

INTERFACE

Planning Displacement: The Real Legacy of Major Sporting Events

LIBBY PORTER

Introduction

Displacement is a defining feature of the mega-event: those major sporting and cultural events that roam every few years to a new venue, and a new city. This is the legacy of such events that goes almost unreported publicly. It is considered either unimportant, or the unfortunate but necessary by-product of the urban redevelopment needed to make a successful event. This Interface takes a look at the personal cost and experience of being displaced by a major sporting event. It explores the deeply marginalising effects of being on the “receiving end” of the policy and planning processes designed to achieve displacement. In doing so, the contributions in this Interface confront those processes head on and challenge not only the assumptions, but also the procedures by which displacement is actually given effect.

With alarming regularity, I hear certain platitudes about displacement for “urban regeneration” amongst policy makers and planning practitioners particularly in relation to major sporting events. They converge on the notion that displacement is inevitable and, while perhaps unfortunate, just a “natural” part of the cycle of urban development. From those who are actually carrying out displacement (tenant evictions, forced purchase of property by the state and so on), there is a widespread notion that they are just doing their jobs. In the face of the kinds of stories presented here, I find it difficult to believe that people are not heartbroken by what it means to “just do their jobs”.

As a planning profession we seem to rarely engage with critical understandings of what displacement actually is, despite the wealth of evidence on the subject from a long tradition of gentrification scholarship (see Lees, Slater & Wyly, 2008 for an excellent overview) and various critiques of urban renewal, slum clearance and regeneration (Allen, 2008; Jacobs, 1961; Porter & Shaw, 2008). Moreover, the actual practices that bring it about are rarely held up and examined critically. Or perhaps more accurately, they are rarely held up and examined critically from the perspective of those on the receiving end of them. Any “critique” is usually in the form of making those procedures more “efficient” from the perspective of property capital (see, for example, Adams *et al.*, 2001).

It is worth taking a moment, then, to examine what displacement actually is, and how we might define and understand it. Despite the lack of widespread media and popular attention to displacement associated with major sporting events (with notable exceptions such as Monbiot, 2007), we actually know quite a lot about displacement, its processes and effects. It is instructive to start by looking closely at the cogently argued analytical categories that Marcuse (1985) offers, based on and developing earlier definitions:

Displacement occurs when any household is forced to move from its residence by conditions that affect the dwelling or its immediate surroundings, and that: 1) are beyond the household’s reasonable ability to control or prevent; 2) occur despite the household’s having met all previously imposed conditions

of occupancy; and 3) make continued occupancy by that household impossible, hazardous, or unaffordable. (Grier & Grier quoted in Marcuse, 1985, p. 205)

Marcuse (1985) adds to this the notion of exclusionary displacement, which occurs when a household is prevented from moving into a dwelling because gentrification of that particular housing unit, or neighbourhood, has occurred. Such a household is “excluded from living where it would otherwise have lived” (Marcuse, 1985, p. 207) by the restructuring of local housing markets as a result of gentrification. To this, Marcuse further adds displacement pressure which he defined as:

when a family sees the neighbourhood around it changing dramatically, when their friends are leaving the neighbourhood, when the stores they patronize are liquidating and new stores for other clientele are taking their places, and when changes in public facilities, in transportation patterns, and in support services all clearly are making the area less and less liveable, then the pressure of displacement already is severe. Its actuality is only a matter of time. Families living under these circumstances may move as soon as they can, rather than wait for the inevitable; nonetheless they are displaced. (Marcuse, 1985, p. 207)

We can also note that displacement occurs beyond the traditional gentrification focus of the “household”: local businesses, for example, and those completely marginalised from local housing markets such as the homeless, also become displaced. The specificity of these definitions of both direct and exclusionary displacement help us understand the phenomenon in both conceptual and empirical terms. As we will see from the contributions that follow in this *Interface*, these categories of displacement interlock and overlap in the actual reality of being displaced by major sporting events.

A report by the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) is also telling on the scale, process and effects of displacement, providing detailed accounts of evictions, indirect displacement, and loss of housing affordability and rights as a direct result of major events. This report concludes from the evidence collected that “the Olympic Games and other mega-events are often catalysts for redevelopment entailing massive displacements and reductions in low cost and social housing stock, all of which result in a significant decrease in housing affordability” (COHRE, 2007, p. 11). Other studies on a city by city basis have also documented displacing effects, whether by Olympic Games, or other types of major cultural and exhibition events. It is to these kinds of research that practice should be turning, to more fully understand the structures and processes at work in displacement and gentrification, and the role of policy and planning practice.

My purpose with this *Interface*, however, is slightly different and the tenor not analytical but experiential and narrative. It doesn’t set out to document displacement in a comprehensive sense, nor does it specifically address in a conceptual way the existing body of work on displacement, gentrification and urban regeneration. Instead, it brings together stories from people who are directly experiencing displacement, in different ways, because of major sporting events in their home cities. This is important, partly because it is rarely discussed, and partly because the stories ask very specific questions, but in new ways, of planning policy and practice.

Our stories come from London, Glasgow and Vancouver, and are each the result of either Olympic or Commonwealth Games events being held in those cities. Margaret Jaconelli is a resident of Dalmarnock, in Glasgow’s East End and is currently contesting a Compulsory Purchase Order over her property, which is due to be demolished to make way for the Athlete’s Village of the 2014 Commonwealth Games. Julian Cheyne was a

resident of a housing estate known as Clays Lane, in the East End of London, and was displaced to make way for the development of the Athlete's Village for London's 2012 Olympic Games. David Eby is a resident and local lawyer in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside district, a poor area adjacent to some of the major sites and tourist destinations that are the focus of the 2010 Winter Olympics.

The contributions do not offer an "analysis" of displacement, in the sense of its drivers and causes, or the underlying structures of its effects. Nor do they constitute a practitioner perspective on event-related urban redevelopment, or the "how-to's" of legacy planning. Instead, they are accounts of what it feels like to be on the receiving end of the event-planning process. They are the human stories of loss, marginalisation and injustice that are the other, less visible, legacy of major sporting events. As stories of displacement, they are naturally "negative" stories. There are, perhaps, similarly personal accounts of more positive legacies of the urban redevelopment associated with major sporting events. While this is acknowledged, this is not an apology for bringing together what may be criticised as an "unbalanced" selection of viewpoints. The voices of those who stand to gain, and who do gain, from the urban development associated with major sporting events are more easily heard and significantly more widely reported. As Julian Cheyne points out, one of the remarkable aspects of the Olympic Games in particular is the almost universal support they receive from politicians, authorities and the media.

There is much to learn from these stories, if we listen carefully. I suggest this requires a listening to these stories through, and then beyond, the palpable sense of hurt, loss, marginalisation, and unfairness. It requires listening to the details, the specificities of these stories, and then hearing what is behind those details. It might be possible to argue those details and specificities away: there is always another side to every story. To do so, however, would be to miss the point of what these stories teach us. They certainly offer another viewpoint about the events and happenings in each of these cities, other than the "official" narrative, or the narratives offered by research and academic analysis. But more than that, they tell us about what the daily grind of being displaced actually looks and feels like.

Much of this daily grind is about the workings of planning process, from the perspective of non-planners at the "receiving end" of processes over which they have little control. What has struck me on reading these contributions, and being involved in their production, is the strong sense of people feeling invisible, of being someone (or perhaps a community of people) that just doesn't count: in a sense, of becoming a non-citizen. Citizen invisibility is produced in at least two ways in the planning process, as these stories attest.

First is the impact upon people, neighbourhoods and daily lives when space is seen as an abstraction by planning policy and practice. In the story from Eby about Vancouver we get a glimpse of how plans for the Downtown Eastside, particularly the new transport routes down Hastings Street and the "greenway", have been imagined as the creation of new things, valuable uses, from space emptied of people and activity through bureaucratic imagineering. The existing population and neighbourhood, the spaces and places in which citizens actively create their daily existence together, are invisible to the bureaucratic abstractions of "delivering" major venues and new infrastructure. It doesn't matter anymore whether the people making and implementing the policies, regulations and procedures are just "good people doing their job", or whether they are in the back pockets of the real powers behind the event. Either way, the ethos that the poor, homeless and marginalised are simply objects to be removed is pervasive.

In London, Cheyne notes how powerfully the discourse of dereliction has worked in the East End to allow and justify the displacement and disruption of homes and livelihoods. Cheyne's neighbourhood, the Clays Lane estate, which sounds like exactly the kind of

"sustainable and inclusive community" the rhetoric of government policy appears to be championing, was condemned as "in decay" and "lacking amenities". The much-loved semi-wild area around the Clays Lane estate was dismissed as "scrub". In Jaconelli's case, the abstraction is more personal. She is being displaced by new development for the Athlete's Village, and her family home and neighbourhood becomes, through the land assembly process, nothing more than bricks and mortar, to be traded for some other form of shelter in another part of the city.

The second way these citizens are made invisible is through planning procedure. This is particularly palpable in Cheyne's and Jaconelli's stories. In the UK as elsewhere, the state's seizure of property (known variously as compulsory purchase, expropriation, eminent domain or compulsory acquisition) to enable land assembly for comprehensive redevelopment is controversial. Supporters argue compulsory purchase is necessary for this purpose, as comprehensive redevelopment is unable to occur without land parcels of a significant-enough size to interest private developers. When there is substantial private gain to be made from property redevelopment, and little to no chance that those displaced will be able to move back, the question of "public interest" is seriously in doubt.

Residents like Cheyne and Jaconelli, as well as those that Eby discusses living precariously in the hostels of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, are all suffering from Marcuse's four types of displacement.¹ There is direct displacement through forced eviction, compulsory purchase, police harassment; there is chain displacement in recognising the many households and residents moved at earlier times; there is exclusionary displacement as the displaced cannot access the new or existing housing in the neighbourhood; and there is displacement pressure where the daily reality of living in a rapidly transforming neighbourhood has its own displacing effects (see Slater, 2009).

All of the stories also demonstrate just how marginalising and dispossessing the daily grind of policy and regulatory implementation can be. Processes like compulsory purchase are daunting in the extreme. The sheer volume of paperwork, the time taken, the deep uncertainty generated: all take their toll on health, livelihoods and wellbeing. When we take into account the extreme inequalities of power in those processes, and the outcomes they generate, they are also exposed as deeply unjust. Furthermore, they are indicative of a much wider erosion of trust in the public sector as a result of poor experiences and the resentment that follows. Whether it be planners or police officers, the sense that trust in public institutions has been completely abrogated in these stories is very apparent.²

Why should any of this matter? Surely, as the High Court found in its deliberations on the displacement of the Clays Lane residents (see Cheyne this volume), the benefits of major sporting events far outweigh the individual homes, health and livelihoods of a few residents? And what is more, planning is just the process by which these things are figured out "on the ground", right? No need for planners to get anxious and uptight about what is going on. And anyway, how can the planning profession go about fixing the widespread "trust" problem in the public sector?

Three issues seem important here. First, as the COHRE study (2007) found, the numbers of people displaced by major events (sporting or otherwise) runs into the millions. This matters globally, with a weight of numbers that if it doesn't make us run to the barricades, must surely make us stop and think about the value of continuing to host events in this way. Second, there is little evidence to support the notion of a lasting positive legacy from the urban development associated with major sporting events. In fact, the evidence points in the opposite direction: toward massively negative and pernicious impacts especially for those most vulnerable to urban change (see COHRE, 2007, Lenskyj, 2002, Shaw, 2008). Third, these are citizens who matter. They deserve respect for their homes, livelihoods and

wellbeing, and to be treated with dignity and care. Whatever you think about displacement—a necessary evil of major urban redevelopment, or an absolute travesty of justice that is never excusable—these stories ask us to think about the manner in which we conduct public policy, and planning procedure. Is it with care, respect and dignity for those who are asked to make way for urban change? What if, instead, we were to conduct our procedures and policies as if people actually mattered? As if there were basic human rights to respect, proper shelter, a livelihood, and a say in all of those things?

Debates about major, roaming sporting events will, and of course should, continue. Whether you think them universally evil because they line the pockets of the already rich, or simply a good idea that doesn't deliver "legacy" because of poor management; whether you are "pro-Games" or "no-Games"; whether you buy into the Olympic frame (Shaw, 2008) and want to mould it, or whether you seek to break that frame: either way, you should be heartbroken, angry and moved to action by the stories that follow.

Notes

1. I am indebted to Tom Slater for this pertinent observation.
2. With thanks to Heather Campbell for helping develop these points.

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"Just a person in a wee flat": Being Displaced by the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow's East End

MARGARET JACONELLI in conversation with LIBBY PORTER

This piece is an abridged and edited transcript of an interview with Margaret conducted in her home, in January 2009, by Libby Porter. The "voice" in italic text is that of Margaret, Libby's voice is in normal text.

Margaret Jaconelli is a long-time resident of Dalmarnock in the East End of Glasgow. In 2000, the Housing Association that owns the tenement building in which Margaret's flat is located came to tell her she needed to move because they had decided to demolish the building. It was not clear at this point for what purpose the building was going to be demolished.

The Housing Association came [to us] in 2000 and said that they were going to pull this building down . . . So I went down to visit [the Housing Association] and said right, before we do anything here . . . it all boils down to money. They said well we're just going to grass [the site] over. I said, listen, do not tell me that in the East End of Glasgow, near the city centre, that all this land is going to be grassed over. It all boils down to money. I know the way everything gets sold, the bricks, everything, the land will get sold.

Later, when Glasgow bid to host the 2014 Commonwealth Games, it became clear that the building, like many others around it, stood in the way of the Athlete's Village. This development of approximately 38 hectares will be adjacent to the new National Indoor Sports Arena and cycling Velodrome. According to the brief to the consortia of companies bidding for the development rights for the Village, the site should ultimately contain around 1,200 homes. The significant majority of these will be sold in the open market after the Games, with a portion let for social housing.

Most of Margaret's neighbours were renting their homes from public housing agencies, including Glasgow City Council, and had been progressively evicted and re-housed since the first announcement of the demolition in 2000. Social tenants are eligible for re-housing in other forms of accommodation, some of which had been newly built within the Dalmarnock area. But Margaret, as an owner-occupier, was ineligible for this re-housing scheme. In addition, her tenure history in her home over the past thirty years made things even more complicated . . .

We bought our house in 1976. We were only 17 and we bought this house. When I first moved here, in '76, all the wee maisonettes were over there [gesturing over the road to where there is now a vacant plot], and four big tower blocks were there. We were only 16, we got married and when we were 17 we had our first boy. At that time, you had to go to the schemes¹ like Castlemilk and Easterhouse. And they were offering us away to the schemes. But I didn't want to go to the schemes. My husband's family stay in the schemes, so, it would've been easier to go there. But at that time I worked in Arnott's [a large Glasgow department store] and my mum had a big four-bedroom apartment. It was only my mum and dad that was left in the house, so we stayed with my mum and dad for a year. We saved up, got the deposit for this [apartment] and bought this. We were 17. My husband was an apprentice at the time, and I worked. The two of us worked, and we bought this. I worked, and my mammy looked after the wee fella [Margaret's eldest son]. That was how we took this house. At that time, you couldn't get a house in Dalmarnock. People wanted to live here. Now, a lot of people run it down, but there were a lot of good people down here, and there still are a lot of good people down here. We could've got a house up in Rutherglen [an area to the south of Glasgow] at the time, and sometimes I wish we had, you know [laughing]. But you cannae go back!

We were only in the house a few years and the Housing Association came in and bought it back off us. Then we had to be in it another 15 years for me to go back in to buy it [back] from the Housing Association. We started renovating it for the long-term, because we've got four boys and we thought one of them would have wanted it. We had only owned it again for a few years and that was when they came [in 2000] and said the building's coming down. When they came to tell us the building was coming down, they took my details and asked about what we would need in a new house [a new scheme was being built nearby], and I said I would like an apartment. They said that's okay, and

put me down for that. But then later they said we can't give you a house, you're not entitled to it. You're an owner-occupier. See if they'd given me a wee house down there, I would've been quite happy to go. I wouldn't be here.

Anyway, that was us. We just had to sit tight then, and wait.

Since then, Margaret has been fighting for proper compensation for her family's displacement. In the years between 2000 and early 2008, Margaret and her solicitor had intermittent correspondence with the Council and the Housing Association about her position. Eventually, a representative from the Housing Association arrived at Margaret's house with a letter offering her a shared ownership property three to four miles from Dalmarnock. A shared ownership property is a form of tenure where a housing authority (such as a municipal authority or housing association) and the occupier own a part share each of the property. Usually, the occupier also has to pay rent on the part owned by the housing authority. Margaret currently owns her house outright, with no mortgage.

Finally [in summer 2008] someone from the Housing Association came to the door with a letter. She said, "I've brought this letter about how to buy your own house."

And I said, "What do you mean buy my own house?"

She said, "It's a shared ownership."

I said, "Wait a minute, I don't need you to come and show me how to buy my own property. I can quite easily do that, that's what I would pay a lawyer for. And anyway who said shared ownership? I've never mentioned shared ownership."

She said, 'Well we thought it would be a good idea for you.'

I says, "Oh did you? You know my circumstances? I'm not interested, take it away."

Then I went "No no, wait a wee minute, give me the envelope. I'm not even opening this envelope, I'm taking it to my solicitor."

I went to my solicitors the next day, gave him the letter and he says, "They've offered you a shared ownership property—you would own 80% and they would own 20%—in Cranhill, Bellrock View" [an area to the north-east of the city].

I said, "Well I'd be coming out of the frying pan into the fire, so—the answer is no."

We wrote back and said "Come in with an offer and let's sort it out."

Never heard a reply to that. Then on the 11th of July 2008, I lost my wee grandson, he was stillborn. And the next morning I had a letter from the Council. My lawyer wrote back and said we were willing to negotiate. Never heard any more until last week a neighbour round the corner came in and said, "Margaret, they're compulsorily purchasing you, I've got the letter here with your address listed on it."

I've never had any negotiations [with the Council], we've never sat down and talked about money.

Margaret lodged an objection, through her solicitor, to the Compulsory Purchase Order in April 2009. Her objection relates to the lack of appropriate negotiation and reasonable offers being made to her concerning the purchase of her property. Other property owners in the area, mostly small shop owners around the corner from Margaret's home, are also objecting the Order. At the time of writing, they still await a reply from Glasgow City Council, and information about a hearing for their objections.

I went to see my solicitor last week, panicking. I was panicking because I'm not wanting to go away with nothing. You hear that many rumours, people go away with nothing. And he said, "Well Margaret, we've got our say in court now, they're putting you out of your house and they've got to come up with the compensation."

But I only want the compensation to go. I'm 50 now, I'll be 51 in April. I don't want to take a mortgage on. I just want to buy a house and that's it. What I'm most worried about is am I going to have enough money to buy a house? I cannot take a mortgage on at 51, because I'll be paying [it off] for the next 15 years. I've still got the wee fella, he's 15. He's my youngest and I've got to make sure everything's alright for him. That's why I say "No, I'm going to fight it." Last year I was pretty ill and I wasn't really interested in what was happening. But now I'm back on my feet and I'm fighting. I'm not looking for millions. I'm just looking for enough to buy a house, a decent house, not far from here.

All the residents of the building, and the surrounding neighbourhood were evicted and re-housed in the years immediately after the first decision to demolish in 2000. Margaret continues to live in the empty building with her family, surrounded by dereliction, awaiting an outcome about her objection to the Compulsory Purchase Order. As the only residents in the block for so many years now, the daily realities of life for Margaret and her family are challenging. Damp, cold, vermin and insecurity are constant pressures. The future seems daunting because of uncertainty...

I've been here six years myself....six years alone. The last person before me, my neighbour upstairs, she went away in 2002, round to the new houses in Dalmarnock Road they built. And I've been here for six years alone.

I'm paying £140 a week in the winter to heat this house up. I've got the fire on all the time in the winter. See if you don't, it gets dead cold and damp, because the building's empty. In the summer it's not so bad, but in the winter I'm spending £140 a week on heating. What happened was the lass [in the flat] above me was moving [in the winter time]. When everybody else had left [their flats], they went and left old beds and carpets down, everything. The lass upstairs said that the Housing Association phoned her and said, "Make sure your house is empty."

She said "Can I leave my carpets down to keep the heat in for Margaret, because she's going to be in the building?"



Figure 1. Ardenlea Street, Dalmarnock, Glasgow. Photo by Libby Porter.

They said, "No you must lift your carpets."

On the windows up there, they took the window [panes] out and left . . . it's like a wire mesh with holes. So, the wind was blowing through. And they left a space like that [gestures with hands about a foot apart] and the birds were getting in. I had to fight last year to get them to come and block that, they just put a wee bit of wood up. Then the water was coming in and running down the walls into my boy's bedroom and I had to fight for months to get them to sort that out, which they eventually did.

Last year I fought with them to get the gutters clean. I know it sounds unreasonable, because the building's coming down, but we've got a pipe in one of the bedrooms, it's in between the wall. When it gets blocked, you can hear it, and it bursts. So, I had to fight with them to get the gutters cleaned.

Yesterday, I could hear like a mouse or something that had come in behind the metal door in the close. I phoned the housing and said "Look I don't know whether it's a mouse or a rat or a bird or whatever, but it's scratching behind the metal door."

And they said, "Well what are you wanting us to do?"

I said, "I want you to get the Environmental Health in."

Now for 33 year I have never had anything like! [laughing] For 33 years it's been not bad, but yesterday . . . ooh [shuddering]. It might be a bird that's come in through the gap. So, I'm waiting on them coming to open the metal door . . .

We can't go on holiday, don't get me wrong, my [youngest] son goes on holiday, he makes sure he goes on holiday [laughing]. Usually we go away on holiday as a family, but we can't now, we haven't been on holiday in five years. That's because we cannot leave the house. There used to be guys come in to empty flats in the building, the scrap men. They've been in all the empty houses taking the scrap. So if you go [away], you never know . . . And there's nobody to watch. We've got the alarm system here but it's still not the same.

I feel like I'm being treated like I'm just from the East End, just a person in a wee flat. I've always been an East Ender, born in the East End and brought up, brought our kids up here. My boy doesn't want to leave here, he's got pals here. Wherever I go, I'll not be away far, because I've got friends, and my brother and sister both stay in [nearby] Bridgeton. I don't want to go away from my nieces and nephews. All my family are all local.

The regeneration is going to be fantastic for the people of the East End, because for years and years when I was a wee lassie, I can't remember anything getting done here. Nothing. And this is the first time that someone is working to bring good things to the East End. But at the same time you cannot forget about people too, because we've got feelings. They should be working with me, but they're not.

I've never known anywhere else but this house since I was 17. That's the full scale issue, its going to a new house. It's scary, having to go to a new house. See if I wasn't well or anything went wrong, my neighbour up the stair there, she came every day or she phoned. If I went somewhere else, nobody knows you. See if something went wrong down here, I can always run around to the shops and meet somebody and say I need your help. But see in a new house, you can't do that. The community's always been close, if there was something wrong, the community was always together.

We've had a lot of good times here and a lot of sad times. The past year's been quite rough for us . . . this year has been a right bad year. Hopefully, they'll come in and give us a good offer and let us get on, because we're in limbo.

We cannot get on with our life.

Note

1. This is a reference people in Glasgow make to the large peripheral housing estates built in the post-war period as part of massive slum clearance programmes.

Olympian Masterplanning in London

JULIAN CHEYNE

London's 2012 Olympics is being felt deeply in different parts of the city's East End. One neighbourhood in particular, the Clays Lane estate, has borne the brunt of displacement from Olympics developments as it became marked as the site for the Athlete's Village. Julian Cheyne was a resident at Clays Lane and was displaced by the London Development Agency (LDA), along with his 425 neighbours, to make way for the Athlete's Village development. Julian and his neighbours fought the proposals through the planning consent process, and also fought the compulsory purchase of their homes by the Government. After the Compulsory Purchase Inquiry found against them, they unsuccessfully appealed their case, together with the residents at the nearby Travellers' sites, to the High Court.

The first thing the London Development Agency (LDA) said, when they came to talk to the Clays Lane community at the end of November 2003, was "your estate is going to be demolished even if the Olympics don't come to London." They even showed us a plan setting out what was in store as part of a non-Olympic scenario. We did a little research and asked a Freedom of Information question of the LDA and were told there was no plan! Later, we found in the evidence to the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) Inquiry of the Olympic masterplanner, EDAW, that this non-Olympic plan had only been commissioned in June 2004. This was six months after the LDA visited Clays Lane, and the plan was then abandoned as unviable. They had deliberately lied and this set the tone for what was to happen from then on. They just wanted to demoralise us and convince us opposition was pointless.

In fact this was the reaction of everyone I met. On being told I was facing eviction to make way for the Olympics people said "the Olympics is going to happen anyway, isn't it?"



Figure 1. A community barbecue at Clays Lane. Photo by Mike Wells.

as if to object was simply a waste of time. And, of course, it was. At a public meeting in Stratford the head of the ODA Planning Decisions Team, Vivienne Ramsey, previously head of Newham Planning, stated that the Olympics would definitely happen and any objections should aim to modify the applications. Even our lawyers (which were provided through the Legal Aid Commission, a small win for us, as objectors to CPOs do not normally receive legal aid) thought it unwise to oppose the Games in principle, so we had to restrict our case to arguing for the retention of our estate. The 2012 Olympics may not be unique in their cost or scale, but few projects have received such uncritical support from the media, politicians of all parties, and authorities of every complexion.

I lived at Clays Lane for more than sixteen years. I was 58 and in poor health when London's Olympic bid succeeded. I had no intention of moving and was very upset to find my home was to be demolished. Clays Lane was not an ideal community but it was a very sociable community. A survey carried out by the consultancy firm Fluid declared the estate had "unique qualities" and provided "an informal mutual support system" and that its courtyard layout had proved "effective as a piece of social architecture". I have lived in streets in London where I never knew my neighbours. At Clays Lane I had friends all over the estate. Being forced to move was a terrible shock.

The other terrible shock was being confronted by hard-headed officials from the LDA who were prepared to do whatever it took to get us out. This included deliberate lies, obfuscation, changing the rules, and applying planning rules tightly for some and loosely for others. Even the procedures in place that supposedly lend the process transparency were essentially flawed: the Compulsory Purchase Inquiry was run by an Inspector who could only advise the Minister, from the Government supporting and funding the project, who would then decide whether to grant the order.

A significant part of this was the portrayal of our estate at Clays Lane, which was only completed in 1982, as being in a state of decay and lacking amenities. In fact, the housing, which was an important resource for an astonishingly diverse (I counted more than forty nationalities) community of mainly young single people, was perfectly sound. We had a community centre, housing officers and maintenance staff on site, two bus routes to the estate, free car parking and ten well laid out courtyards. We also enjoyed low rents and utility costs and access to a large semi-wild open space at the Eastway Cycle Circuit. The nearest shops were a 7-minute walk, the nearest tube was less than fifteen minutes walk and Stratford shopping mall and mainline station a 5-minute bus ride. None of these conditions seemed to warrant any attention during the Inquiry and many residents displaced from Clays Lane are now living in accommodation with far fewer amenities. Even worse, residents have ended up on average £45 a week worse off, a reality that was reflected in our calculations during the Inquiry compared to the LDA's much lower assumptions. During the CPO Inquiry, the CPO Inspector declared that increases in our housing costs were not his concern and dismissed our evidence on this point.

In its evidence to the Inquiry the LDA stated that it had to take the "disruption" to Clays Lane residents into account when considering the location of the Athletes' Village. However, when asked about this, EDAW was unable to produce any evidence to show they had done this. It made no difference, the Inspector declared himself satisfied with the LDA's assertions that they had indeed taken this into account. The LDA said it would ensure that the agencies responsible for rehousing us would work to the highest standard, but they dropped this promise from the second draft of Fluid's report. The Mayor of Newham later said the council had strongly supported the relocation programme. However, this "support" did not extend to lifting a moratorium on the sale of council land which might have enabled our community to continue. It also did not extend to granting

us decant status for seven of the eighteen months of the relocation programme, while they used us as leverage in their negotiations with the LDA for nomination rights to Legacy housing.

Various promises were made about the quality of the accommodation residents could expect, but these were first “clarified” and then forgotten. The report of the Fluid survey stated it was conducted in 2004 to discover residents’ individual needs, but the LDA later discarded it on the grounds that it was confidential to Fluid and was only carried out to establish general trends. The LDA declared its intention to support and sustain communities. One of the questions asked in the survey concerned the possibility of moving as a community. However, despite the fact that the survey discovered that half the residents might be interested in this option no action was taken to make this a reality from the time it was first suggested in 2003, before the survey, until the spring of 2006 after the relocation programme had started. A new survey in 2005 omitted the question altogether.

The wider amenities of our neighbourhood were also dismissed as irrelevant during the process. Residents were particularly keen on the neighbouring Eastway Cycle Circuit, which ran through a large area of almost wild open space stretching to the River Lea and included areas of woodland and a stream. However, the LDA dismissed this as “scrubland” and declared in their evidence to the CPO Inquiry that we were “isolated” by this green space. They went on to say the Fluid survey had shown only a few residents were bothered about living next to green open space. Actually, the survey had shown over 75% of the community had expressed such a concern. When asked in the Inquiry whether they were aware of this discrepancy the LDA witness admitted, without blushing, that they were aware. It made no difference. The Inspector didn’t even mention this lie in his report.

Objectors always face difficulties with planning applications. The time to object is limited and, particularly where applications are complicated, they may have difficulty putting together comprehensive objections. The scale, complexity and multiplicity of the Olympic planning applications made this an almost impossible task. Even the planning authorities had difficulty understanding the applications. The ODA extended the time allowed for objections to the second general application in 2006 by a couple of weeks, but had barely completed the process of uploading the documents onto their website before the time to object ran out. Objectors such as myself (though I didn’t buy them!) had to pay £500 for a complete set of documents, which ran to 10,000 pages, including all the diagrams and appendices. The main applications were then followed by a stream of follow-up applications which were simply impossible to keep up with.

But objectors did not only face these difficulties. The Government changed the law which made things easier for the applicants. Rules on replacement land were suspended and a special development corporation, the Olympic Delivery Authority, was established with powers to propose plans, approve them and to deliver the Olympic programme. Residents were consulted on a relocation strategy which was supposed to be agreed by the Local Borough Councils and provide a minimal level of protection. However, the strategy never formally existed because the planning permission under which it was required was no longer in force and anyway the Government had removed the requirement for such a strategy. Neither the CPO Inspector nor the High Court judge who heard the appeal was concerned at the lack of this elementary protection. The Inspector decided there was a relocation strategy in place, based on the fact that we were being relocated, and the High Court judge just said the project was too important to be held up for such a reason.

Within the planning process itself, there was one set of rules for Olympics applications and a different set for everybody else. The first general planning application was made in

2003 and was presented to the local boroughs. Newham gave permission for housing to be built on the Eastway Cycle Track, even though this had been classified as Borough Metropolitan Open Space and the proposal was contrary to the existing planning framework. It made no difference. In 2006 that planning framework was simply altered to regularise the position. Hackney and Newham also allowed two Travellers' sites to be relocated on open spaces at Hackney Marshes and Major Road Park. Even when the ODA Planning Committee attached conditions to planning consents, such as restrictions on construction working hours or controls on impacts, ODA Development Control failed to respond to our correspondence that conditions were being breached. They took no action to protect residents.

The Olympics are justified on the grounds of the benefits they are supposed to bring. Planners and inspectors are supposed to examine these claims critically to establish that the proposals will deliver what is claimed. As objectors, we tried to point out to both planning committees and the Compulsory Purchase Inquiry that the experience of previous Olympic cities showed that few of the claimed benefits actually materialised. Instead, the Legacy claims were accepted uncritically by both planners and the CPO Inspector. For instance, it was claimed the Athletes' Village and other housing would create a legacy of 9,000 new homes in the Olympic Park. However, this failed to take into account the loss of housing for over 1000 people at Clays Lane and Park Village. It also ignored the fact that the Athletes' Village was being built on the Stratford City site where 4,500 homes were already going to be built. The Athletes' Village would use this already proposed housing and modify it for the period of the Games. It had been claimed by Mr Prior that one of the reasons for siting the Athletes' Village at Stratford, and therefore for demolishing our homes, was because Stratford, rather than nearby West Ham, provided a housing legacy. Actually the opposite was the truth. The Inspector, however, simply repeated the LDA's claims in one part of his report and said the totals were a matter of debate in another. In reality he just had to add up the figures to see that there was no housing legacy from the Village. Newham and the ODA also happily gave permission for the Athletes' Village based on these false claims. The ODA has since admitted in a Freedom of Information response that there is no housing legacy from the Village but now claims a legacy saying the housing will be delivered earlier than would have been possible because of the credit crunch!

The other rationale behind the location of the Olympic project is that it would be impossible to regenerate East London without this massive programme. We attempted to point out a series of issues here: that the budget was plainly inadequate, as became apparent in autumn 2006; that Stratford already had a major redevelopment programme at Stratford City, which was expected to deliver six times as many jobs as the Olympics; and that major housing development was already planned as was the extension of parkland in the Lea Valley. None of this made any difference. The argument put forward by the Olympic team, even by local council officials, is that local planners are just not up to the job and cannot deliver needed facilities on their own. The logic goes like this: to get facilities like the £135 million Media Centre, which is intended to provide employment in the legacy phase for around 20,000 people, it is necessary to have an Olympics which cost £9.34 billion! The idea of just building a centre on its own is apparently considered to be simply impossible. So the very failure of planning is used to justify the granting of extraordinary planning powers.

This Olympian attitude towards planning rules contrasts with the difficulties which have been encountered by some relocated businesses when seeking planning permission for their new sites. Lance Forman of Forman's Salmon Smokery has described how he was told by the Environment Agency that he had to build his new factory a certain distance

from the edge of a canal to enable water borne insects to mate. He pointed out this made the site unviable. They eventually compromised on the distance provided he built a green roof on his factory. He also wanted to incorporate a shop in the factory but had endless arguments on rules about disabled access. However, when it came to the application for the Olympic Aquatic Centre it was found that the first design approved by Newham in 2004 was too large for the site and more recently it was noted it had an inadequate number of lifts for the Paralympic Games. But that made no difference to the granting of planning permission.

Essentially the Olympics is a large scale transfer of resources from one set of owners and users to another. An LDA official told the *Property Newsletter* in 2003 that the Games represented an opportunity for property developers. Before the Olympics came along Clays Lane had not been included in the massive neighbouring Stratford City development programme. However, in the same *Property Newsletter* article a representative of Stratford City was happy to say that the Olympics had now enabled them to include the Clays Lane area in their scheme. The sale of compulsorily purchased land to developers is supposed to recoup the cost of the Games. This, of course, required the destruction of the industrial sector around Marshgate Lane. The LDA presented this part of the Lea Valley as an extensive rubbish tip. David Higgins, Chief Executive of the ODA, called it "a scar". However, this industry provided 1,200 jobs for local people which have now been moved out of the area. These jobs will be replaced by "clean" high tech jobs, which, for the most part, will not match the skills of local people. Existing businesses in the Olympic Park were selling land to housing developers before the Olympics came. Now the LDA will reap the profit from these sales and most of the land will have to be sold for expensive private development with a lower proportion of "affordable" housing.

The LDA argued that statistics showed that East London was one of the most deprived places in Britain and therefore in desperate need of "regeneration". If the lessons of previous Olympics such as Barcelona, Sydney and Atlanta are anything to go by, rents and land values in Stratford will be driven up resulting in a further exodus of those who will be evicted because they can't afford to live in the new Stratford, to make way for those who can. This new population will inherit the Lea Valley, the new park and its high tech jobs and "hey presto!" the statistics will indeed show that Stratford and this part of East London is no longer such a deprived area.

Closing Ceremonies: How Law, Policy and the Winter Olympics are Displacing an Inconveniently Located Low-Income Community in Vancouver

DAVID EBY¹

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issues. His advocacy work is focused, amongst other things, on the displacement effects of Vancouver's hosting of the 2010 Winter Olympics, where the Downtown Eastside is the frontier of Olympics displacement.

It's a Wednesday morning in late February, 2009, and I'm walking to work along my usual route, in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada: my home, as well as the home of the upcoming 2010 Winter Olympic Games. An overhang where a small homeless community has camped for at least a year is surprisingly quiet as I pass by. Two City of Vancouver engineering department vehicles, one a garbage truck, idle at the curb directly beside the camp.

This urban campsite is located in the heart of the Downtown Eastside (DTES) community, which is my neighbourhood, Canada's largest off-reserve Aboriginal community, and the home of 14,000 other people (City of Vancouver Community Services, 2006). Almost 5,000 of my neighbours are injection drug users, many of whom grapple with various disabilities including physical and mental health challenges (Vancouver Coastal Health, 2003). Our community's income is changing as more people like me move in through rapid gentrification—V6A is no longer Canada's poorest postal code—but our neighbourhood is still visibly poorer than other areas of the city. An open drug market operates 24 hours per day and people sleep, in large numbers, on the



Figure 1. Street life in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Image from the Pivot Legal Society Hope in Shadows collection 2007. Photo by Phillip Kim.

sidewalk. Most of my neighbours have only \$375 CDN a month available for rent, and \$235 CDN a month for expenses. The average bachelor apartment in Vancouver rents for \$754 CDN a month. A dinner for three at the restaurant across the street from my building would entirely devour a monthly welfare living allowance.

I live in a neighbourhood of stark economic contrasts.

My 5,000 drug-addicted and street-involved neighbours subsist just two blocks from Olympic venues such as the Olympic hockey arena and BC Place, the site of the opening and closing ceremonies. They sleep along the notorious Hastings Street, slated to be a main transportation route for delegates, dignitaries, athletes, security forces and essential souvenir supplies. They use drugs openly directly between Gastown, where the cruise ships arrive in Vancouver, and Chinatown, another tourist destination. They are bitten by bedbugs in beautiful but run-down historic buildings in close walking distance to several major Olympics venues.

In a city of 30,000 hotel rooms expecting 300,000 visitors for the Games, people are already offering one-bedroom condominiums in the neighbouring Gastown area for \$12,000 over the two-week period of the Games. My low-income neighbours pay \$375 to \$450 per month. They have no access to police in the event they are illegally evicted, and must wait as long as two weeks for an eviction hearing at the tenancy tribunal. They have little or no political voice. To say they are vulnerable to displacement is to understate the obvious.

My trip to work, almost exactly one year out from the Games, is interrupted as I watch a police car pull up alongside the homeless camp. The police officer who exits his car looks at a jumble of belongings, what many who work with the homeless informally call a "nest". The nest consists of a shopping cart, a red gym bag, some building materials, cardboard, and some blankets. A plastic bag of soda cans, almost as good as currency in our neighbourhood, sits in the cart, on top of wire trimmings and various bits of scrap metal that will bring in some revenue from the nearby scrap metal dealer.

"Is this yours?" the police officer says to me, pointing at the nest. I tell him that they're not my belongings. He canvasses two other individuals within fifty feet, and they both deny ownership. With due diligence complete, he makes a circular motion with his index finger towards the dump truck, directed at the city workers. They begin throwing the belongings into the garbage truck. At that point I pull out my cell phone and start recording, unable to believe that after 30 seconds on site, this officer was willing to throw away what appeared to be someone's meagre life belongings.

Way back when a group of individuals and business interests thought it would be a good idea for Vancouver to host the 2010 Winter Olympics, the City's elected leadership at the municipal level decided to hold a referendum on the bid. The "Yes" and "No" sides quickly lined up. The Yes side was made up mostly of local business and media interests, the No side was mostly an informal coalition of social activists and NGOs.

When, despite grossly inadequate resources and a virtual media blackout, the No side gathered considerable momentum, the bid committee reacted. In the lead up to the vote, one of the most common objections of the No side to the Olympics—beyond the allocation of scarce government healthcare and education funding to a two-week party—was that the Olympics would negatively impact Vancouver's low-income communities, especially my neighbours. In response to these objections, the three levels of government signed an agreement with the bid committee and the International Olympics Committee promising significant benefits for the "inner city" if Vancouver won the Games (Vancouver 2010, no date).

The words “leverage” and “legacy” featured prominently in the final agreement, titled the Inner City Inclusive Commitment Statement (the ICI), which promised, among other things: a “legacy of affordable housing”; that nobody would be displaced; and that inner city residents would be consulted in a meaningful way on the security arrangements to ensure that they weren’t disproportionately impacted.

The promises made sense. Vancouver has been struggling with significant growth in its homeless population due to cuts to social housing resources at the provincial and federal level, seeing street homelessness increase exponentially and emergency shelters become overwhelmed. Vancouver’s street homeless now number over 1,200 in official counts, but the true population is estimated to be as high as 2,000, remarkable in a city whose homeless counts as recently as seven years ago showed less than half that many, and half that many again just three years before that (Paulsen, 2007).

The ICI promises have been almost completely ignored. No security consultation with the inner city has taken place, despite increasingly sophisticated dress rehearsals of the finalized security plan by Olympic security forces. No amendments to the notoriously weak Residential Tenancy Act have been made to prevent mass low-income tenant evictions by landlords with dollar signs in their eyes. No new Olympic-related social housing units will be opened before the Games are here, and those that were scheduled to be located in the Olympic village are now unlikely to ever be occupied by any currently homeless individual due to cost overruns.

Two bright spots peek out from among the wreckage of the Olympic promises. First is the mass-purchase by the provincial government of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) residential hotels and lodging houses in the DTES, now totalling 23 buildings and almost 1,200 units. Characterized by 10 foot x 10 foot (approximately 3m x 3m) rooms, and shared kitchen and bathroom facilities, the SROs appear to be the likeliest candidate for the Olympic housing legacy and are the dominant form of housing in the DTES. Until the mass purchase, the privately owned buildings were closing, resulting in evictions of low-income residents, usually to the street. Unfortunately for this bright spot, more than half of the rooms purchased were already occupied by residents and therefore can’t accommodate the currently homeless. In addition, the hotels are in terrible condition, and the province has limited renovations to essential “life and safety” upgrades. Recent budget announcements limiting funding for services in the buildings mean that they’re unlikely to become the promised lifeboat ferrying multi-barriered homeless people off the streets.

The second bright spot, one that has been dimming daily, is the announcement made in December of 2006 that the province would be constructing new 100-unit social housing buildings on twelve, and then fourteen, City of Vancouver-owned lots (Barrett, 2006). Funding for the required rezoning and architectural drawings was announced, and then nothing. Despite the fact that many of the projects are now shovel ready, no funding for the actual construction of the 1400 units has been dedicated to the projects by the provincial government at the time of writing. Having promised six projects to be completed before the Olympics, then whittling that down to four, the province recently announced that none of the projects will be complete before the opening ceremonies, 12 February 2010.

Even worse than these broken housing legacy promises is an escalating crackdown by the Vancouver Police department on the low-income and homeless residents in the Downtown Eastside (DTES), a crackdown well underway as I filmed that officer throwing away that homeless person’s belongings, and what likely amounted to a week’s worth of hard work. A crackdown that makes perfect sense when the Olympically inconvenient location of my neighbours is considered.

The DTES is the most heavily policed area in Vancouver. A ten-block area has fourteen police officers assigned to it, 24 hours a day. The officers are members of a special enforcement team, until a year ago ironically named the “Citywide Enforcement Team”. In December of 2008, the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) issued almost 900 bylaw infraction tickets for “crimes” like jaywalking and illegal street vending in my neighbourhood, nine times their usual total. Street checks, where police stop individuals in the street and ask for their name and date of birth, were also up—way up. Viewed by police as an effective tool to identify people wanted for arrest, residents call the process being “jacked up” and will go to significant lengths to avoid this kind of interaction, even if they don’t believe they have a warrant for arrest. In that same month of December, the VPD did about 1,100 street checks, almost ten times their usual total, averaging thirty per day in a ten-block area.

The day before I watched those belongings get trashed without notice, I witnessed a Vancouver Police officer threatening a homeless couple with the criminal charge of mischief for sitting in the doorway of an abandoned building. That weekend, I watched while two police officers supervised a homeless woman for fifteen minutes while she woke up, packed up her belongings and left. She was camped against a fence, well out of the way of pedestrians, and not breaking any law. Despite the fact that they had no legal authority to move her along, they did anyway. A neighbourhood park that had always been full of area residents sitting and socializing now sits empty, with no apparent explanation other than police harassment of those using the park. Across the street, people sit on the sidewalk rather than sit on the park benches.

All of these incidents have been completely unique in my experience in the DTES as a lawyer for the past four years, and they all occurred over a period of days. The homeless in the neighbourhood have almost always been left alone in favour of larger issues like drug dealing, open drug use, and associated violence. Not any more. This significant increase in police harassment, mostly taking the form of street checking and ticketing of the homeless for minor offences such as biking without a helmet, street vending, spitting and jaywalking, was accompanied by the public release of the 2009 VPD business plan (Vancouver Policy Department, 2009). The plan promised an acceleration of the crackdown, including a minimum of four street checks per block by each VPD member in the DTES, a 20% increase in bylaw tickets issued by the VPD in the DTES, and a crackdown on “chronic bylaw offenders” by forcing these individuals to court where they could face “no-go” orders limiting their access to parts of the neighbourhood.

In a series of meetings I had, both public and private, with the VPD during and following the events I witnessed, they insisted repeatedly that their ticketing and street check tactics had absolutely nothing to do with the upcoming 2010 Olympics. They told me, “Please stop this Olympic rhetoric, you’re scaring the heck out of the community members.” They disputed even that their December ticket and street check totals, along with the business plan, constituted a crackdown on the poorest of the poor. They explained that they were just doing their best to keep order in a chaotic environment; it wasn’t anything different from their usual day-to-day policing. They advised me that the widely reported suggestions that they were doing a mass crackdown in advance of the Games were a series of “perceptions” that weren’t accurate, and that the VPD would be rewording the business plan to address these perceptions.

In November, 2006, “Project Civil City” was announced by the previous Mayor of Vancouver. A vague but glossy brochure advertising the project was released through the Mayor’s office. The mayor’s smiling photo appeared in the full-colour brochure. Beside his picture was the quotation: “We have a tremendous opportunity to use the 2010

Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games as a catalyst to solve the public disorder problems that affect our city" (City of Vancouver, 2006, p. 3). All of the implementation dates set for the Project Civil City were 2010. Both the federal and provincial ministers responsible for the Olympics were listed as charter members of the Project Civil City Leadership Council. Despite the change in leadership at City Council in Vancouver, and promises to cancel the controversial Civil City Initiative, the Project Civil City mentality has clearly not left our police force.

I wish that the Chief, deputy Chief and Superintendent of the VPD that I'd met with had been there on my way to work to explain to the homeless person who returned to an empty sidewalk why his belongings were thrown away that day; or to the woman sleeping on the sidewalk why she had to get up and move despite the fact that her poverty and conduct was totally legal; or to the couple in the doorway why they would be criminally charged for sitting on a blanket; or to the 900 people given meaningless tickets that they can't pay; or to my neighbours who now didn't feel comfortable using their own park, how these initiatives will help preserve order and aren't related to the Olympics. My guess is that their explanations would ring hollow, and if nothing else, are contrary to the spirit of the ICI Agreement.

The tarting up of our neighbourhood in time for the Games is well underway, and people like our homeless targets don't fit the official plan. \$10m CDN is being spent by the province on new awnings and murals for the neighbourhood (Office of the Premier and Ministry of Community Services, 2006). Significant additional funding is being spent to "renovate" two city parks in the neighbourhood, which will be closed to residents for months. A "greenway" is being built through the centre of the neighbourhood, designed to provide safe transport for tourists from the historic Gastown district to the historic Chinatown district without exposing them, more than is absolutely necessary, to the historic poor district of the DTES which lies, quite awkwardly, between them (City of Vancouver, 2009).

Beyond the false promise of this neighbourhood-scale patina of progress, the main traffic artery of the DTES, Hastings Street, is slated to be an Olympic transportation route, the implications of which remain unclear. Rumours of permit-only access for residents and businesses are persistent, which would restrict access of homeless residents to healthcare clinics, needle exchanges, food providers and other essential services. \$1bn in Olympic security money, exponentially more than has been spent in the past ten years providing supportive housing in our City—an amount that would solve, almost overnight, our homelessness crisis—will have impacts that my neighbours and I can only imagine at this point, as the promised security consultation with inner city residents has not taken place.

On the anti-Olympic activist side, the billion dollar security budget is making itself known through increasingly invasive undercover activities by the Integrated Security Unit (ISU), run by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. An independent bookstore, a conference hosted by the Provincial Information and Privacy Commissioner, and a recent Olympic-related City Council meeting, have all been the targets of failed attempted undercover surveillance by the ISU.

Disagreeing with the police officer about his options as he continued to oversee the City workers as they dismantled and threw away someone's life belongings, I realized immediately the difficulty ahead of Vancouver for its 2010 Olympics and how far we've fallen from our dreams of a socially sustainable Olympics. In the early days of our bid, some went so far as to dream that Vancouver's Olympic legacy could include the virtual elimination of street homelessness in Vancouver. Now, just one year out from the Games, a rookie police officer and some unwilling city workers are forced into a role they probably

never imagined for themselves, in a situation so regular that it was not until the cellphone camera was activated that there appeared to be a moment of doubt about the right thing to do.

I wonder whether, once the international cameras are turned on Vancouver as a whole, our entire city—our governments—won't have the same embarrassing moment of doubt about the right thing to do. Maybe this, more than anything, will be the Olympic legacy for our neighbourhood, but some days I worry that there won't even be a low-income neighbourhood left to fight for come the Olympics. Just another glittering glass stretch of Vancouver, tourist ready, just in time for 2010.

Note

1. Prepared with research assistance from Sara Dubinsky.

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Commentary: Recovering Public Ethos: Critical Analysis for Policy and Planning

HENDRIK WAGENAAR

This collection of stories from people who are displaced to make way for large scale urban redevelopment to host major sporting events, is a powerful reminder to administrators, public officials and citizens, of the dark side of state planning. As practitioners who work closely with state agencies in designing urban planning projects or developing and implementing public policy, often arguing for the active participation of those who are affected in the policy process, the collection is a sober reminder, not only of the power of the centralized state, but also of its willingness to use it when it feels that its most cherished goals are thwarted.

These stories may even come as a shock to those of us who work closely with public officials who exhibit the reasonableness and public ethos one can expect from being in the service of an open, democratic government. Instead what we encounter here are stories of duplicity, deception, outright manipulation of rules, and a cold-hearted, calculating willingness to ride roughshod over the lives of ordinary citizens.

Libby Porter calls on us to be heartbroken over these stories, and although everyone would agree with her appeal, I think that both the stories and her commentary contain insights about planning and policy analysis that deserve to be developed further. For this purpose I want to unpack two—closely related—aspects of Porter's collection that remain implicit: the nature of critique in policy analysis and the kind of analysis that the stories suggest. Differently put, I want to explore what it means, in Aaron Wildavsky's great words, to speak truth to power in policy analysis.¹

The stories themselves and Porter's introduction seethe with indignation. Rhetorically speaking, this *Interface* wants to disseminate a powerful critical message. But what does it mean to be critical in policy analysis? Perusal of the dictionary results in some surprising notions of the adjective "critical". If I restrict myself to meanings relevant to policy analysis, "critical" can be "inclined to judge severely and find fault", but also its almost opposite: "characterized by careful, exact evaluation and judgement (as in 'a critical reading')." In a different vein, "critical" can mean "forming or having the nature of a turning point; crucial or decisive (as in 'a critical point in the campaign')", or, more pointedly and relevant to the complexity of policy systems, as a tipping point, as "relating to the value of a measurement, such as temperature, at which an abrupt change in a quality, property, or state occurs (as in 'a critical temperature of water is 100°C, its boiling point at standard atmospheric pressure')". Also there is "critical" as "relating to a medical crisis (as in 'an illness at the critical stage')". A nice meaning of "critical" in the context of policy analysis is "indispensable; essential (as in 'a critical element of the plan')". And, also relevant to policy analysis is, finally, "being in or verging on a state of crisis or emergency ('a critical shortage of food') or fraught with danger or risk; perilous" (Free Dictionary, 2009).

Thus, being critical means many things, and not surprisingly it is not difficult to recognize them in the various approaches to policy analysis. The "purpose and tenor" of Porter's *Interface* are of the "fault finding" and "judge severely" kind. But upon closer analysis we find other aspects of "critical" in her paper. Her allusion to gentrification scholarship in general, and a report of the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions in particular, suggest a critical stance more in the sense of "careful evaluation" and of pointing out "critical turning points". The COHRE (2009) report states that not only is the number of displacements caused by major sporting events much higher than generally assumed, but the alleged economic benefits of the event are also much lower. The act of collecting reliable data about the size of a problem or the way it develops over time is in important ways a critical act (particularly when the data show the problem to be much smaller or larger than popular sentiment suggests).

Here we encounter a deeper meaning of "critical", one underlying many of the dictionary meanings quoted above, as "lifting the veil of ignorance". This is what enlightenment is about, after all: being given information, being informed or instructed on a topic, obtaining intellectual insight. Collecting data often makes us aware that there is a problem (Not surprisingly, as the author otherwise wouldn't have taken the trouble of collecting them in the first place. All presentations of "data" project an argument.). Barring ill will, most people, including elected officials and administrators, simply lack the time, resources or whereabouts to be informed on everything. No one but the most

dedicated specialist has enough of an overview of the data to make them cohere into aggregated displacement rates or net jobs added five years down the line, for example. And, I should add, to do that in a “critical” manner by applying good judgement about the quality of the data.

But there is another, more powerful aspect of “critical” in Porter’s *Interface*. She, rightly, tells us that the stories teach us “a point”, “another viewpoint about the events and happenings in these cities than the “official” narrative”. In the official narrative ordinary citizens are, quite literally, invisible and Porter explains how this comes about. First, state planners deal in abstractions. This is a world of legacy claims, eminent domain and Compulsory Purchase Inquiries, where displacements are framed as “disruptions” in planning applications. These stories remind us about the extent to which the quality of and justice in policy making is influenced by the immense social distance between those who decide and those who are decided on. This, clearly, is not restricted to state planners lording over residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods, but must be seen as a risk that affects all policy making that involves peripheral, marginal or “different” groups. The larger the social or cultural distance, the greater the institutional ignorance of decision makers about the target group as well as their willingness to base policies on assumptions ascribed to the target group. Becoming involved with the subjects of public policy is usually not a viable career path in public bureaucracies.

But Porter’s stories show us that residents do not merely disappear behind policy makers’ abstractions. Their living, experiential world is also actively distorted and denied. Here we see the willingness of public officials to lie, manipulate and obfuscate when one or another group stands in the way of their most cherished ideals. A diverse, well-integrated neighbourhood in London is portrayed as being in decay. An adjacent green space that is highly valued by residents is dismissed as useless “scrubland”. More sinister, is the dehumanization of homeless people in Vancouver who are harassed by the police and treated as criminals. And if the numbers, despite rigged surveys, tell a different story, you simply deny them. These are instances of “administrative evil” that Adams and Balfour have documented in their book: the inversion of the public ethos in the name of doing good (Adams & Balfour, 2009). The stories also tell us that we should not be too quick in throwing elitist policy theory overboard, as the collusion between city officials, developers and courts is as astonishing as it is disheartening. So, what does policy analysis, apart from political activism (not a bad choice in itself in the face of an unyielding state) have to offer by way of critical analysis against these instances of raw state power?

My answer would be to do what Porter does but in a more systematic manner: qualitative policy analysis (Danziger & Lin, 2000). Qualitative policy analysis is critical in the powerful sense of confronting one’s assumptions of the world with the resistances that the world presents upon a policy intervention. The “data” of qualitative policy analysis are meanings; the meanings of the people who are affected by the policy intervention. For example, when policy makers create incentives to induce single mothers to get off welfare and find a job, this policy intervention or policy “instrument”, is based on an image, a set of assumptions, about single mothers (“hard to motivate”, “preferring welfare over work”, “promiscuous, hedonist lifestyle”, “trapped in a culture of poverty”) (Kalil *et al.*, 2000). Most of the time these are assumptions of one, elite, group about another, more marginal, group with whom it has little or no contact. Having one’s sacred, taken-for-granted assumptions knocked over by the confrontation with a thick description of the lived world of the target group, is thus an elementary act of critique and enlightenment. Another important way qualitative policy analysis is critical is in disassembling what is assumed to be coherent. For example, leadership in local government turns out, on closer

inspection, to have at least four different meanings, each of which drive policy interventions (Sullivan, 2007). Attitudes towards nuclear power, for example, are really a fragmented field of “frames”, each with its own coherent set of beliefs, values, images, and action-preferences (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Policy makers hate this work of wilful fragmentation. It undermines their quest for unity and control. But its importance is that it acknowledges the complexity and pluralism of policy problems, features that everyone who intervenes in the world does well to respect.

The importance of qualitative policy analysis lies in its emphasis on field work. The kind of patient and attentive listening that Libby Porter demonstrates in collecting and responding to these stories. Lin (2000) argues that familiarity with the world in which the “targets” of our policies and research live, is essential for putting the analyst on the right track in tracing and explaining the effects of a particular policy. Although Lin doesn’t elaborate on it, this is in fact a provocative statement, which challenges the institutional distance between policy and practice. As I argued above, the institutional organization of policy making is such that those who formulate public policy are usually far removed from those who receive it. The result of this institutionalized ignorance is far-reaching indeed:

The policy implications of these problems are significant. Policy solutions based on inferences from observed behavior, as gathered in surveys and evaluations alone, will neglect dimensions that were not included in the data gathering. This can result in policies that fail or that have unanticipated consequences. Similarly, if explanations of behavior reflect the investigator’s notions of plausibility, their “goodness of fit” depends on the investigator’s knowledge of the groups in question. When this knowledge is incomplete, biased by class and racial assumptions or overly schematic, policy solutions based on the investigator’s explanations will be mystifying at best, destructive at worst. (Lin, 2000, p. 2)

Libby Porter’s interviews with people who are displaced because of large sporting events display the various kinds of policy criticisms that we would like to impart to our students: first, the patient, careful collecting of hard-to-obtain data that lift the institutionalized ignorance that surrounds so many large, contentious policy issues; second, by giving a voice to the powerless through the careful (re-)construction of the lived, experiential world of the people who are affected by a particular policy. Both kinds of critique act by confronting the assumptions of assertive policy making with the empirical resistances that the world inevitably presents to these interventions. Through Porter’s contribution we learn about the importance of field work in its ability to confront deeply held beliefs about the world. Good, patient field work creates the conditions for learning new things. Not just “facts”, but the explanations and conceptualizations that make sense of the “facts”. Compared to field work, the more popular genres of doctrine and theory leave less space for learning. This is the deeper meaning of Austin’s famous quote (1979) that facts are richer than diction.² In the process, analyst and citizens gain a third critical insight: how the power differentials in society are mapped upon a social field. Not in an abstract, and ultimately inconsequential way (“The planning of sporting events is characterized by large differences in power and influence”), but instead in a situated, practical, emotionally engaged way. By listening to the stories of these displaced people, we gain insight into the multiple points of resistance and obstruction they encountered in their quest for a fair and humane solution to a major threat to their existence. By grasping the emotional impact of administrators’ acts on these residents we learn about value and

the inversion of public ethos. This is the landscape of power as it operates “on the ground” in our society and within our administration. To uncover this in such a convincing way as Libby Porter does in her paper, is no mean feat.

Notes

1. To avoid the cumbersome “planning and policy analysis” I will only speak of policy analysis from now on, implicitly including the analysis of planning.
2. The full quote is: “[H]owever well equipped our language, it can never be forearmed against all possible cases that may arise and call for description: fact is richer than diction” (Austin, 1979, p.195). The quote was suggested to me by John Forester.

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