

# International Events and Mass Evictions: A Longer View

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## Abstract

*Mass evictions have been increasingly linked to large international events, often called mega-events, around the world. This article looks back at the residential redevelopment in Seoul that surged just prior to the 1988 Olympic Games there to better understand how large events bring about change in cities. When existing documentation of the new housing construction boom and a corresponding large-scale dislocation of urban poor residents via aggressive evictions in the mid-1980s are correlated with data from primary and secondary historical sources, there is incontrovertible evidence of a causal link between event hosting and forced evictions. However, the data goes on to reveal that large-scale clearance, evictions and demolitions occurred in Seoul over an extended period before the Olympics as well as long afterwards, which suggests that the Olympics was in fact part of a broader process and practice of urban transformation in Seoul. Without discounting the effect of event hosting in this case, this raises the question of what motivates both event hosting and residential redevelopment, and whether the event offers an opportunity to refine and further institutionalize certain practices. The article proposes taking a longer historical view of the practice of clearance, evictions and demolitions in order to foresee the dynamics of event hosting in a specific city and to inform event-related planning.*

## Introduction

Large international events have become associated with mass urban renewal schemes, often involving mass evictions in working-class city neighborhoods, since at least the second half of the twentieth century. While such neighborhoods have often been general targets for clearance, demolition and rebuilding over the centuries or even millennia at a small scale, recent decades have seen an acceleration in the scale of dislocation and demolition specifically associated with event hosting, accompanying a competitive global economic milieu and exponential growth in the size of both international events and urban agglomerations (Essex and Chalkley, 1998; ACHR, 2003; Greene, 2003; Yu, 2006; COHRE, 2007). There is a growing body of work causally linking the hosting of international events (or mega-events, as they are known to specialists) such as the Olympics to urban growth coalitions promoting major new construction and rebuilding (e.g. Rutheiser, 1997; Hiller, 2000; 2004; Burbank *et al.*, 2000; 2001). It has even been ascertained (Montanari, 2002: 782) that large events are at this point 'the main urban policy to restructure and reconstruct urban areas'. Author

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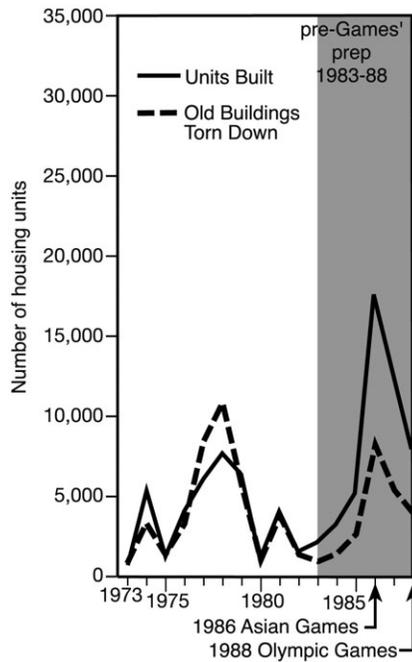
Wole Soyinka (AGFE, 2007: 15) went further in a BBC news report of 21 July 2005, claiming that 'Bulldozers have been turned into an instrument of governance and it is the ordinary people who are suffering'.

Some of the urban alterations tied to large international events can be classified under event-related sites or business and leisure tourism-related facility development such as stadiums, hotels and convention centers (e.g. Muñoz, 1997); however, it is not unusual for event-driven urban redevelopment to extend far beyond event sites to a wide swath of older urban infrastructures and areas. Case studies such as Lenskyj (2002) and COHRE (2007; 2008) have looked at dynamics surrounding Olympic hosting in the short term. Such documentation is important both for the historical record and for event planners and administrators. Because large international events are not held for the most part in working-class residential quarters of cities, the connection between the event and neighborhood demolition may be surprising and must be looked at closely; care must be taken to examine the details to feel confident in assessing causality. The explanation for why such a broad scale of changes is undertaken to prepare for an event appears partly due to event-related abbreviated political approval processes and accelerated financing mechanisms, making large urban infrastructure projects attractive (Harvey, 1973; Logan and Molotch, 1987/2006; Altshuler and Luberoff, 2003). This phenomenon of accelerated consensus-building at the institutional level is surprisingly robust across different types of governments and economies. A powerful part of the argument for widespread redevelopment prior to an event comes under the rubric of image improvement or so-called beautification to prepare the city for international televised coverage.

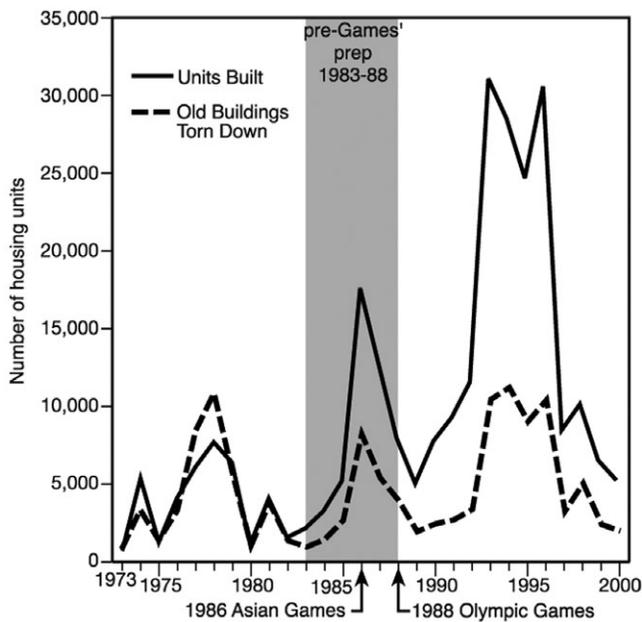
How are scholars of urban change to make use of an awareness of a pattern of causal connection in certain cities between international event hosting and forced evictions, in a way that supports current and future active efforts to build and maintain livable, humane cities? The case study through which this relationship is explored is Seoul, South Korea, host of the 1988 Olympic Games. The Seoul Olympics were widely judged as a positive experience from both international and domestic viewpoints, both symbolically and in terms of physical facilities and proceedings. The main negative aspects of the Seoul Olympics were that they gained international notoriety for both forced eviction of working-class households and the treatment of street vendors, beggars and homeless people (ACHR, 1988; Bank, 1988; Bank and Leyden, 1988; Forgey, 1988; Maass, 1988; Seoul Evictees Union, 1988; ACHR, 1989; ACHR and Third World Network, 1989; Daly, 2004; Yu, 2006). The causal tie between Olympic hosting and forced evictions was relatively robust, and more will be said about this below.

When housing statistics related to forced evictions are depicted visually, we are presented with a more complicated picture. In Figure 1(a) we see that there is a large spike in new housing construction and a smaller peak in old homes torn down in the period leading up to the Olympics. However, in the more extended timeframe shown in Figure 1(b), we see that both demolitions and new constructions are much higher in the following decade. Apparently the practice of large-scale residential redevelopment before the Games did not end after the event.

In light of Figure 1(b) and other visual depictions presented below, it may be useful to consider event hosting as part of a longer historical trajectory of a particular city with regard to redevelopment. The large event may come to be seen as a major milestone, but it does not occur in isolation. Perhaps one way to understand event-related urban redevelopment is as one peculiar episode in an ongoing continuum of processes and practices whereby the people of a city—or at least their leaders—decide what to keep and what to replace. Figure 1(b) suggests the need to take into consideration growth-coalition dynamics in event-led redevelopment, augmented by a stronger historical-institutional interpretation as promoted by Altshuler and Luberoff to forecast what urban infrastructure changes might be ahead related to hosting an event; taking the longer view may have repercussions for bid selection committees as well as for the general comprehension of how a city's historical geography is shaped.



**Figure 1a** Number of new units built and number of old residential buildings torn down, 1973 to 1988. © L.K. Davis, 2010 (source: 2008; ROK Ministry of Construction and Transportation, 2000: 56)



**Figure 1b** Number of new units built and number of old residential buildings torn down, 1973 to June 2000. © L.K. Davis, 2010 (source: ROK Ministry of Construction and Transportation, 2000: 56)

## Data, method and context

The analysis presented here comes out of ongoing research since 2006 on historical dimensions of residential redevelopment in Seoul. It considers existing data from non-governmental organizations and government sources and takes the additional step of depicting it visually. It relies heavily on primary and secondary sources available only in Korean, including scholarly works, data from the public record, and government figures from internal publications. This data is used to show trends over time in new construction, clearance and eviction.

Primary materials include print and visual media records, as well as government documents including statistical reports (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 1962–2008) and official narratives. Interviews with scholars and officials were part of the data-gathering process although not quoted extensively here. Secondary materials consist of Korean-language theses, scholarly articles and monographs and limited English language works. Because South Korea was awarded the hosting of the 1986 Asian Games in Seoul within two months of (and based upon) winning the 1988 Olympic Games bid on 30 September 1981; with the 1986 event widely considered a warm-up exercise (ROK, 1987; Seoul Metropolitan Government, 1990), it is not necessary for the purposes of this discussion to separate the preparations. Limitations to available data and extrapolation or substitution of proxy data for the purposes of gleaning a sense of change in forced evictions over time is commented on under the appropriate figure.

South Korea is a small, densely-populated country of 48 million people. The dictatorship of General Park Chung Hee led a successful campaign beginning in 1962 to create a capitalist industrial economy, bringing on a new and sustained period of urbanization, such that South Korea now has one of the most urbanized populations in the world. From 1970 to 2005 the gross national income grew from US \$243 to \$ 15,840 per capita and the country joined the OECD in 1996. As of 1988, prior to hosting the Olympic Games, gross national income per capita was approximately US \$3,000 (ROK, 1995; 2000; World Bank, 2009).

The Korean peninsula occupies a geopolitically strategic location proximate to China, Russia and Japan, accounting for a long history of Koreans refusing and coping with foreign domination and attacks. In the first half of the twentieth century, Korea was occupied by Japan, which attempted to obliterate the Korean culture and people. This was followed by an equally tragic postcolonial period, whereby the peninsula was haphazardly divided into two nation-states by the US and Soviet-occupying armies, and then a bloody civil and international war. The peninsula remains one of the last vestiges of Cold War conflict today, and the US Army still oversees the defense of South Korea. Military conflict over the division has stood stalemated at a temporary ceasefire since 1953. There remains no regular means of contact among the general public — no routine mail, telephone or transportation service — between the two halves of the peninsula, although in recent years some special family reunification, package tourism and industrial cooperation programs have sprouted. The greater Seoul metropolitan region, located at the north edge of South Korea, houses nearly half of the country's population; about 10 million people (just under a quarter of the country's population) reside in the primate city proper. This demographic overconcentration near the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel border has long posed ecological and logistical challenges for urban administrators — not to mention military planners — and can only be understood in the context of the peninsula's division. No major decision about urban infrastructure around Seoul is made without taking into consideration a future where division may cease. The division situation intensified the usual factors motivating officials to go to all extremes to showcase an idealized city as international event host in the case of the 1988 Olympics. Until the mid-1990s the mayor of Seoul was appointed by the president.

From the 1950s to the 1980s, many migrants to the city lived in low-rise, self-built small houses in burgeoning, dense settlements, where various arrangements of ownership and tenancy could be found. In the case of the many hillside squatter areas,

even if the house was privately owned, it was often built without permit, and ownership of the land under it was another matter. The residential redevelopment from the 1980s until the early 2000s, which replaced most small houses with high rise apartment towers, was partially driven by a shift in land use regimes to establish private home ownership in the form of condominium apartments. This shift from small houses to units in tall apartment towers is symptomatic of a fundamental shift in social structure and housing, involving a reduction in number of households per home, an exponential increase in the cost of housing, a move away from the extended family to the nuclear family system, and forced curtailment of self-built housing in favor of industrialized production of housing. Since 2008, redevelopment has centered on density infill, meaning removal of older buildings (with 'older' meaning 20 years old or sometimes less!) and continued erasure of the few remaining cheap neighborhoods.

From the late 1960s through the 1970s in and around Seoul, forced relocation of urban neighborhoods by means of army trucks occurred whenever the government needed the land for a project, including roadways, subways and new residential developments for a growing middle income stratum. Many positive and negative experiences with centrally-planned attempts to improve housing and to do away with squatting are recorded, some in partnership with foreign aid groups such as the US Agency for International Development (Lee, 1990). Urban redevelopment since the 1960s has been planned centrally by the government and executed increasingly in collaboration with South Korea's massive, internationally-active construction sector.

As there is a remarkable history of the industrialization of residential building yet to be told, there is also a less visible history of eviction-related conflict between the state and its people. This history is often remarked upon in popular culture such as fiction, film, television, theatre and poetry. Due in part to the autocratic culture dominating South Korea through the early 1990s, this history was little known beyond the Korean-speaking world, except among international missionary and human rights circles. The 1988 Olympic Games changed this lack of visibility, as the eyes of the world focused upon Seoul via the media (see T.K., 1976, Mills and Song, 1979; Lee, 1985; Whang, 1986; Ha, 1987; ACHR, 1988; Ahn, 1988; Bank, 1988; CIIR, 1988; Hong, 1988; Chang, 1998; Cho and Cho, 1992; Son, 2003).

To make sense of event-related impacts, it is helpful to take into account why South Korea sought to host the 1988 Olympics (Sin Dong'a, 1981a; Davis, forthcoming). The dominating logic was firstly economic, to boost the national image for purposes of increasing foreign investment and exports. The second dominating motivator was a strategic move related to international politics. Hosting the Olympics was expected to spread the image of South Korea as a prosperous, successful state in the eyes of North Korea, long-time rival Japan, and superpowers — the USA, China and USSR — that kept North Korea at bay. Furthermore, according to Son (2003), General Chun's government calculated that it could buy seven years to build up its military forces if the bid was won, as North Korea would probably not attack with such an internationally visible event on the horizon.

The third motivator for pursuing the Olympics was to shore up domestic political legitimacy. General Chun's government had taken power in a multi-stage military coup from the end of 1979 through 1980 and the Kwangju Massacre of May 1980 — when the army fired on civilians and slaughtered either hundreds or thousands (depending on which side one believes) — was a miscalculation for the uncharismatic Chun (Clark, 1987; Weber, 1997; Wickham, 1999). The Olympic bid project, begun in the year before the previous dictator Park was assassinated, was initially of no interest to the Chun regime (KAAA, 2001). It is no accident that after the Kwangju Uprising and Massacre the unpopular regime developed a sudden interest in reviving the bid attempt as part of a series of cultural policy moves calculated to depoliticize the public, ranging from creating professional baseball in South Korea to relaxing censorship on soft porn cinema to hosting the 1988 Olympics.

## Analysis and discussion

Documentation reviewed below supports a causal link between massive, sped-up urban renewal, forced evictions and preparations for the 1988 Olympics. This includes evidence from various sides of the political spectrum in South Korea and internationally includes mainstream Olympic historians (CISJD, 1988; Kim, 1989b; Park, 1991; Kim and Choe, 1997; ROK Ministry of Construction and Transportation, 2000; KOCER, 2002; Son, 2003; Daly, 2004; COHRE, 2007). While the evidence for a causal connection between event-related redevelopment and forced evictions is convincing and not controversial according to evidence that is currently available, the story of the figures depicted here shows how event-related urban restructuring is still tied to a longer history of redevelopment practices, following along the lines of the agenda laid out by Hiller (2000) for the study of cities and events.

### Clearance and new construction before the 1988 Olympics

The roster of urban improvement projects taken on after winning the bids for the 1988 Olympic Games and the 1986 Asian Games was long and ambitious, initiated by the South Korean national government in conjunction with City Hall. Both Games were used as deadlines for completing a 'laundry list' of upgrades to the city. Various sources concur that Seoul used the preparation period for the events to accomplish many decades worth of urban restructuring in just a few years (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 1990; ROK Ministry of Construction and Transportation, 2000; Son, 2003, volume 2: 188; volume 5: 46). Indeed, the 1988 Olympics are named in official histories as a key event in the 'historical mutation process' of the city's evolution along with longer, cataclysmic phases such as the Japanese colonial occupation (1910–45) and the Korean War (1950–3) (Seoul Development Institute and University of Seoul, 2000: 3, 302–34).

Highlights included the Han River Comprehensive Development Project entailing new water storage facilities, aquifer maintenance, flood plains repair, new river bed and banks, creation of public parks by riverside; the building of the Olympic Expressway; sewage and drainage duct works and sewage treatment improvement; redevelopment of main downtown commercial districts; creation of Asia Park and Athletes' Village; creation of the Olympic Park and Athletes' Village; development of the Karak Agriculture and Fisheries Wholesale Market, Yongsan electronics shopping district, Yongsan tour bus terminal and part of Mokdong New City; finishing one subway line and opening parts of several new lines; widening streets; expanding parking; reorganizing signage; introducing landscape architecture to numerous sites; planning additional public monuments, bridges, parks; and erecting several large office buildings (see, for example, Son, 2003, volume 5: 42–6; volume 2: 185–8). Projects were planned and carried out by the city government, mainly the Department of Urban Planning and the Department of Urban Renewal, in conjunction with the national Ministry of Transportation and Construction. The pragmatic viewpoint of planning officials was that there were people living in all of these areas, residential, commercial, or agricultural, who had to be moved (see, for example, Park, 1991).

In order to enable the regulatory mechanisms for construction, the president of South Korea, General Chun, proclaimed Public Law No. 3646 on 31 December 1982 to speed urban redevelopment. One particularly unpopular piece of the legislation relaxed limits on building height and size in the central business districts of the older, northern half of Seoul. A leading pro-government newspaper bitterly assessed the easing of controls with the tart metaphor 'ruining both one's self and one's family to pretty up for the party' (*Chosôn Ilbo*, 1983). Small- and medium-sized business owners in downtown areas stood to lose out to large corporate conglomerates erecting tall office buildings. (Kim and Choe, 1997; Son, 2003: volume 5: 46) This special edict was the key to Olympic-driven massive redevelopment.

## Residential clearance and the 1988 Olympics

Residential redevelopment was an integral part of the Olympic preparations proposed and implemented rapidly from 1982 onwards. Much of this fell under the category of 'city beautification' (see, for example, ACHR and Third World Network, 1989; Lee, 1990; Kim and Choe, 1997; Kim and Ha, 1998; Son, 2003). 'City beautification' came to be understood by the time of the 1988 Olympics as the removal of buildings labeled as substandard; in residential areas it entailed demolishing huge tracts of inexpensive buildings constructed without permits and replacing them with condominiums.

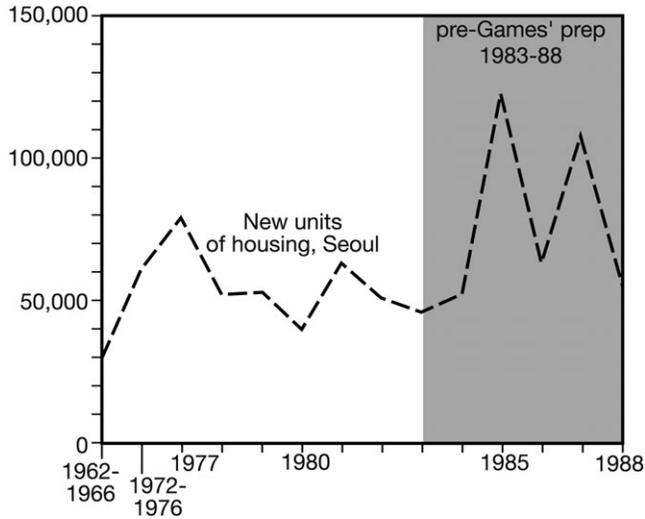
Nowhere in the logic for bidding to host the 1988 Olympics is urban redevelopment mentioned as a positive; to the contrary, the bid process went forward in defiance of opposition by City Hall, and mayors were replaced repeatedly until one was found that would pursue the built environment restructuring called for to present a modern-looking city by Western standards. The national level at which this decision to bid was made contrasts sharply with the assumption of Essex and Chalkley (1998) that hosting is first a city-level decision; outside of Europe and the USA national initiatives may take precedence. Refusal of the beautification campaign was behind the lack of support for hosting by Seoul's City Hall in late 1980 (*Sin Dong'a*, 1981b; Son, 2003). City Hall had extensive recent experience with centrally-dictated redevelopment and forcible removal in the 1960s and 1970s, including the infamous Wau apartment collapse disaster of 1970 (Lee, 1990), and was aware it was entering difficult territory. The city beautification campaign was specifically engineered to prepare for hosting the 1988 Olympics (Park, 1991). It is both boasted of in official histories of Seoul and also was condemned by the United Nations in 1987 for being one of the world's most physically violent, brutal housing relocation policies, second only to South Africa's township system (ACHR and Third World Network, 1989; Greene, 2003; Daly, 2004; Palenski, 2004).

In evaluating the effect of the 'beautification' campaign on urban poor residents at the time, one senior planning scholar wrote: 'City beautification is a standard of affluent people. Forcing that standard on poor people is immoral'. He went on to argue that: 'Were the public to decide that the affluent standard was to be supplied to poor people, too, the government would have had to reallocate resources differently than it in fact did' (Kim, 1989b: 264). This meant making replacement housing available at comparable cost, which was not the case.

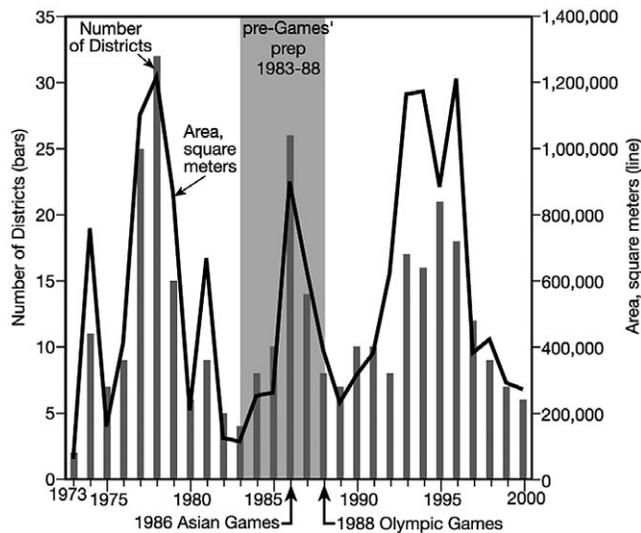
Similar to what is seen in Figure 1(a), Figure 2 shows an increase in the scale of residential redevelopment before the Games. Twin peaks in growth of housing supply are seen just before the 1986 Asian Games and the 1988 Olympic Games. Absolute numbers do not match exactly here, but the major trends are in general agreement when various sources are compared.

One international study showed that around 100 sites were redeveloped between 1982 and 1989 (ACHR and Third World Network, 1989: 5). It stated that between 1983 and 1988, 48,000 buildings housing 720,000 people were destroyed (*ibid.*: 23). That breaks down to 15 people or roughly 3 families per house, at 5 people per household, a reasonable estimate for densely populated low-income districts at that time. The estimate that 48,000 buildings were removed is tenable considering that a 1979 survey showed 186,436 unpermitted houses in Seoul, a large increase over 136,650 unpermitted houses identified in 1966, when the government reported 35% of the city's population residing in such houses (Whang, 1986: 270).

A government source states that 332 districts, most in Seoul, were redeveloped from 1973 to 2000; 'from 1986 to 1987 through the city beautification program for the Olympics . . . 40 districts were undertaken'. The same source shows 82 sites completed between 1982 and 1989, slightly fewer than the 100 mentioned above. It also reports a lower number of buildings taken out between 1983 and 1988, about 23,000 (ROK Ministry of Construction and Transportation, 2000: 56). A city publication shows similar figures (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 1998: 33–4). One possible explanation for why the number of buildings removed is 23,000 here instead of 48,000 above is that the



**Figure 2** Growth in housing supply, Seoul, 1962 to 1988 (source: adapted from Kim and Choe, 1997: 116)



**Figure 3** Area in square meters redeveloped (line) and number of urban districts redeveloped (bars), 1973 to 2000. © L.K. Davis, 2010 (sources: ROK Ministry of Construction and Transportation, 2000: 56)

government count is limited to residential districts and does not include evicted residents of the commercial, mixed-use and agricultural districts within city limits that were also redeveloped at that time.

Total area in square meters redeveloped per year is represented in Figure 3; it shows a middle-sized peak for the period of 1983–8 in the shaded area. The bar graphs represent total number of residential districts cleared and redeveloped in a given year, which roughly follows the contours of *area redeveloped*.

According to one source, the following schedule was announced during General Chun's annual tour of City Hall on 8 February 1983: '42 neighborhoods lining the main arteries and 53 neighborhoods in the city center, or a total of 95 neighborhoods were

targeted for redevelopment. Of those 71 areas were to be finished before the 1986 Asian Games, and the remaining 24 before the Olympic Games' (Son 2003, volume 5: 45). Ninety-three of the 95 neighborhoods were finished by 1988 (*ibid.*: 46). Tellingly, the former mayor of Seoul (who had presided over the South Korean delegation to Baden Baden in 1981 where the final Olympic bid competition was decided) was appointed head of the Korea National Housing Corporation — a government body — later in 1983 (Son, 2003, volume 2: 197). Included among those 95 areas were at least three huge urban residential redevelopment projects, each involving many neighborhoods: Sadangdong, Mokdong and Sanggyedong. All three regions became landmark sites of extended violent conflict with existing residents (Lee, 1985; *Yôsong*, 1985; Kim, 1987; CIIR, 1988; Hong, 1988; Kim, 1989; PURN, 1987; Lee, 1990; Kim, 1991; Sturdevant, 1991; Cho and Cho, 1992; Kim, 1996; Cho and Park, 2010). Even the contemporary existence of so-called 'vinyl house settlements', modern day shantytowns in and around Seoul, are said to have originated in this period of dislocations (KOCER, 2002; Stephens, 2009).

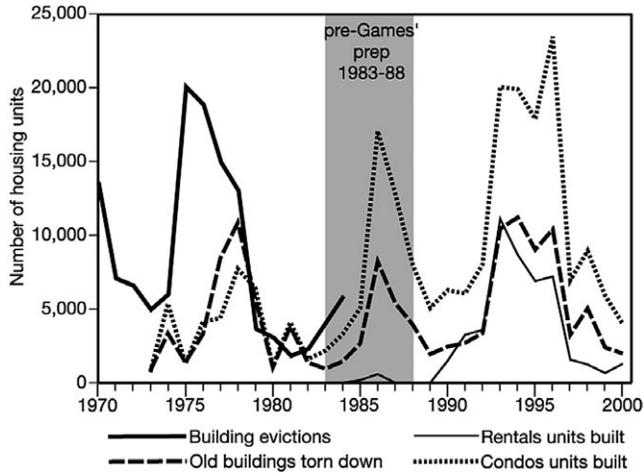
Because of the top-down style of redevelopment completed in a rush and without a plan in place for affordable housing, large numbers of people were dislocated. Property values were driven up and the displacement of working-class residents by wealthier newcomers was the outcome. However, gentrification as understood in the West is a partial and inadequate characterization of the process of residential redevelopment that dominates Asia now and in recent decades. In Seoul prior to 1988, the Chun government decided to replace substandard buildings wholesale on a larger scale than ever publicly acknowledged before via a centrally-planned process. The redevelopment focused on existing Seoul neighborhoods, including large districts of families who had already been forcibly relocated from one or more other central city areas in redevelopment done under the previous dictatorship. Clearance was a prerequisite step to building high rise apartments. Clearance in a hurry is seen as a regret by one official who was involved: 'We went too fast; there was too much fighting, too many difficulties for people' (Interview with Mr Park, Seoul City official, 15 September 2001). The historian, Son, also a former city official, writes: 'In this manner, redevelopment caught fire in the 1980s' (2003, volume 2: 188). Official accounts concur that the period from 1986 to 1987 was a historical high point for redevelopment 'due by and large to the city beautification maintenance project in preparation for the Seoul Olympics' (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 1998: 33).

### Forced evictions and the 1988 Olympics

Not all eviction becomes physically violent resulting in what has been called 'forced eviction'. Furthermore, measurement of forced eviction city-wide is difficult and highly inconsistent over time, as seen below in Figure 4. To what extent can the 1988 Olympics be said to be linked causally to forced eviction in Seoul?

Literature about the 1980s, evidence from neighborhood-based grassroots social movement groups, and government statistics of more transparent categories used as proxies can be pieced together to give a picture of the forced eviction practices used just prior to the Asian Games and the Olympics. Forced evictions were prevalent in this period (Park, 1990; 1995; Ha, 2001). The precise nature of the causal link relates to the carrying out of the special proclamation from General Chun. If the passage of time brings historical documentation from the military government period to the surface, the rationale for Chun's list of projects may someday become clearer; however, forced evictions are not generally discussed by aged officials on their deathbeds!

Although there was no freedom of speech and assembly and the South Korean media was censored up until the 1990s, news of neighborhood redevelopment struggles made it into print during violent periods. For the mid-1980s, due to the enormity of redevelopment efforts and an outspoken climate of public protest building up to the June 1987 Uprising when the dictatorship agreed to hold elections, there is plentiful documentation of forced evictions in the big residential projects Mokdong, Sanggyedong



**Figure 4** Composite number of building evictions, 1970 to 1984; number of old residential buildings torn down, number of condominium units built, number of rental units built, 1973 to 2000. © L.K. Davis, 2010 (sources: number of evictions – Chang 1989; 1998: 251; the rest – ROK Ministry of Construction and Transportation, 2000: 56)

and Sadangdong, as well as a number of the smaller areas. Another record is found in the logs kept by neighborhood groups forming the coalition called the Seoul Evictees Union (1988). Their written records of eviction battles also appear as appendices in academic publications such as Kim's *Theory of the Urban Poor* (1987). While counting forced evictions from the 1950s through the 1970s is trickier (T.K., 1976; KOCER, 1998), domestic coverage of forced eviction is voluminous at least in the 1980s.

The saga of some of the Sanggyedong evictees is really what brought the international spotlight onto Seoul prior to the Olympics beyond the usual international news media coverage of event-related cleanups of undesirable peoples. Sanggyedong evictees became directly linked to the Olympics when one group's resettlement solution (after several ugly rounds of desperate protest against dislocation, including spending the winter in tents outside the Roman Catholic Cathedral in the middle of downtown) put them by chance on land they had purchased next to the Olympic torch route. This has been written about at length internationally and domestically (PURN, 1987; Kim, 1989a; Kim, 1991; Sturdevant, 1991). In short, the homes they were building on their newly-purchased land were repeatedly knocked down by local government officials and hired thugs, resulting in the community spending the torch-run period living in dugout caves out of sight by the road.

This episode turned out to be the visible 'tip of the iceberg' when an international human rights group sent in a team to investigate, prompted by the non-governmental organization coalition of groups which had participated in the United Nations Habitat meetings (ACHR, 1988; 1989; 1988–94; ACHR and Third World Network, 1989; Asia Watch, 1990). The report issued by the international team that visited South Korea to look into allegations of widespread evictions was damning: it found evidence for 720,000 evictions related to Games preparations (ACHR and Third World Network, 1989). The report said that government officials verified this figure in face-to-face meetings (*ibid.*: 43), implying that — if anything — the count was low. The fact-finding mission had several immediate results. The first was that housing activists in poorer Asian countries formalized the organization of a new human rights umbrella group in Bangkok called Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (publishing the report as a small book on the Seoul Olympics was one of their first activities, but since then they have focused on land use and housing issues throughout the region). The second result was that foreign news

media became more attentive to the topic and enough coverage resulted that forced evictions made it into the annals of Olympic history as one of the few minuses to an otherwise glowingly successful event (see, for example, Daly, 2004; Palenski, 2004).

Forced evictions increased prior to the 1986 Asian Games and the 1988 Olympic Games, and it would not have happened this way at this time if the Games were not imminent. However, Figures 3 and 4 support the notion that it would be simplistic to state that the Olympics alone caused the redevelopment. Figure 3 shows very clearly that redevelopment in the 1980s, while perhaps made possible mainly by the Games, was lower than in the decade before or after. Figure 1(b) shows that new housing production was even greater in the decade following the Games; the latter half of the first decade of the twenty-first century will also show very high numbers of evictions and demolitions if projects currently underway are completed and comparable statistics are made available.

Figure 4 is the least complete but the most provocative of the figures, compiling various sources' counts of building and clearance activities from the 1970s through to the first half of 2000. A key message from this Figure is the number of demolitions of old homes, indicating eviction and usually some amount of forced eviction when corroborated with the limited historical record, may have been even higher in the 1970s than in the mid-1980s, pre-Olympic. The shortest, heaviest, dark line on the far left, taken from tables of numbers in Chang (1998), shows building evictions much higher than acknowledged by official data; unfortunately that data source stops at 1984. The medium dark dashed line of 'Old buildings torn down', taken from the more complete set of internal government data, echoes the Chang line with a considerably lower count of demolitions; that data from the government is continuous to the year 2000.

In fact, both the Chang (*ibid.*) line and the ROK Ministry (2000) line indicate that there were more demolitions counted in the 1970s and the 1990s, before and after the Games' decade. Ha (1987), the senior Korean scholar on the details of housing-related public policy and administration, sees the 1980s as a repeat of mass evictions and forced removals of the 1950s and 1960s; other sources reviewing earlier decades also mention forced removal and demolition of low-cost urban housing (T.K., 1976; Mills and Song, 1979; KOCER, 1998; ROK Ministry of Construction and Transportation, 2000). The mayor of Seoul from 1966–70 was nicknamed 'the Bulldozer' for his eviction and demolition practices. Even modern historical data is hard to find and yet will be of great interest to scholars if it becomes available one day.

Some of the larger redevelopment areas rushed through the process in the years just before the 1988 Olympics had an immediate, short-term causal link to the event in terms of timing and scale but probably would have been redone eventually. The difficulties of the Sanggyedong evictees, made known worldwide by the documentary 'Sanggyedong Olympics' (PURN, 1987), occurred only because of the Olympics and highlighted to a wider audience the kinds of 'preparations' being made for the Games. Domestically, the mass scale of forced eviction and rebuilding was common knowledge, but in that political environment it was hard to stop. Resisters risked prison and death. The Sanggyedong group debacle raises the question of how much eviction and redevelopment was taking place, where the human impact was practically invisible.

Stemming from all of this, more recently a Geneva-based human rights group, the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, having seen a pattern, undertook a study of Olympic Games and forced evictions. This resulted in several documents, including a book entitled *Fair Play for Housing: Mega-events, Olympic Games, and Housing Rights — Opportunities for the Olympic Movement and Others* (2007) and some shorter policy recommendation documents, suggesting to those involved in bidding procedures that avoiding forced eviction ought to be part of the social sustainability guidelines for hosting. *Fair Play* incorporates case studies of the past six Olympics plus a section on preparations for the 2012 London Olympics; it ends with a discussion about event hosting working together with sustainable urbanism practices currently in vogue, in the West at least. There is inadequate space here to evaluate and debate the merits of this

work fully, but one would expect the International Olympic Committee to find no argument, at least in principle, with the ten guidelines proposed.

On the other hand, the long and dissimilar list of international events classified as mega-events at the end of the *Fair Play* volume implies that government officials and event planners of all sorts would need to adhere to these guidelines to improve upon the current situation. One does not need to read COHRE's most recent case study on the 2008 Olympics held in China to remember that both international law and civil society are socially-constructed covenants rather than universal practices. Sober and meticulous studies of events and impacts such as Essex and Chalkley (1998) are based upon notions of civil society that assume freedom of speech and the press, and freedom to associate, are defended by law. Appeals to international law to stop the most egregious violations of human rights including the right to shelter are laudable but may have differential impact depending upon the host country.

### Taking the longer view – what it tells us

It is worth looking at a longer time span even if it confuses the picture of how events function in cities because the longer view can deepen and enrich our understanding of this interaction. This analysis argues for staying with the commonly held perspective that the 1988 Olympics caused an increase in residential redevelopment, evictions and forced evictions in the period immediately prior to the Asian and Olympic Games. It goes on to show in Figures 3 and 4 that these outcomes are not unique to event hosting, however, and that event hosting is part of a bigger picture of social structural change in cities related to political economy demands. The intense but temporary scrutiny given to events and to cities hosting major events can further inform our studies of urban practices such as forced evictions, and studies of particular practices can likewise lead to a more acute awareness of how events function in cities and how to envision an ideal event.

The descriptive figures considered here show that demolitions, forced evictions and redevelopment booms were neither unique to the pre-Games period of the mid-1980s, nor to subsequent decades. Figures 3 and 4 suggest that even larger numbers of old houses may have been torn down during the 1970s than in the 1980s, and more still in the decade after the Olympic Games. If the causal relationship between the hosting of the two Games events and sped-up urban redevelopment along with a spike in forced evictions is accepted for this case, then the reason for booms in demolitions, evictions and forced evictions in previous and subsequent decades calls for a different explanation. Here, the likelihood of causal complexity, in the form of plural causality (Ragin, 1987) is evident. Hosting certain kinds of events may combine with other factors to be sufficient cause for evictions, forced evictions and demolitions to increase — and yet hosting is certainly not the only time when large-scale urban restructuring and all that may come with it takes place (King *et al.*, 1994).

In retrospect, the housing history of working-class neighborhoods of Seoul can be seen as having reached a turning point away from small, self-built units to corporate, mass-produced towers during this pre-Olympics period, a new mode of housing production privileging industrial builders. The number of buildings without permits that were destroyed in the decades before and after the 1980s appears to be higher than the number demolished just before the Games. The historical perspective of redevelopment in Seoul after the Korean War suggests that a large plan to replace self-built homes (built without permits) in working-class areas of the city unfolded in fits and starts from the late 1960s onward, making space available for more a lucrative form of housing. Hosting the Olympics provided a major impetus for industrializing such redevelopment administratively (Park, 1991; Kim and Choe, 1997; Ha, 2001) that seems to have made large-scale redevelopment easier in subsequent eras.

The move to high-rise apartment towers in the redeveloped zones was driven by the larger political economy of land and real estate development in the city, although in the 1980s it was justified and made to happen partly as a result of aesthetic planning for

televised international events. The underlying forces had more to do with soaring land prices, profit motives shared by corporate developers and the city, real estate speculation at the household level by the middle class and the need for more units of housing achievable by increasing density (Smith, 1979; 1982; Slater, 2006; Ebner, 2008).

Less expensive, low-rise options for gradual housing upgrade which might have achieved both goals of 'beautification' and affordability were thus shunned. The type of housing, its cost structure, lifestyle and spatial demography of urban residents in urban South Korea has been transformed by the mode of residential redevelopment that was accelerated and expanded immediately preceding the 1988 Olympics. Replacement was chosen over repair and upgrade for the majority of districts of the city (Graham and Thrift, 2007).

The rebuilt areas became high-rise apartment complexes for reasons beyond event-hosting needs, such as the need to store capital in the built environment, excess building capacity of South Korean construction corporations as Middle East contracts dwindled, and the need to curtail the use of urban land by owner- and renter-squatters. In eliminating squatter use of land and separating 'owner-squatters' from 'tenant-squatters' via a new administrative method of organizing redevelopment, the pre-1988 Olympics redevelopment process pioneered a new method of accomplishing redevelopment on an enormous scale (Ha, 2001). The Games were used to amplify changes already underway that resulted in the elimination of a way of life (KOCER, 2000; Son, 2003; Cho and Park, 2010).

By placing the hosting of the Olympic Games into a slightly longer timeline and changing the focus to redevelopment, evictions and forced evictions as a focal outcome, the explanations for why a city would bid to host and then undertake a Robert Moses-scale renovation in the name of the Games become clearer. Also, by focusing on the event, and then using contemporary studies of event history to draw attention to replacement and repair practices in the city, certain aspects of built environment maintenance which are little-noticed beyond an immediate locale such as demolition and forced evictions are made more broadly visible.

## Conclusion

Existing evidence indicates that large swaths of old houses were demolished, many evicted, and some forcibly evicted in a massive redevelopment campaign immediately preceding the 1986 Asian Games and the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul, South Korea. The Games were the motivating force behind the campaign — its origin, its scale, breadth and pace — even when the construction work went far beyond the physical location of competition facilities. Some reasons for the causal relationship between changes in the built environment and the event were discussed. The analysis of existing data went on to demonstrate that the outcome of demolition and evictions were greater before and after the 1980s. More data would be needed to determine whether the same is true of forced evictions. Indeed, a positive outcome of the international attention given to South Korean forced evictions right before the 1988 Olympics was the creation of a social housing system. While this system in practice only helps the very lowest income rung and the middle class, and not those in-between, it is a start.

Scholars of South Korean national political history have noted when asked that massive redevelopment and forced evictions have been happening in Seoul for a long time and are not specific to the Olympics (Ha, 2007; Cumings, 2009). In a most general sense this is partially true, but if they were to look at city-level administrative dynamics, they would not refute the causal connection for a specific period of particularly notable forced evictions. One reason for looking at the variables of event and forced evictions is to overcome fatigue and cynicism about inhumane governance and the urban condition; this might be accomplished through closer work with details of how cities transform that the mega-event and mega-project literatures have promoted in the vein of Altshuler and Luberoff (2003).

This suggests the need for a more enriched understanding of the role of large-scale events, or mega-events, in facilitating eviction, forced eviction and urban redevelopment. The history of practices of eviction, forced eviction and redevelopment previous to the event-preparation period serves as an institutional legacy that might predict what is to occur. The data shown here indicates that the preparation period for events was used to create new institutional mechanisms, such as corporate–local government–elite resident partnerships (Ha, 2001), that would come to facilitate greater efficiency and even more ambitious projects in the decades following the landmark event. This is what happened in South Korea, and it is proposed that studies of local public administration in the China case may prove the 2008 Olympics to have parallel effects, albeit in a very different type of system.

One direction for further research provoked by gaps in the above discussion is that reshuffling variables may lead to a deeper understanding of how large-scale event hosting is functioning. Recent studies of failed bid attempts have incorporated this approach. For example, Alberts (2009) looks at those facilities which are still built in the wake of a failed attempt to host — and to what end. If a more common independent variable is selected, such as a growth coalition-oriented national agenda, to predict the outcomes of evictions, forced evictions and redevelopment, the large-scale event might seem to be merely part of that growth agenda. This doesn't necessarily negate the first finding, that the event-hosting led to certain outcomes in certain contexts, and it doesn't excuse the organizers from proceeding humanely. Perhaps a more historicized approach to studying event outcomes for successful host efforts might influence how events are planned on a locale-specific basis.

Taking a more historical view of residential demolitions, evictions and forced evictions — rather than looking only at the years immediately proximate to the Games reinforces that a large-scale event is produced within a particular context, as Hiller (2000) has emphasized. Preparations by host cities should not be reified as an isolated event, but must be understood and may even be predictable based upon that city's practices of recent decades. Although it may have been superficially understood as an aesthetic project to make the city appear more attractive to the television audience, tourists and investors, the underlying process of residential building conducted in advance of the 1988 Olympics was a major chapter in a greater story. That story involves a wholesale shift in normative living standards, land use regimes and the replacement of self-built homes with industrially mass-produced homes: an epochal transformation in which the Olympics played a key part. Olympics of recent years in Athens and Beijing have also been employed to accomplish major changes to the built environment specific to each city's historical geographical context and trajectories. The results shown here provide a rationale for looking at how clearance and eviction are handled over time and incorporate the study of large events within this analysis. It suggests topics for further research on comparative study of how aged urban built environments are dealt with (Nijman, 2007) and the role therein of events. Large-scale events offer a rare window into a murky domestic world of public policy practices with hidden historical legacies that are of great interest and significance to urbanists.

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## Résumé

*On constate un lien de plus en plus étroit entre des expulsions en nombre et de grands événements internationaux, ou méga-événements, organisés dans le monde. Revenant sur le réaménagement résidentiel de Séoul lancé juste avant les Jeux olympiques de 1988, l'article tente de mieux comprendre la manière dont ces grands événements amènent les villes à changer. Si on peut corrélérer, d'un côté, les textes existants sur une explosion dans la construction de logements neufs associée à un déplacement à grande échelle de résidents urbains pauvres au moyen d'expulsions énergiques dans le milieu des années 1980 avec, de l'autre, des données issues de sources historiques primaires et secondaires, on prouve de façon irréfutable un lien de causalité entre l'accueil de l'événement et les expulsions forcées. Toutefois, les données font aussi apparaître que les déblaiements, expulsions et démolitions ont eu lieu à Séoul sur de longues périodes, tant avant qu'après les J.O., ce qui suggère que ceux-ci s'inscrivaient dans un processus et un exercice de transformation urbaine plus globaux. Sans écarter l'incidence de l'organisation d'une telle manifestation, on peut se demander ce qui motive à la fois la candidature à celle-ci et le réaménagement résidentiel, mais aussi dans quelle mesure l'événement est l'occasion d'affiner et d'institutionnaliser davantage certaines pratiques. L'article propose une perspective historique plus longue pour étudier la pratique des déblaiements, expulsions et démolitions afin d'anticiper la dynamique d'accueil dans une ville donnée et de contribuer à la planification urbaine liée à l'événement.*