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Olympic cities and the legacy of infrastructure: Barcelona 1992 and Athens 2004

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Vassar College

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Olympic Cities and the Legacy of Infrastructure: 
Barcelona 1992 and Athens 2004

Samuel Rosenthal
April 28, 2017

Vassar College
Senior Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Bachelor of Arts in Urban Studies

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Adviser: Brian Godfrey

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Adviser: Tyrone Simpson
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Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Karen and David, and my sister Lucy. My family’s love, guidance, and unending support has given me the confidence to pursue what interests me in all aspects of my life.
Chapter One
Introduction

It’s a familiar sight, and it can come in many forms. A sprawling concrete plaza with just a handful of meandering pedestrians. A hulking, empty arena protected by chain link. A storefront bearing the five rings. These are some of the lasting legacies of the Olympic Games.

In recent years, the concept of ‘legacy’ has become more prevalent in popular discourse surrounding the Games. As the Olympics have grown so as to become a sporting mega-event, so has the audience for the Games become global in scale. As more and more money is invested in the Games, the desire to create a positive and enduring Olympic legacy has intensified, and so has the pressure to successfully manufacture such a legacy.

Legacy is a complex term, especially as it relates to the Olympics. It can refer to profit margins, political climates, or medal counts. But perhaps the most tangible form of legacy exists as infrastructure, and cities have increasingly viewed the Olympics as a means by which to improve their physical urban fabric. By using the promise of the Games as a way to access funding, both public and private, cities can begin to develop infrastructure before the Olympics even occur. The Games, now enormous in scale, provide adequate justification to engage in projects such as the construction of transport systems or the installation of street lighting—projects that cities have been seeking to accomplish for years yet have lacked funding for. But the Games also require pieces of infrastructure that—on their own—have no clear post-Games purpose, such as extraneous sporting arenas or press centers. The modifications to the urban fabric that the Olympics
demand can be difficult to implement and incorporate. Each city adopts a somewhat different approach, and each city’s ensuing legacy has been strongly influenced by its Olympic planning methodology.

The intention of this thesis is, broadly, to analyze the way in which Olympic cities grapple with the complex problem of hosting the Games. This analysis is conducted from an infrastructural and planning point of view, focusing on the development of infrastructure as a means to accommodate the Olympics, but also examining the ways in which infrastructure is incorporated (or not incorporated) into the city. Using two case studies, Barcelona 1992 and Athens 2004, this thesis seeks to better understand the Olympic city, involving historical, political, and economic perspectives, all the while focusing on infrastructure as an ultimate expression of urbanity.

This thesis also relies on the theoretical framework of globalization set forth by Saskia Sassen. Sassen’s work addresses the effects that processes of globalization have had on cities, including changes in economic patterns and the role of urban infrastructure. She locates the current economic structure of cities at the intersection of two processes: the increasing scale and complexity of economies and linkages between cities, and the shifting orientation of economic industries toward the service sector.¹ These dual trends will underscore analyses of both the overarching historical development of the Olympic Games as well as the two case studies selected for this thesis.

Chapter Two of this thesis traces a history of the Summer Olympic Games from their revival in Athens in 1896 to their return to the city in 2004. In this discussion,

² John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold, “The Summer Olympics,” in *Olympic Cities: City
themes such as the increasing scale of the Games, the growing importance of Olympic infrastructure, and the rise of city branding are emphasized. Each of the thesis’ two case studies is situated within this chronology so that the critical historical juncture at which each sits may be better understood.

Chapter Three provides a case study of the 1992 Olympic Games, held in Barcelona, Spain. The chapter seeks to outline a broad history of planning in the city, identifying the Olympics as the pivot for a shift in planning ideology. Chapter Three relates the history of planning in Barcelona, the planning of infrastructure for the 1992 Olympics specifically, and both the immediate and long-term effects of such Olympic planning strategies. The emphasis in this case study is on the development of infrastructure in the city, but this necessarily includes a discussion of Barcelona’s city planning philosophy. The chapter charts a trajectory from 19th-century city planning ideology focused on small-scale improvements to public space to a post-Games emphasis on the attraction of global private capital through the construction of service-based infrastructure. Ultimately, the chapter seeks to clarify shifts in overarching city planning practices in Barcelona through the consideration of specific infrastructure projects.

Chapter Four is a case study of the 2004 Olympic Games, hosted by Athens, Greece. This chapter is formatted in a similar way to Chapter Three to allow for clarity and the ability to easily compare the two Games. Chapter Four examines Athens’ attempts to replicate the Olympic planning model forwarded by Barcelona, as well as the city’s infrastructural legacy in the post-Games era. The chapter focuses on the relative failure of poorly coordinated, publicly driven projects in comparison with the relative
success of self-generated economic nodes catering to service sector activities, specifically in the realms of culture and leisure.

Chapter Five serves as a discussion and conclusion to the thesis. The chapter begins by making comparisons between the two case studies and summarizing the content of each case study chapter. This discussion is then placed within the theoretical framework of Saskia Sassen’s analysis on the economic development and globalization of cities. Finally, the thesis concludes with a brief discussion of the 2016 Games held in Rio de Janeiro and the potential future direction of Olympic planning.

Ultimately, this thesis seeks to provide an analytical understanding of why cities bid for the Olympics, as well as what effects the Games have on both the physical infrastructure and planning ideology of cities across the world.
Chapter Two
A Brief History of Summer Olympic Infrastructure

The significance of infrastructure’s role in Olympic planning cannot be fully understood without an historical analysis of the Olympic Games themselves. The modern Olympics have existed for a little more than a century, and in that time they have grown from a somewhat localized gathering of idealistic aristocrats and athletes to a sporting mega-event that is global in scale.

The development of the Games has in many ways been closely intertwined with processes of globalization. The relationship between host cities and the Games has changed with increasing urbanization. Similarly, the financial viability of the Olympics has been affected by global economic conditions. By tracing the history of the Olympic Games, specifically the Summer Olympics, a better understanding of the increasing role of infrastructure may be gleaned. Ultimately, this understanding will serve as the basis for an analysis of two Olympic cities and their infrastructural planning legacies: Barcelona 1992 and Athens 2004.

Olympic Revival

The history of the modern Olympic Games may in fact begin with the banning of the ancient Olympics by Emperor Theodosius I in 393 AD. The prohibition of the ancient Games laid the foundation for the accumulation of collective memory, and the memory that was constructed in the following centuries was one that was

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overwhelmingly positive, influenced by both nostalgia and nationalism. Numerous attempts to revive the Games were subsequently made, but none were met with any degree of success.³

In 1894, Pierre de Frédy, Baron de Coubertin, in an effort to revive the Games, invited 78 delegates to an International Congress of Amateurs. Coubertin believed that the revival of the Games could mitigate inter-imperial rivalries and create a sense of global harmony.⁴ He termed his vision the ‘Olympic Movement’ and was joined by other wealthy elites in his endeavor.⁵ One of the founding principles of the Movement was that educational reform could be accomplished through physical activity. Relying on the elite 19th century ideals of “classical liberalism, volunteerism, philanthropy, [and] amateurism,” the Olympic Movement sought to produce both peace and education on the global scale.⁶ Coubertin also saw the Olympic Movement as having domestic benefits. He viewed physical fitness as being crucial to military preparedness, and also felt that the Games would contribute to the betterment of class relations, allowing for social harmony within individual nations.⁷

In an effort to formalize his vision, Coubertin produced an Olympic Charter, which was to guide the development of the Games in the coming decades.⁸ The Olympic Charter created the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which is the central governing body of the Olympic Games. The IOC is tasked with selecting host cities as

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⁵ Wright, “The Olympic Ruling Class,” 216.
⁶ Wright, “The Olympic Ruling Class,” 216.
⁷ Wright, “The Olympic Ruling Class,” 218.
well as enforcing guidelines for the operation of the Games. The IOC also oversees National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and local Organizing Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOGs).\(^9\) NOCs act at the state level, representing athletes from their respective countries, while OCOGs operate at the local level, managing the implementation of the Games and coordinating between all tiers of administration and government.\(^10\)

With the organizational framework for the fulfillment of his vision, Coubertin was able to inaugurate the first modern Olympics in 1896.

**Analytical Framework**

The history of the modern Olympics can be examined through a number of different lenses. For the purposes of this thesis, it is most important to focus on the development of Olympic infrastructure over the course of the 20th century, the role that infrastructure played in each staging of the Games, and how the development of infrastructure was connected with certain conditions of globalization over time.

The development of the Summer Olympic Games may be seen as a continuum onto which can be projected several trends, such as the increasing scale and scope of the Games, the conceptual shift in ‘Olympic legacy’ from a peace movement to a brand, or the related shift in infrastructural design from temporary structures to permanent ones.\(^11\)

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\(^9\) Wright, “The Olympic Ruling Class,” 216.


\(^11\) Daphné Bolz, “Olympic Heritage – An International Legacy: The Invention of the Modern Olympic Stadium from Coubertin to 1948,” in *Sport, History, and Heritage:*
Understanding these long-term trends is useful for contextualizing the Barcelona and Athens Games, as each occupies a specific moment in Olympic history. The changing rhetoric of the Olympic Movement during the 20th and early 21st centuries is also a factor in the planning of the Games and the assessment of each event’s legacy. By outlining a brief history of the Summer Olympic Games that addresses these concerns, an analytical framework may be provided for examining the Barcelona and Athens Games in a later portion of this thesis.

Several scholars have attempted to systematize trends involving the increasing scale and permanence of Olympic infrastructure. Jon Coaffee breaks up the development of the Summer Olympics as it relates to urban impact into four rough phases. The first phase ranges from 1896 to 1904 and is characterized by minimal urban impact. The second phase, lasting from 1908 to 1932, is characterized by increasing urban impact. This is the period during which the Olympics become a somewhat larger event and facilities are constructed specifically for the Games. The third phase, the postwar period from 1948 to 1956, is characterized by economic austerity, and thus little urban impact. The fourth phase is from 1960 onward. This ongoing period is characterized by substantial urban impact, with heavy investment in public infrastructure, especially transport.  

Similarly, Martin Wimmer attempts to classify periods of the Games by their Olympic Village building typologies. Wimmer’s first stage, extending from 1896 until around 1948, is characterized by bungalow-style housing and single-family apartments.

Figure 1: A list of Summer Olympics host cities from 1896 to 2004. Coaffee and Wimmer’s phasing schemes are presented as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Host City</th>
<th>Coaffee</th>
<th>Wimmer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Athens</td>
<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>Phase 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>St. Louis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>No Games Held</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Antwerp</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Amsterdam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>No Games Held</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>No Games Held</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Phase 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Helsinki</td>
<td></td>
<td>Phase 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Phase 4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Tokyo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Mexico City</td>
<td></td>
<td>Phase 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Munich</td>
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<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Moscow</td>
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<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td></td>
<td>Phase 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Seoul</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td><strong>Barcelona</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td><strong>Athens</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The second stage lasts from 1952 until 1964, and is characterized by multi-family housing blocks. The third stage, ranging from 1968 to 1980, is characterized by large housing complexes organized in high-rise apartment buildings. The fourth stage is from
1984 onward, and is characterized by Olympic Villages of varied forms, borrowing and mixing styles from the previous three phases.\textsuperscript{13}

The Coaffee and Wimmer classification systems are approximations, but they are useful for understanding the overarching trajectory of the Summer Games since their revival. In each case, the most salient trends are those of accumulating scale and permanence.

\textit{Athens 1896 to Los Angeles 1932}

The first modern Olympics were held in Athens in 1896. The staging of the Games in its ancient home was meant to symbolize the connection between past and present. Events were held in the restored Panathenian Stadium, further ossifying the link between the modern and ancient Games.\textsuperscript{14} Because the Panathenian Stadium was available for use, very little new infrastructure was built for the Games, thus setting a standard for the expected amount of construction for the next several Olympics.

This was, however, to the detriment of the following two Games. Paris 1900 and St. Louis 1904 invested very little in infrastructure, and the Games suffered for it, lacking both the spectacle and capacity of the Athens Olympics. Following the Games in St. Louis, Coubertin asserted the necessity for a proper stadium for hosting events.\textsuperscript{15} The legacy of these two Games is further overshadowed by the World’s Fairs held in each


\textsuperscript{14} Mike O’Mahony, \textit{Olympic Visions: Images of the Games through History} (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 141.

\textsuperscript{15} Bolz, “Olympic Heritage,” 235.
city at the same time as the Olympics. Originally planned as extensions to the Fairs, these Olympics ultimately suffered from inadequate facilities and poor planning.

The London Olympics of 1908 marked somewhat of a turning point in the way Olympic infrastructure was conceived and understood. For the first time, a new permanent stadium was constructed specifically for the Games. The White City Stadium was a multi-purpose arena capable of seating 93,000 spectators. The stadium contained tracks for running and cycling, a swimming pool, and facilities for archery and gymnastics events. Restaurants and dressing rooms were located beneath the stands.

The White City Stadium, unlike facilities in the previous two Olympics, was built to last beyond the Games, even if its eventual purpose was unclear; for nearly twenty years after the Games, the stadium was left unused. Ultimately, it was given to a greyhound racing association in 1926, and then eventually demolished in 1985. But beyond pioneering the implementation of a permanent central arena, the London Games also set a precedent for improvements to the host city’s infrastructure. The construction of the stadium necessitated an extension of the Central London Railway and the creation of a new station at Wood Lane. For the first time, the Olympics prompted an expansion of a city’s infrastructure. London 1908 demonstrated that the scale of the Games was increasing and that cities were beginning to adapt to this through the construction of more permanent facilities. At the same time, cities were beginning to glimpse the opportunities presented by the Games for the improvement of the city itself.

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Following London’s lead, Stockholm, which hosted the Olympics in 1912, built a new stadium in the Royal Zoological Garden that was later used for winter festivals and ice skating.21 Berlin, which was slated to host the Games in 1916, constructed the Deutsches Stadion and claimed direct inspiration from the White City Stadium. The 1916 Games were ultimately cancelled due to the outbreak of World War I, but the Deutsches Stadion in turn inspired similar arenas in Cologne, Nuremberg, and Frankfurt.22 During the interwar years, permanent stadiums continued to be built for the Games, although these arenas were increasingly viewed as architectural statements rather than industrial achievements.23 The aesthetic value of Olympic infrastructure was beginning to be seen as an important aspect of planning for the Games, and cities responded by forwarding their own unique designs for infrastructure projects.

The Los Angeles Games of 1932 marked another turning point in the infrastructural history of the Olympics for two reasons. One was that, for the first time, the Olympic Village became a permanent piece of architecture. From London 1908 to Amsterdam 1928, Olympic Villages were viewed as temporary housing strategies. The Antwerp Games of 1920, for example, placed athletes in local schools.24 In some cases teams were housed on the ships that had transported them to the Games.25 Los Angeles 1932 was the first time that a permanent Olympic Village was constructed for the event.26

The Village model pioneered in Los Angeles, and later replicated in Berlin 1936, was to build facilities for housing, entertainment, and leisure.\(^{27}\)

The second reason the Los Angeles Games were significant was that city branding began to play an important role in the planning of the Olympics. This had effects on decisions about the creation and manipulation of the city’s infrastructure. For the 1932 Games, Los Angeles made a concerted effort toward portraying itself in a certain way. Palm trees were imported into the city and planted en masse in an attempt to impress visitors. The Los Angeles Coliseum was constructed, itself a striking piece of architecture.\(^{28}\) For the first time, Olympic infrastructure projects extended beyond just a formidable central arena. Planners were beginning to understand the process of hosting the Games as a citywide event, as well as an opportunity to craft a new urban image. This expansion, coupled with the increasing permanence of Olympic infrastructure, helped to bolster the Olympics’ status as a growing mega-event.

**Berlin 1936 to Mexico City 1968**

The 1936 Games were held in Berlin during the era of Nazi rule. The Nazis continued to build on Los Angeles’ model for the construction of Olympic Villages. The architectural design of Doberitz Village was influenced by modernity and rationalism, yet even so, there existed a local aspect to the project; each house was named for a German city and decorated according to that city’s culture.\(^{29}\) This type of city-specific branding,

inaugurated in Los Angeles and concretized in Berlin, foreshadowed the eventual exploitation of cities’ unique cultural heritages through processes of Olympic planning.

The Berlin Games also saw the host city itself take a larger role in funding the Olympics. While the Games were originally mostly subsidized by the IOC, individual host cities were beginning to take on more of the burden of spending. This was especially evident in Berlin. As cities began to embrace the ‘city branding’ view of the Games, it became more imperative that host cities contribute to the financing of the event. Ostensibly, the more a city spent on improving its image for the Olympics, the more revenue it would later generate from tourism and other economic activities. And while this was not necessarily the case for Nazi Germany, it would come to be true for future host cities.

No Olympics were held in either 1940 or 1944 due to World War II. When the Games resumed in London in 1948, it was during a period of austerity. As a result, the Olympics of the 1950s were largely unremarkable. Postwar designs for stadiums were more functional than anything else.

The 1960s, however, marked yet another turning point in the development of Olympic infrastructure. Beginning with Rome 1960, Olympic host cities resumed the trend of increasing investment in infrastructure as part of their planning for the games. Rome saw hosting the Games as an opportunity to build new roads and bridges, renovate

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32 O’Mahony, Olympic Visions, 142.
the city’s airport, install street lighting, and improve telecommunications networks. Cities were seeing that long-term infrastructural improvements to their urban fabric could be merited by their status as hosts to the Olympics. Although the interventions made in Rome were piecemeal in nature, they revealed the possibility that citywide improvements could coincide with—and be justified by—planning for the Games.

Tokyo 1964 followed Rome’s lead and coordinated their Games with the city’s ten-year development plan. This included the construction of housing, hotels, waste disposal systems, water supply systems, and a monorail system, as well as the renovation of the harbor. The Tokyo Olympics were also among the first to make a concerted effort toward crafting a unified ‘look’ for the Games. The graphic design of posters and pamphlets matched the architectural design of stadiums. The Tokyo Games furthered the understanding of the Olympics as a city branding event, where the host city is able to market itself to the rest of the world in an effort to increase the flow of capital into the metropolis.

This trend continued with Mexico City 1968, and by the time of Munich 1972, the Olympics had grown massively in scale. In the twenty-year period between Helsinki 1952 and Munich 1972, the number of countries represented at the Games had nearly doubled from 69 to 121; likewise, the number of participating athletes had increased from 4,955 to 7,134. This was due in part to the Games being televised, and thus reaching a much larger audience.

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36 Wright, “The Olympic Ruling Class,” 221.
37 Wright, “The Olympic Ruling Class,” 221.
Munich 1972 to Barcelona 1992

For decades, cities had been moving toward a greater understanding of the Olympics as an opportunity for city marketing. Now, with the increased size and scope of the Games, the stakes were exceedingly high, and the significance placed on infrastructural investment and city branding was enormous.

Yet, this awesome pressure laid the foundation for disaster. The Munich massacre, in which a hostage-taking situation resulted in the deaths of eleven Israeli athletes, five members of the Palestinian terrorist group Black September, and one German policeman, marred the Games.\(^{38}\) That the Olympics had grown so much in scale and that city branding had become so significant only served to exacerbate the harm done by the massacre. The events had unfolded on the global stage and with the reputation (and financial future) of the host city at stake. As a result, the images of both the Olympics and the city of Munich were badly damaged.

Poor economic conditions tainted the Montreal Games of 1976. The Games were also affected by boycotts on the part of several African countries that opposed the admission of the New Zealand to the Games after its sporting teams had been in contact with apartheid South Africa.\(^{39}\) The 1980 Games in Moscow were similarly boycotted, this time by nations opposed to the Soviet Union.\(^{40}\)

This series of failures (difficulties with security, financial complications, and political animosities) precipitated a change in the IOC’s mission. Following the 1972 Games, IOC president Avery Brundage stepped down and was succeeded by Lord

\(^{38}\) Wright, “The Olympic Ruling Class," 222.

\(^{39}\) Donald Macintosh et al., Sport and Canadian Diplomacy (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 57.

\(^{40}\) Wright, “The Olympic Ruling Class,” 222.
Killanin.\textsuperscript{41} Killanin, who was forced to deal with the financial issues and boycotts of the 1976 and 1980 Games, understood these calamities to be linked to the ‘crisis of capitalism’ of the 1970s. Under his leadership, the mission of the IOC shifted from the promotion of a peace movement to the advocacy of large profits.\textsuperscript{42} Prior to the 1970s, the Olympic Movement was predicated on amateur competition. Its message was idealistic and wholly opposed to commercialism. But after the series of shocks during that decade, the Movement adopted a neoliberal stance, maintaining that the best way for the Olympics to succeed was to focus on profit-making.

This ideal overtook infrastructural investment as the primary goal in Olympic planning, and was fully realized with the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles. Following the debacles of the 1970s, Los Angeles proved to be the only city willing to bid for the 1984 Games after Tehran withdrew its application.\textsuperscript{43} Los Angeles embraced the IOC’s new for-profit model, financing the games with money acquired from ticket sales, television revenues, and corporate sponsorships. The negotiation of television rights was overseen by Killanin himself, thus bringing this lucrative process under IOC control.\textsuperscript{44} At the same time, investment in infrastructure was given a subordinate role. The Olympic Village—the construction of which cities in preceding decades had viewed as an opportunity to build long-term housing stock—was essentially nonexistent; athletes were housed in pre-existing university facilities.\textsuperscript{45} With the Los Angeles Games of 1984, investment in

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\textsuperscript{41} Wright, “The Olympic Ruling Class,” 222.
\textsuperscript{42} Wright, “The Olympic Ruling Class,” 217.
\textsuperscript{43} Wright, “The Olympic Ruling Class,” 222.
\textsuperscript{44} Wright, “The Olympic Ruling Class,” 223.
\textsuperscript{45} Muñoz, “Olympic Urbanism,” 177.
\end{flushright}
permanent infrastructure was seen as a less viable way to make money than the selling of television rights or corporate sponsorships, and was thus less important.

Seoul 1988, however, saw the return of investment in infrastructure, although not without criticism. Seoul followed a model of urban regeneration on a large scale, which essentially amounted to urban renewal. The city sought to mitigate the effects of this by incorporating more localized aspects of South Korean culture, such as the placement of high-rise buildings around low-rise ones to protect them. Still, however, the overall program was condemned for its prioritization of infrastructural improvement at a social cost. High-density, walkable neighborhoods were demolished and commercial high-rises were erected in their place. Many saw this as an effort to ‘modernize’ the image of the city at the cost of its historic infrastructure and social cohesion.

Four years later, Barcelona 1992 sought to address the criticism sustained by the Seoul Games, and many consider the Barcelona Games to have been a huge success from an infrastructural and branding standpoint. Because the 1992 Olympics serve as one of the case studies for this thesis, they will be discussed only briefly here so as to provide an understanding of their situation within the chronology of the Summer Games.

Much of the discourse of success in Barcelona surrounds its cohesive integration of city branding techniques with citywide urban redevelopment and planning. Barcelona, like many cities prior, viewed its status as a host city as an opportunity to improve its urban infrastructure as well as its image. However, more than any other Olympic city before or possibly since, Barcelona was able to integrate the Olympics into an overarching city plan—one that had existed before the Games were awarded and whose

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47 Gold, “The Summer Olympics,” 44.
vision extended far beyond the Games’ conclusion.\textsuperscript{48} Furthermore, the city was aided by the fact that approximately 88\% of necessary facilities for the Games were already available for use and only fifteen new venues needed to be constructed.\textsuperscript{49} This allowed Barcelona to focus more of its attention on citywide infrastructure projects that were not necessarily directly associated with the Olympics, but would benefit from increased funding due to the Games. In fact, 83\% of expenditures went toward improvements on city infrastructure while a mere 17\% went toward the Games themselves.\textsuperscript{50}

For the 1992 Olympic Games, Barcelona renovated an existing stadium and created four Olympic areas with 4,500 apartments and 5,000 hotel rooms.\textsuperscript{51} In terms of infrastructure outside the immediate realm of the Games, the city constructed a new Ring Road to connect venues, two communication towers, new cultural centers and museums, expansions to the airport and the metro system, and five kilometers of new beaches.\textsuperscript{52} Even infrastructure projects that were related directly to the Olympics were employed with a sense of integration into the city as a whole. The renovation of Barcelona’s waterfront was widely seen as a result of both the city’s implementation of projects based on long-term planning and its understanding of how the post-Olympic relationship between existing and newly created areas of the city would play out.\textsuperscript{53}

But this largely positive appraisal of the Barcelona Olympics belies the negative consequences of its planning strategy that have become evident in succeeding years. The

\textsuperscript{48} Gold, “The Summer Olympics,” 46.
\textsuperscript{49} Gold, “The Summer Olympics,” 45.
\textsuperscript{51} Coaffee, “Urban Regeneration and Renewal,” 186.
\textsuperscript{52} Gold, “The Summer Olympics,” 46; Coaffee, “Urban Regeneration and Renewal,” 186.
\textsuperscript{53} Muñoz, “Olympic Urbanism,” 181.
regeneration of the waterfront, while touted as a positive outcome of the Games, has increased housing prices across the city, forcing many longtime residents to leave.\textsuperscript{54}

Additionally, following the Barcelona Games, inflation in the city increased and unemployment rose.\textsuperscript{55} And on a larger scale the city branding approaches used for the Barcelona Olympics have increasingly placed control of the city in the hands of private agents. Generally, post-Olympic city planning in Barcelona has become less focused on the improvement of the lives of the city’s residents, and more attuned to strategies that seek to maximize the attraction of capital. This is to say that despite the widely held understanding that the Barcelona Games were an unequivocal success, the 1992 Olympics have had a complicated legacy. This legacy will be further discussed in a later portion of this thesis.

\textit{Atlanta 1996 to Athens 2004}

The Atlanta 1996 Games returned somewhat to the model set forth by Los Angeles 1984. In contrast to Barcelona, the city focused most of its spending on sports facilities.\textsuperscript{56} There was no overall city plan, although some of the venues found post-Games uses; the main stadium would be turned into a ballpark.\textsuperscript{57} The Atlanta Games were conceptualized as a more temporary event than the Barcelona Olympics; athletes were housed in university dormitories and most of the Olympic district was dismantled following the Games.\textsuperscript{58}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{54} Muñoz, “Olympic Urbanism,” 181.
\bibitem{55} Coaffee, “Urban Regeneration and Renewal,” 187.
\bibitem{56} Coaffee, “Urban Regeneration and Renewal,” 188.
\bibitem{57} Cashman, “Legacy,” 186.
\end{thebibliography}
Beginning with the Sydney 2000 Games, the IOC began to recommend a more sustainable approach to Olympic planning.\textsuperscript{59} The site selected for the 2000 Games was Homebush Bay, previously a slaughterhouse then a brickworks.\textsuperscript{60} Although the original scheme for an Olympic Eco-Village was never realized, the Games did prove to be sustainable in other ways. The Olympic master plan, for example, made use of several existing structures including the Aquatic Center and the Main Stadium.\textsuperscript{61}

Athens 2004 followed the Sydney Games, and initial planning for the event was influenced by the IOC’s sustainable discourse. Early on in the process, planners claimed that the Games would be the “first Olympiad to use 100% green energy” and intended to reuse existing infrastructure in the city.\textsuperscript{62} However, the majority of these plans were ultimately abandoned and the final scheme for the Olympics called for inefficient, spatially dispersed infrastructure.\textsuperscript{63}

Some of the more positive outcomes of the Athens Games were the improved transportation networks in the city. Pedestrian routes were created to link Athens’ various archaeological sites and two new metro lines were built.\textsuperscript{64} However, the negative consequences remain far more visible. Much of the infrastructure built for the Games is no longer heavily used, or even used at all. The Olympic Sports Complex at Maroussi, for example, is used only for occasional concerts.\textsuperscript{65} As the city finds it increasingly difficult to meet maintenance costs, several of these venues have fallen into disrepair. Many have

\textsuperscript{59} Coaffee, “Urban Regeneration and Renewal,” 189.
\textsuperscript{61} Weirick, “Urban Design,” 78-81.
\textsuperscript{63} Gold, “The Summer Olympics,” 51.
\textsuperscript{64} Gold, “The Summer Olympics,” 51; Coaffee, “Urban Regeneration and Renewal,” 191.
\textsuperscript{65} Gold, “The Summer Olympics,” 51.
criticized the city for lacking a clear post-Games plan for the infrastructure that was built.\(^{66}\)

To some degree, the Athens Games represented an attempt to emulate the ‘Barcelona model’ set forth by the 1992 Olympics. Unlike Barcelona, however, Athens’ primary Olympic legacy is one of increasing urban fragmentation brought on by incoherent planning and a lack of long-term vision. But much like Barcelona, post-Olympic Athens is marked by the growing influence of private investment in the development of infrastructure. Only thirteen years removed from the Games, the legacy of Athens 2004 remains a complex one. This, too, will be discussed in greater depth in a later portion of this thesis.

The trajectory of the Summer Olympic Games from their revival in 1896 to their return to Athens in 2004 is characterized by increasing scale, intensity, and permanence. Begun as an idealistic peace movement of sorts, the Olympics have transformed into a sporting mega-event dominated by massive construction projects, huge flows of capital, and concerted efforts at city branding. The reflection of these trends over the course of the 20\(^{th}\) and early 21\(^{st}\) centuries may be seen in the changing manifestations of Olympic infrastructure.

This planning and development of infrastructure reflects a fundamental dilemma of Olympic planning since the Los Angeles Games of 1984. That dilemma centers on the reconciliation of two major aims of Olympic host cities. On the one hand is the desire to not only profit from the Games themselves, but to use the elite status of host city to create

a lasting framework for the continued attraction of global private investment. Such a framework has located its foundation in the service sector, specifically the economy of culture and leisure. On the other hand is a focus on long-term planning for a city’s own residents. Olympic cities, now more than ever, understand the opportunity to host the Games as a means by which to accomplish far-reaching infrastructure and planning goals that would otherwise be difficult to achieve. Of course, there exists a significant overlap in these two goals. Large-scale infrastructure projects, for example, are able to circumvent bureaucratic planning processes by way of increased private capital. Yet the complexity of navigating the two aims remains a potent force Olympic cities must reckon with. Simply put, cities must negotiate between planning for the attraction of private capital and planning for the city’s own inhabitants.
Chapter Three
Case Study: Barcelona 1992

The 1992 Olympics are often cited as the paragon of mega-event infrastructural planning initiatives. From an infrastructural point of view, the improvements made to the city of Barcelona have widely been seen as a successful leveraging of the Games for the lasting benefit of the host city.

The Barcelona Olympics are also often recognized as a turning point for the political and economic understanding of the Games. The first Summer Games to be staged following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the 1992 Olympics helped to promote global capitalism and the new service-based economy. While the 1984 Los Angeles Games forwarded a new understanding of the way in which private investment could be coupled with a mega-event such as the Olympics to help promote a city, the 1992 Olympics linked those two concepts to physical infrastructural improvements.

The 1992 Games also represented a turning point for the city of Barcelona itself. The Olympics marked the transition from publicly planned, small-scale infrastructural improvements to larger schemes funded by private investors. In many ways the 1992 Games actually facilitated this transition by opening the city to the global market. Pre-Games planning initiatives that focused on the improvement of public space gave way to post-Games enterprises intent on maximizing profits. And while the legacy of the 1992 Olympics has been largely positive, many have seen the gentrification of Barcelona’s neighborhoods and the commodification of the city’s unique culture as enormous drawbacks.
The 1992 Games continue to represent an important moment in Olympic history, heralding a new era of planning focused on city branding and the service sector, specifically the economy of culture and leisure. For this alone, the Barcelona Olympics have forever changed the way the Games are understood.

*Barcelona’s Planning History*

In order to understand the planning scheme devised for the 1992 Games, it is important to contextualize it within the broader history of urban planning in Barcelona. The city’s developmental history before being awarded the Games in 1986 was punctuated by several citywide master plans, as well as more minor interventions. Many of the planning techniques developed in the pre-Games years contributed to the planning framework for the 1992 Olympics.

The oldest part of Barcelona is the city center, called the Ciutat Vella. It is comprised of the Barri Gòtic, El Raval, and Barceloneta. The Barri Gòtic and El Raval were constructed in the Roman and Medieval periods, and Barceloneta during the 18th century. The Ciutat Vella is characterized by historical infrastructure and an extremely dense urban fabric.

Surrounding the Ciutat Vella is a district called the Eixample. Faced with the need to expand and renovate the city in the mid-19th century, Barcelona forewent the implementation of Haussmann-style urban renewal and instead opted for Ildefons Cerdà’s

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Cerdà’s scheme emphasized the ordered expansion of the city through a uniform grid system of street blocks. The plan incorporated green space and sought to ease flows of traffic. Cerdà believed that the homogeneity of the Eixample’s street grid would produce social equity. In execution, however, the Eixample did not adhere completely to the plan, and as a result became a densely populated and socially unbalanced district. The Eixample was not completed until 1929, but in 1905 Léon Jaussely created a plan to stitch together the district with the Ciutat Vella, seeking to redirect the development of the city toward a more compact urban morphology.

Organized planning in Barcelona ceased with the rule of dictator Francisco Franco, who came to power in 1939. Barcelona had not sided with Franco during the Spanish Civil War, and so was punished through neglect. During Franco’s rule, the city expanded uncontrollably and infrastructure deteriorated. Factories began to populate the city’s waterfront, restricting access to the Mediterranean Sea. But by the 1970s, processes of deindustrialization were causing these factories to become abandoned and signaling the onset of severe infrastructural and economic decline.

In 1970, mayor Josep Porcioles, who led the city for fifteen years under Franco, strategized to rejuvenate the city through a bid for Expo 82. Though the bid failed, the

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70 Illas, *Thinking Barcelona*, 139-141.
notion of improving the city through the hosting of a mega-event was forwarded for the first time since Barcelona’s attempt to claim the 1936 Olympics from Berlin.\textsuperscript{73}

In 1974, under the direction of mayor Enric Massó, Barcelona began to draft the Pla General Metropolità (PGM). The plan was grand in scale and sought to create both new green spaces and new road networks, as well as repurpose abandoned industrial sites.\textsuperscript{74} This, coupled with the PGM’s focus on the reconstruction of Barcelona’s urban space rather than its extension, laid the groundwork for Olympic planning just a decade later.\textsuperscript{75} In 1975 Franco died and in 1976 the PGM was completed.\textsuperscript{76}

With the end of Francoism came the rise of the Socialist Party of Catalonia. The dual processes of deindustrialization and globalization had contributed to an economic crisis in many parts of Europe, and Barcelona was no exception.\textsuperscript{77} The municipal government, as well as architects and designers, felt that intentional planning interventions were needed to address Barcelona’s economic and infrastructural shortcomings. The new left-wing government was prepared to use the recently-passed PGM as a framework for these interventions.\textsuperscript{78}

In 1980, mayor Narcís Serra appointed architect Oriol Bohigas to the Head of Urban Planning.\textsuperscript{79} At this time, there existed a discourse of ‘recovery planning’ that sought to remedy the years of neglect under Franco with a renewed focus on the unique

\textsuperscript{73} Monclus, “Barcelona 1992,” 272.
\textsuperscript{74} Monclus, “Barcelona 1992,” 272.
\textsuperscript{75} Illas, Thinking Barcelona, 141.
\textsuperscript{76} Monclus, “Barcelona 1992,” 272.
\textsuperscript{77} Monclus, “Barcelona 1992,” 269.
\textsuperscript{79} Ingrosso, Barcelona, 27.
cultural identity of Barcelona. Notions of Barcelona’s identity were tied up with the city’s architectural heritage, and improvements to infrastructure were seen as a means by which to better the city’s image.

However, the struggling economy of the 1980s forced Barcelona to scale back its plans. Because of this, and also because he believed in the importance of specification in planning, Bohigas hired architects to design small-scale public spaces and public art. He felt that specific, intentional interventions in certain neighborhoods could renew a sense of vibrancy in those communities and contribute to more widespread positive effects. Bohigas further believed that these interventions should be publicly driven. In conjunction with these new public spaces, Bohigas oversaw the restoration of the city’s historic architecture. During this time, notions of improving the city’s image were linked with the creation of public space. The intention was to improve the city for the sake of its own inhabitants.

Between 1980 and 1987, hundreds of small parks and public spaces were created across Barcelona. Some of the larger interventions, such as the Parc de l’Espanya Industrial, utilized abandoned industrial land, a technique which would later be expanded for the Olympics. Other projects, such as the Moll de la Fusta, began the process of connecting the city to the waterfront, which had been separated by abandoned factories and a railway line. While many Barcelonans viewed these projects as positive urban interventions, others were more critical. Some lamented Bohigas’ focus on sculptural and

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81 Illas, Thinking Barcelona, 144-145.
83 Ingrosso, Barcelona, 44.
84 Ingrosso, Barcelona, 44.
85 Ingrosso, Barcelona, 47.
artistic interventions, citing the need to prioritize green space in a city that lacked such.\textsuperscript{86} More recent criticisms have centered on the contribution of Bohigas’ plans to the densification of the city, and have linked this with the increasing privatization of land.\textsuperscript{87}

Retrospective criticisms of Bohigas’ scheme tend to emphasize the link between the planning techniques he used and those implemented after the Games which focused on attracting private investment. At the time, however, Bohigas made explicit his belief in publicly driven planning initiatives.\textsuperscript{88} Even if mayor Narcís Serra was interested in attracting capital through tourism, Bohigas ostensibly sought to better the city for its own people.\textsuperscript{89}

Despite the progress being made with small-scale interventions, city planners believed that large-scale improvements could be enacted under the right circumstances. To this end, a bid for the 1992 Olympics was made; the city announced its candidature in 1981.\textsuperscript{90} In 1982, Pasqual Maragall was elected mayor of Barcelona, and in 1983 he appointed Joan Busquets to replace Bohigas as Head of Urban Planning.\textsuperscript{91} Bohigas’ planning initiatives were for the most part continued under this new leadership. But in 1986, Barcelona was awarded 1992 Olympic Games, and the city’s planning strategy was forced to respond.\textsuperscript{92}

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\textsuperscript{86} Joan Ramon Resina, \textit{Barcelona’s Vocation of Modernity: Rise and Decline of an Urban Image} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 209.  \\
\textsuperscript{87} Resina, \textit{Barcelona’s Vocation of Modernity}, 212.  \\
\textsuperscript{88} Illas, \textit{Thinking Barcelona}, 144.  \\
\textsuperscript{89} Ingrosso, \textit{Barcelona}, 30.  \\
\textsuperscript{90} Ingrosso, \textit{Barcelona}, 30, 50.  \\
\textsuperscript{91} Ingrosso, \textit{Barcelona}, 50.  \\
\textsuperscript{92} Ingrosso, \textit{Barcelona}, 30.  
\end{flushright}
Planning for the Games

The promise of the Olympics fundamentally shifted Barcelona’s planning strategy, ensuring the city far more public and private funds than it otherwise would have had. While the city still intended to emphasize publicly driven infrastructure projects, it was able to expand the scale of these interventions. And although Barcelona sought to keep the focus of its urban improvement projects centered on its residents, the city also understood that it was now on the international stage. The Olympics were, and continue to be, a global event, and infrastructure projects needed to shift their focus so as to cater to foreign investment as well. Even if the city wanted to maintain the prioritization of its people, such a perspective was incompatible with the global scale of the Games.

The general strategy Barcelona adopted for the Games was to distill the number of Olympic zones to only four, locating them at crucial points along the periphery of the city. It was also important that any infrastructure built specifically for the Games had a clear post-Olympic use. To some extent, these two concepts went hand-in-hand: by locating each zone at a specific point in the city, their use during the Olympics could activate the sites and spur long-term investment. Though the scale of the projects had increased, the post-Franco era ideology of generating maximum output from minimum input was still present.

The four Olympic zones comprise the infrastructure projects related most directly to the Games. They are: Montjuïc, Diagonal, Vall d’Hebron, and Poblenou. All four sites are located on the periphery of the Eixample.

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95 Illas, *Thinking Barcelona*, 146.
The main Olympic area was situated atop the mountain of Montjuïc in the southern part of the city. Already extant were a park and a stadium originally constructed for the 1929 World’s Fair. Though the site was neglected during the Franco era, many of the park facilities survived into the 1980s. The project for Montjuïc included the renovation of the stadium by architects Vittori Gregotti and Federico Correa. This was to be the main Olympic Stadium. Together with three other buildings atop the hill (the Palau Sant Jordi for gymnastics and volleyball, the Bernat Picorell Swimming Pools, and

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the INEFC for wrestling), this constituted the Olympic Ring.\textsuperscript{98} Palau Sant Jordi and the INEFC were designed by renowned architects Arata Isozaki and Ricardo Bofill, respectively.\textsuperscript{99} Amidst the natural undulations of Montjuïc hill, the Olympic Ring stood as a starkly axial design.\textsuperscript{100}

Figure 3: Olympic site at Montjuïc (Photo by the author).

The Diagonal site was in the southwest of Barcelona. It was centered on the Avinguda Diagonal motorway and contained the highest number of pre-existing sports

\textsuperscript{99} Casellas, “The Barcelona Model?,” 94.
\textsuperscript{100} Ingrosso, Barcelona, 61.
facilities of the four main Olympic areas. The plan for this site was drafted by Oriol Clos and Maria Rubert, and sought to repurpose the existing public and private sports facilities for use during the Games. Attempts were also made to integrate the Diagonal site with the towns of L’Hospitalet de Llobregat and Esplugues.

Figure 4: Distribution of primary Olympic sites in Barcelona:
1) Vall d’Hebron, 2) Poblenou, 3) Montjuïc, 4) Diagonal
(Source map from Google Earth, modified by the author using Photoshop).

The third Olympic site, Vall d’Hebron, was located in the northeast part of the city at the base of the Collserola Mountains. By placing this site in a working-class

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102 Ingrosso, Barcelona, 65.
103 Official Report, 209.
neighborhood that lacked many services, planners hoped they could generate investment and improve the area. Sports facilities, including tennis courts and an archery range, as well as 489 dwellings were constructed there. The plan for the site was conceived by Edward Bru and, unlike the axial design of Montjuïc, was more organic. And while much of the newly-built architecture for the Games was criticized as being uninspiring and bland, the changing rooms at Vall d’Hebron designed by Enric Miralles and Carme Pinos were praised for their beauty.

The fourth Olympic site built for the Games was Poblenou. Here, on land previously occupied by abandoned factories and warehouses, was built the Olympic Village. The project, overseen by Bohigas’ architecture firm MBM, involved the razing of the site and the erasure of all remnants of its industrial past. The scheme to build housing on the site had actually been drawn up before the awarding of the Olympics, and MBM’s initial plans were altered slightly with the announcement of the Games in 1986. The plans were changed so that the development would first act as an Olympic Village, then be converted to permanent housing after the Games. The design of the Village, officially called Nova Icària, was intended to be a somewhat public initiative. The master plan of four superblocks, similar in form to those of Cerdà’s Eixample, was laid out by MBM, but the design of the individual interventions in the Village were distributed amongst 33 separate architectural firms, thereby dispersing control of the project’s design. MBM’s idea was to modernize the historical urban form of the Eixample.

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In addition to the Olympic Village, the Poblenou site featured two new skyscrapers built directly on the waterfront, the Torre Mapfre and the Hotel Arts. The railway line which had divided the city from the shoreline was submerged, allowing for the reclamation of 4.2 kilometers of new beachfront. A new Olympic port was also constructed. Portions of the Ronda del Litoral were covered with park space so as to further link the city with the waterfront. In all, over 1,500 new homes and 220 new commercial spaces were created, rendering the Poblenou intervention the most substantial of the four Olympic sites.

Besides the core four sites, there existed additional infrastructure projects that, while less directly related to the Olympics themselves, were made possible through increased investment in the city as a whole during the pre-Games period. These included two telecommunications towers designed by prominent architects, the Torre de Collserola and the Torre de Telefônica. Additionally, ring roads were created to ease traffic. These thoroughfares were designed to vary in capacity based on the neighborhood through which they passed, as well as pass underground when possible, so as to minimize the potentially divisive effects of the new routes.

Infrastructure built for the Olympics changed Barcelona’s culture of planning in a number of ways. For one, the Games necessitated a shift from the small-scale urban interventions of the late 1970s and early 1980s to much larger infrastructure projects,

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109 Ingrosso, *Barcelona*, 70.
112 Casellas, “The Barcelona Model?,” 95.
113 Illas, *Thinking Barcelona*, 151.
some of which involved the decimation and reconstruction of entire neighborhoods, as was the case with Poblenou.

This shift in the physical scale of projects forced a similar shift in their target audience. While the interventions of the post-Franco era were aimed at improving the lives of Barcelonans in specific neighborhoods, the projects of the pre-Olympics period served a global audience as well. Infrastructure came to be seen as a means by which to impress tourists attracted by the Games as well as the press. The understanding of whom urban infrastructure is for began to shift in the years leading up to the Games.

Planning for the 1992 Games was influenced not only by the Olympics themselves, but also by what Saskia Sassen describes as the new service-oriented economy. Sassen notes that in the 1980s individual cities began to take on a larger role in the global economy, which was shifting from a focus on manufacturing to one on services. Needing to compete with each other economically, cities began to adapt themselves to the development of service-related infrastructure in order to attract global capital. In Barcelona’s case, the Olympics were viewed as an opportunity to develop that infrastructure, and the city’s own planning ideology was forced to shift as a result.

Planning in Barcelona also became an increasingly private endeavor due to the Olympics. Between 1986 and 1993, 32.7% of investment for Olympic projects was private. The majority of private funding was directed at housing, hotels, and roads, and more than a third of this funding came from foreign capital. The other 67.3% of investment was public, and this funding was funneled mostly into projects in the four

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primary Olympic sites. Unlike the frugal years following the Franco regime, the promise of the Olympics brought new sources of funding. And while the public sector still controlled much of the planning process, the foundation for increasing private influence had been laid.

While many of the fundamental planning principles of the post-Franco period remained in pre-Games schemes—such as the concept of generating widespread change through interventions at specific sites—the scale of these interventions had increased dramatically. Along with this went the increasing reliance on private investment and the growing influence of private agents.

*Infrastructural Legacy (Short-Term)*

There are two ways of understanding the legacy of Barcelona’s Olympic infrastructure. The first is to investigate how the physical infrastructure built for the Games was used after the Olympics, and how it influenced its immediate urban surroundings. The second way is to understand how the planning and implementation of Olympic infrastructure changed city planning in Barcelona in the following decades. This involves a wider understanding of how the city brands itself and how it increasingly relates to the global market.

In terms of physical infrastructure built for the Games, the legacy is complicated. The prevailing discourse is a largely positive one, focused on the integration of Olympic projects with a long-term city planning strategy. Many have seen the construction of ring roads linking Olympic sites, the submergence of disruptive railway lines, and the

improvement of the city’s sewage system as projects that satisfied long-term goals for Barcelona. Indeed, shortly after some of these projects were completed, the praise began. Newspapers lauded the “gleaming new Olympic village and beachfront” which had replaced the “grumpy industrial area that had blocked access to the sea for decades.”

During the Olympics and in the early post-Games period, press coverage of Barcelona’s infrastructure adopted a highly congratulatory tone.

A certain amount of this positive appraisal stems from the fact that compared to other Olympic cities, many of Barcelona’s facilities have found post-Games uses. The Piscines Bernat Picornell is now the largest outdoor pool in the city. The Olympic stadium was for a time home to Barcelona’s second soccer team, Espanyol, and has also found a variety of sport-related uses. The renovated Montjuïc hill is used by pedestrians and cyclists. The beachfront has also become a popular recreational space, and the Olympic Village now serves as housing.

However, this largely positive discourse surrounding Barcelona’s post-Games infrastructure obscures the social inequality and unevenness of access that have developed as well. Construction of many Olympic facilities forced the demolition of apartment buildings and the relocation of Barcelona’s working-class residents, many of which had no choice but to move. Waterfront restaurants owned by Barcelonans were also destroyed to make way for the Olympic Village and the two new skyscrapers.

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121 Forman and Thurow, “Modern Times.”
Ironically, these tragedies have been swallowed by the overarching discourse of renewed access to the waterfront.

In the years following the Games, much of the criticism directed at Barcelona’s Olympic infrastructure has centered on the Olympic Village. The master plan for the Village was generated by Bohigas’ firm MBM, and the development was technically called Nova Icària, named for a group of socialist utopians who had created a community on the site during the 19th century. The application of the name, however, came to be seen as an attempt at image-building, for the development had little to do with socialist utopians. In fact, many saw the Olympic Village as representing the exact opposite—a decimating of Barcelona’s industrial heritage in favor of a new type of city aimed at attracting foreign private investment.122

In 1988, prior to the start of the Games, the Olympic Village came under the control of NISA, a public-private company responsible for its construction and sale.123 NISA was heavily influenced by private real estate developers, who managed to reduce the promised number of low-income residences being built. The focus of the project turned from the socially-oriented goals of the early 1980s to profit maximization.124 Although some housing units remained under public control, their reduced prices were still too much for most low-income families to afford, and were subsequently taken by young professionals instead. As a result, housing prices in surrounding neighborhoods began to rise.125 This, along with the erasure of the site’s industrial heritage, attracted

122 Illas, Thinking Barcelona, 154-155.
123 Ingrosso, Barcelona, 72.
124 Ingrosso, Barcelona, 76.
criticism. This corruption of social goals at the hands of private actors was to foreshadow planning processes in Barcelona in the coming years.

The Olympic Village was not the only infrastructure project to invite criticism. Despite being praised for its architectural design, the Vall d’Hebron has been condemned for its planning strategy, which prioritized the automobile over the street. The result is a landscape unfriendly to pedestrians, featuring parking lots, metal sidewalks, and artificial turf.126 And although the number of housing units under public control was higher in Vall d’Hebron than in Nova Icària, the development still produced gentrification in its surrounding neighborhoods.127

Gentrification has been the primary negative legacy of Barcelona’s Olympic infrastructure projects, which were designed to impress visitors and attract foreign investment. Unlike the initiatives of the immediate post-Franco period, Barcelona’s pre-Games infrastructure schemes targeted a foreign audience while neglecting the city’s own residents. The inherently global nature of a mega-event such as the Olympics necessitates an international perspective on planning. At the same time, Barcelona’s desire to compete in the global marketplace and the service economy forced a new approach to city-building that was focused more on how the city appeared to private investors than how it operated for its own people.

This shift in Barcelona’s approach to planning was brought on by the promise of the Olympics and the new service economy described by Sassen. However, it was in the years following the Games that the approach was concretized and implemented across the

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city. Projects conducted under this new ideology stood in stark contrast to the initiatives of both the post-Franco period and the pre-Games era.

**Planning Legacy (Long-Term)**

Beyond the immediate impact of Olympic infrastructure projects and their post-Games uses, Barcelona’s planning strategy for the Olympics changed the way the city understood itself in the years to come. In the decades following the Games, Barcelona relied more and more heavily on private investment to complete infrastructure projects. At the same time, the city began to view itself not as an autonomous urban entity within Spain, but as a participant in the global competition between cities to attract capital.

Barcelona understood that in order to achieve its goals in infrastructure improvement, it needed to make itself marketable to global investors. However, throughout this process, the city’s objectives shifted from improvement for its own residents to improvement for the sake of its image. Post-Games infrastructure projects lacked the community-oriented goals of earlier initiatives and instead invested private funds in projects that sought to generate further capital in a never-ending cycle.\(^\text{128}\)

In Kenneth Frampton’s theory of “critical regionalism” cities or architects indirectly incorporate local elements into planning or design schemes in an attempt to avoid the totalizing effects of globalization.\(^\text{129}\) This theory is evident in Barcelona’s pre-Olympic projects that converted old industrial sites into parks, such as the Parc de l’Espanya Industrial and the Parc Pegaso, which maintained architectural elements from


\(^{129}\) Illas, *Thinking Barcelona*, 159.
the factories as references to the city’s industrial heritage. These projects were able
to create new infrastructure that possessed a meaningful link to Barcelona’s cultural and
economic past. Tourists who experienced these sites could glean some understanding of
Barcelona’s culture and history.

Post-Games planning, however, broke with this theory of critical regionalism. In
contrast, projects adopted a strategy focused on the creation of images, with less
emphasis on the authenticity of those images or their truthful relation to the city’s culture
or history. Taken to the extreme, this conception of planning led the city to become not a
center for consumption, but an object of consumption itself. Jean Clos, the mayor who
succeeded Pasqual Maragall, forwarded the belief that cities should be promoted like
businesses. One city planner, Manuel de Forn, succinctly summarized this new post-
Games direction: “We have created a new city. Now we need to profit from it.”

Many have cited the Olympic Village project as laying the groundwork for
Barcelona’s post-Games planning strategy. Its transformation of the Poblenou district
from an abandoned industrial site into a center of middle-class housing, tourism, and
commerce represents the city’s bridging of the gap between the industrial economy of the
past and the new service-sector economy that it sought to embrace. So too did it
represent a crucial aspect of Barcelona’s new planning strategy—the shedding of cultural
design references in favor of a new tourist-oriented veneer. The infrastructure that results

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133 Forman and Thurow, “Modern Times.”
from this process makes little reference to its urban environment or history. It is an empty image generated for consumption on the global market.

Josep Maria Montaner argues that this erasure of Barcelona’s industrial infrastructure, and by extension its industrial history, amounts to an erasure of the city’s working-class history. The Olympic Village model has now been replicated in the Ciutat Vella, notably in the district of El Raval, which has undergone numerous changes since the Games. The construction of the Rambla del Raval, a large street and plaza in the district, necessitated the demolition of several blocks of buildings. The area has also seen the construction of several new museums and a film archive center. A luxury hotel stands amidst bars, restaurants, and young tourists. The new planning focus on the economy of culture and leisure has changed the urban form and social character of El Raval. Rising housing prices resulting from these new projects have forced out longtime residents, and the rapid pace of construction has contributed to the loss of historic infrastructure. El Raval represents a significant example of how new post-Games planning processes have changed Barcelona.

Yet it is the Forum 2004 project that stands as the epitome of planning strategy in post-Olympics Barcelona. In 1996, a decade after being awarded the 1992 Olympics, Barcelona announced its hosting of the 2004 Forum of Cultures. The event, overseen by UNESCO, was a conference intended to facilitate debate on issues such as urbanization, sustainability, and globalization. The site selected for the event was the Poblenou district, the same neighborhood that had undergone the transformations generated by the

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135 Ingrosso, Barcelona, 96.
136 Ingrosso, Barcelona, 120.
137 Ingrosso, Barcelona, 110.
138 Ingrosso, Barcelona, 99.
Olympic Village. And just as Oriol Bohigas had supervised the planning of the Village, Josep Antoni Acebillo was to oversee the Forum project. The long-term goal of the project, beyond simply hosting the conference, was to improve service-sector-related infrastructure in that part of the city. The vision was decidedly outward-looking, seeking to entice global private investment to come to Barcelona.

The planning scheme for the Forum expanded on that of the Olympic Village, and sought to continue the conversion of disused industrial land into communications and information technology facilities. Along with this, housing and park space were also incorporated. The project, managed by the multinational Hines Group, saw the construction of 1400 apartments, three hotels, and three commercial buildings.

While the Forum itself was criticized for its trivialization of cultural diversity and its lack of participation, the infrastructure built for the event was condemned as an “architectural theme park” that bore no relation to the city beyond. Both the Forum and the infrastructure it required were seen as vehicles for the attraction of private investment, and nothing more. Today, the enormous plaza in front of Herzog & de Meuron’s Forum Building stands essentially vacant.

Oriol Bohigas, in seeking to explain the failure of the Forum project, contrasts it with his own Olympic Village. He claims that while the Olympic Village aspires to continue to urban fabric of the Eixample and allow for social cohesion, the Forum places buildings randomly within green space, with no regard for the communal urban

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139 Ingrosso, Barcelona, 134.
140 Ingrosso, Barcelona, 101.
141 Ingrosso, Barcelona, 138.
142 Ingrosso, Barcelona, 152.
143 Ingrosso, Barcelona, 155-156.
144 Ingrosso, Barcelona, 152, 158.
experience. Acebillo, for his part, defends his work. He says that criticisms which attack the space for being unlike the city’s old squares do not understand his intention. The infrastructure created for the Forum represents Barcelona’s desire to participate in the new service economy, featuring spaces capable of holding conferences and mega-events. Acebillo sees this acquiescence into the neo-tertiary economy as the only way forward, and that those who argue otherwise would rather see the city “grind to a halt.”

The Forum project represents a new way of understanding the city, heavily focused on branding the city for an audience of global private investors. And while Bohigas may criticize the project in comparison to his own, it is undeniable that the Forum project rests on the same logic as that of the Olympic Village. The Village, to some extent, began the process of using private investment to fund infrastructure projects. And even though, as Bohigas states, the Village aspired to social cohesion, the ultimate influence of private agents corrupted this goal. The Forum is a more extreme example of this. Its veneer of social and cultural amelioration is even thinner than that of the Olympic Village, but the link between the two is irrefutable.

Projects like the Forum are taking place within a new planning framework in Barcelona. In 2000, the city adopted a plan called 22@Barcelona. The plan lays out a framework for the conversion of disused industrial lands into new centers for science and information technology. In many ways, it is a formalized template for what the Forum project and the Olympic Village sought to achieve. 22@ focuses on the area of the

145 Ingrosso, *Barcelona*, 86.
146 Ingrosso, *Barcelona*, 173, 177.
147 *22@ Barcelona Plan: A Program of Urban, Economic, and Social Transformation* (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2012), 2.
148 *22@ Barcelona Plan*, 2.
Avinguda Diagonal between Placa de les Glories and the Barcelona International Convention Center, near the sites of the Forum and Olympic Village. Over a twenty-year period, the plan seeks to replace existing industrial infrastructure with higher density construction in order to “generate the critical mass necessary to develop an agglomerative economy.” This focus on the expansion of service-sector economic facilities is the plan’s driving force.

As of a 2012 revised version of the plan, 22@ attempts to alleviate criticisms centered on the destruction of cultural heritage and historic architecture through the Poblenou Industrial Heritage Protection Plan, which intends to protect 114 historic structures in the district. The Protection Plan considers the reuse of industrial infrastructure as schools, offices, or loft apartments to be part of this preservation process. Yet even so, the plan prioritizes service-sector economic growth and the branding of Barcelona for the global market. Given that 22@ is intended to serve as a guiding framework for future planning in Barcelona, the ideological shift is clear. The focus is now, more than ever, on the attraction of private capital through leisure- and technology-based improvements to the city’s infrastructure. Post-Games infrastructure projects have sought to construct a brand identity for Barcelona, casting the city as, not simply a center for culture, leisure, and commerce, but as an object of consumption itself.

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149 22@ Barcelona Plan, 4.
150 22@ Barcelona Plan, 6.
151 22@ Barcelona Plan, 15.
152 22@ Barcelona Plan, 17.
Discussion/Conclusion

Since the end of Francoism in 1975, urban planning in Barcelona has always been related in some way to culture. The early projects of the late 1970s and early 1980s were small urban interventions that centered on the improvement of public space through art installations. The goal of these projects was to improve the city for its own residents. Without much funding, these initiatives were small in scope and driven by the public sector. Yet despite the modesty of these interventions, planners like Oriol Bohigas believed that if located in the right neighborhoods, they could induce urban change on a wider scale and bring a sense of vibrancy to neighborhoods which had been neglected for decades under Franco.

This frugal yet intentional planning ideology became Barcelona’s trademark. Yet the city still believed that more widespread urban improvements could be made with more funding. To this end, Barcelona sought, and won, the right to host the 1992 Summer Olympics. With the promise of the Olympics, the city acquired more funding, especially through private investment. The enormity of the Games necessitated urban interventions of a much larger scale than previous projects. At the same time, the Olympics forced the city into the global economy, which over the previous decade had shifted its focus toward services and the realm of culture and leisure. The resulting infrastructure Barcelona built for the Games represented a change from its post-Franco era planning ideology. The city adopted a global stance on development projects, viewing the Games as an opportunity to market itself to international private investment. Barcelona’s priority became the attraction of capital through the creation of infrastructure related to the service sector. At the same time, considerations such as the preservation of historic infrastructure became
less important. This is seen most evidently in the Olympic Village project, which sought to replace old industrial sites with middle- and upper-class housing, as well as spaces for commerce and consumption. In the years leading up to the Games, planning focused increasingly on the marketing of Barcelona as a tourist destination, using culture primarily as a branding tool.

Following the Games, this trend continued and intensified. The increasing influence of private agents in the planning process meant that infrastructure built in the city bore less and less relation to actual Barcelonans. The goal of attracting foreign capital overshadowed all else, giving rise to projects like the Forum. Seen as a more corrupted version of the Olympic Village, the Forum project represented the epitome of Barcelona’s post-Games planning strategy. The rhetoric of cultural diversity surrounding the Forum event was a thin veneer masking the true intention to attract private capital. The infrastructure created for the event barely related to the city or its people and today stands as abandoned as the factories it replaced. New planning frameworks such as 22@ serve as guidelines for this process, and though they attempt to make provisions for the preservation of culturally-significant infrastructure, do so only superficially; industrial architecture is incorporated if it can be used to build profitable loft apartments. City planning in Barcelona is now oriented toward the construction of service sector infrastructure. The city is no longer a center for commerce; it is itself a commercial.

Culture has consistently played a role in Barcelona’s post-1975 planning history. The publicly driven, small-scale interventions of the early years saw culture as something tangible, something that could be used to truly improve the city for its own people. But with the increasingly global outlook engendered by the Olympics and sustained by the
new service economy, Barcelona began to view culture as a branding strategy. The naming of Nova Icària for a group of socialists while the Village represents everything but socialism shows the irony of the way in which pre-Games planning used the city’s cultural heritage as a branding mechanism for a global audience. After the Olympics, Barcelona took this strategy even further, shedding all references to the city’s culture except in instances where it could be profitable. The result is a strategy centered on the tourist—all image and no authenticity. And while the city today retains a significant amount of culturally relevant infrastructure and historical references, its current planning schemes do not indicate a continued valuation of this.

Yet even so, many have cited Barcelona’s Olympic planning to have been a success. And in the following years, cities sought to emulate the alleged ‘Barcelona model.’ One notable city that attempted to do this was Athens in 2004.
Chapter Four
Case Study: Athens 2004

Twelve years after the Barcelona Olympics, the city of Athens attempted to replicate the alleged model of the 1992 Games. Itself a Mediterranean port city, Athens hoped it too could use the Olympics to improve its failing infrastructure and rebrand itself as a modern tourist destination. But though the city proclaimed its adherence to the Barcelona model, directed action did not follow. In essence, the ‘Athens model’ contained even less substance than the Barcelona one.

The prevailing municipal legacy of the 2004 Olympics is one of budgets exceeded and construction deadlines unmet. It is also one of planning bureaucracy and abandoned facilities. Athens’ lack of a long-term planning vision, compared with the intentionality of Barcelona’s strategy, accounts for some of these perceived shortcomings. But to fully understand the legacy of the 2004 Olympics, it is crucial to locate the Games within the framework of the global economy and the increasingly dominant service sector. Much like the Barcelona Olympics, the Athens Games highlighted the need for cities to compete with each other for global capital. The sustained future of a city, perhaps even more so than in 1992, rested on the attraction of global private investment. In Athens 2004, much as in Barcelona, the service sector—specifically the economy of culture and leisure—was recognized as the gateway into the global marketplace. The Olympics, again, were seen as the means by which to enter.

However, the unique planning history of Athens produced a similarly unique Olympic planning process and subsequent legacy. While public initiatives largely seemed
to fail, spontaneous growth in privately driven economic nodes prevailed. This chapter explores the planning process and legacy of the 2004 Olympics.

_Athens’ Planning History_

The city of Athens has a long history of urban development reaching back to Ancient Greece. And while many of its archaeological sites and infrastructure from this era have remained important factors in city planning, more recent 20th century planning has also influenced the design of Olympic and present-day Athens.

By far the most important city in Greece, Athens is a peripheral city in the wider context of Europe, and is today plagued by unplanned growth, traffic congestion, and obsolete infrastructure.153 In the 1950s and 1960s, the city experienced enormous population growth and was forced to build new housing. The _antiparochi_ system was developed, whereby an owner provides land, prospective tenants contribute money, and a builder constructs the housing. In most cases, no architects were involved and the result for the city is a nearly uniform landscape of five- and six-story apartments of unremarkable design. Many buildings feature partial upper floors because unfinished buildings are taxed at a lower rate than completed ones.154 Because the pace of construction was so rapid, water and sewage systems lagged behind.155

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In the 1970s and 1980s, Athens experienced uneven economic development due in part to an influx of immigrants from the countryside into the city.\textsuperscript{156} Unplanned developments on the urban fringe, which had previously been tolerated in light of housing shortages, continued to be accepted because their construction aided the economy and created jobs.\textsuperscript{157} By the 1980s, Athens’ present-day urban form was taking shape: a high-density urban center with inefficient land use on the periphery and changes to the area’s natural topography.\textsuperscript{158} The 1985 Athens Regulatory Master Plan was created to address these issues, but the overlapping influence of other administrative bodies, as well as the dearth of systems that track land use changes, impeded the successful implementation of the Master Plan.\textsuperscript{159}

Seeking to remedy these issues with the city’s infrastructure, Athens assembled a bid for its second Olympics between 1987 and 1990. The city believed that hosting the Games would help stimulate a struggling economy and renew failing infrastructure.\textsuperscript{160} Athens sought the 1996 Summer Olympics and, in the wake of the 1984 Los Angeles Games, hoped to ground the increasingly commercialized Games in their traditional geographic roots.\textsuperscript{161} But Athens’ bid for the 1996 Games failed, and in doing so defeated the city’s nostalgic outlook on the Olympics.\textsuperscript{162}

\textsuperscript{158} Chorianopoulos et al., “Planning, Competitiveness and Sprawl,” 251.
\textsuperscript{159} Chorianopoulos et al., “Planning, Competitiveness and Sprawl,” 251-252.
\textsuperscript{161} Gold, “Athens 2004,” 318.
Ironically, among the reasons for Athens’ rejection was the city’s failing infrastructure and lack of facilities—the very problems it believed the Olympics would help solve. Yet the city was not deterred. By the turn of the 21st century, Athens was experiencing social and environmental tensions as a result of its urban form. Unplanned developments at its periphery necessitated automobile use, which in turn created congestion in the high-density urban center. Since Athens’ bid a decade earlier, the Barcelona Olympics of 1992 had renewed faith in the Games’ ability to improve infrastructure and stimulate economic development, and Athens again sought to host the Olympics. In January 1996, with a few modifications, the Hellenic Olympic Committee and the Mayor of Athens submitted a second bid to host the Games.

The new bid focused more on a pragmatic approach to hosting the Olympics, in contrast to the earlier bid’s insistence on Greece’s “right” to receive the centennial Games. With a more stable framework in place, Gianna Angelopoulos, who headed Athens’ Olympic effort, promised to “give the world the Olympics of their dreams.”

And in September 1997, Athens was awarded the 2004 Olympic Games.

Planning for the Games

The final planning scheme developed by Athens for the 2004 Games, while aspiring to the purported standard of urban coherence set forth by Barcelona, lacked the intentionality of the 1992 Olympic strategy. Though the plan initially centralized

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166 Longman, “Athens Wins a Vote for Tradition.”
infrastructure in a few sites, changes were made in 1998 that sought to avoid problems that might arise due to existing zoning rules.\(^{168}\) As a result, the final scheme for the Games adopted a more scattered model, locating infrastructure across a wider range of the city.\(^{169}\) The building of Olympic infrastructure also marked an important moment where a new planning ideology was beginning to form. Much as in Barcelona, Olympic planning in Athens saw the prioritization of the service sector economy. Athens, like Barcelona, sought to improve its culture- and leisure-related infrastructure. However, because Athens lacked the strong underlying planning framework that was present in Barcelona, the result was an even more fragmented design scheme and, ultimately, city.

The primary Olympic site was the Athens Olympic Sports Complex (AOSC) located at Maroussi, nine kilometers north of the central city. Using some existing facilities, the AOSC housed the Olympic Stadium, the velodrome, the swimming complex, and the press center, among other things.\(^{170}\) The AOSC, as the main Olympic site, represented the city’s aspirations toward the development of its culture and leisure infrastructure. In trying to replicate the legacy of the Barcelona Games, Athens commissioned Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava to design the AOSC.\(^{171}\) Calatrava, who had built one of the controversial telecommunications towers for the 1992 Games, devised a similarly dramatic design for the Athens Olympic complex. Calatrava’s scheme prominently featured arches, which the architect initially attributed to the arc of a javelin throw or a long jump.

But after criticism of his design on the part of Greeks and Athenians, Calatrava adjusted his rationale, claiming the arches paid homage to the Greek architectural tradition. Similarly, the reasoning for Calatrava’s use of blue and white coloration changed from a representation of sky and sea to that of the Greek flag. These shifts in rhetoric are symbolic of Athens’ increasing focus on tourism and the service economy. Calatrava’s initial inspirations for his design were too ambiguous and thus did not provide a decent opportunity to culturally brand Athens. By tying the infrastructure of the Games to the culture of the city and the country, Athens sought to commodify its culture.

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172 OAKA.com, AOSC.
and ultimately profit from tourism. The Olympics were here seen as the linchpin between culture and profit.

The Faliro Bay site was another important Olympic area in Athens. The design of the site was overseen by French architects Reichen & Robert and was intended to increase pedestrian access to the waterfront. Cut off from the city by a coastal highway, Faliro had essentially become a dumping ground for the city. Though it was originally intended to host eleven sports, this number was ultimately reduced to four. Nevertheless, infrastructural interventions were made, including the renovation of both Peace and Friendship Stadium and Karaiskaki Stadium. Additionally, an existing racetrack was moved and the Illissos River was canalized to prevent flooding.

The renovation of the old Helleniki Airport provided another Olympic site. The airport hosted fencing, baseball, basketball, hockey, softball, canoeing, and kayaking in converted hangars and newly-built facilities. Near Mount Parnitha was built the Olympic Village. Before it was constructed, the Village promised to implement an environmentally-conscious design strategy, using solar energy, indigenous plant species, and special water management systems. However, none of these strategies were realized and as a result the Village attracted a fair amount of criticism.

The scattered planning strategy for Athens’ Olympic infrastructure was mirrored by the lack of an overarching design aesthetic. One newspaper article wrote, “Unlike Barcelona...there is little sense of an underlying design culture in Athens, and the

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Figure 6: Distribution of primary Olympic sites in Athens:
1) Olympic Village, 2) AOSC, 3) Faliro Bay, 4) Helleniki Airport.
(Source map from Google Earth, modified by the author using Photoshop).
numerous interventions seem at times like incongruous accessories pinned to the languishing body of an intransigent giant.”

Though Athens aspired to the design quality of Barcelona, its lack of strategic coordination resulted in arbitrarily implemented infrastructure.

In addition to infrastructure directly related to the Games, Athens also further developed its transport infrastructure. The city built new highways and ring roads that extended out into the suburbs. Athens also doubled the size of its metro system, adding eleven new miles and twenty-one new stations, and built the new Venizelos Airport outside the city. New, more environmentally-friendly and accessible buses replaced the old fleet.

Other infrastructure-related projects focused on the renovation of the city’s historic sites. Athens’ archaeological attractions were linked together with new green spaces and pedestrian paths. The idea was to create a unique tourist spectacle that simultaneously referenced the city’s cultural heritage and projected the image of a modernized Athens. The city was seeking to make its history marketable, and the 2004 Olympics acted as the pivot for this ideology.

Other ‘beautification’ projects conducted for the 2004 Games involved the installation of more street and monument lighting, the restoration of building facades, landscaping, street paving, and the renovation of public squares. These interventions were primarily for aesthetic purposes, seeking to improve the city’s image but without

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179 Ingersoll, “My Big, Fat, Greek Olympics,” 29.
180 Ingersoll, “My Big, Fat, Greek Olympics,” 29.
much regard for its content. In fact, much of the ideology surrounding the planning of infrastructure for the Games involved improving the city’s marketability in the culture and leisure sectors of the economy. The construction of sports arenas and convention centers, as well as the renovation of the waterfront and several museums, represented projects which ultimately sought to connect Athens to the service economy and global private capital. Much as in Barcelona, this planning of service-based infrastructure involved the commodification of Athens’ unique culture. The showcasing of the city’s historic sites for a global audience of tourists and private investors is a prime example of this, and such processes would continue after the Games were over.

In discussing the breakdown of investment for the 2004 Games, Elias Beriatos and Aspa Gospodini classify Olympic infrastructure projects into three categories: built heritage, innovative design, and non-competitive. Built heritage projects focus on the historic center of Athens, and include the linking of archaeological sites and the restoration of monuments, squares, and historic buildings. Innovative design projects are those featuring high-profile designers and architects, such as Calatrava’s AOSC and the Faliro Bay waterfront redevelopment competition. Non-competitive projects include all else, ranging from transport infrastructure to new street furniture. Beriatos and Gospodini estimate that built heritage projects accounted for approximately 4.89% of total investment, innovative design projects about 60.53%, and non-competitive projects 34.58%. About 65% of total investment in infrastructure went toward what Beriatos and Gospodini term “competitive projects,” which are essentially those aimed at the

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attraction of global capital. The competition, as Sassen describes, is understood to be between other European and global cities.

*Infrastructural Legacy (Short-Term)*

The most immediate legacy of Athens’ Olympic infrastructure is one of abandonment. In stark contrast to Barcelona, most of whose Olympic venues found post-Games uses, Athens was unable to effectively utilize much of the infrastructure it had built for the Games. Directly following the Games, bid organizer Gianna Angelopoulos predicted that Athens’ sports facilities would “host regional, European and world championships—as well as local Greek teams and clubs and many cultural events as well.” However, pre-Games planning for the 2004 Olympics had not emphasized long-term strategies for infrastructure use as the 1992 Games had done, and as a result, venues have had to find sporadic and sometimes unconventional roles to play.

Part of the problem also stems from the scattered placement of these venues. Olympic infrastructure situated far from the city center is difficult to access, and many of those sites have not been activated in the way that was hoped. Additional issues have resulted from political infighting. The New Democracy Party, which assumed power in March 2004, blamed the oppositional socialist PASOK for having no post-Games plan for the infrastructure. Meanwhile, PASOK accused the New Democracy of allowing venues to deteriorate. In response, the New Democracy created Hellenic Olympic Properties, a state-owned holding company, and transferred ownership of twenty-two

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venues including all sports facilities, the press center, and the Olympic Village. The plan was for HOP to oversee the venues until lessees could be found, but the maintenance costs of much of the infrastructure is too high to be worth it.188

Figure 6: Abandoned facilities at Faliro Bay.189

Despite these setbacks, some Olympic venues have found alternative post-Games uses. For the most part, these post-Games uses have followed the lead of pre-Games planning ideology, and have secured roles in the culture and leisure economy. The Badminton Hall, for example, was opened in 2007 as a 2,500-seat theater, the largest in Greece. The Stavros Niarchios Foundation Cultural Center was built on the site of the old racecourse at Falirio Bay. The International Broadcasting Center was renovated to become

189 Jon Pack, Faliro Olympic Beach Volleyball Center, Athens.
a shopping mall.\textsuperscript{190} These new uses represent the growing influence of the private sector, taking advantage of Athens’ lack of post-Games strategy. They also symbolize the significance of the service sector and the economy of culture and leisure. Though the city itself was unable to orchestrate a coherent post-Games strategy for its Olympic infrastructure, Athens’ focus on the economy of culture and leisure in the initial planning process left remnants suitable for private agents to pick through after the Games were over.

Still, however, much of Athens’ Olympic infrastructure remains abandoned. The main Olympic complex lies vacant, thieves having stripped the site of valuable materials.\textsuperscript{191} For sports that are unpopular in Greece, finding new uses for venues has been challenging. The Hellenikon Complex has recently become an improvised refugee camp for Afghan migrants.\textsuperscript{192}

As in Barcelona, the Athens Olympic Village stands in many ways as singular representation of the city’s Olympic legacy as a whole. The Village, which was initially promised to be a piece of highly sustainable infrastructure, ultimately failed to implement many of the energy-saving measures it had intended to. There were other concerns too. Even before the Games, many Athenians protested the construction of the Olympic Village, believing it would worsen congestion in the city and noting that it would encroach on forested land.\textsuperscript{193} After the Games, a lottery was held for low-income families to acquire housing in the Village. However, this process left 90% of the apartments

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\item \textsuperscript{190} Gold, “Athens 2004,” 333-335.
\item \textsuperscript{191} Goldblatt, The Games, 386.
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occupied by individuals suffering from serious poverty or mental or physical health issues. As of 2015, the unemployment rate in the Olympic Village was 60%. High property taxes have also forced shops and schools in the district to shut down.\textsuperscript{194} Other criticisms have centered on the lack of public transport connection to the area.\textsuperscript{195} While some see the provision of housing in general as a benefit of the Olympic Village, others point out these issues as evidence that Athens’ lack of post-Games strategy has harmed the city.

Many have seen the failures of Athens’ immediate post-Games infrastructural legacy as stemming from a dissonance between the government and the city’s residents. The city government’s rhetoric of national pride belied an absence of citizen participation in Olympic planning and decision-making processes—an absence itself caused by missed deadlines and the rushed nature of construction.\textsuperscript{196}

Some have sought to outline an ‘Athens model’ in order to contrast the alleged failures of the 2004 Games with the alleged successes of the 1992 Games. Whereas the Barcelona model concentrated Olympic interventions in four urban critical areas, the Athens model scattered infrastructure across the city. Whereas the Barcelona model focused on the redevelopment of Brownfield sites, the Athens model instead built on Greenfields and undeveloped lands. Whereas the Barcelona model intimately involved architects and planners who emphasized good urban form, the Athens model largely neglected design professionals. When architects were consulted, such as Calatrava with the AOSC, their work was considered only in isolation and not seen in the wider urban

\textsuperscript{194} Goldblatt, \textit{The Games}, 386.  
context of the city as a whole. The major similarity between the two models, however, is the significance placed on the culture and leisure economy. In both Barcelona and Athens, infrastructure designed and built for the Games was intended to play an important role in the service sector.

While the prevailing discourse regarding the legacy of Athens’ Olympic infrastructure is one of disuse, abandonment, and lack of foresight, there are in fact subtler ways in which Athens’ venues have endured in the post-Games era. Still, what uses that have been found have centered on the service sector and the culture and leisure economy. The reopening of Olympic venues as malls and museums, though not necessarily part of the city’s initial infrastructural scheme, falls in line with overarching pre-Games planning ideology. The focus on the development of Athens’ culture and leisure infrastructure in the planning process carried over into the post-Games era, which found the city searching for private investors to repurpose expensive and unused venues. Given the strong emphasis on culture and leisure in the construction of these venues, and in the Olympic planning process as a whole, it seems inevitable that most of these new uses would involve the service economy directly.

The patchwork nature of Athens’ post-Olympic infrastructural legacy underscores a similar fragmentation of the city at a larger scale. In the years following the 2004 Games, Athens experienced increasing urban degeneration, brought on in part by the service sector focus of the Olympic planning process.
Planning Legacy (Long-Term)

The planning legacy bequeathed to the city by the 2004 Games is difficult to fully evaluate. Compared to the 1992 Games, a short amount of time has elapsed since the Olympics themselves, and less has been published regarding the effects the Athens Games have had on city planning. There are, however, some overall trends that have been made apparent.

One of the most salient themes in Athens has been the increasing fragmentation of the city’s urban fabric, as a result of both public and private forces. The lack of coordination amongst the city’s various publicly planned Olympic sites has resulted in the inability to cohesively plan for and implement post-Games uses. This process has in turn been mirrored by the proliferation of privately driven economic clusters in key locations within the city. These clusters have, in the view of some, “exacerbated physical and social fragmentation in the city.” In the formation of these clusters, the generation of jobs has been prioritized over the social and economic equality of the neighborhood. In effect, an individual’s inclusion and role in this new type of urban environment is dependent on their relation to the economy. Aspa Gospodini identifies four types of these clusters: entrepreneurial epicenters, high-culture epicenters, popular leisure epicenters, and culture and leisure waterfront epicenters. All four types relate directly to the service economy.

Though the development of these clusters parallels the planning and implementation of infrastructure for the 2004 Olympics, Gospodini makes certain to

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198 Gospodini, “Post-Industrial Trajectories,” 1161.
199 Gospodini, “Post-Industrial Trajectories,” 1160.
differentiate between public initiatives centered on the Games and the privately driven formation of culture-based economic nodes. She characterizes public sites as those related directly to the 2004 Olympics (such as athletic complexes), as well as parks, convention centers, and spaces of commerce, all of which contribute to the service sector of the economy. The scattering of these sites across the city indicates a multinuclear approach to planning. Privately generated sites, on the other hand, are clustered in the city center. Gospodini sees these nodes as being unplanned manifestations of the culture and leisure economy. In many cases, as in Barcelona, they represent the conversion of disused industrial lands into spaces of leisure, such as nightclubs, galleries, and theaters. These nodes of culture and leisure, more than the publicly planned infrastructure of the Olympics, exist today as active sites of economic and cultural interaction. Gospodini identifies four of these privately driven sites within the city of Athens: Piraeus Avenue, Psiri, Metaxourgio, and Kifissias Avenue. Each is briefly discussed in turn.

Piraeus Avenue was created in 1835 as an industrial thoroughfare between Athens and the neighboring port city of Piraeus. During a period of deindustrialization in the 1970s, factories along the avenue were abandoned. Those that remained were ultimately protected by the 1986 city master plan, and began to be converted for new uses. Culture- and leisure-based activities occupied the converted buildings, which attracted private investors due to their low prices and accessible location. Today, the Piraeus Avenue

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200 Gospodini, “Post-Industrial Trajectories,” 1165.  
201 Gospodini, “Post-Industrial Trajectories,” 1167.  
202 Gospodini, “Post-Industrial Trajectories,” 1172.
district is characterized by a number of high-culture institutions stitched together by bars and nightclubs.\textsuperscript{203}

Psiri and Metaxourgio were created in the mid-19\textsuperscript{th} century as working-class neighborhoods, characterized by their large numbers of small, family-owned businesses. By the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, there was a greater mixture of residential and industrial uses. But deindustrialization during the 1970s caused the two neighborhoods to deteriorate. This process was worsened by increasing traffic congestion and pollution, as well as restrictions on new construction. An influx of immigrants and middle-class residents in the 1990s, along with the city’s 1991 Regeneration Plan, aided in the economic stimulation of the two areas. The restoration of old homes and the conversion of former industrial buildings into design offices and galleries symbolize the embrace of the service sector in these districts. Today, the two neighborhoods feature economic activities related to leisure, nightlife, high culture, commerce, and services.\textsuperscript{204}

Kifissias Avenue was built in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century to connect central Athens with regions to the north. Properties along this route were larger than in other areas of the city, and in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century large office complexes were built along the mid-section of the avenue. Knowledge-based companies and financial services were attracted to this area, which has become increasingly commercialized. Prior to the 1990s, the region was characterized by housing and commerce. Now, there are banks, insurance companies, telecommunications providers, and electronics companies. The AOSC was built in the Kifissias Avenue area for the 2004 Olympic Games.\textsuperscript{205} Unlike the other privately

\textsuperscript{203} Gospodini, “Post-Industrial Trajectories,” 1173.
\textsuperscript{204} Gospodini, “Post-Industrial Trajectories,” 1174-1176.
\textsuperscript{205} Gospodini, “Post-Industrial Trajectories,” 1176-1177.
developed areas Gospodini identifies, Kifissias Avenue has no history of postindustrial decline. It instead represents an alternative route for the investment of private capital into service sector economic activities, where information technology companies build their own infrastructure from scratch. Kifissias Avenue may well be a predictor for future developments in Athens and similar cities with service-sector-focused economies.

It is important to note that these sites have not developed directly due to the Olympics, and many have been developing their culture and leisure infrastructure since before the Games were being planned. The point is not that these economic nodes have developed because of the Games, but rather in spite of them. Their existence, and persistence, provides a counterpoint to the planning of the Olympic era, demonstrating that private forces exert a much greater influence over the infrastructural development of the city than public ones. Gospodini notes,

“On the one hand, spontaneous entrepreneurial clusters like Kifissias Avenue, representing robust post-industrial economic formation, are consigned by local authorities and the state to a laissez-faire spatial development programme and conventional architectural schemes. On the other hand, planned epicentres of culture and leisure involving huge public funds, like those constructed for the 2004 Olympics, have failed to shape a new quarter of culture and leisure in the city’s landscape, since they have been scattered throughout Attica.”

This is the crucial legacy of the 2004 Olympics. If the city is to understand how to successfully plan for its future infrastructure, it must recognize the relative failures of its own Olympic program and the relative successes of self-generated, privately developed economic nodes.

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206 Gospodini, “Post-Industrial Trajectories,” 1180.
Discussion/Conclusion

The Athens Games of 2004 occupy an important moment in the history of Olympic planning. The 2004 Games in many ways demonstrated the impossibility of replicating the so-called ‘Barcelona model’ and showcased the overwhelming power of the private sector in the generation of infrastructure related to the service economy.

Publicly driven planning for the 2004 Games was perhaps incoherent from the outset. A lack of clear post-Games strategy, worsened by the scattered distribution of venues, resulted in a large degree of abandonment and disuse. What little pre-Games planning focus there was centered on the city’s development of its culture and leisure infrastructure, and the venues that have found post-Games uses have achieved this within the culture and leisure economy.

But the greatest amount of development has come from the private sector. Self-generated economic nodes have spawned alongside the Olympics, and have for the most part thrived in the post-Games era. While the AOSC lies vacant, Piraeus Avenue bustles. These privately generated sites have, to some extent, followed a key tenet of the Barcelona model, which is the redevelopment of disused industrial lands. Meanwhile public planning initiatives largely neglected to do this.

In both realms, public and private, the issue of fragmentation still exists. The spatially dispersed nature of Athens’ Olympic infrastructure, combined with the city’s lack of a clear post-Games plan, has resulted in further urban incoherence and social inequality. Seemingly positive strategies, such as the allocation of housing in the Olympic Village to low-income families, have proven disastrous. The city’s paramount focus on building infrastructure suited to the culture and leisure economy has left venues
either abandoned or repurposed at the hands of private investors with little concern for Athens’ urban dwellers. Unplanned, privately driven cultural clusters have likewise prioritized economic development at the cost of all else.

The 2004 Games represent an irony of planning for Athens. While the city government touted the benefits of the so-called Barcelona model and sought to emulate it, public planning for the Games instead chased private investment haphazardly. Neglecting many of the fundamental tenets of Barcelona’s strategy and unable to rely on a strong planning history of its own, Athens’ Olympic scheme was scattered and confused, and ultimately failed. Meanwhile, private forces in the city, acting on their own, more closely followed certain aspects of the Barcelona model and have found relative economic success. Yet, both public and private forces have contributed to increasing urban fragmentation and, like Barcelona, the commodification of the city.

Ultimately, the Athens Games have forced cities to reckon with the fact that they are no longer in control of planning and infrastructure development. Cities have not only become enticed by the potential profits of the new service economy described by Sassen, and thus beholden to it, but private forces now play a significantly more powerful role in infrastructure development than the municipal governments themselves. The Athens Games have shown this to be the case.
Chapter Five
Olympic Planning in the Present Day

The 1992 and 2004 Olympics represent unique historical episodes. Each resides at the intersection of two complex histories: one of the Olympics themselves, and one of the individual cities in which the Games were staged. The peculiarities of planning as well as the complicated legacies of each staging of the Olympics are the product of these two histories. But each city’s Olympic legacy is also the result of more widespread forces of globalization that affect all cities, not just those that host the Games. This chapter will provide a summary and comparison of both the 1992 and 2004 Olympics, seeking to identify points of concordance and divergence in each staging of the Games. Then, the Games will be placed within a theoretical framework of globalization, relying on the work of Saskia Sassen to help describe some of the forces that have recently been shaping world cities. Finally, a brief discussion of the current state of the Olympics and the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games will look toward the future of Olympic planning.

Comparing the 1992 and 2004 Games

The 1992 and 2004 Olympics here are compared according to the four analytical headings outlined in each case study chapter: planning history, planning for the Games, infrastructural legacy (short-term), and planning legacy (long-term).

Recent planning history in Barcelona begins with the mid-19th century implementation of the Eixample. The Eixample’s strategy, which emphasized green space and aspired to social equity, stood in stark contrast to the Haussmann-style renewal occurring in other European cities at the time. Under Franco, city planning initiatives
essentially ceased. But after Franco’s death in 1975, planning resumed in the form of the PGM. The plan, much like the Eixample, sought to create new green spaces in the city with the goal of improving the urban experiences of its residents. But the PGM also introduced a new concept—that of repurposing brownfield sites. Deindustrialization under Franco had produced abandoned industrial sites along Barcelona’s waterfront, and the PGM intended to find new uses for these properties.

The appointment of Oriol Bohigas to Head of Urban Planning coincided with economic decline in Europe, and Barcelona’s planning strategy moved to focus on small-scale, publicly driven interventions. As with prior planning initiatives in Barcelona, these interventions centered on the creation of public space for those who lived in the city. During the early part of the 1980s, hundreds of small parks and public spaces were created. At the same time, mayor Narcís Serra and his successor Pasqual Maragall began to look outward, seeking more money to fund larger infrastructure projects. In 1986, this desire was satisfied with the awarding of the 1992 Olympics to Barcelona.

From the mid-1800s until 1986, Barcelona’s planning ideology remained, at its core, unchanged. Plans such as the Eixample, the PGM, and the interventions conducted under Bohigas represented a focus on the creation of public space for those who inhabited the city. The primary goal was to improve the city for its own residents. Additionally, these schemes were driven by the public sector. With the exception of the Franco era, a certain continuity can be traced throughout Barcelona’s planning history from the Eixample in the mid-19th century to the awarding of the Olympic Games in 1986. It is crucial to recognize this continuity as a foundation for the planning of Olympic infrastructure between 1986 and 1992.
Athens’ pre-Games planning history looks quite different. The city, like Barcelona, has a long history of planning dating back to ancient Greece. However, the most significant recent history concerns the city’s response to the enormous population growth of the 1950s and 1960s with the antiparochi system. This system, designed to fund and build housing as quickly as possible, resulted in the rapid proliferation of nearly identical apartment buildings throughout Athens. Because of the speed with which the housing was constructed, design professionals were not consulted and sewage systems were not always completed. In contrast to the carefully planned, resident-oriented schemes of Barcelona, city planning in Athens prioritized efficiency and speed.

The 1970s and 1980s in Athens were marked by unplanned developments at the periphery of the city and the failure to implement the 1985 Regulatory Master Plan. By the end of the 1980s, Athens’s history of unchecked development had produced a high-density urban center with inefficient land use at the fringe. Struggling with congestion and deteriorating infrastructure, the city bid for the 1996 Games and lost. However, a resubmission for the 2004 Games was ultimately successful.

In contrast to the publicly driven schemes that characterize Barcelona’s planning history, few unified efforts at controlling urban infrastructural development in Athens were made during the 20th century. And those plans that were created, such as the 1985 Regulatory Master Plan, were not met with a high degree of success.

These histories are critical to understanding the development of Olympic infrastructure as well as the subsequent legacies in each city. Barcelona, unlike Athens, had a long history of publicly oriented planning initiatives on which to rely, and this would, to some extent, dictate the outcome of its Olympic infrastructure projects.
Olympic planning in Barcelona differed from pre-Games methods due to the increased scale at which projects needed to be built. Yet at the same time, the city relied on similar strategies to those of the pre-Games years, containing the majority of infrastructural developments within four core sites. It was hoped that by intervening in these four critically located sites (Montjuïc, Vall d’Hebron, Diagonal, and Poblenou), the regenerative effects of new development would emanate throughout the city. This strategy falls very much in line with Bohigas’ pre-Games city planning methods in Barcelona, which operated under the assumption that small-scale interventions in specific locations could produce widespread positive effects. The link between the two planning ideologies is clear.

Nevertheless, the enormous scale of the Games proved to be a transformative factor. Small-scale pre-Games projects that focused on the redevelopment of industrial land now amounted to the razing and reconstruction of entire neighborhoods, as shown in Poblenou. The scale of the Olympics also forced a shift in the target audience of infrastructure projects. While pre-Games initiatives aimed at improving the social environment of the city for its own residents, projects built for the Olympics sought to impress a global audience, ultimately hoping to attract private investment, specifically in the service sector. These changes in planning ideology, brought on by the hosting of the Olympics, laid the foundation for the increasing influence of private agents in the city’s planning processes.

In contrast to Barcelona, the Athens Games adopted a more scattered model for the laying out of Olympic infrastructure across the city. In standing
Games planning methods, Athens did not involve architects or designers in much of the Olympic planning process. The exception is Calatrava, author of the controversial telecommunications tower of the 1992 Games. Barcelona, on the other hand, relied heavily on design professionals during its Olympic planning process, and as a result, the city was able to develop infrastructure well suited to the attraction of global capital. Athens, too, sought capital investment, focusing, as Barcelona had, on the attraction of the service sector for economic growth. Beautification projects in the city focused on the marketing of Athens’ unique cultural heritage.

The immediate infrastructural legacy of the 1992 Olympics is considered to be a largely positive one. Media praised the city for its redevelopment of disused industrial sites and critics lauded the integration of the Olympic scheme with long-term planning strategies in the city. Notably, most of the venues built for the Barcelona Games were able to find post-Olympic uses. However, these appraisals masked some of the more negative effects of the city’s strategy. Enormous redevelopment schemes, such as the one for Poblenou, forced longtime residents and businesses out of their districts. The Olympic Village in Poblenou has also drawn criticism for its absolute decimation of industrial infrastructure, which some have seen as equivalent to the destruction of part of the city’s architectural heritage.

The increasing control of private agents has also been a negative consequence of the Barcelona Olympic strategy. These private developers, rather than focus on the improvement of the city’s social environments, instead prioritize profit maximization. This, along with pedestrian-unfriendly infrastructure in projects such as the Vall
d’Hebron, has been seen by many as contradicting a central principle of Barcelona’s pre-Games planning ideology. In contrast to schemes such as the Eixample, which aspired to social cohesion, projects like the Olympic Village have worsened gentrification in many parts of the city.

In Athens, the immediate infrastructural legacy is one of abandonment, which stands in contrast to Barcelona. Athens’ lack of solid planning history, as well as its dispersed scheme for Olympic infrastructure, is partially to blame. Political animosities have also contributed to the city’s inability to effectively maintain its Olympic venues in the post-Games era. Fragmented schemes during the Olympic planning process were matched by mismanagement after the Games ended. This was the case with the Olympic Village, which today is plagued by unemployment. While Barcelona’s Olympic Village’s legacy is one of gentrification, Athens’ is one of neglect.

Those venues which have found uses have followed the lead of pre-Games planning ideology and are utilized within the service sector of the economy. Sports arenas and press centers have been reopened as theaters and malls. In this way, the legacies of Barcelona and Athens are similar. Infrastructure projects, which were planned in the framework of the service economy, have fallen increasingly under the sway of private agents using the venues for alternate service-related purposes.

The long-term effects of Olympic-era planning in Barcelona involve the increasing influence of private investors and the commodification of the city. City planning in the decades following the Games expanded on the marketing of Barcelona’s culture for the service economy, ultimately transforming the city into an object of
consumption itself. This is best exemplified in the Forum 2004 project, which sought to follow the Olympic Village’s model of redeveloping the waterfront. However, the convention center and plaza built for the Forum related to the city to an even lesser extent than did the Olympic Village, and today stand essentially vacant. The Forum represents Barcelona’s full embrace of the service economy, clearly to the detriment of the city and its people.

Recent city plans such as 22@, which seek to transform Barcelona’s industrial lands into new tech centers and lofts for young professionals, bear little resemblance to socially-oriented schemes like the Eixample. City planning in Barcelona following the Olympics has become wholly focused on the attraction of mobile capital through the development of service-related infrastructure, all but turning away from those who actually inhabit the city.

For Athens, long-term planning legacy centers on the increasing economic and social fragmentation of the city. Publicly driven plans have largely failed due to the dispersed nature of such infrastructural interventions. At the same time, self-generated economic nodes have sprung up in the city. These nodes, like the public initiatives in Athens as well as those in Barcelona, have centered on the service sector. Also similar to Barcelona, these nodes have repurposed disused industrial land for culture- and leisure-related activities. The success of these privately driven sites stands in direct contrast to the abandonment of facilities built by the city.

The Athens Games have shown the true power of private forces in the present-day economic development of cities. The Games also illustrate the relative successes of redeveloping brownfield sites. The Barcelona Olympics demonstrate this as well,
indicating that this may be a potential factor in the effective development of service-based infrastructure.

Theoretical Framework: Saskia Sassen

In her work, Saskia Sassen discusses the effects that recent processes of globalization have had on cities. Sassen’s analysis involves shifts in both economic patterns and the role of infrastructure in global cities. Her analysis is useful in understanding why the Olympics have changed over time and helps to explain the importance of city branding in the contemporary world.

Sassen characterizes the current economic structure of cities as being the result of two intersecting processes. One is the “globalization of economic activity” and the increasing scale and complexity of international transactions.207 The other is the growing influence of the service sector economy and the increasing orientation of all economic industries toward services.208 These trends have contributed to a new economic structure in cities focused on the service economy. Sassen notes that services are enticing to cities because they can provide enormous profits that manufacturing and the industrial economy cannot.209

This is consistent with the analysis of both Barcelona and Athens. In the case of Barcelona, city planning ideology centered on publicly driven, small-scale initiatives was transformed by the Olympics into a philosophy based on the attraction of global private capital. Projects such as the Forum represent a post-Games planning strategy linked to

207 Sassen, Cities in a World Economy, 81.
208 Sassen, Cities in a World Economy, 82.
209 Sassen, Cities in a World Economy, 82.
services and founded on the notion that Barcelona must compete with other urban centers for capital investment.

In the case of Athens, whose Olympics were held twelve years after Barcelona’s, the pursuit of mobile capital was a well-established tenet of Olympic planning. However, the legacy of Athens is marked by a failed attempt to repeat the alleged successes of Barcelona. Observing the growth of Barcelona’s service sector industries following the 1992 Games, Athens aimed its Olympic planning strategies at the improvement of infrastructure suited to the service sector, specifically the culture and leisure economy. These plans were thwarted by the city’s scattered planning model and inability to maintain facilities after the Games. Yet in the wake of this letdown, privately driven economic nodes in the city emerged. Like the publicly planned initiatives for the Olympics had hoped to do, these nodes grew based on investment in service sector activities, such as arts and technology.

It is clear that much of the planning and legacy for both the 1992 and 2004 Games can be understood through the lens of Sassen’s two intersecting processes. The increase in the sheer scale of global economic activities, as well as the turn toward investment in service sector industries, heavily influenced the strategies for both the Barcelona and Athens Olympics. With this perspective, the Barcelona Games may be seen as a sort of experiment in using the Olympics to attract private investment, and the Athens Games as a botched attempt to repeat it. In Athens’ case, however, the private sector was able to succeed where the public sector failed.

This concept of using the Olympics to attract capital investment can be further illuminated by Sassen’s work. Sassen locates the beginning of recent shifts in the world
economy in the 1980s, when “the geography and composition of the global economy changed so as to produce a complex duality: a spatially dispersed, yet globally integrated organization of economic activity.”²¹⁰ The reorganization of the financial industry during that decade resulted in the proliferation of new firms and higher levels of innovation in the field.²¹¹ New technologies that allowed for the increased mobility of capital supported this expansion in the financial industry, as well as the entire service sector of the economy. However, while capital mobility encouraged spatial dispersion, the technologies that supported such mobility required physical infrastructure tied to specific geographic locations.²¹²

For the 1992 Olympics, Barcelona was able to rely on its history of strong urban planning strategies, using the Games as the vehicle by which to develop infrastructure and thus access the new service economy. The Barcelona Games demonstrate the link between infrastructure and capital that Sassen describes, and the economic growth of the city following the Olympics lends support to Sassen’s theory. The Athens Games, however, did not generate the same degree of growth as the Barcelona Olympics. This is in part due to both the city’s inability to rely on a strong planning history and the dispersed infrastructural scheme it developed for the Games. But while Athens’ public initiatives largely failed, privately driven, service-based economic nodes have grown and thrived in the city since the Games. These nodes, in accordance with Sassen’s theory, have relied on the creation of service-based infrastructure, including the redevelopment

²¹⁰ Sassen, The Global City, 3.
²¹¹ Sassen, The Global City, 19.
²¹² Sassen, The Global City, 19.
of industrial sites. The Athens Games suggest that the role of infrastructure development, previously assigned to the public sector, has shifted to the private realm.

The 1992 Olympics forged a new model for city planning in the era of the service economy. By reconciling the dispersive and centralizing features of mobile capital, the 1992 Games forwarded a new mode of urban planning and development, using the Olympics as a vehicle to attract initial investment. The 2004 Games sought to emulate this model, but without the standard of infrastructure planning of the Barcelona Olympics, such an endeavor failed, resulting in the increasing spatial and social fragmentation of the city. In the wake of this failure, however, privately driven economic nodes have grown, indicating a shift in the responsibility for infrastructure development—and ultimately city planning processes—from the public to the private sector.

Rio 2016 and the Future of Olympic Planning

The 2016 Olympics, hosted by Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, so far have seemed to follow the trend laid out by the Barcelona and Athens Games: heavy investment in infrastructure aimed at attracting service-related capital. Though both Barcelona and Athens drew much of their funding for Olympic infrastructure from public sources, the aftermath of the Athens Games indicated the rising power of private forces in urban economic development. Rio, more than either Barcelona or Athens, has embraced the
private sector as a source from which to draw money. According to mayor Eduardo Paes, approximately 60% of costs for the Games have come from private funding.\footnote{Michael Kavalar, “Rio Gets Ready,” \textit{Planning}, American Planning Association, July 2016.}

Rio is also, to some extent, following the model of brownfield redevelopment. A new light rail line in the city runs along a street through a district of old warehouses, some of which are in the process of renovation. The city’s vision for the thoroughfare is an upscale promenade.\footnote{Kavalar, “Rio Gets Ready.”} Private investors have also funded projects such as the Olympic Village, the Olympic golf course, and a new waterfront with two museums. The Meu Porto Maravilha project, as many in Barcelona, involves the redevelopment of the waterfront from an industrial landscape to one populated by apartments. Developers have indicated that these apartments will be accessible to low-income families, but as was seen in Barcelona and Athens, these types of plans do not always unfold accordingly.\footnote{Andrew Jacobs, “After Olympics, Rio Is Altered if Not Reborn,” \textit{New York Times}, August 21, 2016.} In many ways, the planning ideology present in Rio aligns with that of Barcelona and Athens, intending to develop infrastructure suited to the attraction of service-related industries.

Given that not even a full year has passed since the conclusion of the Games, Rio’s Olympic legacy is still in flux. Thus far, it appears to be similar to the legacy of Athens, with many of the venues built for the Games already abandoned and in disrepair. The Olympic Park, though open to the public, is lacking in basic facilities such as restrooms. The Olympic Village, intended to be repurposed as luxury apartments, has sold fewer than 10% of its units. Commentators such as Renato Cosentino identify the

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214 Kavalar, “Rio Gets Ready.”
bulk of investment as being in projects located in the wealthy suburbs of Rio. These initiatives, he believes, were undertaken to serve private developers, not the city’s residents.\textsuperscript{216} It is clear that, at the very least, this capital-focused mentality that was evident in both the Barcelona and Athens Games endures in Rio.

So what is the future of the Olympics? Andrew Ross Sorkin asks, “What is it about the Olympics that causes some cities that are typically unwilling to spend a cent on infrastructure or planning to overspend so wildly?”\textsuperscript{217} The answer is, at least in part, that the Olympics represent a vehicle for entry into the new service economy described by Sassen and that, when combined with strategic infrastructural interventions, have the potential to provide a huge economic boost for a city. Neither infrastructure nor the Olympics alone can accomplish this. The two need to work in tandem.

This is good evidence that, for at least the near future, the current Olympic model will remain. Criticisms that center on the economic inefficiencies of the Olympics must also recognize that the Games represent a means by which to enter the global economy. If a city is willing to look outward rather than inward, if a city is willing to fully embrace the service economy, and importantly, if a city is capable of producing a cohesive infrastructure strategy, then the Olympics can bring a huge degree of capital investment. In many ways, Barcelona has achieved this.

Of course, this is not to label such an achievement as praiseworthy. Because with this access to the global economy comes gentrification, social inequalities, and ultimately the commodification of the city. Barcelona’s Forum project stands as an example of

precisely this. Furthermore, those Olympic cities whose public initiatives fall short are left with urban incoherence and the economic burdens of their losses.

Yet the lure of the global service economy and its promise of capital investment remain, and in the wake of public failures spring up privately generated nodes of economic activity and new infrastructure which, too, are oriented toward the service sector. This is epitomized in Athens.

It is also worth noting that Olympic cities share many similarities with all global cities. All cities compete economically on the world stage, and so planning processes in Olympic cities should not necessarily be considered as special cases. The Olympics, as a sports mega-event, exist as a vehicle for entry into the new economy. But there are other vehicles in other forms. Across the world, urban planning strategies have embraced the service economy. Cities, understanding the need to compete with other cities for economic resources, have begun to look outward for investment rather than inward toward their own inhabitants. Planning strategies now view the city more as an economic growth machine than as a place where people actually live. It is these trends in planning ideology, themselves responses to changes in the world economy, that act as the driving forces behind the Olympic model. The Olympics, as colossal and transformative as they are, must be understood as just one small symptom of a much larger phenomenon.

As goes the global economy, so go the Olympics.
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