



Negotiating for Neighborhoods: Interventions in Olympic Impact in Sydney and Vancouver

Sydney and Vancouver, hosts of the 2000 Summer Games and the 2010 Winter Games, respectively, both established organizations to monitor the social impacts of the Olympics. For citizens and advocates, both provide models for overseeing Olympics-driven development, and offer perspective on possibilities for equitable outcomes for the Games and residents. The two groups, though similar in aim, differed greatly in scope, composition, and organization. Despite the differences outlined below, groups both in Sydney and Vancouver established agreements to benefit neighborhoods and learned from the difficulty compliance with existing or agreed upon goals.

Additionally, a new International Olympic Committee initiative called the Olympic Games Impact (OGI) will change the climate of impact analysis and mitigation by formalizing the procedure. Created in 2003, OGI requires host cities to report on 125 impact indicators for a twelve year span before, during, and after the Games. Beijing 2008 will be the first Games to provide a formal postGames analysis, and Vancouver will be the first host to undertake full OGI requirements, the first phase of which will be due shortly. While OGI will force hosts to consider impacts more fully, the test of its efficacy will have to wait until the release of its first reports.

Sydney and the Social Impact Advisory Committee (SIAC)

The 2000 Sydney Games promised a new look at Olympic hosting as the first Games of the 21st century. In some ways, they achieved a new approach, building venues on abandoned, government-owned land, including green features in their building, and prioritizing treatment of minorities and homeless in the city's plan for managing the Olympics' impact. As one of the first hosts to focus on impacts, Sydney may have some claim to its reputation as the first "Green Games" as well as then-IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch's famous line in which he called the 2000 Games "The best Olympics ever."



The 2000 Olympic Village in Sydney, constructed with environmental concerns in mind, built on the city's concept of hosting the first "Green Games."

So what did the best Olympics ever look like? After Sydney secured the bid to host the Games, the government of New South Wales commissioned a Social Impact Assessment, which made 37 diverse recommendations on mitigating social impact, including the establishment of a committee to monitor and advise on those impacts. Thus, the Social Impact Advisory Committee was born.

SIAC maintained a diverse composition, including members of Sydney's advocacy community, members of SOCOG,—the Sydney Organizing Committee for Olympic Games—and members of city and provincial government. The committee met twice yearly from 1994 until the Games were over, making recommendations and discussing progress on Olympic development.

The influence of the SIAC eventually led to the establishment of the Homelessness Protocol, a guideline for police interaction to ensure that the homeless residents of Sydney were treated equitably. The Protocol remains a positive legacy that is still in use today in Sydney. This protocol affirmed the right of all citizens to enjoy Sydney's public spaces, and prevented harassment of the homeless by police, an occurrence common during previous Olympics.

Still, the SIAC suffered from problems that plague many monitoring organizations, that they garner advisory power but have little in the way of leverage or mandate for actual change. Rev. Harry Herbert, the chair of the SIAC, expressed this frustration, saying, "It seems to be a case of government saying the biggest measures are too dangerous and the smallest aren't worth doing!" Pointedly, the government's lack of action and plan for homelessness, and SRO housing topped Herbert's list of concerns.

The Games monitoring environment in Sydney experienced fluctuation, as a splinter group formed just before the Games began to call attention to the lack of progress the organizing committee had made in securing positive social impacts. Rating the positive impacts at a 5 out of 10, the Council of Social Services of New South Wales and its Olympic Impact Committee (OIC) arm criticized the organizers and government for "[failing] to stop the loss of low cost accommodation," and further, that "other figures [that showed] big rent increases in the Olympic Corridor, contradict the Government's claim of no Olympics-related rent effects."

Vancouver and the Impact on Communities Coalition (IOCC)

The Vancouver Olympics have garnered a great deal of attention for their emphasis on sustainability and commitment to host a Games that does little to displace community members. Crucial to this reputation was the Impact on Communities Coalition

SIAC

—Side by Side—

IOCC

Established: By Sydney’s Olympic Coordination Authority (OCA) in 1996, two years after Sydney is named 2000 Games host.

Headed by: Rev. Michael Herbert, Secy. General of Uniting Church of Australia

Composition: Ministers of government, community leaders, religious officials, members of local governments

Primary Actions: Developed Homelessness Protocol. Draft biannual reports and recommendations regarding Olympic development and its social impacts.

Problems: Divergent interests caused splinter Games Impact groups to form, disrupting unity. Lack of response from government

Established: 2002 by community organizations concerned about potential impacts, one year before Vancouver wins 2010 Olympic bid.

Headed by: Dr. Jim Frankish, University of British Columbia

Composition: Currently a membership organization of 11 advocacy groups.

Primary Actions: Their 22 recommendations for positive social impacts were included in the Vancouver’s final bid, hosting community forums on themes of major social impact.

Problems: Many bid guarantees not being met. Multilateral initiatives with government, Olympic organizing committee fell apart. Weak leverage and accountability

(IOCC), which drafted 22 recommendations for positive social impact that Vancouver’s bid committee eventually included in the guarantees section of their final “bid book.”

The IOCC differentiated itself from SIAC right from the beginning in a number of key ways. IOCC was formed before the bid, and thus was able to advance some of its concerns and create a direction in the bid itself, rather than simply reacting to development. Also, the IOCC is a member organization with no ties to the Olympic organizing committee, VANOC, or the bid committee. The IOCC has also benefitted organizationally from its unity of message—perhaps owing to a somewhat more homogenous group of members—focusing throughout its seven year history on the seven areas of environment, security and safety, community and economic development, civil rights, housing, transportation, and accountability and transparency.

The IOCC has commissioned several academic works that aim to tease out potential impacts from the Games, while also conducting public opinion and market research. While much of the IOCC’s work has focused on research on those seven issues, community participation bolsters their résumé as well; they will host a community forum on each of their seven platform issues by the time the Games begin in February of 2010.



An artist’s rendering of the Southeast False Creek redevelopment in Vancouver’s inner city, including the Olympic Village, which will become a mixed-income community after the Games.

Vancouver’s non-sport legacy focuses on a tract of abandoned shipping and industrial land called Southeast False Creek (SEFC), which will host the Olympic Village during the Games and be converted to a mixed-income, mixed-use development after the Games. The SEFC project forms the centerpiece of an agreement between advocates and VANOC called the Inner-City Inclusive (ICI) agreement. The ICI broadly states VANOC’s intent to prioritize inner-city redevelopment for the 2010 Games legacy. In addition to that agreement, advocates and the SEFC developer have signed a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA), guaranteeing first-source hiring, job training programs, and affordable housing.

And while the SEFC project appeared to provide wide and deep benefits to the community, developers have already scaled back the affordability commitments of the housing units. Millennium Water, as the housing development will be known after the Games, will sell condo units from \$450,000 to \$6,000,000, quite unaffordable for many residents.

Next Steps for Chicago Olympics Impact

How will our city, known for the deep rich tradition of community development and organizing, demonstrate the best monitoring and advancement of what are serious social impact concerns. Will the bid establish an independent committee pulled from all of Chicago’s diverse communities and expertise? Will the committee have the ability and to keep the Olympics development process transparent.

Sources: “Host to Host: Improving the Environment One Host City at a Time” IOC Report, Xinhua News Services, www.pacificmetropolis.com, Sydney Post-Games Report, International Olympic Committee, Impact on Communities Coalition at ioccc.ca, Council of Social Services of New South Wales (NCOSS), Online Opinion, Australia’s e-journal of Policy and Debate, Jim Frankish, Southeast False Creek Working Group, gamesbids.com, Housing Legacy of the 2010 Winter Games: Report of the Housing Table, City of Vancouver Housing Centre, www.vancouver2010.com

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