Olympics and Housing
A Look into the Treatment of Underserved Populations Before and After the Games

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Abstract

Every four years, the world unites for a friendly few weeks of international sports competition, the summer Olympics. A different city is given the honor of hosting this world wide, mega-event each time. Many years of preparation goes into each Olympics, from changes in transportation and technology to building of new housing structures, monuments, and venues. It is the perfect opportunity for cities to renew and revive themselves, both structurally and culturally, and most hope that the costs and changes in which they invest will have a positive, everlasting effect. However, what is often good for the city’s population as a whole cripples those on the margins of society even further. These marginalized people include minority groups, low income workers, and the homeless. Often, host cities put so much effort into creating a perfect image of themselves, that they disregard how their actions affect impoverished populations, for example through the displacement of people in building of Olympic venues.

My thesis investigates the question, “In regards to housing, do Olympic cities implement positive changes for all of its citizens, or are the needs of the marginalized populations ignored?” To answer the question, I will look at the efforts of three host cities, Barcelona, Atlanta, and Sydney. The question will be analyzed through four different viewpoints of housing; displacement of people in preparing for the games, the Olympic Village and its after use, treatment of homeless populations throughout the Olympic process, and finally affordability of housing in the city in response to the Olympics. My thesis will conclude with a brief look at the preparations going into the 2012 London Olympics, and will make recommendations as to how Olympics might better tackle the issue of housing and marginalized populations in the future.
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Introduction

Every four years, the world unites for a friendly few weeks of international sports competition, the summer Olympics. A different city is given the honor of hosting this world wide, mega-event each time. It is the host city’s chance to showcase their culture, infrastructure, and technology, and demonstrate to the world their ability to host such an impressive event. Many years of preparation goes into each Olympics, from changes in transportation and technology to building of new housing structures, monuments, and venues. It is the perfect opportunity for cities to renew and revive themselves, both structurally and culturally, and most hope that the costs and changes in which they invest will have a positive, everlasting effect. However, what is often good for the city’s population as a whole cripples those on the margins of society even further. These marginalized people include minority groups, low income workers, and the homeless. Often, host cities put so much effort into creating a perfect image of themselves, that they disregard how their actions affect impoverished populations, for example through the displacement of people in building of Olympic venues. My thesis investigates the question, “In regards to housing, do Olympic cities implement positive changes for all of its citizens, or are the needs of the marginalized populations ignored?”

The origins of the modern Olympic movement began in 1776, when Richard Chandler discovered the site of the ancient games in Olympia, Greece (Olympic Museum 2007: Antiquity 13). After his initial finding, archaeological digs uncovered
ancient Olympia and many types of “pseudo-Olympics” occurred throughout the 19th century (Gold & Gold 2007: 20). However, it was not until 1894, when Pierre de Coubertin successfully founded the International Olympic Committee (IOC) that the modern Olympic movement officially began. When reinstating the Olympics, Coubertin, working together with an Olympic Congress, wrote the Olympic Charter, which included all of the “fundamental principles, rules and by-laws” of the modern Olympics (Gold & Gold 2007: 21). The first games were held in Athens in 1896, to pay homage to the ancient games.

According to Coubertin and the IOC’s Olympic Charter, “Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles” (IOC Website). A very important element in this Olympic principle is the “respect for universal fundamental ethical principles”.

Although the Olympic Charter does not explicitly define what constitutes a fundamental ethical principle, clearly basic human rights, such as the ones mentioned in the United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights constitute a fundamental ethical principle. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care…” (UN Website). Since access to housing is considered to be a basic human right, the Olympics
should provide an opportunity to address housing problems that may exist within the city. It is the responsibility of everyone; the IOC and other Olympic committees, the city, state and national governments, Olympic sponsors, and individual citizens to make sure that the host city lives up to the ideals of Olympism, which includes adequate housing for all of its citizens. Yet, often the opposite holds true.

In the past, the unfair treatment of marginalized populations during the modern Olympics has continuously occurred. During the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, the Nazi Germans made sure to cleanse the homeless from areas in the city visible to spectators of the Olympic Games (Davis 2007: 106). During the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, struggles existed between citizens and the government, as many in Mexico felt spending money on the extravagance of the Olympics was unnecessary considering the amount of poverty that existed within the city. On the evening of October 2nd, a political demonstration about the lack of quality food and housing for many citizens in Mexico quickly turned into a violent massacre involving civilians and the Mexican military (Games Monitor Online). Additionally, the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, South Korea are especially known for their maltreatment of underserved populations. During these games approximately 720,000 low income workers, renters and squatters were forcibly evicted from their places of residence (Davis 2007: 106).

As mentioned earlier, this thesis investigates the question of if and how cities implement positive changes for all of their citizens through the context of housing during the Olympic Games. To answer the question, I will look at the efforts of three host cities, Barcelona, Atlanta, and Sydney and view the issue of housing through four
different viewpoints; displacement of people when preparing for the games, the Olympic Village and its after use, treatment of homeless populations throughout the Olympic process, and affordability of the city in response to the Olympics.

Although this paper examines the different housing issues separately, in actuality these issues are related. In preparation for the Olympics, host cities often revitalize their city to portray a positive image to the world. There are improvements to infrastructure, like athletic housing and transportation, as well as the building of new sporting venues needed for the games. These new improvements often take place in underserved neighborhoods, using the Olympics as a chance to clean up the city. Yet throughout the clean up process, former tenants are displaced from their homes and have nowhere to go. Although they are sometimes given subsidized housing by the government, either through coupons or the promise of affordable housing in the former Olympic Village, often these residents can not afford the newly revitalized area. This is where the issue of homelessness arises. People are either forced to leave the city, or live on the streets. Yet, as continually mentioned, cities are looking to portray a positive, clean image to the world; so homeless people are often maltreated and viewed as criminals in order to hide them from view of international spectators. This thesis will examine the issue of housing in relation to the Olympics separately through the four different housing issues, but it is important to remember that they truly are interrelated.

My research is comprised of both first and secondary sources. Newspaper articles are the bulk of my primary sources. I also have some notes of first hand observations and discussions with people in Barcelona that are considered primary
sources. My secondary sources are comprised of a variety of books and journal articles, some about the Olympics in general, others on specific host cities, and others on issues affecting cities like housing. Sources which I have found extremely useful were a compilation of studies published by the Center on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE). These studies investigate the various issues of housing and marginalized populations before, during, and after the Olympic Games. I would consider these studies to be both primary and secondary sources as they provide raw data, numbers, interviews, as well as an analysis of the different cities’ situations.

My paper will be comprised of four chapters, each of my three case studies plus a quick look at the 2012 Olympic Games to take place in London.

The first chapter will explore my first case study, Barcelona. The 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona dramatically changed the way the city was seen by the world. Through a large amount of infrastructural improvement and revitalization the city was transformed in order to successfully host the games. And on the whole, the hosting of the Barcelona Olympics was a success. Much has been written about the “Barcelona model” for city change and planning, and how the Olympics really were a catalyst for positive change in the city. However, many people, the majority from underserved populations, were displaced before the games to make room for the improvements. In Barcelona, the marginalized populations include low income residents, elderly populations, along with the “Roma” or gypsy population. The Olympic Village in Parc de Mar, the housing built for athletes, and the construction of ring roads caused the displacement of many marginalized individuals. Even after the games, the former
athletic housing was unaffordable to many and sold at market value to wealthy citizens. This chapter will demonstrate that although viewed as a success by many, the needs of marginalized populations in Barcelona were ignored.

The second chapter will examine my second case study, the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. Image was very important to Atlanta. These Olympics were much commercialized and sponsored by big corporate companies. Portraying Atlanta as a positive, global city was central to its Olympic goals. And with this goal came the unfortunate abuse of underserved populations. In Atlanta, the underserved included low income and homeless residents, the majority of who were African Americans. In order to clean up its image, thousands of homeless people were maltreated, making the city appear clean and well off, when in reality the problem was just swept under the rug. This chapter will illustrate how Atlanta’s solution to its impoverished populations resulted in hiding the problem rather than fixing it.

Chapter three will investigate the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney. The Sydney games are known as the “green” or environmentally friendly games, and the Olympic Village built for the athletes was constructed in compliance with greening regulations. Yet, housing issues involving the marginalized populations still arose. One of the major effects of the Olympics in Sydney was the rise of housing costs along with the decline of public or affordable housing. The lack of affordable housing drastically affected Sydney’s underserved populations which include the indigenous Australians along with poorer people with low incomes. On a positive note, in contrast to what transpired in both Atlanta and Barcelona, there were minimal forced evictions of
citizens in Sydney. In fact, preparations included activities which ensured that the homeless were not unfairly punished during the event. This section of the paper looks at both the affordability issue that arose in reaction to the Olympics, along with the positive steps that Sydney took to ensure the proper treatment of its homeless populations.

The fourth and final chapter will take a quick glimpse at the future 2012 Olympics in London to see if housing issues are occurring in the city’s preparations. This will lead into the conclusion for my thesis where I will summarize all of my findings, along with give some suggestions as to how Olympic cities can potentially help marginalized populations in relation to housing. Finally, I will conclude by reexamining the role that Olympics play in cities to see if it is even in their place to address issues such as housing and treatment of underserved populations.
Chapter One: 1992 Barcelona

*Historical Context, Receiving the Olympic Bid & City Goals*

All generations of Barcelonans were celebrating on October 17, 1986 when Barcelona received news from the IOC that they were selected as the host city for the 1992 Summer Olympics. Barcelona had had three prior unsuccessful bids; 1924, 1936 and 1972, and consequently people of all ages were excited that Barcelona had finally been selected as a host city (Bell 1989: 395). The successful bid came at a time when Barcelona was ready for change. Following the year 1975, a political transformation in Spain from Franco’s dictatorship to a democracy emerged alongside an economic crisis. As a result of these past political and economic struggles, residents hoped that the games would give the city a chance to revive itself. The summer games were set to begin July 25, 1992, and the city needed to accomplish a great deal in those short seven years in preparation for the event.

The governments of Spain, Catalonia and Barcelona were all in support of Barcelona’s bid, and thus supported any changes the city hoped to make so as to portray itself as a well-functioning, modern city to the world (Brunet 1995: 3). However, tensions arose throughout the entire planning process, as each level of government had a different goal for the Barcelona games. The national Spanish government viewed the Olympics as a chance to showcase its nation to other countries. Spain had just entered the European Economic Community (currently the European Union) in 1986 and the Olympics would be an excellent opportunity to showcase itself...
globally. However the Generalitat de Catalunya, the autonomous regional government, had visions of the Barcelona games as being an opportunity to promote Catalan pride and nationalism to the world. Finally, Barcelona’s City Council hoped to use the Olympics as a chance to rejuvenate and revive the city, harboring urban transformation as its primary interest (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 97-98).

However, a unifying factor across all three levels of government was the simple fact that the Olympics would provide a chance to improve the city of Barcelona. According to Barcelona resident, Maria Dolors Bonjorn, the Olympics were a chance for the city to “limpia el barrio” or clean up the neighborhood (Conversation with Maria Dolors Bonjorn). Barcelona had many ambitious goals for the future with regards to urban change, and receiving the Olympic bid motivated Barcelona to bring about these changes.

**Preparation & Displacement**

In general, Barcelona wanted to revitalize different areas of its city, the biggest project being in Parc de Mar. Additionally, it wished to its infrastructure, especially transportation through the construction of ring roads. Unfortunately, both goals for the city would displace marginalized people. Low income workers, the elderly, and Roma or gypsy populations would all be displaced from their homes due to the construction of new facilities and ring roads.

Barcelona’s plans included improvements of four different urban spaces: Montjuic, Diagonal, Vall d’Hebron, and Parc de Mar (COHRE Barcelona 2007: 14). The city also needed to improve its infrastructure in regards to both transportation and
communication. Through all of this renovation and construction, a total of 624 families would be displaced and relocated in various parts of the city and its outskirts (Fair Play for Housing 2007: 112). No forced evictions were necessary as residents were willing to negotiate, rather than refuse to locate. Nevertheless, there was not much transparency about the issue of relocation. Residents were not forewarned about their move and only fairly compensated through either re-housing in state-subsidized apartments or through financial reimbursement.

In Montjuic, Diagonal, and Vall d’Hebron, Olympic sporting facilities were added or renovated in order to prepare for the games. These facilities included the addition of pools, new sports and training facilities and sports playing fields (COHRE Barcelona 2007: 21). In these three areas, approximately 282 Roma families were displaced as demolition of their shanty houses was necessary to later construct various sporting facilities for the games (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 112). To prevent the emergence of “Roma Ghettos”, Barcelona’s City Council dispersed these Roma families throughout the city. City Council had good intentions in re-housing the Roma families in various locations, such as avoiding the rejection of large Roma communities from assimilating into various neighborhoods. However, the council failed to be transparent with the Roma community about the re-housing process and was therefore looked upon as being discriminatory.

Additionally, to deal with the increased amount of people in the city during the games, infrastructural improvements were needed, especially those involving transportation. Both metro renovations and ring roads, mountainous and coastal, were
built to lessen the amount of traffic on the city streets (IOC Barcelona Official Report 1992: 83, 239). Unfortunately, the creation of these ring roads throughout the city led to the displacement of 195 families, those of which were comprised of Roma origin or elderly couples (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 106).

Finally, the biggest revitalization was that of the Parc de Mar district, home to the athletic accommodations of the Olympic Village. Demolition of old warehouses, industries, and residences began on August 3, 1987 (Rexach 1989: 138). During this process 147 housing units were demolished. The majority of these residences were elderly, either coupled or widowed, and almost all of the buildings were privately owned (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 105). The building of the Olympic Village in Parc de Mar was initially controversial among the locals since it was feared to be a type of gentrification, the process of a neighborhood changing from low economic value to higher economic value (Roche 2000: 145). As I will demonstrate in the next section, the locals were correct, and gentrification to the Parc de Mar area undoubtedly occurred. The changes made in the Parc de Mar area would permanently affect the look and feel of the area, drastically affecting who lived and used the space.

**The Olympic Village**

The Olympic Village built in the zone of Poble Nou, in the Parc de Mar district was the site for housing the athletes, judges, and media. Before the Olympics, Parc de Mar was the location of a lot of industry and warehouses (Monclús 2007: 228). It used to be filled with old fish markets, industrial sites, army barracks, a women’s prison, and
unsanitary beaches covered in garbage and industrial waste (Nel.lo 1997: 4). The city was closed off from the sea with a railroad blocking residents from accessing the water.

In revitalizing the area for the Olympic Games, architects Oriol Bohigas, Josep Martorell, David Mackay, and Albert Puigdomenech decided to model it after the L’Eixample district (Rexach 1989: 138). L’Eixample was a district based on the city planning of Cerda in which blocks were placed in an evenly-spaced, grid-like style. However, the city did not just revitalize the Olympic Village but rather the entire waterfront.

One of the biggest challenges in revitalizing Parc de Mar was the rerouting of the railroad. This relocation, demolition and clean-up process required an investment of 80 million Spanish pesetas, or approximately 480,000 Euros (Nel.lo 1997: 6). Vall d’Hebron would have been a safer and cheaper choice for the Olympic Village; however by deciding to revitalize Parc de Mar, the city was given the chance to open itself up to the sea (Monclús 2007: 229). The rerouting of the railroad in the Parc de Mar district led to the creation of 18 hectares of beach and a four kilometer-long seafront (See Figure One). This seafront was then filled with high end commercial areas, businesses, restaurants and recreational centers (Nel.lo 1997: 5). Two tall building towers, the Hotel Arts and the MAPFRE tower, along with the famous Frank Ghery goldfish statue, are three landmarks that demonstrate the commercialized and developed feel of the revitalized area.

The actual Olympic Village housing, located next to the towers, was comprised of 45 hectares of land (Rexach 1989: 138). Approximately 2,400 housing units were built.
for more than 15,000 athletes, officials, referees and judges (Monclús 2007: 229). The units are built into buildings which are then formed into blocks. These blocks face each other, instigating a feeling of openness and “light into Barcelona” (Costa 1993).

Two Olympic committees were in charge of managing funding for the Olympic Village. In 1986, Vila Olímpica Societat Anònima (VOSA) was established as a public group that was able to act as a limited firm and incur debts independent of the public budget (Nel.lo 1997: 6). VOSA was responsible for acquiring the land, clearing it, and cleaning it. In 1989, the second Olympic committee in charge of housing was created, the Nova Icaria Societat Anonima (NISA), whose name derived from the utopian community of Icaria. NISA, a subset of VOSA, was created to bring in private funding. It was comprised of 40% VOSA members, 40% real estate groups, and 20% banks (Nel.lo 1997: 6). The combination of VOSA and NISA, a public-private type partnership, led to a very successful situation for funding the Olympics. The groups were able to raise 101,000 million Spanish pesetas, or approximately 607,000,000 Euros, which constituted 22.2% of total Olympic investments for the city.

Unfortunately for the marginalized populations of Barcelona, the Olympic Village housing was never used as public housing since, “the objective of the Olympic Games was not to develop a housing policy” (COHRE Barcelona 2007: 17). Moreover, because the funding for its construction was through the public-private partnerships of VOSA and NISA, all of the housing units were sold at a slightly higher market price (than the market price of the rest of Barcelona) at approximately 1,444 Euros per square meter (Carbonell 2002: 4). Before the Olympics even began, 60% of the housing units
had been sold. The remaining 40% of village housing was gradually sold until 1996 (Carbonell 2002: 3). One of the benefits of buying Olympic Village housing was the fact that buyers benefited from Ley 12/88. This law gave owners tax benefits on their property as the residents could claim to be a part of the Olympic revitalization process (COHRE Barcelona 2007: 52). It is also significant to note that a larger percentage than usual of the housing units were bought by families (Carbonell 2002: 3). The familial population serves as a stark contrast to the former population of elderly residents who lived in the Parc de Mar district before the Olympic displacements.

The increase in prices at the Olympic Village area continued into the next decade. Ten years after the games (in 2002), the Olympic Village units were selling for a price 2 to 5 times higher than the price at which they originally sold (Carbonell 2002: 4-5). However, nowadays it seems as if the allure of the Olympic Village is dwindling. Only a small portion of people can actually enjoy the entertainment of the seafront, thus leading to an empty and phantom-type feeling appearance of sorts, kind of like a “ruin” (Mateo 1993). Juan Clos, the current Barcelona mayor, blames low-density planning as the reason for a lack of social and economic life, there are just not enough people per area of space. According to Clos, the Olympic Village density of 60 units per hectare is too low and therefore the area often appears ghostlike (BCN Field Studies Center Website). Nevertheless, housing prices in Barcelona increased substantially due to the aftermath of the Olympics. In the next section, I will continue to analyze the issue of affordability in the city both before and after the games.

**Affordability**
Before the Olympics had even commenced, the effects on the price of housing were already being felt by the Barcelonans. In 1990, the increase in cost of living in Barcelona was 20% higher than in the rest of Catalonia. Furthermore, between the years of 1986 and 1992, the market price of new housing had risen 240% while the market price of old housing had risen 287% (Brunet 1995: 17). A decrease in public housing had been evident during these years as well. From 1986 to 1992, there was a cumulative decrease of 75.92% in the availability of public housing for the underserved populations of Barcelona (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 112).

In contrast to former residents of Poble Nou, the current population of the area is affluent, well educated, and younger than the city average. Income in this area is at the ratio of 1.49 to 1.00 vs. the rest of the city of Barcelona. Additionally, this area has 7% more 0 to 14 year olds and 11% more 25-39 year olds with respect to the rest of the city. Finally, 41.5% of the residents of the Olympic Village have attained higher level education in contrast to the city-wide 17.2% (Carbonell 2002: 4). These statistics imply that the current residents of the Poble Nou district are younger, richer, and more educated than the marginalized people who lived here before the Olympic Games (see Figure Two).

This newer, affluent demographic corresponds with the now very expensive commercial area of the seafront, which is targeted at tourists and the wealthy. Comprised of shopping, a movie theater, fancy restaurants, and many clubs and bars, the average Barcelonan most likely cannot afford the changes brought about by the Olympic revitalization. Although the beach is technically open to the public, the
commercialization of the area excludes marginalized individuals. According to a travel blog, the seafront is a “really pretty, nice place to spend an hour” but that it’s “expensive and excludes locals” (Ciao Travel Website). In fact, much of the housing in the area is now being targeted towards the British as “holiday” housing for short-term rental purposes. A housing unit for four goes for an approximate weekly price of 580 British pounds or 620 Euros, and a unit for eight can cost up to 1,380 British pounds or 1,500 Euros for the week (Self Catering Hols Website).

Overall, the affordability of Barcelona has decreased as a result of the Olympic Games’ embedded presence in the city. Market prices for housing have risen, and the availability of public housing has decreased significantly. The unaffordable nature of Barcelona has caused many of the city’s former residents to either move elsewhere or live on the streets.

**Homelessness**

The final aspect of housing I will look at in regards to the Olympics is that of the treatment of homeless populations. From my research, it does not seem as if there was a significantly high mistreatment of homeless people during the games. However the presence of homelessness is still worth mentioning, as occurrences of maltreatment most certainly did occur.

Barcelona was home to approximately 800 homeless individuals during the 1992 Olympics (Fair Play for Housing 2007: 110). In addition to homeless populations, sex workers were also unfairly targeted before and during the Olympic Games. In 1986, the city set up a Municipal Table of Police Coordination which created a Preventative Police
Presence Plan to ensure that neither homeless people nor sex workers disturbed the Olympic spectators. Two months before the start of the games, Barcelona City Council stated that they planned to “clean the streets of beggars, prostitutes, street sellers and swindlers” (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 110).

During the 1992 Olympic Games specific actions were taken by the city to ensure that it portrayed a clean, homeless, and sex worker free image to the world. The city enlisted 3,000 police who were told to close down places where sex workers usually work and remove them to “other less touristic locations”. Additionally, it is estimated that during the games, over 400 poor and homeless people were unfairly treated and supervised during the Olympic Games (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 110).

Concluding Thoughts

It seems as if Barcelona was successful in realizing its own city’s goals and, synonymously, those of the privileged population. In terms of meeting its goals for renewal, the city met expectations: it opened the city up to the sea, and Barcelona now has a new neighborhood that wealthy residents and international tourists can enjoy. Furthermore, the city has become a model for city planners worldwide. It is called the “Barcelona Model” and is an example of urban revitalization for other cities to follow.

And yet, the underprivileged were more or less disregarded throughout the city’s revival process. As a result of the displaced marginalized populations of the Roma, the elderly, and the low-income workers and the increasing un-affordability of the city, many residents of Barcelona had to either move out of the city entirely or resort to living on the streets. As Costa, summarizes in his article, Reassuring Clarity?:

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“Barcelona got rid of its shadows with admirable determination, in a well-organized collective effort that it boasted of in all directions. What the city passed over in silence, and probably deliberately ignored, is the manner in which those shadows of unbearable presence, the areas of darkness that motivated the city’s transformation, were dealt with, and just where it was that they were temporarily pushed aside or buried.” (Costa 1993)
Chapter Two: 1996 Atlanta

Receiving the Bid & City Goals

On September 18, 1990 the city of Atlanta received their bid to host the 1996 Summer Olympic Games, beating out Athens, the assumed favorite choice as these were the Centennial Olympics, and Toronto (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 114). Atlanta was chosen as a host site for the main reason that it was located in the United States in a “financially valuable TV environment” (Roche 2000: 155). Partly due to the television environment, these Olympic Games would later become known as the “Commercial Games”. Big businesses like Coca-Cola Company sponsored the games in order to get their advertisements televised around the world. By using the games as a commercial opportunity, Atlanta hoped to bring business to the city and have the city be viewed as world-class. As Charles Battle, managing director of international relations for the Atlanta Committee of Olympic Games (ACOG) stated, “It was an opportunity to introduce the world to Atlanta and Atlanta to the world” (Vaeth 1998).

Billy Payne and his “Crazy Atlanta Nine” are the group of private investors who worked together to ensure Atlanta received its bid. However, many believe that the city would not have won the bid were it not for the support of Andrew Young, Atlanta’s mayor at the time. Young, who once worked in the United Nations, also worked alongside Martin Luther King, Jr. during the civil rights movement (COHRE Atlanta 2007: 13). Because of his past experiences, Young was able to convince IOC members that Atlanta was the right place for the Olympics because, “A great part of
Atlanta’s claim to the ideals of Olympism was refracted through its claim to being the human rights capital of the world” (Ruthieser 1996: 229). However, this claim to Olympism and human rights was not actualized. Once the city received its bid, its focus shifted from fixing social problems to presenting a positive image of itself to the world.

**The Olympic Village**

Contrary to the promise made in the bid, that only private money would be used to fund the Games, by 1995, more than $350 million in public funds had been directly spent on the Olympics. Part of the reason for using public funds was that more than two thirds of venues and housing were constructed on state owned land. The Board of Regents from the University System of Georgia, the largest public donor of money, agreed to spend $120 million to help build the Olympic Village (COHRE Atlanta 2007: 11).

The Olympic Village, built to house the athletes during the Games, was predominantly constructed on Georgia Tech’s campus (see Figure Three). One of the main reasons for choosing this location was due to its close proximity to the competition which was less than 3 kilometers away. Additionally, Georgia Tech already had some usable facilities, and the university planned to use the new constructed housing after the Olympic Games (IOC Atlanta Olympic Report 1996: 325).

The ACOG gathered a group of people together to observe the Barcelona Olympics to see what they needed to do in preparation for their own Olympic Village. They decided that it was necessary to have internal village transportation, access to
office and medical spaces and air conditioning (IOC Atlanta Official Report 1996: 45). They also built eight and thirteen story housing structures, which would later be used by Georgia State University, and revamped the Georgia Tech Plaza. Additionally, the existing Georgia Tech dorms were renovated (IOC Atlanta Official Report 1996: 326).

The Olympic Village built for the athletes during the Games had only one purpose, to serve the athletes. The village was built large enough to host 16,500 athletes and officials (IOC Atlanta Official Report 1996: 324). The whole village was color coded in different residential zones, which made places easier for everyone to find, as it broke down language barriers (IOC Atlanta Official Report 1996: 328). The Olympic Village area was made to feel like a miniature city. There was even a volunteer position for an Atlanta Olympic Village mayor. There were places of worship, bars, music rooms, as well as an unlimited list of different amenities and services (IOC Atlanta Official Report 1996: 326).

The village was never built with the purpose of later serving marginalized populations in Atlanta. Even though the mayor Andrew Young used his favorable UN status to help Atlanta receive the bid, once preparations began he stated, “[the Olympics were] a business venture, not an anti-poverty program” (COHRE Atlanta 2007: 20). This lack of interest in helping marginalized populations of Atlanta during the bid and planning processes, spurred anti-Olympic community activist groups.

**Critics to the Olympic Bid & Housing Process**

When Atlanta was selected as the 1996 Olympic host city, not everyone celebrated. Various protest and community activist groups against the Olympics
formed in order to try and protect marginalized populations. Groups like the Metro Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless, the Open Door Community, Empty the Shelters, and the Concerned Black Clergy banned together to form the Olympic Conscience Coalition. In reaction to past Olympics, such as the games in Seoul, South Korea, this group formed in hopes to counteract the housing inequalities that they feared would occur throughout the city. The Olympic Conscience Coalition was able to obtain over 300 signatures from various organizations, all of whom wanted to ensure that what happened in other cities like Seoul, South Korea, did not happen here in Atlanta (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 124).

However, the protests were ignored. As COHRE’s report on Atlanta states, “the Atlanta way of making Olympic decisions included a few white men assembling informally, committing their own and the public’s resources to create policy, to initiate legislation and to add to their ranks their country club cronies” (COHRE Atlanta 2007: 17). Throughout the entire Olympic process, from planning to executing to the aftermath of the games, the considerations of the poor and marginalized in Atlanta, most of whom were low income or homeless African Americans was not ever seriously taken into account.

Displacement of People during Preparations

Since Atlanta saw the Olympics as an opportunity for the whole word to get to know their city, it wanted the city to be seen as clean and world class, not one populated by the underprivileged. In order to fulfill their goal of attracting big business
to Atlanta, the removal of “visibly poor people” in the city was going to have to occur (COHRE Atlanta 2007: 8).

Displacement of marginalized individuals in Atlanta was not a new trend. In the decades leading up to the Olympics, approximately 68,000 people or 22,000 households were displaced in preparations for the Olympics and of these people 19/20 were African American (COHRE Atlanta 2007: 8). Additionally, the decade before the Olympics, public funding for housing had already been cut 74% from 1974 to 1984 (COHRE Atlanta 2007: 9). Once Atlanta received the bid, the reduction of public housing only increased. The city would purposefully withhold public services and allow dangerous “ghettos” to develop so that rejuvenation and gentrification of poorer areas was justified (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 119).

Approximately 30,000 marginalized families were displaced from their homes in preparation for or due to the aftermath of the Olympic Games. Demolition of public housing and increasing rents were all factors that led to the displacement of these families (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 113). It is interesting to note that many of the demolished homes were often replaced with regular housing, and not necessarily Olympic venues or athletic housing. As already mentioned, Atlanta wanted to present a positive, clean image to the world, and dilapidated housing counteracted that goal.

The city used the Olympics as a “catalyst to remove the problem of public housing from the doorstep of the corporate and academic institutions that could not abide or accommodate the proximity of poor people” (Keating & Flores 2000: 305).
The Corporation for Olympic Development in Atlanta (CODA) was the organization involved with the planning and implementation of housing, venues and preparations for the games. CODA, run at one point by Shirley Franklin, did not really have a plan, socially or financially. People from the corporation traveled around Atlanta designating different areas as “slums” that needed revitalization (Rutheiser 1996: 256).

One of the biggest controversial cases of displacement for the Atlanta Olympics was the demolition of Techwood Homes, located between most of the Olympic venues and Georgia Tech’s campus (see Figure Four). Built in 1936, Techwood Homes was one of the United States’ first public housing projects (Rutheiser 1996: 233). Additionally, it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 119). The majority of people who lived in Techwood Homes had lived there a long time. The average residency of Techwood Home tenants was 7.95 years, with approximately one third of residents living there for more than 11 years (COHRE Atlanta 2007: 26). Techwood Homes was clearly a well established public housing project and its destruction caused much damage to former residents.

In order to demolish Techwood Homes, residents had to be evicted. Landlords evicted tenants based on a variety of factors, all of which should have had very little bearing on eviction. The first families to go were those which had at least one late payment of rent. Next to be evicted were those who shared their apartment with other people not officially signed on the lease. Families housing a former charged felon were
targeted next. Many families decided to leave on their own so as to not have to go through the difficult eviction process (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 119).

On the day of the demolition, everyone came together to watch; former residents mourned their loss, while the wealthy businessmen cheerfully celebrated. In sad irony, former resident children were even singing songs in a choir, made to act as if this was a happy day (COHRE Atlanta 2007: 25).

What replaced Techwood Homes was a mixed income community called Centennial Place. Only 30% of the housing in Centennial Place was allocated for the marginalized people living in the lowest income brackets. When taking into account good credit and background checks, the majority of former Techwood Home residents were not even eligible for the low income housing. After the Olympics, the average income of a resident at Centennial Place was approximately $34,000 per year. Back when this housing unit was Techwood Homes, the average annual income was $3,219. Clearly the majority of the new residents do not fall into the lowest income bracket. No solution was ever found to help the original residents who were displaced. Some received housing vouchers for areas south of Atlanta; however often these housing vouchers were for areas where the cost of utilities was too high for these citizens to pay (COHRE Atlanta 2007: 28).

Twelve other public housing projects were also demolished and redone as mixed income housing. Two of these projects were in Cabbagetown and Summerhill, where the majority of residents were low income African Americans. Cabbagetown is located east of downtown Atlanta. Here, a mill was sold and converted into loft style
apartments. Originally there were 206 units available to “moderate income renters”. However, that did not last long and currently there are 504 loft spaces with prices ranging from $655 to $1,800 per month (COHRE Atlanta 2007: 30). Summerhill is located by the Atlanta Brave’s major league baseball stadium. Many of the residents of Summerhill had already been displaced during the construction of the Brave’s stadium. During the Olympics the city constructed a façade of nice, front row houses nearby the stadium, so that the area looked rejuvenated. This façade was meant to portray to the world how well Atlanta treated their poor populations; in reality, behind the front row houses, the city was still littered with dilapidated housing and homelessness (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 119). This example typifies how Atlanta failed to actually solve any problems in regards to marginalized populations and only covered up the issue so that it was not apparent to the outside world.

**Homelessness**

The treatment of the homeless populations in Atlanta was also a major issue during the 1996 Olympics. Being homeless was a crime (Bulman 2007). In fact, in 1995 and 1996, 9,000 homeless people were arrested in Atlanta. Conveniently, the jail was one of the first Olympic projects to be finished on time (Rutheiser 1996: 227). Eventually, the state of Atlanta did face a Federal Court Order to stop arresting homeless people without proper cause. However, homeless maltreatment was definitely still a problem throughout the Olympic Games (COHRE Atlanta 2007: 31).

The city came up with many different “Quality of Life Ordinances” to make sure the homeless were hidden from the public. Laws were passed which made it illegal to
enter a vacant building or cross through a parking lot unless you owned a car parked there. Additionally, a non profit organization called Traveler’s Aid donated thousands of dollars to purchase one way bus tickets out of the city. These tickets were passed out to the homeless so that they could leave Atlanta during the games. Yet this tactic did not really solve any problems. Once the homeless left Atlanta, where were they supposed to go and what were they supposed to do? The police also tacked up blank arrest warrants throughout the city that said “African American Male Homeless” (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 125). All of these unfair arrests perpetuated the problem of homelessness, since it was much more difficult to qualify for public housing after having received an arrest.

In the aftermath of the homelessness cleansing during the Atlanta Olympics, the media instilled a fear of homeless people into the general population. The problem has continued. In 2005, Mayor Shirley Franklin, former leader of CODA, tried to put a ban against pan handling. This bill was passed a year later and “vagrant free zone” areas are now marked out throughout the city (COHRE Atlanta 2007: 8).

**Affordability & Aftermath of the Games**

Since the games, Atlanta has become a more and more expensive place to live. Between 1989 and 1999 Atlanta’s poor population increased by 77,456 individuals, yet because of the influx of white, businessmen, the actual poverty rate of the city has slightly decreased (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 124). Housing in the city has continued to be unaffordable. In 2004, owning a median priced home in Atlanta required an annual salary of at least $69,000. The majority of typical jobs in Atlanta
such as teachers, police and fireman make an average of approximately $40,000 per year (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 112). Clearly the average person is making just over half of what is necessary in order to own a middle priced house in Atlanta. Imagine being a minimum wage worker making approximately six or seven dollars an hour; living in the city of Atlanta would clearly be out of reach for the average low paid worker.

In terms of racial segregation, there are also trends in regard to housing. Atlanta is still a divided city between blacks and whites. Black income in Atlanta is on average $38,000 lower than white income. A third of blacks in Atlanta live below the poverty level and 40% of Atlanta’s children are impoverished (COHRE Atlanta 2007: 43). As mentioned above, working 2 or 3 jobs at minimum wage is not even enough to afford most homes in Atlanta.

**Concluding Thoughts**

Economically, Atlanta was actually fairly successful. The city broke even financially, even though it “left a sour taste in many mouths” (Schaus & Wenn 2007: 238). After the Olympic Games, Atlanta is still viewed positively in the business world. A survey shows that approximately 620 corporate businessmen view Atlanta more favorably after the 1996 Olympics (Vaeth 1998).

Yet, in terms of helping out its marginalized populations, Atlanta utterly failed. It did not attempt to fix the problem, and in many ways perpetuated it. The privileged people in charge of organizing the games viewed the Olympics as a chance to showcase their city economically and did whatever it would take to make sure Atlanta was shown
in a favorable light— even if it meant mistreatment of marginalized populations. Atlanta is an example for all future host cities of how not to treat the underserved.
Chapter Three: 2000 Sydney

Receiving the Bid & City Goals

Sydney beat out many other cities: Beijing, Manchester, Istanbul, Berlin and Brasilia, in order to win the bid for the 2000 summer games. The city came up with a catchy slogan, “Share the Spirit” and branded the games as being “green”, very environmentally conscientious and sustainable (García 2007: 253). Throughout the bid, Sydney was described as an “open, tolerant, multicultural society” with the development, natural beauty, and support necessary to successfully pull off the games (COHRE Sydney 2007: 11).

The majority of Sydney did, in fact, favor the Olympic Games. Ninety percent of Sydney’s population viewed the bid for the 2000 Olympics as something favorable (Cashman 2002). Additionally, all levels of government, from the city, state, and nation, along with both major political parties, were in favor of hosting the games. And on September 23, 1993 Sydney got their wish and won the Olympic bid (COHRE Sydney 2007: 12). In staging the Olympics, Sydney hoped that this “magic moment” in history would bring a lot to the city- in terms of tourism, employment, and private investment (Lenskyj 2002: 13).

Attempting to Protect the Rights of the Marginalized

Once the city won the bid to host the 2000 Olympics, steps were taken by both governmental and non-governmental organizations to try and protect the marginalized during the games. In Sydney, these marginalized populations include the indigenous
Australians, poorer people with low incomes and people with mental illnesses (as these make up the majority of Sydney’s homeless population). A study in 1998 showed that of the low income people, indigenous people are the worst off; they make up approximately only 2% of Australia’s population, yet over a third of low income housing residents. In fact, they are 20 times more likely to be homeless than non indigenous people (Lenskyj 2002: 91-92).

These various groups conducted different studies to help prevent mistreatment of marginalized individuals, such as Australian’s indigenous population, as Sydney did not wish to make the same mistakes that occurred in Atlanta. In 1994, a study was commissioned by Shelter New South Wales (Shelter NSW) which looked into how to avoid creating many of the housing problems that previous Olympics had made. The conclusions of their study were that without an appropriate type of housing policy, low income private renters will most definitely be negatively affected by the Olympics. Some of their suggestions for how to avoid this included monitoring the housing market, strengthening existing planning controls, controlling private rents, and increasing the number of low cost housing units (Lenskyj 2002: 89).

An additional study in 1998 showed that 94% of low income residents of Sydney spent approximately 40% of their income on housing and rent costs in comparison to the average resident who spent approximately 30% (Lenskyj 2002: 91). They suggested in the study that tenants rights should be strengthened, rent control should be enforced, and social impact analysis should occur before these types of problems arise (Roche 2000: 140).
Although the intentions of these two studies conducted in Sydney were admirable, the reality of the situation was that marginalized populations and tenants really did not have much control over their situation. On the whole, tenants do not have many housing rights, and more power is given to their landlords. In 1987, a law was passed which stated that landlords could increase rent at no notice and evict people within 60 days. Additionally, no laws exist in Sydney which control rent (Lenskyj 2002: 90).

**Displacement & Boarding Houses**

In contrast to the Olympics in Barcelona and Atlanta, displacement of residents for construction of Olympic venues did not occur in Sydney. At the beginning of its bid, Sydney made a promise to its citizens to avoid the displacement of individuals, making it clear that “no resumption of land” would occur as the majority of Olympic construction would take place in Homebush Bay, a former government wasteland (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 127) (See Figure Five). Even though this held true for home owners and renters, people living in temporary housing near the Olympic area were not fulfilled their promise.

Temporary residents located near the Olympic area, such as boarding houses or student housing, were not guaranteed the same promise of no evictions as permanent residents. Boarding houses are cheap accommodations which would run at the rate of 70 to 100 Australian dollars per week. Residents of boarding houses were considered temporary as they paid on a weekly basis (Lenskyj 2002: 97). During the games 76% of board houses were converted for use as Olympic accommodations for visitors. After
the games, these boarding houses continued to be used as visitor accommodation, oftentimes for British youth who would live and work temporarily in Sydney for a summer (Lenskyj 2002: 97).

Additionally, the displacement of University students, specifically from the University of Sydney and University of Technology in Sydney was commonplace during the Olympics. When students signed their housing agreements for the year, they agreed to give up their apartments during the events, as they felt they did not have another choice. Furthermore, international students were especially affected by this, as they did not know what was normal and were often the brunt of landlords’ dishonesty (Lenskyj 2002: 105). Overall, although displacement was minimized during the Sydney games, a significant population was affected and it is important to not overlook this fact.

The Olympic Village

As mentioned in the previous section, the Olympic venues, along with the Olympic Village for athletes, were constructed on government wasteland property. The Olympic Village, now known as the Newington Apartments, was constructed in Homebush Bay near the site of the main stadium (Neal 2003: 213). Homebush Bay used to be known as, “a grimy fringe neighborhood, notorious for stockyards, slaughterhouses and brick kilns” (Brooke 2004). However, it is now one of the higher class neighborhoods in Sydney.

The Olympic Village was never built with the promise of later being used as low income housing, as Sydney wanted to revitalize the neighborhood of Homebush Bay.
and sell and rent properties at market value (Lenskyj 2002: 100). The construction of the village was a public-private deal and the developer, Mirvac Lend Lease Village Consortium, consequently had the right to sell the housing units at commercial market rates. In 2000, a 2 bedroom Newington Apartment went for 369,000 Australian dollars and a 4 bedroom apartment cost 775,000 Australian dollars (COHRE Sydney 2007: 30). The apartments overlook the Olympic stadium in a U formation. Four types of housing units were made: family courtyard, townhouse and Olympic modules (See Figure Six). During the actual games no kitchen or garage was built as they needed more space for athletes (Neal 2003: 215). However, buyers of these athletic accommodations were persuaded to purchase their housing units before July of 2000, as they were promised new kitchens, carpet and painting after the games (Lenskyj 2002: 100).

Sydney was committed to keeping the 2000 games green, and as a result of its commitment, the Olympic Village was built with specific greening components. The housing units were oriented to the north and included natural ventilation, larger windows and insulation materials which made consumption of energy 50% less. Additionally, dual water reticulation cuts led to a reduction of water waste by 50%. At the end of its construction, the Olympic Village was the largest solar power village in the world (Leece 2001).

During the games, more than 15,000 Olympic and Paralympic athletes were able to be housed in the Newington district. After the games 5,000 people in approximately 2,000 units were able to find accommodations in the area. The area also has a school and approximately 60,000 square meters of commercial space (Neal 2003: 248).
Currently, the Newington Apartments are still sold at high market rates. New properties are continually built in the area and sell from the range of 370,000 Australian dollars for a 1 bedroom, to 1.5 million Australian dollars for a larger home (Granath 2008). The area of Newington Apartments includes many attractive amenities- 24 hour security, a concierge service, private bus service and gym. In looking towards the future, there is the Sydney Olympic Park Draft Master Plan 2030, which hopes to house 11,000 new residents in the area in 25 story buildings, which should accordingly add approximately 28,500 jobs to the area (Granath 2008). Unfortunately, because Homebush Bay used to be a dumping site for wastelands, there are sometimes odor problems. The government has spent approximately 155 million Australian dollars on cleanup of toxins in the area, but odor still continues to be a minor issue (Granath 2008).

Luckily, because Homebush Bay was a government wasteland before the Olympics, not many people were displaced from their homes. However, as evidence by the high costs of the Newington Apartments and the fact that no housing was ever allocated towards public housing, the Olympic area is not one in which the marginalized populations feel particularly welcome. In leading to the next section of affordability, we will explore Sydney and see if and where there are places where marginalized people can afford to live, or if they are just forced to live on the outskirts, as the city itself is too expensive.

Affordability

The biggest problem with Sydney’s Olympics was the decrease in affordable housing in the area. In the five years leading up to the Olympics, from 1996 to 2003,
rent and housing were undeniably on the rise, with housing prices more than doubling in Sydney and rent increasing up to 40% (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 127). Although housing located within the Olympic Corridor area was most effected, there were impacts that were seen over 100 kilometers away. In Sydney, the price of owning a house increased 7% instead of the usual 2%. In the Olympic area, the increase in owning a house went up 23.6% (Lenskyj 2002: 93). In regards to rent, Sydney saw rent increases from 15 to 40% in the Olympic corridor (Lenskyj 2002: 98).

During the actual Olympics, landlords raised rent prices up to 1,000 more Australian dollars for each week during the games. In some areas, rental prices were exorbitant, charging in the hundreds of thousands of Australian dollars for one week (Lenskyj 2002: 99).

Lack of affordable housing in Sydney has continued to be a problem in the aftermath of the Olympic Games. In 2004, a median priced dwelling cost citizens approximately nine times the median household income. That year, Sydney was ranked the 20th most expensive city in the world, and by 2006 that ranking had jumped to 7th (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 127). Consequently, Sydney has attracted many overseas investors and other wealthy individuals. Although the blame for rising housing costs can not solely be blamed on the Olympics, the games were unquestionably one of the catalysts behind prices.

**Homelessness**

The lack of affordable housing in Sydney, partially the result of the city hosting the 2000 games, has led to an ever-increasing number of homeless people; in fact, from
1992 to 1997 the number of homeless people in the city tripled. Of these new homeless, 60-70% had never used homeless shelters before (Lenskyj 2002: 95). Moreover, a lot of homeless people took up squatting as a means for residency. Many inhabited abandoned buildings, in which they would make renovations with the intention of creating a more habitable living space. (Lenskyj 2002: 102).

The actual treatment of the homeless populations in Australia during the Olympic Games was handled relatively well in comparison to previous host cities. Unlike the Atlanta games, Sydney tried very hard to maintain the rights of the homeless; in fact, the Premier of New South Wales, Bob Carr stated on June 2, 1998 that “unfortunates would not be removed from Sydney streets just to provide a good impression during the 2000 Olympic Games…any idea that we should behave like Hitler in 1936 by getting unfortunate people off the streets to present a false image of the world should not be embraced” (COHRE Sydney 2007: 25).

Furthermore, throughout the course of the games, the “Homeless Protocol” was established by a community activist group, Shelter NSW, a group established to ensure the perpetuation of the rights of the homeless. Cards were handed out to the homeless with a 24 hour phone hotline that they could call if they were subject to police harassment. Outreach volunteers worked with the police force to respond to, and attempt to prevent, extreme harassment of homelessness individuals. Finally, “Operation Safe Haven” was established during the games, a development that provided homeless people with safe place to eat and sleep away from Olympic spectators. More or less, the treatment of homeless people was positive. Only five
people throughout the entire Olympics called the hotline reporting any problems (COHRE Sydney 2007: 26).

Unfortunately, due to the decrease of affordability in Sydney and Australia during and after the Olympics, the number of homeless people continues to rise. In 2001, 99,000 Australians were classified as homeless, half of them being identified as indigenous Australians, a large number of whom were identified as mentally handicapped (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 128). Although there was a notable attempt to treat the homeless fairly during the games, it is evident that there is still work to do in Sydney.

Concluding Thoughts

Sydney ended up 1.7 billion Australian dollars in debt to public financiers (Schaus & Wenn 2007: 238). Although the city expected an economic boom to come, it remained an unfulfilled hope. In fact, in the three years after the games, foreign tourism to New South Wales actually rose less than for the rest of Australia as a whole (Usborne 2008). Additionally, the unaffordable nature of Sydney continues to grow, due to lack of price controls by the New South Wales government, and, as a result, more middle to low income citizens are being forced out of the city.

However, there are some positives that emerge, retrospectively, from the Sydney games. For one, a minimum number of displacements occurred as the city was committed to using government wasteland property in building its venues. Additionally, the community activist organizations created to protect the marginalized populations were positive products of the Sydney games. For example, Shelter NSW
was able to establish a “Homeless Protocol” which was able to prevent mistreatment of marginalized Australians during the Olympic Games. Finally, through the greening construction of the Olympic Village, Sydney was able to realize and achieve its ultimate goal of being an environmentally friendly Olympics.
Chapter Four: A Quick Look to London

Now the Olympic torch is passed to London. As London prepares for the 2012 Olympics, are we going to see the same outcomes in regard to housing? So far it looks that way. London is already “lacking foresight and spending money like water” (Usborne 2008). As we have learned from looking at Barcelona, Atlanta, and Sydney, planning ahead for the future, beyond the Olympics, is of utmost importance.

Additionally, the London budget has gone from 3.4 billion pounds to 9.3 billion pounds (Usborne 2008). Again, the high spending in London is an indicator of the potential problems the city may face. If the city itself is in debt, its focus is not going to be on helping the underserved or underprivileged.

Like all cities competing for their Olympic bid, London emphasized how the event would benefit everyone in the city, as there would be a trickle down effect (Slavin 2006). The city hoped that, “The Olympic and Paralympic Games would speed up the rebirth of the Lower Lea Valley by six or seven years, cleaning up polluted land and reclaiming the area for the benefit of the whole of London” (COHRE London 2007: 25). The 2012 Plans for the Olympic Park state, “The Park lies within some of the UK’s most disadvantaged boroughs; the Games will herald major changes for them…Economically, the area will be transformed. Up to 12,000 new jobs will be created in the Park alone. The Olympic Village, where the athletes will stay during the Games, will be converted into apartments; many available for key workers such as teachers and nurses…The Park will significantly contribute to the regeneration and

The majority of the games will take place in Lower Lea Valley, in eastern London. This area contains 1,500 acres of land contaminated from industry, polluted water and trash dumps. It is considered to be one of the most underprivileged areas of London, and is one of the top 10 most deprived places in the United Kingdom. (COHRE London 2007: 24-25). East London used to be an area comprised of a lot of lower income minorities including Bangladeshi, Black, Romani Gypsies and Irish Traveller populations. The latter are protected in the United Kingdom under Section 225 of a 2004 Housing Act. This act states that Romani Gypsies and Irish Traveller populations must be allowed to have some type of housing or encampment provided to them (COHRE London 2007: 23). According to the 2012 Olympic Plans, along with the 2004 Housing Act, it appears as if the city is going to do all that it can to ensure everlasting, positive changes for everyone.

Yet even before London had won their bid, 550 foreign students at the East London University Park Village estate were displaced by threat of court action, forcing these students to find alternate housing in the regular private housing market (Slavin 2006). Additionally, the Gypsy and Traveller populations living in Clays Lane and Waterden Crescent, both in East London were evicted before the official bid was won (COHRE London 2007: 26). The destruction of both the Romani and Traveller’s camp sites in East London for Olympic preparations directly conflicts with the 2004 Housing Act.
People have complained about the displacement. They do not understand why it is that they, long term residents, have to be displaced for a two week event. However, London officials claim that it is for the benefit of everyone. Even a court judge ruled that, “[even though] forcing the families to move was a very significant interference with their human rights; it was nevertheless proportionate considering the benefits of development for the Olympic Games” (COHRE London 2007: 29). Each evicted family is being given a “disturbance fee” of 8,500 pounds to cover the cost of loss of home and relocation expense. Still, London is a very expensive city. The average London house costs “almost seven times a teacher’s salary and almost nine times an average nurse’s salary”. Social affordable housing has also been on the decline. In 1984, 35% of housing in London was public housing whereas in 2005 it was only 26% (COHRE London 2007: 22). The culmination of a decrease in public housing, along with an increase in expensive, private housing, does not leave many options for the cities underprivileged.

The Olympic Village hopes to house up to 17,000 athletes. Afterwards, it is going to be converted into 3,600 homes with the promise of some affordable housing for people with “key occupations”, like nurses and teachers. There is also an Olympic Legacy Development plan which hopes to build a total of 9,100 new housing units by 2020 (COHRE London 2007: 31). However, although there will be more housing, there is a fear that most of this housing will not be affordable to those who previously lived in East London. Of the housing being built, less than 50% is considered “affordable” and of that, only 30% will be reserved for social housing (COHRE London 2007: 32).
From what we can see so far, it seems as if London is headed down the same path as its antecedents. With too much focus on city image and rejuvenation, marginalized populations are again being ignored and pushed to the side in order to display an impressive image of London to the world.
Conclusion

Throughout this thesis I have examined how Olympics have affected those on the margins of society. For Barcelona, the underserved included low income residents, the elderly, along with the “Roma” or gypsy population. In Atlanta, the underserved were comprised of low income and homeless people, the majority of whom were African American. Sydney’s impoverished included the indigenous Australians and poorer people with low incomes. In the spirit of Olympism, it seems that cities should follow “universal fundamental ethical principles” specifically that of providing access to adequate shelter. It seems as if host cities should be making an effort to respond to the basic human right of housing in the context of Olympic revitalization efforts. Yet host cities are falling short of this ideal.

I looked at the question, “In regards to housing, do Olympic cities implement positive changes for all of its citizens, or are the needs of the marginalized populations ignored?” The question was examined through four different viewpoints; preparations & displacements, the Olympic Village, homelessness, and affordability. Using three different host cities, Barcelona, Atlanta and Sydney I was able find a variety of similarities and differences in all three cases.

First, I looked at the preparations for the Olympics, like venue and infrastructure construction, and how that led to displacement of people from their homes. In Barcelona, displacement was a serious issue as the entire area was completely revitalized. Residents in the Parc de Mar district were never actually forcibly evicted.
from their houses, yet they were not really given any option but to move as construction for Olympics was going to occur. Residents were usually re-housed in state subsidized apartments or financially reimbursed. In Atlanta, over 30,000 people were displaced in preparation for the games, and of these people, the majority of them were black. Additionally, Techwood Homes, one of the country’s first public housing projects was demolished. In Sydney, fewer people were displaced, as the site of the Olympics was built on a formerly government owned toxic wasteland, Homebush Bay.

Next, I examined the Olympic Village which was housing built for athletes during the Olympic Games. Although this housing was potentially available for cities to use as public housing after the games, it was generally sold at market value instead. In Barcelona, all of the housing in the area was sold at market value, 60% of it before the Olympics had even started. The entire area was transformed from an industrial, dirty area to a consumer-type play area that was too expensive for a normal Barcelonan to live or use. Again, in Sydney the Newington Apartments built to house the athletes were not used later as subsidized housing for the poor, but instead sold at market value. At least in Atlanta, the Olympic Village was built on University properties, so after the games the housing was used as student dormitories.

I also looked at the issue of homelessness in all three cities, both before, during, and after the games. The maltreatment of homeless populations was not an especially big issue in the Barcelona games; however the homeless Roma population, along with street sex workers, were at times discriminated against and felt unwelcome in the city during the Olympics. The treatment of homeless people in Atlanta was extremely bad.
More or less being homeless was a crime. The city did everything they could to portray a positive, clean image to the city, regardless of the rights of each of their citizens. On a positive note, in Sydney the treatment of homeless was actually very good as they did not want to repeat the mistakes of their predecessor, Atlanta. Steps were taken to ensure that the homeless were not maltreated by police, and that their best interests were taken into account.

Finally, I examined issues of affordability of the city based on the lasting effects of the Olympics. In Barcelona, the residents living in the area of the Olympics are affluent, well educated, and younger than the city average. Affordability has decreased; in 1990 the increase in cost of living in Barcelona was 20% higher than in the rest of Catalonia. Additionally, between the years of 1986 to 1992, the market price of old and new housing had risen more than 240%. Affordability in Atlanta also decreased. In 2004, owning a median priced home in Atlanta required an annual salary of at least $69,000 a year. Clearly, those earning minimum wage can not afford a house of that price, and therefore many marginalized are being forced to the streets or out of the city. The biggest issue with housing in Sydney was that of affordability. Both in Sydney and the surrounding area, rent and housing costs increased dramatically, forcing many citizens to move.

By looking at Olympic host cities in terms of housing, through my four different views of displacement of citizens, the Olympic Village, homelessness, and affordability, it seems that on the whole all three cities, Barcelona, Atlanta, and Sydney did not view helping the underserved populations as a priority. In all three cities more effort was
spent covering up the problems of the underserved rather than attempting to solve them. Additionally, in looking at the preparations going into the 2012 London Olympics, it seems as if we are going to see the same results, a lack of consideration or care for the underprivileged. Something needs to be done to ensure that this negative housing situation for marginalized people does not continue.

The Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, an invaluable resource to me in writing this thesis, has recently published the COHRE’s Multi-Stakeholder Guidelines on Mega Events and the Protection and Promotion of Housing Rights. This document demonstrates step by step what actions host cities should take in order to consider the needs of all citizens when planning a major event like the Olympics. The document is comprised of ten different guidelines all of which require accountability from both the host city and all Olympic organizations involved in the process. The guidelines range from using mega-events as an opportunity to increase the amount of low income, public housing to preventing discrimination of homeless people to ensuring transparency in the planning process (Fair Play for Housing Rights 2007: 48).

However, before I recommend that the changes suggested by COHRE be implemented in all future host cities, it is important to question the role of the Olympics in dealing with social issues like housing rights. Most host cities are not putting any effort into serving their marginalized populations. In fact, it seems that both past and current host cities care more about creating a positive image of their city to the outside world, rather than dealing with the problems of the marginalized populations. Because this occurs so frequently, some might argue that it is not the job of Olympics to fix
issues related to public housing and social welfare of impoverished populations. Yet
when looking back to the foundations of the Olympics, and the basics of the Olympic
Charter, I feel that there is sufficient argument for the fact that cities should be
improving the lives of their marginalized populations, and at the very least, not making
their situations worse.

Although in the past host cities have had difficulty helping underserved populations, this trend can still change. Lenskyj, in her article, “The Olympic (Affordable) Housing Legacy and Social Responsibility” proposed that along with sports, culture and environment, “social responsibility” become a fourth pillar of the Olympic movement. If this fourth pillar were adopted, the focus of the Olympic host cities might change to include helping the underserved populations. Agenda 21, an optional article that is a part of the Olympic Movement states that sustainable development is “economic, social and political development particularly geared to the benefit of the poorest members of society” (Lenskyj 2006: 196). If Agenda 21 became mandatory, rather than optional, host cities would be accountable for all members of their society, not just the privileged. Efforts of host cities would have to be refocused towards solving problems like housing shortages for impoverished populations. The guidelines published by COHRE could also be implemented to improve the situation. In the spirit of the Olympics and the philosophy of Olympism, a change in the mentality of the Olympics would benefit all members of society throughout the world.
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Appendix

Figure One: Barcelona opens itself to the Sea
A view of the redeveloped seafront with the two towers and Frank Ghery fish

Figure Two: La Vila Olímpica Housing Complex for Athletes
Residents in this area of Barcelona are younger, richer and smarter than the city’s average individual
Figure Three: Construction of Atlanta’s Olympic Village

After the games, these housing units on Georgia Tech’s campus will later be used as student housing.

Figure Four: Demolition of Techwood Homes

Built in 1936, Techwood Homes was the United State’s first public housing project.

http://www.ajc.com/opinion/content/opinion/stories/2008/07/01/Techwood_demolitionC.html
Figure Five: Homebush Bay, Sydney, Australia
Homebush Bay used to be a toxic, government wasteland before it was transformed for the 2000 Olympic Games

Figure Six: Newington Apartments at Homebush Bay
These environmentally friendly apartments built for athletes were sold after the Olympics at market value, costing 369,000 to 775,000 Australian dollars