact on residents’ experiences of housing and homelessness before, during, and after the Games. The three research questions of this case study include: a) What were the host residents’ experiences regarding housing, before, during and after the Games? b) What impact did these experiences have on the image of the mega-event itself? c) In what ways are vulnerable populations particularly affected by the Games? Research methods will include interviews (question a), surveys (question b) and focus groups (question c). A sample of 25 interviewees will include people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. Interviewees will be found through the advice of staff at homeless shelters and by inviting homeless people in three vulnerable Vancouver neighbourhoods (South Granville, Victoria, and Oppenheimer). Interviews will occur in year one of the research. Interviewees will meet with researchers in their communities and answer 10-12 open-ended questions designed to address experiences and perceptions of the Games’ impacts on housing. Interview responses will help inform a larger survey of host resident perceptions of the efforts to mitigate housing impacts as well as proposed housing legacies. The survey will be a modified version of one currently being used by the PI and his SSHRC research team to address the multi-dimensional aspects of community capacity. This survey is relevant because portions address specific housing concerns for host residents at large. The survey sample will be drawn across the host region using community centre posters, websites, community radio, and contact information for individuals within a database of 300 individuals assembled from previous forums, workshops, and networking. Finally, focus groups will be conducted and transcribed. Participants will be handpicked to ensure a broad base of participants from among housing advocates, developers, journalists, and politicians. To gain maximum information on the ways that vulnerable populations are affected by the Games, some focus groups will be uniform (i.e., all developers) and some will be mixed. Names of housing advocates will be obtained via Frankish’s and Eby’s previous work. A list of politicians’ names can be found for the affected geographical areas. CI Wyly has contacts for developers who are involved in current Olympics-related housing infrastructure as well as developers who have been involved in housing (whether market or social) in the affected geographical areas.

Case Study 2 (Regime Theory and Housing Market). The research objective of this case study is to scan market conditions to provide a context for resident experiences. The two research questions are: a) What were the housing conditions in the host region before the Games’ bid? b) To what extent does the mega-event affect housing stock in the host region? Research methods will include document analysis and key informant interviews. Document analysis will answer research question a) and interviews with real estate developers and politicians will answer research question b). Key informant interviews with real estate developers and other key players with respect to the housing market will be interviewed to assess ongoing and likely changes in the amount and type of housing stock, including people from the different levels of government. Based on previous interviews with 4 developers, CI Wyly and graduate research assistant Surborg

hypothesize that real estate developers are not the only key driving force in changes in the housing market. They will use developer contacts to recruit other interviewees. Previous questions from these initial interviews and their responses will be used to hone the interview schedule. Document analysis will provide statistical evidence of any changes in the real estate market as well as some explanations.

Case study 3 (Community Dissent). The research objective of this case study is to evaluate the host region's efforts to express community dissent related to housing issues. The research questions include: a) What words and other symbols are reflective of efforts to frame housing and homelessness issues? b) What does resistance mean in the context of actions taken by governments to mitigate displacement and overcrowding? Research methods will address both questions a) and b) and include: surveys, media monitoring, document analysis, and key informant interviews. Survey results from Case Study 1 will triangulate with Case Study 3 data. The monitoring of local media (e.g., Vancouver Sun, The Tyee, Georgia Straight, and CBC radio) will occur in order to collect data on whether the media reports on community dissent, and how this is portrayed (e.g., negative or positive light). PI VanWynsberghe and graduate student researcher MacNaughton conducted initial research into dissent using data gathered from media accounts, which found, among other things, a trend towards increasing protest and volatility in Games-related protest and the emergence of housing as a key concern. Key informant interviews will include probes for the meanings of Olympic symbols to express dissent and perceptions of 2010 Games' achievement of their commitments. The sample of 10 interviewees will include members of Olympics community watchdog groups, such as the Impact on Community Coalition and 2010Watch, whose websites can also be analyzed for positions on the Olympics and housing. Housing advocacy groups will also be invited, such as the Anti-Poverty Committee and the City-wide Housing Coalition; both have been very active in raising awareness and expressing dissent in relation to the Olympics and housing.

Case study 4 (Housing Policies and Policy Implementation). The research objective of this case study is to examine the effect of policy strategies designed to address concerns related to housing issues. The two research questions include: a) What is the role of the mega-event in achieving community-based objectives? b) Under what conditions are innovative housing policies discussed and debated? Research methods will include document analyses, key informant interviews, focus groups, and a software program for data collection called PolicyMaker. Interviews will answer questions a) and b) and the interviewees will be politicians, bureaucrats, non-governmental organizations and policy analysts. Questions will address interviewees' perceptions of the recommendations put forward in various policies as well as the likelihood of, and conditions for, implementation. Focus groups will address question a) and participants will come from three levels of government, housing providers, advocates, media, and researchers. Four focus groups of approximately 5-10 additional? individuals will be recruited. Focus groups will bring levels of government together and gain specific insights on housing policies. Document analyses will address question b) and include study recommendations that have been published for addressing Games-related housing impacts, such as those already put forward by VANOC² and levels of

government.⁵⁹ Analyses for both questions will be aided by PolicyMaker, which organizes information about policy. PolicyMaker identifies key policy players and obstacles and challenges to change, and aids in the selection of effective strategies for influencing a policy's feasibility.

Analysis. HyperResearch, qualitative data analysis software, will be used to organize, code, and analyze interview and focus group data. HyperResearch has the further ability to incorporate multimedia, which is very useful to this project's use of web-based documents for analysis. The four completed case studies will then undergo another round of study using cross-case analysis with a computer tool known as the Foresee (4C) database and search engine. 4C has been co-constructed by PI VanWynsberghe (<http://foresee-database.com/>). 4C is a centralized on-line location for aggregating, displaying, and comparing condensed qualitative and quantitative data from individual case studies.⁶⁰ 4C has the capacity to compare units of analyses across multiple studies, such as one's experience of impacts in the housing sector,^{62,63} and it affords investigators an opportunity to more accurately examine commonalities and differences in events, activities, and policy input processes.⁶⁴ The outputs of the database include a matrix outlining the four cases by specified fields. A tagging function enables each researcher to code their own data and to compare it with those of other researchers. A journaling function enables research team members to share similarities and differences across case studies. Meaningful findings will include, for example, individual and group-level perceptions of security and private space^{62,65-67} versus population level analyses of outcomes such as the number of people displaced by the Games. This delineation is important to identifying? underlying differences among various sub-populations, especially vulnerable ones.^{62,63,65,67-69} Other findings of the cross-case analysis will include an interpretation of a broad range of effects, or consequences that are likely to be experienced by an equally broad range of social groups as a result of the Games.^{62,63} Cross-case analysis will also elaborate upon the links between housing trends in the region and overcrowding in shelters or developers' economic interests and other urban objectives.

Outcomes of the Research.

1. Four graduate students will receive training in the areas of community-based research on housing issues, case study research, and cross-case analysis.
2. Four case study reports as described above.
3. Eight peer reviewed academic journal articles (two articles per case study).
4. A cross-case analysis of the four case studies of 2010 Games. This will help to provide a more complete picture of the Olympics and housing than could a single case study or survey and will serve to inform the framework and recommendations described below.
5. A framework for pre- and post- social impacts analyses. Such knowledge will mark a significant advancement in the fields of mega-events.
6. Recommendations that will help organizers create mega-event commitments that better reflect host residents' expectations and concerns and will help host residents

prepare for large-scale events.

Communication of Results.

Our plans for communication and dissemination activities are extensive. The previous SSHRC funding has created many avenues for sharing our findings, as does the background of the research team in the areas of community-based research and knowledge translation and mobilization. All members of the research team are members of the Impact of the Community Coalition (IOCC, www.vcn.bc.ca/ioc/), which is a local non-governmental organization with a mandate to evaluate the organizing of the Games in order to maximize the benefits of the Games and create a rich post-Games legacy. The IOCC works closely with VANOC and has a database of 300 that includes politicians, bureaucrats, community organizations and media. The IOCC website is also a repository for research and a source of information dissemination about the Games. It will serve as a key forum for research-related communications on this grant. We will also share our results with the academic community through peer-reviewed articles in the following premier academic journals (City and Community, Environmental and Planning C, Cities, and Journal of Urban and Regional Research) and conferences, including the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, American Geographers Association, and Urban Affairs Association.

A member of the research team (Eby) will share our research findings with the United Nation's Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, Miloon Kothari. VanWynsberghe, Wyly and Eby are members of the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), which is co-convened by the United Nations. Eby has contributed to COHRE's recent conference and can ensure that this research will be presented to other COHRE members. VanWynsberghe and other members of the research team have excellent working relationships with VANOC, ensuring that research findings are shared with them. Other activities will include publications in magazines, press releases and community-centre presentations, and other popular media. We will also share our findings with future Olympic hosts (e.g., Beijing) who have already expressed an interest in the research.

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