Vancouver's promise of the world's first Sustainable Olympic Games

Meg Holden*, Julia MacKenzie, and Robert VanWynsberghe

* corresponding author

Addresses
Dr. Meg Holden
Urban Studies Program
Simon Fraser University
3rd Floor, 515 W. Hastings St.
Vancouver, BC V6B 5K3
Email: mholden@sfu.ca

Julia MacKenzie
Department of Geography
Simon Fraser University
Email: julia.mackenzie@gov.bc.ca

Dr. Robert VanWynsberghe
Department of Human Kinetics
University of British Columbia
Email: rvanwyns@interchange.ubc.ca

Abstract

Vancouver has committed to host the world's first Sustainable Olympic Games in 2010. This promise is in keeping with local policy trends in the Vancouver region toward visions of sustainability and with growing attention by the International Olympic Committee to environmental sustainability concerns. This article demonstrates that interests in sustainability at local and international scales may differ markedly, however, resulting in a range of possible legacies for Vancouver and the international Olympic movement from the 2010 Winter Olympics. To move beyond the fruitless search for a universally-acceptable definition of sustainability, this article investigates different meanings of sustainability using the tool of the 'language game', originally devised by philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. Examining sustainability as a language game in the planning phase of the 2010 Olympics allows us to consider the potential and likely scenarios for sustainability wins and losses, internationally and in the local context. Four possible scenarios are considered. In the most optimistic scenario, sustainability language converges across the international and local language systems, aiding the development of sustainability in Vancouver policy, charting a course for Olympic cities to follow, and creating institutional change within the IOC as well. In the contrasting scenario, the failure to find common ground in sustainability pursuits could doom the concept for future Olympic cities and for policy practice in Vancouver both. Two other mixed outcome scenarios are considered as well. This analysis leads to insight into the boundaries of the meaning of sustainability in the context of a mega-event, in which more than any particular demonstration project, the communicated message of sustainability may be the most lasting legacy.

1   Introduction

This article takes a partly retrospective, partly investigative, and partly speculative look at how the world's first Sustainable Olympic Games are being planned for the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics (hereinafter referred to as 2010). In doing this, we locate the range and possible overlap of meanings for 'sustainability' in the context of both Vancouver-based and International Olympic Committee-based plans for 2010. We posit the idea that key local and international actors are giving meaning to sustainability in the context of the Olympic Games in different ways, playing Wittgensteinian 'language games' suited to their scale of operation and particular agenda. In order to offer this analysis, we retrospectively examine the work done by the host organizers and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to incorporate environmental sustainability language into the Olympic Games planning process. Our investigation progresses toward a comparative and context-based understanding of the evolving meaning of sustainability in the Olympic Games, as international movement and as local legacy. We contend that, while it is understood that megaevents like the Olympic Games bring major changes to host cities, less understood are the ways in which host cities may also shape such changes. Here, we study the potential paths of influence that international and local actors may have on one another in the course of attempting to institutionalize a new idea into the Olympic Games.

During the course of its over one hundred year history, the IOC has gradually become aware of the linkages between its future as a global institution and its ability to reflect changing global values, including the values of sustainability. Vancouver, a city-region with a policy history of attention to sustainability, gained membership in the elite group of Olympic cities when it was granted the right to host 2010. Commitments made by the IOC and VANOC for 2010 are the most ambitious in Olympic history, pledging a Games that will respect and not diminish British Columbia's natural heritage, will respect

First Nations plans and sensitivities on their land, and that will "ensure the benefits of the Olympics are available to all people, regardless of income or social position, and further, to ensure those most marginalized in society are not displaced or otherwise harmed by the Olympics" (IOCC 2007, 4). The stakes of these commitments are high internationally as well as in the local context. Achim Steiner, the UN Under Secretary General, has stated:

> Mass sporting events, televised around the world, offer a great potential for practically demonstrating … the power of sport to inspire improving environmental management … in every sphere of life – potential that can inspire organizers of big audience participation events as well as governments, industry and individuals to also become champions for our planet … I sincerely hope that the next Winter Olympics in Vancouver … pick up the Torino torch en route to … realizing sustainable sporting events and leisure activities across the world. (UNEP, 2006)

As an Olympic city, Vancouver has the opportunity to distinguish itself globally and solidify its reputation as a sustainable city. Alternately, with the influx of global capital and imposition of IOC demands onto the existing planning culture, 2010 may mark the turning point for Vancouver away from its current development trajectory and toward standard, unsustainable, international development trends as experienced in other Olympic cities before (Burbank et al, 2001). Whatever the outcome, the stakes are high for the meaning and actualization of 'sustainability' within urban development and mega-event planning. This article examines the language used in treatments of sustainable development locally in Vancouver and internationally in the IOC, in search of evidence for the enactment of one or the other of these conflicting visions as Vancouver's Olympic legacy.

It is not impossible for global and local versions of sustainability to converge in 2010. Indeed, the IOC's emergent interest in the sustainability of Olympic events and Vancouver's commitment to sustainability may entrain significant scaling up and catalytic impacts, in terms of the richness and effectiveness of discourse, the understanding of sustainability in different development contexts around the world, and in terms of

policies, standards, and behaviours in support of sustainability. However, as scholars of the relationship between multilevel governance and sustainable urban development have noted, the difference between what attaining sustainability would look like for Vancouver and what it would look like for the international Olympic movement is potentially great (van Bueren & ten Heuvelhof, 2005; Bruff & Wood, 2000).

To the extent that success in sustainability goals at the local scale depends on particular kinds of success at the global scale, and vice versa, differences of intention, interpretation, and action toward sustainability may stymie the potential for progress at either scale. For example, if sustainability is showcased for the first time as the primary theme for 2010 and is met with confusion, disappointment, or misunderstanding by the world's viewers and visitors, there is a risk that the value of the term will decrease, and the IOC may see sustainability as a liability for future Olympic events. The Olympic movement could, in this scenario, put an indelible stain of cynicism on the concept of sustainability and its applicability to different development contexts, and could also lead to reticence on the part of global development actors like the IOC to associate themselves with the term 'sustainability' and its implications. This article invites a deeper, place-based understanding of policy development that will, will perseverance, lead to a more embedded and operation understanding of outcomes (Peck, 1999). The need for such an approach has been pointed to especially in the study of the evolution of sustainability governance, in which shifts at all scales of institutional organization, management and integration are needed (Savan et al, 2004).

2   Sustainable Olympic Games as Language Games

The fact that neither local Vancouver nor international versions of sustainable urban development have been authoritatively and comprehensively articulated makes the stakes of this global match up more monumental. Sustainable development, often

shortened to sustainability, entered international development discourse in 1987. The 1987 Brundtland Commission's report, *Our Common Future*, brought into focus the dialectical relationship between global poverty and environmental degradation, and made the case that conservation and protection of the natural environment had to be pursued in step with human and economic development (WCED, 1987). This two-pronged approach soon expanded to the three-pillar approach of sustainable development, integrating social, environmental and economic progress (Roseland, 2005). Equipped with this holistic, integrative, and forward-looking framework, the language of sustainability has proven immensely popular in international development and increasingly so in national and local policy processes as well (Holtz, 1998; Keiner, 2006; Owens, 2001; Portney, 2003; Robinson & Tinker, 1998). For other scholars and practitioners, sustainability remains a frustratingly ambiguous, perilously contradictory, and/or eminently co-optable concept that damages more than it provides (Basiago, 1995; Pearce, 1994; Simon, 1981).

Among the groups attempting to settle the definitional debate about sustainability at the urban scale, Olympic cities may have a special role to play. Hosting the Olympic Games provides a nearly unparalleled global communications opportunity. Host cities, to an increasing degree, are also held up as global markers of the most that planning and development in today's context of global capital can achieve, and may in this sense set gold standards beyond which aspiring global cities fear to tread (Shoval, 2002). Given that a great deal of the blame, among scholars and policy makers alike, for the failure of the concept of sustainability to transform urban development, is placed by scholars and policy makers alike upon the failure of sustainability to adequately communicate its message, Vancouver's promise for the world's first Sustainable Olympic Games takes on the aura of a litmus test.

One popularly-cited urban sustainability framework, backed by the United Nations Environment Program and intended for international adoption, is the *Melbourne Principles for Sustainable Cities.* These principles were created in 2002, following Sydney, Australia's successful Green Games in 2000. The ten principles put forward relate to developing a vision and restoring what makes a city unique and to the role of governance and policy-making. While Canada has not directly adopted the Melbourne Principles, the Prime Minister's External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities (2006, x-xi) recently suggested a similar interpretation:

> Sustainability is most usefully regarded as a guiding principle, rather than a specific set of ideas applied in a single area such as environmental policy. The essence … is to recognize that there are assets, costs and benefits not accounted for in market decisions and values. Sustainability looks to the public interest beyond narrow market decisions ...

Vancouver is a city-region in the process of emerging in its own unique global niche of style, landscape and culture, tied strongly to the language of sustainability (Punter, 2004). In Vancouver, sustainability serves as model and framework for city and regional decision making as a whole (City of Vancouver, 2002; GVRD, 2006). Sustainability appears prominently in specific policy initiatives from sustainable neighbourhood development (City of Vancouver, 2005a), to non-market social housing (Bradley & Lee, 2005), to food policy (Mendes, 2006). The Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) operates by the Sustainable Region Initiative, "the way of doing business that will keep our region the way we want it now, and 25 or even 100 years into the future" (GVRD, 2003, 4).[1] In 2002, the City of Vancouver began to guide policy through a sustainability lens with the establishment of its Sustainability Principles, ten encompassing value statements and goals for equity, renewable resource use, collaboration, diversity, leadership, and fossil fuel reduction (City of Vancouver, 2002).

---

[1] The regional context is important because Vancouver is one of 21 municipalities under the regional authority of the GVRD for sewer, water, energy, and certain land use and transportation planning functions.

Sustainability is thus a popular international, national and regional policy term. The application of this framework in practice at different scales, however, has been less fruitful (Gibson, 2005). The relationship of sustainability policy and planning to challenges of equity and justice, putting limits on consumption and wealth, and improving the quality of life at different scales have all been subject to intense debate, primarily in the 1980s and 1990s (Campbell, 1996; Satterthwaite, 1997; Anand & Sen 2000; Rees, 1990; Lélé, 1991). The result is that sustainability is both easy to agree on in principle and difficult to implement. Consequently, both the IOC and Vancouver may have internally-justified but differing interpretations of sustainability when they showcase the 'Sustainability Olympics' to the world in 2010.

This article investigates the use of sustainability in the context of the Olympic Games as a language game.[2] The language game, or *Sprachspiele*, is a technique devised by philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein to demonstrate the contextual nature of the meaning of all language. In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein (1968, S.66) devised the language game as a means to understand his insight that there is no direct correspondence between words and real objects:

> Consider for example the proceedings that we call 'games'. I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all? – Don't say: 'There *must* be something common, or they would not be called 'games' – but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all – For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all* but similarities, relationships and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don't think, but look!

We often assume that the primary purpose of comparing definitions of terms is to understand the actual, cast-in-stone referents of the terms. Instead, Wittgenstein argued that despite the way we use language to compare similarities and differences, we have

---

[2] This methodological approach should be considered a type of discourse analysis, a method that has become popular among social and policy researchers to analyze policy practices and outcomes (Rydin 2003). Our language games approach derives from one of the philosophical originators of a discourse approach yet due to scope does not go as far as some uses of discourse analysis, which attempt to represent relationships of actors via discourse (Lees 2004).

no clear means of setting exact boundaries on meaning or defining limits on terms capable of superseding context. Meanings are not "'read off' something lying beyond the world [nor] is that meaning . . . gleaned like an empirical object" (Klein, 2006,369).[3] Instead, words may take on numerous different meanings, depending on how and by whom they are used. Each meaning can have its own legitimacy, provided that it has clear utility within the system in which it is used.[4]

Wittgenstein's further contribution is that this situation does not leave language users in the throes of relativism in which nothing is as it is intended. Indeed, the nature of language games is that the more we play, the more we may recognize the common rules that circumscribe our playing field of common contextual understanding. We know the game we are playing well enough to communicate with some measure of common meaning. The Olympic Games represent this kind of a game as much as they represent an athletic event, as reporter Ben O'Hara-Byrne comments in relation to the play between the Government of Canada and the Vancouver Olympic Organizing Committee (VANOC), "there's a game being played here that's not played at the Olympics, it's called politics" (Newman & O'Hara-Byrne, 2006). It is language that guides the instrumental tasks of planning and hosting 2010 and the multiple layers of local, national, and international politics that accompany this.

Difficulties in arriving at a simple, straightforward, and universally acceptable definition of sustainability and sustainable development are often faulted for the lack of

---

[3] Our use of Wittgenstein's notion of the language game in the *Philosophical Investigations* adopts an interpretation of this idea as representing the pragmatic strain in the later Wittgenstein, or "ordinary language philosophy." This is to say that, although some of Wittgenstein's readers have cautioned against the use of his philosophy as an undergirding for social criticism and progressive political thought, our interpretation follows that of Pohlaus & Wright (2002, 804) whose view is that "Wittgenstein, without giving us a specific program of political thought, creates potent possibilities for social criticism through paying attention to philosophy as an outgrowth of ordinary language."

[4] On the definitional debate about sustainability, it is not difficult to ascertain what Wittgenstein's stance might have been. Throughout his later writings, he held that a term only took on meaning in the particularities of the context in which it was used (Crary 2003).

progress toward sustainable development decisions and outcomes (Keiner, 2006).

Some see the definitional task as the essential first step in sustainability progress, that

the merger of local Vancouver and IOC definitions of sustainability, in this case, is

essential to sustainable development actions in Olympic events. Wittgenstein (1968,

S.69) offers a different interpretation of the definitional task:

> How should we explain to someone what a game is? I imagine that we should describe games to him [sic], and we might add: 'This and similar things are called "games"'. And do we know any more about it ourselves? Is it only other people whom we cannot tell exactly what a game is? – But this is not ignorance. We do not know the boundaries because none have been drawn. To repeat, we can draw a boundary – for a special purpose. Does it take that to make the concept usable? Not at all! (Except for that special purpose.) No more than it took the definition: 1 pace = 75 cm. to make the measure of length 'one pace' usable.

We can use this idea to think about the difference it might make in the Olympic

Games planning process that actors employ varying concepts of sustainability in

language games that define and enact certain interpretations of reality. In this view, the

task of advancing sustainability in the Olympic Games is not a task of constructing a

definition and rules with absolute accuracy and precision. This is an unrealistic

expectation of language. Instead, by conceiving of language in play, we can establish a

common ground of rules to guide fair action, but at the same time accept that many

judgments can only be made as context demands, and still other precision need never

be articulated. The term 'sustainability' is a prime example of language 'in play' because

it is notoriously malleable in its definition, application, and implications (Robinson, 2004;

Mebratu, 1998; Redclift, 1987).

Investigating sustainability as a language game thus entails the analytical

separation of usage of the term by actors at different scales of interest based on the

steps being taken toward and/or away from sustainability. Our interest in the language

games played with sustainability is not meant to trivialize the practice of sustainability in

specific dimensions of resource conservation, climate change, reduction of toxic

substances, housing choice and other matters of material importance. Instead, our intent

is to foreground the vital importance of language as the currency of communications,

branding, policy and decision-making at local and international scales. Using a language

games framework, our interest lies in how sustainability is described, defined, discussed

and defended by local and international actors in the 2010 planning process. Thus, we

can begin to separate out what it would mean for actors at both scales to achieve

different levels of sustainability progress or stagnation. Four possible scenarios can be

outlined and their relative values compared. When comparing value, our primary focus is

on what the different scenarios will mean for communicating sustainability to Olympic

spectators and participants. At the same time, it has been impossible to avoid some

judgment of the relative quality of different 2010 initiatives with regard to their qualitative

ability to affect sustainable outcomes. Ultimate assessments of the value of each of

these initiatives, however important, are beyond the scope of this article. Before turning

to these scenarios in the case of 2010, the next section establishes the history of

environment and sustainability concerns within the international Olympic movement.

3   The emergence of environment and sustainability in Olympic Games bidding and planning

Table 1 outlines the major milestones in the evolution of environment and

sustainability considerations in the Olympic Games. This timeline demonstrates citizen-

driven actions to identify and prioritize environmental considerations in Olympic bidding

and planning. Consider, for example, the citizens of Tokyo voicing concerns about

pollution and water quality for the 1964 Games (Chalkley & Essex, 1999), or Denver's

refusal to host the Games in 1974, following citizens' concerns that the Games would be

detrimental to the environment (Chernushenko, 1994; Lenskyj, 1998). Despite these

grassroots actions, it was not until the early nineties, following international dialogue on

sustainable development, that the environment became a formal consideration of

hosting the Olympic Games.

1964	Citizens of Tokyo voice concerns about pollution and water quality
1974	Denver Citizens turn down the Games for environmental reasons
1987	Release of the Brundtland Report
1991	Lillehammer decides to formally pursue a 'Green Games'
1992	IOC/Olympic Movement sign the Earth Pledge
1994	Lillehammer hosts the first 'Green Games'; the environment is adopted as the 3rd pillar of focus; UNEP/IOC sign an agreement on sport and the environment
1995	2002 Bid Cities are the first to be officially evaluated on their environmental plans during the bidding process; UNEP/IOC host the 1st World Conference on Sport and the Environment
1996	Creation of the Sport and Environment Commission; Olympic Charter modified to refer to the environment
1997	UNEP/IOC host the 2nd World Conference on Sport and the Environment
1999	Creation of Olympic Agenda 21
2000	Sydney sets new global Olympic standard by hosting the 'Green Games'
2001	IOC begins process of setting economic, social and environmental indicators
2003	Vancouver selected as host city for the 2010 Sustainability Games
2005	London (LOCOG) wins the rights to the 2012 "One Planet Olympics"; Beijing (BOCOG) signs agreement with UNEP for "greenest ever" Games and completes its initial OGGI report
2006	Torino hosts the 2006 Winter Games in an urban setting for better use of city centres and a recycling of sports infrastructure, and purchases carbon credits; UNEP signs agreement to make the 2008 Beijing Games "the greenest ever"; London 2012's Sustainability Policy approved and LOCOG submits its OGGI study structure; VANOC completes its initial OGGI report
2007	UNEP names IOC and President Jacques Rogge "Champions of the Earth 2007," citing Torino as shining example

Table 1: History of environment and sustainability in the Olympic Games

In the early 1990s, organizers of the Lillehammer 1994 Winter Games formally

adopted environmental principles for the Games, following citizen outcry about the

impacts of the Olympics on the environment. This act, coupled with world demand,

convinced the IOC of the need to formally recognize the environment. As a result, in

1992, members of the IOC signed the Earth Pledge (Planet Drum, 2002, "The Olympic

Movement and the Environment").[5] In 1994, the IOC furthered this commitment by

adding 'environment' as the third Olympic pillar to the existing pillars of sport and culture,

and the Centennial Olympic Congress officially added the following to the Olympic

Charter:

> … the Olympic Games are held in conditions which demonstrate a responsible
> concern for environmental issues and encourage the Olympic Movement to
> demonstrate a responsible concern for environmental issues, takes measures to
> reflect such concern in its activities and educates all those connected with the
> Olympic Movement as to the importance of sustainable development (IOC,
> 2004, Olympic Charter, Rule 2, ¶ 13).

Two years later, UNEP and the IOC signed an agreement formalizing the

Olympic Sport and Environment Commission within the IOC, with a sustainability

education and advising mandate. This marked the first appearance of the language of

sustainable development in official Olympic literature, and as the Commission gained

strength, the IOC expanded its evaluations of Olympic bids to include an environmental

sustainability component (Kearins & Pavlovich, 2002).

Momentum around environmental issues increased and in 1996, at the 105th IOC

session, the IOC approved a recommendation to:

> … take a leading role with respect to the environment…recognizing the
> unique opportunity provided by the regular celebration of the Olympic
> Games to emphasize the importance of the environment (as quoted in
> Planet Drum, 2002, "The Olympic Movement and the Environment").

Host cities responded with myriad approaches to addressing the environmental

impacts of Olympic events. While some of these approaches have been quite

successful, the lack of specific goals made delivering optional environmental initiatives

more difficult in host cities that found themselves facing financial and time constraints. In

response to this problem, the IOC created semi-formal guidelines parallel to those of

Agenda 21, the celebrated formal outcome of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment

---

[5] The Earth Pledge mission is to identify and promote "innovative techniques and technologies
that restore the balance between human and natural systems" (Earth Pledge, 2005 "Our
Mission").

and Development in its *Olympic Agenda 21* document in 1999. This document not only addressed issues faced under the environment pillar, but broadly focused on socio-economic issues and on strengthening the role of major groups (Vancouver 2010, n.d., "Overview: History") (see Table 2).

Because these documents represent stages in the development of criteria for hosting the Games in alignment with sustainability principles, both the Olympic Environment and Sport Commission's requirements for host cities and the *Olympic Agenda 21* were crucial for greater acceptance of sustainability within the Olympic community. Importantly, however, the IOC's policies were based mostly on existing business-environment protocols, that is, voluntary measures rather than explicit regulations. Greenpeace responded to this perceived oversight by publishing a set of guidelines in 2000. This document recommended that the IOC "increase its capacity to advise, direct and pressure bidding and host cities to ensure that their environmental commitments [are] met" (Greenpeace, 2000, 2).

Although the IOC did not formally adopt the Greenpeace guidelines, at the Fourth World Conference on Sport and the Environment, the IOC signed another resolution which urged all members of the Olympic Movement "to continue and intensify their efforts in implementing environmental, economic and social sustainability in all of their policies and activities" (Athens Environmental Foundation, 2004). To achieve this pursuit, the IOC decided to measure the impact of the Olympic Games on the host city and its citizens and environs. Consequently, the IOC developed the Olympic Games Global Impact (OGGI) initiative, a methodological framework for standardizing the measurement of Olympic impact through economic, social and environmental indicators (IOC, 2006).

Improved socio-economic	The values of Olympism and action on behalf of sustainable development
	Stronger international cooperation for sustainable development

conditions	Combating exclusion
	Changing consumer habits
	Health protection
	Human habitat and institutions
	Integrating the concept of sustainable development into sports policies
Conservation and management of resources for sustainable development	Methodology of environmental action for the Olympic Movement
	Protection of conservation areas and countryside
	Sports facilities
	Sports equipment
	Transport
	Energy
	Accommodation and catering at major sports events
	Water management
	Management of hazardous products, waste and pollution
	Quality of the biosphere and maintenance of biodiversity
Strengthening the role of major groups	Advancement of the role of women
	Promoting the role of young people
	Recognition and promotion of indigenous populations

Table 2: Objectives of *Olympic Agenda 21*

Commitments by host cities to achieve ever greener and more sustainable events are varied and lauded by UNEP. Organizers of the 2006 Winter Games in Torino bought carbon credits from renewable energy projects in India and Sri Lanka, and an energy efficiency scheme in Eritrea, to offset nearly 67% of what venues and operations produced[6], and made modest innovations in the areas of waste reduction, water conservation, and green building design (UNEP, 2005; TOROC, 2006; Swimnews, 2007). Similarly, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) has signed an agreement to make the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games "the greenest ever" (UNEP, 2005). Organizers will work with UNEP to reduce environmental pollutants and to raise public awareness about such issues among the people of China. On July 6, 2005, London won

---

[6] This figure included estimates of emissions generated by athletes' travel to and from Torino, but not those of spectators (UNEP, 2006).

the rights to host the 2012 'One Planet Olympics' (London 2012, 2005) under the banner

of local and international sustainability. VANOC has chosen to highlight sustainability not

just in its OGGI reports, but also through its vision, mission, and value statements (see

Table 3). Within the organization, VANOC has already used this formal commitment to

sustainability to invest in a sustainability arm to operations, which has a broad focus on

relationships with local First Nations, inclusion of marginalized populations,

environmentally friendly building techniques and business operations, sustainable

neighbourhoods, and ethical purchasing policies. [[[updates [updates Both the IOC and

VANOC have officially adopted the language of sustainability. The challenge now is to

develop the rules and procedures to apply this language to practice in Olympic planning.

The results from 2010 will show how the IOC's and Vancouver's definitions of

sustainability communicate and translate into action.

VANOC Vision	A stronger Canada whose spirit is raised by its passion for sport, culture and sustainability.
VANOC Mission	To touch the soul of the nation and inspire the world by creating and delivering an extraordinary Olympic and Paralympic experience with lasting legacies.
VANOC Values	• *Team*: Fair play, respect, compassion, accountability and inclusion • *Trust:* Integrity, honesty, respect, fairness and compassion • *Excellence:* Recognition, compassion and accountability • *Sustainability:* Financial, economic, social and environmental • *Creativity:* Innovation, flexibility and adaptability

Table 3: VANOC's vision, mission statement, and values

4   Four possible scenarios for Sustainability Progress or Stagnation by 2010

Varying interpretations and contexts – different language games -- of sustainability

at global and local levels could either create new opportunities for communication or

widen the gap between international and local visions. Because of these variable

possible outcomes, international and local sustainability policies and processes could

progress, stagnate, diverge or converge, leading to two differentiable scenarios at each

scale (see Table 4). The standard of progress or stagnation we are using here derives

from the collective judgment that will be cast by the local and international communities

on 2010, as they have been on all Olympic Games, broadcast primarily through the

media.

SCALE OUTCOME	International Olympic Movement	Local Policy Context
Sustainability Progresses	Raising standards for sustainability in Olympic cities a	Sustainability thinking and policy becomes a competitive advantage c
Sustainability Stagnates	b Sustainability attempts fail to inspire the Olympic Movement	d Capping the ceiling of sustainability innovations locally

Table 4: Four possible outcomes for sustainability progress or stagnation in 2010

If, from an international perspective, sustainability progresses through the vehicle

of 2010, higher standards for all Olympic host cities will result. This could lead to global

acceptance of sustainability as a necessary part of international athletics event planning

and other international sporting organizations, such as FIFA, could adopt similar

standards.[7] On the other hand, if international sustainability stagnates, the concept and

its message will be seen as a failure, with the likely result a loss of commitment from the

IOC to address sustainability.

At the local scale, sustainability progress could further cement the institutional

status of sustainability within official Vancouver policy, embraced as a competitive

advantage as the city secures its Olympic status. If sustainability stagnates locally

during the 2010 Games, however, sustainability innovations and progress made locally

---

[7] UNEP's launch of the FIFA "Green Goal" project for the 2006 World Cup in Germany is testament to the fact that this is on the agenda (United Nations, 2007).

could risk being moth-balled or overturned in favour of a new direction and organizing language for policy. This could have lasting impacts both on the built environment and on the collective energy of the communities in Vancouver that have united under the banner of sustainability to advance public welfare and quality of life.

These two opposing outcomes for sustainability at international and local scales open up four possible scenarios: a win-win scenario in which international and local sustainability progress converge, a lose-lose scenario in which international and local sustainability stagnation converge, a win-lose scenario in which divergent outcomes privilege international progress at the expense of local progress, and a lose-win scenario in which local progress occurs but at the expense of international stagnation on sustainability. The following sections examine the impact of each of these possible scenarios through the interpretation of different uses of the language of sustainability.

A. Win-win scenario: International Progress/Local Progress

In the first scenario, international and local progress occur in tandem. Internationally, sustainability considerations become standard to Olympic events and essential components of successful Olympic bids, creating a channel for existing local sustainability policies to be implemented and new reasons for other would-be Olympic cities to learn from and build upon local progress toward sustainability in Vancouver. Sustainability policies and systems thus become Vancouver's competitive advantage.

A program which could be key in making this scenario come into being is OGGI. OGGI was created by the IOC in 2003 to better understand the positive and negative impacts of the Games on host nations and communities. Its stated objectives are to:

- Measure the global impact of the Olympic Games;

- Create a comparable benchmark across all future Olympic Games; and,

- Help bidding cities and future organizers identify potential legacies to maximize the Games' benefits.

OGGI consists of a standard reporting system based on 154 distinct economic, social and environmental indicators that measure conditions pre- and post-Games in the host city, region, and nation (van Griethuysen & Hug, 2005). While OGGI is not specifically framed in terms of sustainability, it is operationalized in a framework identical to that used by many sustainability indicator reports (Maclaren, 1996). OGGI indicator themes range widely, from atmospheric pollutants to sports team composition. As an example of the sheer amount of information captured by reporting on just one indicator within OGGI, the atmospheric pollution indicator reports on five different atmospheric pollutants (carbon monoxide, suspended particulates, fine suspended particulates, sulphur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide) for six reporting sites across the entire Olympic Games geographical scope.[8] Thus, the OGGI initiative is comprehensive, and yet the sheer volume of information can make correlating indicators to outcomes difficult.

The host Organizing Committee is responsible for developing a series of four indicator reports (baseline, pre-Games, Games and post-Games for a span of eleven years). With standard indicators tracked before and after the Games, the IOC hopes to understand and compare their negative and positive impacts. In theory, a better understanding of the Games' impacts will help future host cities plan Games that are integrated into long-term and balanced urban development, and help the IOC adjust its evaluation process of would-be host cities to ensure successful Olympic Games events: "Based on the findings and analysis of the OGGI study from each Olympic Games, the

---

[8] It should be further noted that despite the extensive array of information for this example environmental indicator, the environmental indicators present the fewest challenges to reporting amongst OGGI indicators in that most of the data already exist and are collected on a regular basis. At the opposite end of the spectrum, approximately half of the indicators required under the social dimension of the report are not measurable with currently existing data in Vancouver.

IOC is able to integrate changes to maintain the long-term viability of the Olympic

Games in keeping with the ideals of the Olympic Movement" (IOC, 2006, 1).

The OGGI initiative demonstrates the IOC's interest in sustainability as a framework

through which it can quantify and compare its influence on local conditions across time

and space. The holistic reach of the sustainability framework chosen for the OGGI,

including environmental conditions, employment, local elections, media coverage of

Olympic events and community pressure groups, serves not coincidentally to imply as

well an extremely broad and holistic realm of influence of the Olympic Games on every

imaginable local trend. By setting up indicators for the Olympic impact across such a

broad spectrum, the IOC has created a self-fulfilling prophesy, assuming a measure of

causality that cannot easily be teased out of simple correlation effects of the Games.

The substantial time series represented by the OGGI requirement provides a clear

message that the IOC understands host communities' need for legacies that start before

the Games and last beyond the closing ceremonies. It is a move in the direction of

sustainability, that is, longer-term planning and a more realistic assessment of the

impacts of mega-events as well as the time lags that often precede their felt impacts.

From the local perspective, OGGI presents a number of opportunities that could

be considered sustainability 'wins.' The indicators framework of OGGI institutionalizes

host community evaluation based on comprehensive sustainability criteria. By

standardizing these indicators, OGGI facilitates community-to-community comparability

as well. Communities already engaged in sustainability reporting, like Vancouver, thus

have a head start in meeting OGGI requirements and the added value over time of

additional means to compare indicators against those of other Olympic communities.

The most obvious utility of standard evaluation indicators for all Olympic host

cities is to increase "friendly" competition between cities, such that the local legacy of

each successive Olympic Games is increasingly positive on a range of transparent

metrics. This competition for continuous improvement offers each Games the

opportunity to be the "best" – read "most sustainable" – Olympic Games ever. The need

for Olympic cities to engage in inter-urban learning networks, even as they compete with

one another, has been noted (Surborg et al, 2006). This opportunity to share lessons

within a well-defined elite network offers the potential to add leverage, marketing and

momentum to initiatives in a single city and to ensure the continued success of new

initiatives. As the OGGI initiative is a new requirement that demands substantial

research and analysis from local host committees, Vancouver has been in consultation

with Beijing in an attempt to interpret and put in place the first iterations of OGGI

collaboratively and efficiently. Vancouver has a longer history of engagement with the

policy language of sustainability and indicators, offering Beijing an opportunity to learn

efficiently from its Pacific neighbour. Beijing, in turn, offers Vancouver the chance to

strengthen existing trade and development relationships.

The two local organizing committees share a common interest in adapting the

OGGI indicators as they have been developed to date due to the challenges that the

massive size of both Canada and China pose for the implementation of some OGGI

indicators. The IOC developed the OGGI indicators to be measured at both local and

national scales, which may be useful in smaller European countries, but which are not

necessarily appropriate in situations where the host community is geographically part of

a much larger country. In a country as large as Canada, for example, pesticide use in

Nova Scotia has very little bearing on the environment in Vancouver. A common interest

in revising the OGGI indicators to maximize their relevance puts the Vancouver and

Beijing organizing committees on common ground to exert pressure on the IOC around

its interpretation of the OGGI framework.

The OGGI initiative has an additional likely impact on the language games of

future Olympic bidding processes. As prospective hosts begin to include commitments to

measure and assess OGGI indicators in their bids, all these bidding communities will also likely face pressure to express a commitment to realize a positive impact from the Olympics on social, environmental, and economic criteria, lasting well beyond the Games themselves. This pressure alone could spur significant creative thinking about leveraging the Olympic Games planning process for local – and perhaps national – sustainability results. The duration of OGGI provides considerable scope for creating programs to move trends in a positive direction. It is quite possible to envisage, as a result, stricter standards in contracting, oversight and transparency, labour agreements, environmental impact assessments, and inclusivity agreements for the poor, especially in cities where such standards have not existed previously. In short, if the OGGI indicators are consistent with sustainability, then the OGGI initiative could help leverage sustainability locally within bid cities.

B. Lose-lose scenario: International Stagnation/ Local Stagnation

If it is possible to consider mutually reinforcing positive outcomes at local and international scales, it is also conceivable that mutually reinforcing negative outcomes could become the legacy of 2010. The implementation and material demonstration of the Sustainability Games could lack luster for the world and the community's perception of Vancouver, causing embarrassment for both Vancouver and the IOC. Such an outcome could tarnish both the international and the local reputation of the discourse of sustainability for hallmark events and for local policy alike.

Another innovative theme for the Olympic Games – a private sector theme – failed in the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. If, as happened in the case of the 1996 Atlanta Games, the uniqueness of a 'Sustainability Games' vanishes in the development rush, then Vancouver stands to be stuck with white elephants – like a speed-skating oval sinking into sandy soil and in need of engineering upgrades in Richmond (Bennett, 2006); a gentrified downtown core predicated on the forceful removal of large numbers

of disadvantaged people who were promised a way-up at the bid process stage rather than a one-way ticket out of the way (Olds, 1998); and a new transportation infrastructure that worsens congestion, health and air quality (Boei, 2006). In this scenario, the Vancouver Sustainability Olympics could become the pariah that the 'free enterprise Olympics' became in the aftermath of the Atlanta Games.

The free-enterprise Games in Atlanta were a failure and an embarrassment, not only locally, but globally. True to the corporate-friendly history of Atlanta, and following on from the success of the first "free enterprise" Olympic Games in Los Angeles, the 1996 Games were planned almost entirely by local corporate leaders. Organizers hoped that Atlanta would pave the way for future cities to rely exclusively on the private sector for funding, and in so doing, change the face of the Games toward a business pursuit rather than a public endeavor. Organizers placed business interests above community interests and in so doing, displaced over seventy businesses, four shelters and a thousand homeless people (Whitelegg, 2000, 806). Exacerbating the public relations nightmare was the Centennial Park project, which forcibly removed "the unsightly presence of Atlanta's numerous poor and homeless residents" (Whitelegg, 2000, 803) while promising to add environmental amenities to a rundown part of the city. During the closing ceremonies for the 1996 Games, then-IOC President Samaranch broke with tradition and failed to call the Atlanta Games "the best Games ever."

The City of Vancouver's final key deliverable to Olympic Operations in its Olympic Strategic Plan is ". . . to encourage the IOC to permanently add sustainability as a fourth "Olympic pillar," to the three existing pillars: sport, environment and culture" (City of Vancouver, 2006a, 52). All innovations run the risk of failure, however, and if the Sustainability Games fail to inspire as the free enterprise Games failed before them, then the Vancouver Olympics may actually confound the inclusion of sustainability principles within Olympics and other hallmark events internationally. 'Reputation risk' is

one of the main threats faced by both the IOC and Vancouver in 2010. In its Strategic

Plan, the City of Vancouver takes this risk very seriously: "It is incumbent on City Council

and staff to do all within their power to ensure that through the role of Olympic Host City,

Vancouver's already-strong worldwide reputation is enhanced, and that the City makes

the most of the potential opportunities the Games present" (City of Vancouver, 2006a,

24). At the same time, the City and all local partners in the planning and staging of the

Games have a role to play "in the protection of the Olympic brand and marks" (City of

Vancouver, 2006a, 11). If these reputations and brands are not helped by the

advancement of sustainability, those responsible within all the affected organizations will

doubtless be tasked with finding a new umbrella framework and organizing concept with

less baggage and more potential.

Two risky elements in planning and executing the Sustainability Games, the role

of social inclusivity and the Southeast False Creek sustainable community and Athletes

Village, will be dealt with in greater detail in the two scenarios below. Two other

potentially explosive issues deserve mention here for their failure potential, as well: the

issues of waste disposal and construction.

VANOC has set a target of zero waste for the 2010 Games (Vancouver 2010,

n.d.). Though not unprecedented as a principle[9], zero waste remains elusive in practice.

The production of waste continues to increase in the Vancouver region, and, in fact,

landfill capacity will be reached in 2008. While the regional government has identified

and purchased a site for a replacement landfill, the provincial government – the Minister

of Sustainable Resource Management – put approval of the use of this site on hold due

to concerns about First Nations rights and title to the land in question (GVRD 2006, 25).

The reality that Vancouver may not have a local waste disposal site in 2010 puts the

---

[9] Other cities that have made commitments to "zero waste" include the Regional District of
Nanaimo, BC (2006) and Canberra, Australia (ACT Commissioner for the Environment, 2000).

zero waste question in a context with more threatening consequences for a city-region wishing to cement a global sustainability reputation.

Another key visible element of sustainability plans for VANOC is green building for Olympic venues. This element capitalizes on Vancouver's existing high standards for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified green buildings (City of Vancouver, 2005). In the summer of 2006, VANOC was granted an increase in its construction budget from $470 million Cdn. to $580 million Cdn. to cover unexpectedly high materials and labour costs.[10] In stark opposition to VANOC's green building pursuits is the troublesome issue of the four-lane highway being constructed by the Province of BC through the ecologically sensitive Eagleridge Bluffs to improve road access from Vancouver to Whistler for the Olympics. Neither requests for dialogue about other options, nor legal suits from the municipality, nor resident protest encampments on site were able to effect change to this construction. On the contrary, twenty-one peaceful protesters were arrested and fined upwards of $1,000 each and three were jailed, including one 78 year old woman, Betty Krawczyk (IOCC, 2007).

These and other risks, still on the horizon, conjure potential images of grand freeways in front of thinly shrouded clearcuts, heaps of trash beneath "zero waste" banners on trash bins, uncompleted or unpaid-for buildings awaiting LEED credentials, and other unsightly scenes that loom large enough to overpower any green impression from 2010. As a set of policy goals, sustainability enables a city like Vancouver to set inspiring, high sights. In operationalizing these goals, however, there is that much more room for Vancouver to fall short, to miss its message, and to fail to integrate a full suite of social, environmental and economic initiatives. The experience of the Atlanta Games

---

[10] A report from the BC auditor general has calculated a much higher final price tag for the Olympics, at $2.5 billion, a figure which includes many costs not included in the VANOC operating budget, such as highway and transportation infrastructure improvements and costs of securing all this new infrastructure (Dowd, 2007).

is a lesson that attention must be paid to high-profile substantive issues such as physical and social infrastructure as well as to image creation because cities by themselves lack the power to deliver an image. To make sustainability clear to the world, Vancouver must translate it to the world's media messengers, many of whom have made a game out of twisting and appropriating this term for the past 20 years.

C. Lose-win scenario: International Stagnation/Local Progress

Though useful for understanding the range of possibilities, completely synergistic successes and utterly dismal failures from both local and global scales are relatively uncommon in real events. More likely outcomes of 2010 for the discourse and pursuit of sustainability at international and local levels are mixed accounts. Polarizing again for purposes of clarity, we will consider two mixed outcome scenarios in which the balance is tipped -- in this next case, toward positive local outcomes, and in the case following, toward positive international outcomes -- and consider what this means in the language of sustainability.

In the lose-win scenario, local progress towards sustainability could be made from 2010 despite international disinterest in Vancouver's local sustainability discourse and models. Here, Vancouver could become a leading 'brand' of integrated sustainability principles, policies, and behaviours, but not be able to translate this progress far beyond its geographic boundaries. This kind of progress would have little bearing on the international context if it does not speak to the needs of the IOC for protection and promotion of the Olympic image, making other host cities unlikely to follow Vancouver's lead.

Vancouver's pursuit of sustainability for the 2010 Games occurs in a context of higher orders of Canadian government that currently share an unquenchable thirst for 'sustainability' naming rights – the term appears as an organizing principle not only in the

expected places like environment and natural resources ministries, but almost

everywhere else, too, from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (2003) to the Canada

Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2006). In this context, sustainability could be a

named characteristic of nearly any commodity, service or concept, such that creating a

recipe for the essential components of an Olympic sustainability system is either like

cooking a smorgasbord – in which every imaginable ingredient is potentially available --

or soup from a stone – in which no added ingredient can remove its peculiar taste.

In laying out its Strategic Plan for the Games, the City of Vancouver cites as

guiding principle – ensure sustainability benefits. This is specified to "include measures

relating to environmental stewardship, social responsibility, accessibility, inner-city

inclusivity, economic opportunity, liveability, sport development and health promotion"

(City of Vancouver, 2006a, 7). Specific objectives are listed in the three areas of social

sustainability, environmental sustainability, and economic sustainability, with the intent

"to showcase to the world our substantial achievements" (City of Vancouver, 2006a, 21)

and to create "a balanced urban environment that is conducive to the success of tourism

and commercial enterprises, both large and small" (City of Vancouver, 2006a, 22).

For the IOC, by contrast, sustainability is interpreted much more specifically. In an

interview, IOC President Jacques Rogge leans strongly on the environment leg of the

sustainability stool in claiming: "The IOC is very committed to its responsibility to

promote sustainable development and the environment as the third dimension of

Olympism, alongside sport and culture. The IOC has for instance been working with the

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for over ten years" (Halvorsen, 2006).

Vancouver's Inner-City Inclusivity initiative provides a strong example of the

context of Vancouver's interpretation of sustainability that might well prove

untranslatable to the international context. The statement, included in Vancouver's

Olympic Bid, commits VANOC to include Vancouver's least fortunate residents amongst

those who benefit from the Olympic legacy. These commitments derive from the existing

tripartite governmental investment in the Vancouver Agreement, $200 million from 2000-

2010 to alleviate poverty in the city's worst-off neighbourhood, the downtown east side

(Vancouver Agreement, 2005).[11] VANOC's Inner-City Inclusivity Steering Group intends

to create strategies to ensure jobs for inner-city residents, no unreasonable rent

increases or displacement, provisions for democratic protest, an alcohol and drug

strategy, and accessibility of some venues to the poor and disabled.[12]

Compounding the challenges of inclusivity and further particularizing them in the

Vancouver context, the downtown east side neighbourhood is also home to one third of

the city's First Nations people, who represent 30% of the homeless population (Cardinal,

2006). Due to the visible disadvantage and marginalization of the region's First Nations,

Vancouver's Sustainability Games must include an approach to reconciling a troubled

and unresolved history of abuse of First Nations peoples.[13] While most First Nations in

Canada have working relationships with federal and provincial governments, Olympic

planning represents a unique opportunity for engagement with First Nations at the local

government scale.

The 2010 Olympics will take place on the traditional territory of four existing First

Nations: Lil'wat, Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-waututh. Desires to showcase and

demonstrate the value of the city's Aboriginal roots in 2010 have been acted on by

VANOC through invitations to representatives of all four nations to engage with VANOC

---

[11] The Inner-City Inclusivity initiative also derives from Vancouver's history of evicting households from low-income housing during Expo '86, when about 2000 rooms that housed low-income households were lost and 500-950 low-income people were evicted to accommodate the tourist boom (Olds 1998).

[12] Local progress on this front remains in question. While ten inner-city lodging houses have been purchased to preserve their use, another 22 such hotels have been purchased in the past year by developers, likely for redevelopment, and other low-income lodging houses have been evicted "to make room for Olympics workers and other construction workers" (IOCC, 2007). The City's patience for democratic protest also appears to be wearing thin following visible and vocal civil disobedience at the past year's "countdown" events (Mackin, 2007).

[13] This responsibility in Canada and Vancouver to work toward reconciliation with First Nations peoples is, of course, shared by all 'new world' nations.

via the Sustainability and Aboriginal Participation (S&AP) Roadmap, Sustainability and

Aboriginal Participation Management & Reporting System, and the Four First Nations

Multi-Party Agreement. These moves represent a union of sustainability and First

Nations considerations in Olympic planning with no precedent in OGGI or any other IOC

program. This is at the same time crucial terrain for long-term planning in the local

context and perhaps not readily applicable to many other potential Olympic host city

contexts around the world.

D. Win-lose scenario: International Progress/ Local Stagnation

The final scenario we consider tips the balance of progress toward the

international, with stagnation at the local level: a win-lose scenario. Progress that occurs

uniquely at the international scale would mean increased IOC and global media attention

to the language of sustainability, and the potential to raise the floor of standard practice

in hallmark events around the world. This scenario in 2010 would net no progress for

Vancouver, if logistical and other pressures prevent sustainability innovations and

promises from being carried through. In this case, the floor of standard practice may be

raised but the ceiling for best practice would be capped.

Based on the success of the Green Games in Sydney, and the IOC's

understanding of sustainable development based on its collaboration with UNEP,

successful Sustainability Games in Vancouver would seem to require stellar

environmental performance, not an integrated approach to social, economic and

environmental spheres of sustainability. Though a daunting enough task, environmental

achievement would fall significantly short of meeting the aspirations of 2010 for an

operational definition of sustainability that integrates environmental performance with

social and economic sustainability objectives – a new standard that is worthy of

becoming the fourth pillar of Olympism. In terms of the work that sustainability promises

to do for Vancouver, a legacy of good environmental performance would fail to disprove what social and economic justice critics of sustainability already suspect – that sustainability does not represent a comprehensive approach to urban development but only a repackaging of environmental concerns (Portney, 2003). As mentioned in the lose-lose scenario, despite the attention Vancouver 2010 planners have paid to the full breadth of sustainability practice to date, time and budgetary constraints may start to restrict these considerations toward what is required for a successful Games, first, and what is required to demonstrate innovation to the world, second. The continuing saga of planning for the Athletes Village in Southeast False Creek provides an example of the potential for Vancouver to narrow the scope of its interpretation of sustainability to meet international expectations without meeting local expectations.

Southeast False Creek (SEFC) constitutes 80 acres of former industrial land on some of the last remaining underdeveloped waterfront in the downtown area. The area was approved for development as a 'model sustainable community' in 1999. Following a great deal of work by city staff as well as a wide array of citizen volunteers, the SEFC Official Development Plan passed in 2005. The plan included targets of a one-third housing split for each of low income, modest income, and higher income residents[14]; a self-contained ground source energy system; planning for car sharing and other alternatives to the private automobile; and a wide range of sustainability-oriented public amenities from schools to parks to religious facilities. These and other innovations were to be funded by the city's property endowment fund. The Vancouver 2010 Bid

---

[14] Low-income refers to households who spend 30% or more of their income on housing; modest income refers to singles/seniors with annual incomes $12,500-$45,000 or couples/families with annual incomes $54,000-$90,000.

Committee also chose the first developed portion of SEFC to be the Athletes Village.[15]

At build-out by 2018, SEFC is expected to house 14,400 people.

In late 2005, a newly-elected, more fiscally if not ideologically conservative city council reduced the financing available for model projects, and particularly reduced targets for affordable housing and childcare provision. At two highly contentious public meetings on December 20th, 2005 (5 hours) and March 7th, 2006 (6 hours), the city council resolved "to improve the economic sustainability of the [SEFC] development . . . by adjusting the housing mix and other public amenities, with . . . no adverse impact on the delivery of the Olympic Village for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games" (City of Vancouver 2005c, 6). Citizens speaking at the meetings urged city council to consider their actions in the context of the city's affordable housing crisis, the importance of the SEFC site as some of the last undeveloped land in the city, and the intention in the ODP for the neighbourhood to be a model and a showcase, which could be foregone with the proposed amendments. The second public hearing lasted until 1:30 am, and despite virtually all citizens present speaking in protest, the amendment was made to reduce the affordable housing component to 20% and to reduce the childcare facilities from five to three, both of which are city standards. More recently, the City has dropped its requirement for green roofs in the development over concerns that the BC insurance industry may not insure them (Bula, 2007).

Many citizens lamented the loss of an opportunity to use the Olympic Games to advance better-than-business-as-usual practices, as expressed in this contribution to the public hearing: "the amendments undermine the original vision of a housing mix that creates social inclusion and cohesion and prevents marginalization . . . the City should

---

[15] In April 2006, this 2.6 ha parcel of land sold for $193 million to the Millennium Group, setting both a local and national record (Anderson 2006).

use the Olympics as a way to get [provincial and federal government] funding" (Citizen speaker, City of Vancouver 2006b, 3).

At the same time as sights are being lowered on the realization of a model sustainable community in SEFC, the city administration has created a new program focusing on internationalizing Vancouver's existing success in medium and high density residential development as a means to draw international attention. The Mayor's EcoDensity initiative, as it is called, promotes new commitments to medium and high-density housing in order to reduce sprawl, reduce the city's ecological footprint, and improve "housing affordability by increasing the housing supply" (City of Vancouver, 2006c, 4). The initiative boasts that "with the development of Southeast False Creek underway, an entire sustainable community is about to become reality" (City of Vancouver, 2006c, 1). It borrows from the success of the City of London's "One Planet" campaign, invoking as a challenge: "While Vancouver has made great progress in our efforts to become a sustainable city, we are not a one planet city" (City of Vancouver, 2006c, 3). It appears that Vancouver has begun trading off best sustainability practice as measured by local expectations for internationally-legible and comparable initiatives.

Maurice Cardinal, author of the book *Leverage Olympic Momentum: Living and doing business in an Olympic region,* in a personal communication makes a strong argument about how Vancouver could be adversely affected by the Games even if the event is an international success:

> Unfortunately, many people in past Olympic regions failed to appreciate, until it was too late, that when they [hosts] destroy marginalized neighborhoods and drive inhabitants away, they lose a valuable workforce, one that is needed to keep their community healthy. If you want to engage the business community, or anyone for that matter, you have to connect on a platform that impacts them directly -- show them a benefit. In this case, the benefit is that they get to keep their workforce if they work towards helping create a responsible Olympic event.

To date, as demonstrated by the Sustainable Region Initiative, the Vancouver Agreement, the Social Sustainability Principles, and other initiatives, Vancouver's work

toward sustainability is markedly not divorced from its efforts to retain jobs and an

economic base and to improve the quality of life of its most marginalized residents.

Maintaining and, in fact, stepping up these integrated concerns for social, environmental,

and economic benefit through the Olympic planning process is a challenge that local

Vancouver Olympic planners face in order to realize leverage and gains in the long run.

5. Language Games and Systems of Sustainability-Speak

Different language systems work to construct different meanings of sustainability through different uses. The four scenarios just considered demonstrate the wide range of implications of the language games being played with the concept of sustainability in planning for 2010. Together, these scenarios constitute the contextual boundaries of what local and international bodies can expect as the post-2010 meaning and legacy of sustainability in Olympism. The win-win scenario demonstrates what to Wittgenstein was intersystemic language system convergence – two different language systems of the term sustainability that nonetheless are noncontradictory and can coexist with complementarity. Sustainability, in this most optimistic scenario, becomes an emergent property of the communication and action taking place between the local and global scales of planning for the Olympic Games. The lose-lose scenario demonstrates extrasystemic dissonance, a situation in which the two language systems being used exist in contrast to one another and in fact prevent communication, understanding, and action. The two mixed outcome scenarios demonstrate the same kind of dissonance, but with productive outcomes for either the local or the international scale actors, respectively. The articulation of a common goal is stymied in the mixed outcome scenarios, but the difference in the scale of action makes possible certain kinds of progress based on the context-specific expectations of either the local or the global, although this progress is not interpretable as such at other scales and in other contexts.

Thus, the analytical approach of the language game abandons a universal definition of sustainability in favour of seeking to establish boundaries around uses of sustainability in particular contexts, at particular scales. These scale- and context-dependent boundaries can aid communication about and across interpretations of sustainability. They also set some limits to what constitutes recognizable meanings and

uses of the term. This approach lowers our analytical sights from expectations of

exactness but can facilitate a more realistic understanding of the connections between

language, policy and action at different scales and in diverse contexts.

Given this sense of the different language games at play in planning for the 2010

Sustainability Games, we can summarize the delineation between the meanings given to

sustainability in the international context by the IOC and in the local context within

Vancouver in Table 5, based on the scenarios developed above.

In sum, international and local-scale sustainability agendas have points of

overlap and divergence. Clearly, the notion of sustainability as leverage for increasing

economic competitiveness is shared at both scales. The following quote from the

commercial director for the London Olympic organizing committee expresses the

common perception of the role of sustainability for Olympic cities and for the

international Olympic movement.

> [The 2012] Games focus very much on the environment and promote
> environmentally friendly products and services. There is an opportunity for car
> companies to get involved in that programme and for them to launch their new
> models … this is going to be a fantastic platform. By 2012 this market will be
> starting to take off in a very big way. (Beard, 2007)

Equally at both scales, sustainability is seen as a vehicle for economic

competitiveness and a key to overcoming barriers to economic growth in the long-term.

This move to equate sustainability and competitiveness strategies is seen as essential to

global economic and cultural positioning. Of course, the actions and investments needed

to pursue competitiveness qua sustainability at global and local scales are different

(Sassen, 2005). As a point of comparison, broadcast deals for the Athens 2004 Summer

Olympics were valued at $1.5 billion USD. Although the Winter Olympics have

historically been a much smaller scale event, the gap in the value of broadcast deals is

closing, as the IOC estimates television rights for 2010 will generate $1 billion USD

(Penner, 2007), of which $401 million Cdn. will be shared with VANOC (Dowd, 2007).

Broadcast deals are growing to eclipse other aspects of Olympics revenues; between

2001-2004, television rights revenues contributed 53% of IOC ongoing revenues.

Sustainability language games for the IOC	Sustainability language games for Vancouver
• Find a captivating new brand for the Games that meets civil society expectations • Act as a good guardian of the Games and its reputation and ensure their long-term viability • Encourage learning, cooperation, and competition amongst would-be host cities to increase the status of hosting the Olympics • Demonstrate the holistic and comprehensive positive impact of the Olympic Games • Ensure the host city meets world class standards and achieves continuous improvement in the Olympic event, increasing market share • Demonstrate the continued relevance of the Olympic Games to changing global values, in the context of Olympic history and elite athletics	• Begin a new era for the Olympic Games, with sustainability as the fourth pillar of Olympism • Enhance an already good worldwide reputation for environmental values and high quality of life • Engage in city-to-city learning and marketing with others in the elite club of Olympic cities • Seize leverage for innovation, investment and creative approaches to urban development • Increase the city-region's world class status and its 'Vancouverism' or differentiability from others in this class • Leverage federal/international resources for the pursuit of existing local policy agenda • Institutionalize and promote local best practices in sustainability • Prove that local best practices are available for international adaptation and dissemination • Meet local expectations, particularly related to social inclusion and opportunities for First Nations

Table 5: Comparing agendas for sustainability via the Olympic Games, IOC and Vancouver

Identifying common interests in sustainability as economic competitiveness, then,

is insufficient grounds for achieving convergence in defining and enacting sustainability

because of the difference that scale makes. In fact, it is not a stretch to see how the

IOC's interest in establishing sustainability impact standards for host cities, as through

OGGI, and Vancouver's lobby for sustainability as a fourth pillar of Olympism, could

work against the local host city's interest to develop a global niche for sustainability

policy and practice. If all Olympic cities are "doing" sustainability, what will differentiate

Vancouver? Without market differentiation, what makes Vancouver a preferential destination for tourism or other investment over a growing number of cities "doing" sustainability? Here, Vancouver should heed the warning offered by Mendes (2005, 66) that: "The pressure on Vancouver to 'compete or perish' in global markets does not make it unique. Nor is Vancouver set apart because the goals of competitiveness and sustainability are becoming increasingly entangled."

The values-based dimension of sustainability interest at both international and local scales goes beyond the need to secure increasing market share and serves as another point of partial convergence. For the IOC, like any international organization that attempts to operate in the public and non-profit as well as for-profit sectors, maintaining and upholding a set of globally-relevant values is crucial to its legitimacy and to the reputation and continued work of those employed by and representing the organization. In Vancouver, the quest for sustainability has assumed the status of a city-wide principle, a value upheld by many organizations and institutions, and a personal ethic of many vocal citizens. Sustainability as values-based and ethical standpoint is reflected, for example, in each of the City of Vancouver's ten Sustainability Principles, beginning with "Today's decisions must not compromise the choices of our children and future generations" and "We are all accountable for our individual and collective actions" (City of Vancouver, 2002). For those individuals and groups that hold sustainability as an ethical value, a failure to implement sustainability projects in a way that moves beyond the norm of city practice in environmental, economic, and social domains, and in the integration of these three domains, would sorely disappoint.

Early signs of this disappointment are already evident from individuals within local organizations working toward an ethic of sustainability. Those who seek in a sustainable approach the integration of multiple concerns and agendas, and who recognize the practical difficulties of achieving this integration from their local work, are

in a unique position to recognize the shortcomings of the global Olympic movement on this front. For example, the Fraser Basin Council, a nongovernment organization based in Vancouver that completed the first OGGI report for the 2010 Games, is in a key position to evaluate any potential evidence of integration within the measurement tools being used to advance sustainability. Steve Litke of the Fraser Basin Council, who directed this project, explains that, in his view, the OGGI indicators demonstrate consistency with sustainability, but not absolute correspondence:

> I do not think that OGGI will assess sustainability in a comprehensive, systematic or integrated way. I think OGGI will help to track some trends over time that relate to some elements of sustainability and OGGI will provide some information about whether trends are moving towards or away from sustainability.

In this view, international efforts to inject sustainability thinking into Olympic Games planning are seen as potentially valuable, but unlikely to offer any new ideas or strategies to local sustainability work that preceded the award of the right to host 2010 and that will continue after the torch has been passed on to Sochi. To the extent that this local work may be affected in the future by the international reputation of Vancouver, however, international efforts to communicate and enact sustainability in Winter 2010 may have a lasting local impact. Many host cities before Vancouver have learned that a city's leadership strategies and best public relations campaigns cannot by themselves determine global messaging. Communication that bridges local and international scale interests in and understanding of sustainability holds the most promise for capturing media attention to the sustainability aspects of 2010. The future of sustainability, as principle and framework for urban development and as potential pillar of Olympism, depends in no small part on the purposes to which such communication and messaging are put.

Bibliography

Adams W M, 2006, "The Future of Sustainability: Rethinking environment and development in the 21st century" World Conservation Union, Report of the IUCN Renowned Thinkers meeting, Zurich

Anand S, Sen A, 2000, "Human development and economic sustainability" *World Development* **28(12)** 2029-2049

Anderson F, 2006, "City must have variety of land uses, planner says" *Vancouver Sun* June 28

van Griethuysen P, Hug P-A, 2005, *OGGI – Olympic Games Global Impact Project Specification Sheets* AISTS (Académie Internationale des Sciences et Techniques du Sport, International Academy of Sport Science and Technology), Lausanne

Andranovich G, Burbank M J, 2004, "Regime politics and the 2012 Olympic Games: New York and San Francisco" *California Politics and Policy* **June 2004** 1-18

Athens Environmental Foundation, 2004, "World Conference on Sport and Environment & Agenda 21 - Nagano 2001" Retrieved October 13, 2004, from www.athensenvironmental.org/enviroment/wc_nagano.asp

ACT Commissioner for the Environment, 2000, "Progress towards No Waste by 2010" Retrieved from http://www.environmentcommissioner.act.gov.au/specialreports/nowasteprogress on 21 September 2006

Basiago A D, 1995, "Methods of defining 'Sustainability'" *Sustainable Development* **3** 109-119

Beard M, 2007, "2012 Olympics: Will the sponsors strike gold?" *The Independent* March 5

Bennett N, 2006, "Still time to move oval to Burnaby: Corrigan" *Richmond News* 4 April

Boei W, 2006, "Leaders unable to agree on Gateway" *Vancouver Sun* May 29

Bradley S, Lee M, 2005, "A Social Development Plan for the City of Vancouver: Moving towards Social Sustainability", Administrative Report, City of Vancouver

Bruff GE, Wood AP, 2000, "Making sense of sustainable development: politicians, professionals, and policies in local planning" *Environment and Planning C* **18(5)** 593-607

Bula F, 2007, "Insurers put the brakes on green roofs" *Vancouver Sun* April 14

Burbank M, Andranovich G, Heying CH, 2001, *Olympic Dreams: The impact of mega-events on local politics* Lynne Reiner Publishers, Boulder, Colo

Campbell S, 1996, "Green cities, growing cities, just cities?" *Journal of the American Planning Association* **62(3)** 296-312

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2006, "Sustainability" Retrieved from www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/inpr/su/index.cfm on 23 September 2006

Cardinal, M, 2006, Personal communication

Cardinal N, 2006, "The inclusive city: identifying, measuring, and drawing attention to aboriginal and indigenous experiences in an urban context" *Cities* **23(3)** 217-228

Chalkley B, Essex S. 1999. "Urban development through hosting international events: a history of the Olympic Games" *Planning Perspectives* **14** 369-394

Chernushenko D, 1994 *Greening Our Games: running sports facilities that won't cost the Earth* Centurion, Ottawa

City of Vancouver, 2002, "Policy Report: Creating a Sustainable City*"* Policy Report CC File No. 5340, Vancouver Corporate Management Team 23 April

City of Vancouver. 2005a, *Southeast False Creek Official Development Plan*, Adopted By-law No. 9073, Vancouver 19 July

City of Vancouver, 2005b, Policy Report, Environment, Vancouver Green Building Strategy, File No. 3501, Vancouver Director of Central Area Planning 3 Nov

City of Vancouver, 2005c, "Special Council Meeting Minutes Regarding the Burrard Bridge and the Southeast False Creek Official Development Plan and Financial Plan and Strategy" Special Council Meeting Minutes, City of Vancouver 20 December

City of Vancouver, 2006a, "2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games" Draft Strategic Plan, Version 1, Vancouver, City Office of Olympic Operations April

City of Vancouver, 2006b, "Southeast False Creek Official Development Plan Amendments" Minutes of the Public Hearing, City of Vancouver, 7 March

City of Vancouver. 2006c. "Vancouver EcoDensity Initiative: New housing for a new century" Circular, Vancouver, Office of the Mayor

Coleman F, 1994, "The greening of the games: Norway aims to host an environmentally sensitive Olympics" *US News and World Report,* January 17, page 53-55

Crary A, 2003, "Wittgenstein's pragmatic strain" Social Research **70(2)** 369-392

Deccio C, Baloglu S, 2002, "Nonhost Community Resident Reactions to the 2002 Winter Olympics: the Spillover Impacts" *Journal of Travel Research* **41** 46-56

Dowd A, 2006, "Questions raised over 2010 Olympics budgeting" *Reuters News Service* Sep 14

Dowd A, 2007, "Budget finally set for Vancouver Games" *Reuters News Service* May 8

Earth Pledge, 2005, "Our Mission" Retrieved June 15, 2005, from www.earthpledge.org/about.html

External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities, 2006, *From Restless Communities to Resilient Places: Building a stronger future for all Canadians.* Report, Prime Minister's External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities, Ottawa

Gibson R, 2005, *Sustainability Assessment: criteria and processes* Earthscan Sterling VA

Greater Vancouver Regional District, 2003, "Taking Care of Our Region, Every Day" Brochure, Greater Vancouver Regional District, Burnaby

Greater Vancouver Regional District, 2006, *Sustainability Report 2003-05*. Report, Greater Vancouver Regional District, Burnaby

Greenpeace, 2000, "*Greenpeace Olympic Environmental Guidelines: a Guide to Sustainable Events*" Retrieved April 15, 2004, from www.greenpeace.org.au/archieves/olympics/newguide.html.

Haaland H E, 1997, "1994 Lillehammer Olympic Games" Retrieved May 2, 2004, from www.american.edu/TED/lille.htm

Halvorsen E, 2006. "Safeguarding the magic of the rings" Retrieved 19 June, 2006 www.dnv.com

Holtz S, 1998, "Integrating Environmental Social and Economic Policies", in The *Cornerstone of Development* Eds J Schnurr, S Holtz IDRC, Ottawa pp 283-293

Impact of the Olympics on Community Coalition (IOCC), 2007 (May), "Olympic oversight interim report card: 2010 Olympic Games" Vancouver 32 pp

IOC, 2004, "Sport and Environment Commission: History and mission of the commission" Retrieved March 15, 2004,from www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/commissions/environment/index_uk.asp.

IOC, 2005, "Olympic Games and the Environment" Retrieved May 5, 2005, from www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/commissions/environment/games_uk.asp

IOC, 2006, *Focus: Olympic Games Global Impact.* Olympic Review. June newsletter

Kearins K, Pavlovich K, 2002, "The role of stakeholders in Sydney's Green Games" *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management* **9** 157-169

Keiner M, Ed, 2006, *The Future of Sustainability* Springer, New York

Klein TW, 2006, "The supernatural as language game" *Zygon* **41(2)** 365-379

Lees L, 2004, "Urban geography: discourse analysis and urban research" *Progress in Human Geography* **28(1)** 101-107

Lélé SM, 1991, "Sustainable development: A critical review" *World Development* **19(6)** 607-621

Lenskyj H J, 1998, "Sport and Corporate Environmentalism: the case of the Sydney Olympics" *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* **33 4** 341-354

Ley D, Olds K, 1992, "Worlds Fairs and the culture of consumption in the contemporary city" in *Inventing Place Eds* K Anderson, F Gale Longman Cheshire, Melbourne pp 178-83

Litke, S, 2006, Personal Communication

London 2012, 2005, "International recognition for London 2012 environmental partner" media release 3 June Retrieved from http://www.london2012.org/en/news/press%20room/releases/2005/june/2005-06-03-11-20.htm on 20 Sept

Mackin, B, 2007, "Saturday marks 1,000 days to go" *Vancouver Sun* May 16

Maclaren, VW, 1996, "Urban sustainability reporting" *Journal of the American Planning Association* **62(2)** 184-202

Mah A, 2004, "Uneasy partnerships and contradictions: corporate social and environmental responsibility" , paper presented to the 3rd Annual Global Studies Association Conference, Brandeis University, April 24, 2004; copy available from A Mah, Department of Sociology, London School of Economics, London.

Mebratu D, 1998, "Sustainability and sustainable development: historical and conceptual review" *Environmental Impact Assessment Review* **18** 493-520

Melbourne Principles for Sustainable Cities, 2002, United Nations Environment Programme, International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, and Australia Environment Protection Agency, Melbourne

Mendes W, 2005, *Creating a Just and Sustainable Food System in the City of Vancouver: the role of governance, partnerships and policy-making* Simon Fraser University, Vancouver Unpublished PhD dissertation

McIntyre N, 1995, "The Legacy of Lillehammer", in *Lesiure Connexions: 2nd ANZALS Conference Proceedings* Eds C Simpson, B Gidlow, Lincoln University, Canterbury, New Zealand February 1995

McMichael P, 2004 *Development and Social Change* Pine Forge Press, Thousand Oaks

Newman K, O'Hara-Byrne B, 2006, "2010 Olympics" News Transcript, Global News, Toronto Aug 30

Olds K, 1998, "Urban mega-events, evictions and housing rights: The Canadian case" *Current Issues in Tourism* **11** 1-45

Owens D, 2001 *Composition and Sustainability: Teaching for a threatened generation* National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, IL

Pearce D, 1994 *Blueprint 3: Measuring Sustainable Development* Earthscan, London

Peck J, 1999, "Editorial: grey geography?" Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers **24** 131-135

Penner, D, 2007, "TV stakes higher than ever for 2010 Olympic Games" *Vancouver Sun* April 10

Planet Drum, 2002, "The Olympic Movement and the Environment" Retrieved July 16, 2004, from www.planetdrum.org/background_2002.htm

Polhaus G, Wright JR, 2002, "Using Wittgenstein critically: a political approach to philosophy" Political Theory **30(6)** 800-827

Portney K, 2003 *Taking Sustainable Cities Seriously* MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass

Punter J, 2004 *The Vancouver Achievement* UBC Press, Vancouver

Redclift M, 1987 *Sustainable Development: Exploring the contradictions* Methuen, London

Regional District of Nanaimo, 2006, "Zero waste, a new target and new approach for a new century" Retrieved from http://www.rdn.bc.ca/cms.asp?wpID=1063 21 Sept

Rees WE, 1990, "The ecology of sustainable development" *The Ecologist* **20(1)** 18-23

Ritchie J R B, Smith B H, 1991, "The impact of a mega-event on host region awareness: a longitudinal study" *Journal of Travel Research* **30** 3-10

Robinson J, 2004, "Squaring the circle? Some thoughts on the idea of sustainable development" *Ecological Economics* **48** 369-384

Robinson JB, Tinker J, 1998, "Reconciling Ecological, Economic, and Social Imperatives" in *The Cornerstone of Development* Eds J Schnurr, S Oltz, IDRC, Ottawa pp 283-293.

Roseland M, 2005 *Toward Sustainable Communities* New Society, Gabriola Island, BC

Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2003 *Sustainable Development Strategy: Communities + 2003* Retrieved from www.rcmp.ca/html/sustain_e.htm on 20 February 2006

Rydin Y, 2003 *Conflict, Consensus and Rationality: An institutional discourse approach to environmental planning* Oxford University Press, New York

Sassen S, 2005, "The ecology of global economic power: changing investment practices to promote environmental sustainability" *Journal of International Affairs* **582** 11-33

Satterthwaite D, 1997, "Sustainable cities or cities that contribute to sustainable development?" *Urban Studies* **34(10)** 1667-1691

Savan B, Gore C, Morgan A, 2004, "Shifts in environmental governance in Canada: How are citizen environmental groups to respond?" *Environment and Planning C* **22** 605-619

Shoval N, 2002, "A new phase in the competition for the Olympic gold: The London and New York bids for the 2012 Games" *Journal of Urban Affairs* **245** 583-599

Simon, J, 1981 *The Ultimate Resource* Princeton University Press, Princeton

Surborg B, Wyly E, VanWynsberghe R, 2006, "Olympic Vancouverism: Notes on the 2010 Growth Machine" paper presented at the 2006 Urban Affairs Association meetings, Montreal; copy available from B Surborg, Department of Geography University of British Columbia, Vancouver

Lord C, 2007, "UN honors IOC as Champion of the Earth 2007" Swimnews.com February 1

Topfer K, no date "Forward by Klaus Topfer, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme UNEP" in *Olympic Movement's Agenda 21* Ed Sport and Environment Committee, IOC, Lausanne

TOROC, 2006 *Sustainability Report_2006* UNEP and ambiente 2006, Torino

United Nations, 2007, "Environmental efforts for 'Green' 2008 Olympics" Press Release, New York

United Nations Environment Program, 2005, "UNEP and Beijing Sign Green Games Agreement: Environment Takes Centre Stage in Countdown to the 2008 Summer Olympic" Retrieved September, 20, 2006, from www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=457&ArticleID=5041&l=en

United Nations Environment Program, 2006, "Green score card for winter Olympics" Press Release, Lausanne/Nairobi November 30

Van Bueren E, ten Heuvelhof E, 2005, "Improving governance arrangements in support of sustainable cities" *Environment and Planning B* **32** 47-66

Vancouver 2010, no date "Zero Waste" Retrieved September 15, 2006, from http://www.vancouver2010.com/en/Sustainability/EnvironmentalPerformance/ZeroWaste

Vancouver 2010, no date "Overview: History" Retrieved May 10, 2005, from www.vancouver2010.com/En/AboutVancouver2010/OurPlan/Sustainability/Overview.htm.

Vancouver Agreement, 2005 April 4 "Vancouver Agreement renewed for second five-year term" Press Release, Vancouver Retrieved September 7, 2006, from http://www.vancouveragreement.ca/Pdfs/050329RenewalNEWSRELASE.pdf

Whitelegg D, 2000, "Going for gold: Atlanta's bid for fame" *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* **24 4** 801-817

Wittgenstein L, 1968 *Philosophical Investigations* 3rd ed. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. Macmillan, New York

World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987 *Our Common Future.* Oxford University Press, Oxford