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**'You're making our city look bad': Olympic security, neoliberal urbanization, and
homeless youth**

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Abstract: Drawing on ethnographic research with homeless and street-involved youth in Vancouver the year before, during, and after the 2010 Olympic Games, this article attempts to offer an intimate portrait of neoliberal urbanization as experienced on-the-ground by a city's most marginalized residents. Taking as paradigmatic the aspirational goals of Olympic host cities to create or enhance their reputation as 'global cities,' the article explores what this means for homeless and street-involved youth through the lens of three processes deeply implicated in neoliberalization: city cleansing, city marketing, and self-regulation. Examining in particular how each of these are imbricated with policing and security practices, the article offers an in-depth look at how these abstractions are lived by homeless youth in the everyday. The article concludes by suggesting that marginalized young people are not the beneficiaries of Olympic legacies, despite commitments made by organizing committees such as VANOC (Vancouver Organizing Committee) in Vancouver. In contrast, findings indicate that homeless young people are further marginalized by the Olympics, providing support for previous research that aligns mega-events like the Olympics with neoliberal priorities.

Keywords: homelessness, policing, security, neoliberalism, Olympics, mega-events, city marketing, city cleansing, responsabilization, youth.

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This article draws on ethnographic research into the experiences of homeless and street-involved youth in the Olympic host city of Vancouver before, during, and after the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. Qualitative research with the inhabitants of Olympic host cities is rare; published research that uses qualitative data to understand the experiences of *marginalized* populations within Olympic cities is practically non-existent. This absence is notable, particularly because more abstract measures of negative impacts on marginalized populations are established within the literature, such as loss of affordable housing, increased policing, gentrification and displacement (COHRE, 2007; Hiller & Moylan, 1999; Horne & Whannel, 2012; Lenskyj, 2000; 2008). Through a detailed ethnographic investigation of the lived experiences of homeless and street-involved young people, this article contributes to an enhanced understanding of the everyday textures associated with such negative effects. In

particular, it offers evidence 'at an ontic and mundane level' (Mendieta, 2007: 40) of how processes of neoliberal urbanization and enhanced securitization in the Olympic city exacerbate the experiences of symbolic and material violence that can accrue to marginalized populations living within Olympic host cities.

As a starting point, this article takes as central the premise that the Olympics are implicated in accelerating processes of neoliberal urbanism that contribute to a state of 'advanced marginality' (Wacquant, 2008). The connection between the Olympics and neoliberalism is well-established within existing literature, where it is understood that the Games exacerbate a situation where 'an already rich minority benefit a great deal...[while] the poor and marginal tend to become poorer and more marginal' (Short, 2004: 107. See also Horne & Whannel, 2012; Short, 2008). The Olympics have become a means by which cities might compete on a global scale, working to secure or maintain the sought-after status of 'global city' (Short, 2004). As has been demonstrated by much research on the global city (Sassen, 1994; Short, 2004; Wacquant, 2008), as cities become global, or 'globalize', inequalities mount under the pressures of financialization, the dismantling of the welfare state, and deindustrialization that has led to more insecure labour in the working class wage sector. The result is increasing stratification, where the poor become more impoverished while the rich accumulate wealth at rates that have never before been seen. Security practices have become an integral component of neoliberal cities, where the police have 'been entrusted, not only with maintaining public order, but also...with buttressing the new social order woven out of vertiginous inequalities and with checking the turbulences born of the explosive conjunction of rampant poverty and stupendous affluence' (Wacquant, 2008: 12).

In what follows, I draw on ethnographic data to explore the contours of survival at the level of the street in the shadow of the world's largest mega-event. If the Olympics can be understood as one catalyst towards accelerating processes of neoliberalization already underway in host cities, what follows is an empirical investigation into the modes of social regulation lived by marginalized inhabitants under the auspices of neoliberalism. The Olympics offers a compressed case study of these influences and effects; this article intends to expand current understandings of how such processes are lived and experienced, contributing both to insights about the effects of the Olympics on host cities as well as providing insight into the consequences of neoliberalism writ large. While a consensus has formed in existing critical literature that the Olympics 'produce social transformations favouring the priorities of capital, temporarily and permanently transforming socio-spatial relations, rendering visible stark inequalities in localized contexts, and leaving legacies long after the event has ended' (Molnar & Snider, 2011: 151), how such abstractions are lived on the ground has not been widely documented (Waitt, 2003). With an over-arching focus on policing and security practices, the first half of the article considers how 'spectacular security' (Boyle & Haggerty, 2009) intersects with processes of city cleansing to shape the experiences of homeless youth before and during the Olympic Games. The second part of the article turns to related processes of neoliberalization, with a specific focus on the requirement for self-governance and the imperatives of city marketing, and how these are lived by homeless young people at the level of the street.

Ethnographic research in an Olympic city: the phenomenology of representational spaces

The data from which this article is derived was collected as part of an ongoing comparative qualitative study documenting the experiences of homeless, street-involved, and/or marginally housed youth before, during, and after the Olympic Games in Vancouver (2010) and London (2012). This article focuses solely on the Vancouver data; specifically, data for this article was collected the year before the Vancouver 2010 Games (February to April of 2009), during the Games themselves (February 2010), and one year after the Games (February, 2011) (for more on the findings from London, see Kennelly & Watt, 2011; 2012; 2013; Watt, 2013). Interviews, focus groups, and an arts-based project were conducted in Vancouver with a total of 33 youth in the first fieldwork period; interviews and focus groups were conducted with 27 youth in the second fieldwork period and 28 youth in the third fieldwork period, bringing the total number of participants to 88. Participants ranged in age from 15 to 24; the groups were highly diverse in both ethnicity and gender, including a fairly even mix of male and female, as well as some transgendered participants. There were also a disproportionately high number of Aboriginal participants, reflective of the specific histories of colonialism and subsequent impoverishment experienced by Aboriginal youth and children in Canada (Downe, 2006). In addition to the youth participants, 'key informants' were interviewed during all three fieldwork phases; these included people connected to or concerned with either the Olympic Games or marginalized youth within Vancouver, such as city officials, community organizers, school board representatives, urban planners and youth workers.

The youth in Vancouver shared the difficult circumstances of many homeless and street-involved youth in Canada; specifically, few were in contact with their families of origin, many had previous or ongoing issues with drug and alcohol addiction, and all of them came from families marked by poverty and hardship. Most of them had been living independently since their late teens; what employment they had managed to secure since leaving home consisted

mainly of short-term jobs that provided little in the way of adequate wages or security of tenure. Many of the youth had passed through the foster care system, and many had half-siblings and step-siblings scattered across the country. In short, their lives had already been marked by hardship and scarcity, as were their current circumstances. While some of the youth who participated in our research had secured permanent housing, the vast majority were making use of homeless youth services to access temporary shelter, were 'couch surfing' at friends' houses, or were 'rough sleeping' on the streets at night.

The methodological frame that drives the research is strongly influenced by phenomenological approaches to social research (Ricoeur, 2006), in which methods are designed to access the youths' *representational spaces* (Lefebvre, 1991); this Lefebvrian term refers to 'space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users'' (1991: 39; see also Kennelly & Watt, 2011). One direct implication of such an approach is that the stories told by the youth themselves often stand in stark contrast to the official representations of policing and surveillance practices within the city. Rather than dismiss such accounts as unreliably subjective or one-sided, a spatial and phenomenological approach to social research insists that the meaning-making processes of those who are most likely to directly encounter the *security field* (Giulianotti & Klauser, 2010) are uniquely positioned to offer specific insights into its inner workings and implications. For instance, where representatives of the police have repeatedly insisted that intensified policing within certain neighborhoods in Vancouver prior to the Games was not related to the pending Olympics (Pablo, 2009; Porter *et al*, 2009), the fact that many of the youth experienced efforts to move them out of public spaces, and indeed out of the city itself, is relevant and noteworthy.ⁱⁱ Whether or not there was ever any official declaration about the goals of policing and security as a means of city cleansing, the spatial experiences of street-involved

youth suggest that this was indeed the effect (Kennelly, 2011; Kennelly & Watt, 2011). A phenomenological approach thus ratchets open some critical space for the voices of those who are not often heard from within official policy debates, casting shadows on the claims of Olympic boosters that there is 'a piece of that juicy Olympic pie ... for everyone' (Bradbury, 2010).ⁱⁱⁱ

Specific methods used within each fieldwork period were designed to elicit detailed, textured accounts of the youths' experiences before, during and after the Games. Working primarily at two downtown Vancouver centres catering specifically to homeless and street-involved youth, a Research Assistant (who was also a youth worker who knew many of the youth with whom we worked) and I would typically begin with focus groups of 8-10 people. Rather than a 'talking heads' model of focus group design that might be experienced as both intimidating and alienating to the youth, our focus groups would begin with an exercise I call 'the thermometer.' Opinion statements about the Olympic Games would be read aloud and participants would be asked to place themselves along a spectrum from 'agree' to 'disagree' as marked by signs on the wall. As participants moved around, we would ask them for more information on why they were standing where they were. The kinetic nature of this exercise served as both energizer and icebreaker and sparked many strands of discussion that we followed up with during the brief sit-down discussion that followed. During the first field work period (2009), participants were also shown a video about the pending Vancouver Olympics and asked for their reactions. Participants were then paid an honorarium as thanks for their time, and were invited to sign up for a one-on-one interview.^{iv} Follow-up interviews touched on similar themes, but also included more background questions in order to better understand the context of the youth with whom we were working; participants were also paid an honorarium for their participation in the interviews. During the first fieldwork period in 2009,

youth were further invited to participate in a longer arts-based process over a period of three months. Three participants engaged in this process; their main project involved using disposable cameras to capture images of how their lives were being affected by the Olympics in the lead-up to the Games' (see Kennelly & Watt, 2012 for details on using this same method in London the year before the 2012 Olympics). The photo journals created by the youth were then the focus of a follow-up interview, providing further insight into their experiences and perceptions. Although my RA and I returned to the same centres each year, continuity between participants was low, due largely to the transient nature of this particular population. I did remain in touch with participants who completed the photo journals and conducted informal follow-up interviews with them during subsequent field periods. While the research was thus not a classic ethnography, in the sense of involving sustained contact with a discrete group of individuals over a specific period of time, the temporal breaks permitted the researcher and research assistant to gain a broader sense of the youths' experiences across time (ie before, during, and after the Olympics), while the qualitative methods in each fieldwork period provided rich layers of detailed information pertaining to their lives and contexts. In addition, the visual and visceral methods (ie photo projects and movement-based activities) lended more depth and phenomenological perspective than more traditional 'talk-based' qualitative methods might yield.

Securing the spectacle: homeless youths' accounts of policing and city cleansing

The securing and surveillance of mega-events such as the Olympic Games is now one of many 'common sense' practices associated with hosting such an event. As noted by Bennett and Haggerty (2011) in a recent volume on the topic, 'Security has become an integral part of the

Olympic ritual' (5). Critical theorists of contemporary security culture, both attached to the Olympics and elsewhere, note that much of the rhetoric on which enhanced security and surveillance is justified promulgates *risk* as the central category of concern, where security practices are directed at 'the pre-emption of the catastrophic event' (Dean, 2010; see also Bennett & Haggerty, 2011). Within this post 9/11 model, security officials are repeatedly urged to 'contemplate a host of exceptionally unlikely but potentially catastrophic events' (Boyle & Haggerty, 2009: 260); such a framing of security is the basis on which huge and ascending expenditure is justified. In the case of the Vancouver Games, an initial security budget of \$175 million ballooned to roughly \$850 million by the time the Games were held (Toronto Star, 2010a).

While the threat of catastrophic events is implied to originate from *outside* of a particular city (pace the exemplar case of the 9/11 attacks themselves), the means by which security is carried out is often through a focus on the *insiders* to a city, particularly those insiders who might create an image of a city as less than secure, or as less than clean and desirable. Such an approach to policing and security has been called 'broken windows' policing, and its origins can be traced to New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani's efforts to 'clean up' that particular urban centre in the 1990s (Mitchell, 2010). The logic behind the broken windows approach is that small infractions must be responded to with equal or greater vigilance to more serious offenses, with the belief that such efforts will deter larger scale criminality (Boyle & Haggerty, 2009; Mitchell, 2010). As Boyle & Haggerty (2009) point out, such a logic implies that security and policing are not only about catching criminals, but also about demonstrating to others that security will happen. In other words, security becomes a *spectacle*: a process by which police and security officials can demonstrate that the job is being done, which becomes its own means towards achieving the ends of greater security. Boyle and Haggerty (2009) have

termed this particular manifestation of the security complex ‘spectacular security.’ Developing this concept in relation to the Olympic Games, Boyle and Haggerty suggest that this version of spectacle ‘involves ongoing processes whereby social life is processed and packaged for mass visual consumption in a society increasingly oriented to appearances in the service of capitalism’ (2009: 259). The two goals of spectacular security, similar to broken windows policing, is to ‘reduce the prospect of untoward eventualities while also fostering a subjective sense of safety among the public’ (Boyle & Haggerty, 2009: 264). It also serves to enhance the city’s image within the global marketplace, both to other cities and to corporate sponsors of the Olympic Games.

In the case of pre-Olympic Vancouver, intensified efforts to secure the city were marked by the introduction of the 2009 business plan of the Vancouver Police Department. The plan included an explicit focus on the Downtown Eastside, a low-income neighbourhood that has often been the target of policing efforts, and a locale that is characterized by the city’s elites as a blight on the reputation of Vancouver as a tourist destination and global city (Preston, 2006). The plan included additional numbers of police patrolling the neighbourhood, more street spot checks (whereby a person can be stopped and asked for identification or other questions), and more by-law violation tickets issued (Pablo, 2009). Consistent with the broken windows approach, the plan suggested that ‘with more officers being dedicated to the area, and more of their shift spent enforcing the law on the street, the disorder and offending associated with this area will decrease, increasing the quality of life and safety for all residents and visitors in the area’ (as cited in Pablo, 2009).

While the chimera of safety makes for persuasive public rhetoric, an important question to be asked is ‘safety for *whom*?’ In all three fieldwork periods, the vast majority of participants

reported feeling less safe, rather than more, with the presence of more police on city streets. As one participant remarked in a focus group in 2011, reflecting back on policing during the Games, 'The only safe place was inside, or underground. Dig a hole and wait for it to end!' Such remarks are unsurprising, given the degree to which homeless people in general, and street youth in particular, are subject to criminalization and negative interactions with police (Mitchell & Heynen, 2009; Mayers, 2001).

The shifting priorities of policing in pre-Olympic Vancouver were felt by the youth both in the period before and during the Games; in both 2009 and 2010, youth reported being more frequently harassed for offenses that were previously disregarded, such as jaywalking, littering, and possession of drugs. In each of the instances, the youth remarked upon both the increasing pressures they were experiencing from the police, and the degree to which it seemed disproportionate to the actual offense. Their overall impression was of being specifically harassed, particularly in the period leading up to the Games; the youth believed this to be an effort to 'clean the streets' in preparation for the arrival of the 'rich people' they associated with the Olympic Games. For example, in 2009, Alison reported the following:

Alison: Well, they're arresting you more for possession. They didn't care for possession before. They'd just smash your pipe. And try to intimidate you. But that's it.

In the same year, Artemis reported that:

Artemis: Cops are ticketing people for like jaywalking, ridiculous reasons. They're searching, like, they aren't supposed to just stop somebody on the street and search them or whatever and they're doing that. And actually one officer told me

his boss demanded that he hand out tickets and he wouldn't have given me a ticket otherwise but he's going to lose his job. So I didn't ask him if that had anything to do with the 2010 [Olympics], but that could be it very well.

During a focus group discussion in 2009, one participant reported that 'people are getting arrested left, right, and centre.' In 2010, another participant remarked that the arrival of the Olympics in her city had been heralded by 'more laws':

Justine: Like, if you throw a [cigarette] butt on the ground they'll like stop you and charge you for that. [For] littering.

Interviewer: Ah. Have you had that experience?

Justine: Yes.

Interviewer: What happened?

Justine: They let us go but they said to like throw the butt in the garbage can or in an ashtray outside. I'm like, there's tonnes of butts on the ground.

Interviewer: Okay. Who stopped you?

Justine: A cop on a bike.

Justine explained that this experience happened about a month before the Games began. The accounts above clearly demonstrate that the business plan of the VPD was being rolled out in the period before the Games, and that homeless and street-involved youth were feeling its effects. As per the broken windows thesis of policing, the goal of such a crack-down on petty crime is to create an image of safety and security, both to deter further acts of criminality but also, within the context of a pending mega-event, to demonstrate to the world that Vancouver is a safe and secure city. However, homeless and street-involved youth often experienced such policing as differentially applied, and felt themselves to be the unfair targets of these increased interventions. Justine felt that she was singled out by the police who used the excuse of enforcing an obscure littering law; as she noted, 'there's tonnes of butts on the ground'. Likewise, Artemis suspected that his own increased encounters with police were spurred on by Olympic-related incentives. Where the 'spectacle' of the sporting mega-event itself justifies the enhancement of the more 'spectacular' elements of everyday policing, the effect for homeless and street-involved youth appears to be more frequent encounters with police for more inconsequential acts, further enhancing their own sense of the city streets as unsafe for themselves and their friends. We must return here to the highly relevant question of *for whom* the streets are being made safe: for local residents and the most marginalized members of the city's population? Or for temporary visitors who will be spending tourist dollars and global media conveying images of Vancouver around the world?

The relevance of such questions was not lost on the youth. Many of them remarked on the fact that the increased policing before and during the Games was a direct consequence of the city's desire to boost its international reputation in light of the pending Olympics, and not to help them and their peers. Their analysis is highly aligned with that of various critical scholars, who have noted the degree to which neoliberalizing cities must 'package' themselves as part

of their global competitive strategy. As transfer payments to urban centres shrink, and federal and provincial governments divest themselves of responsibility for services provided within cities, efforts to prop a city's reputation on the global stage -- and thus attract the attention of investors, tourists, and developers -- are applauded and encouraged (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). While the additional threat of a terrorist attack was sometimes referenced by the youth as a justification for the increased policing, they felt that the tactics used by the police were ineffective at stopping such threats, and instead increased their own marginalization. In a 2010 interview, Barry reported being regularly stopped by police in the period leading up to the Games. When asked about his thoughts on this experience, he remarked:

Barry: It's a waste of time and it's a violation of my civil rights. And I can't do anything about it because the Olympics are on and there's a terrorist [drive], which trumps everything ... I can't blame them for being wary with all the bullshit. If I was a terrorist I'd want to hit the Olympics. I can't blame them but it's as annoying as all hell.

Interviewer: Do you think that, for the legitimate concerns of security that you alluded to, do you think that those are being addressed by these searches in your neighbourhood?

Barry: Hell, no. ... They're just doing it to try and bust people. Get them off the street so the tourists don't see them.^{vi}

Likewise, Angela remarked in 2010 on the huge increase in the number of police on the streets, who were 'not watching out for us. They're watching out for the people who are here for the Olympics. You know? It's just so frustrating. It drives me nuts.'

The above remarks relay the degree to which the youth felt that increased policing before the Olympics was directly related to 'making the city look good' (or city cleansing) over and above ensuring the safety and security of the city's more marginalized residents. The relation between policing and city cleansing efforts can be further explored by examining more closely the experiences of the youth *during* the Games. While many reported intensified police interactions in the year before and particularly the month immediately preceding the Opening Ceremonies, the youth were mostly unanimous in feeling that their interactions with police dropped substantially while the Games were happening (though for exceptions to this, see the section below). As Colvin noted in 2011, reflecting back on his experiences with police during the Olympics:

Colvin: They were using very good discretion. And they, you know, didn't stick their nose where they didn't need to kinda thing. If they saw a situation that needed to be dealt with they dealt with it, but other than that they kinda just let people enjoy themselves and enjoy the games. I think they did a good job actually. I don't normally say that about the police (laughing). I think they were quite on the ball for that....It's amazing how calm they were.

Despite his praise of the police and their restraint, Colvin was quick to note the role played by global media attention in creating such behaviour: 'They had the whole world watching them and they were on T.V and like you can only do so much when you're being filmed, right?'

Policing and security for the 2010 Olympics was governed by the Vancouver 2010 Integrated Security Unit (VISU), which included the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, a federal policing body), the Canadian Armed Forces, and seconded police from across Canada. The goal of this body was to have police 'on every corner' during the Games themselves

(Anonymous, 2010); this was achieved through the secondment of approximately 6000 additional police officers from 119 agencies across Canada, approximately 5000 Canadian Forces troops, and approximately 4800 additional private security (not including the private security that were already on hand through individual businesses and property owners) (Lawson, 2011). This was in addition to the 1,327 Vancouver Police Department officers available as of January 2010 (Vancouver Police Department, retrieved May 9, 2011), a number that had grown from 1,124 in 2004 (Demers & Griffiths, 2007). Given the swell of security officials within the city, it is somewhat remarkable that the youth reported a *drop* in police interactions: surely the behaviour of the youth did not change so much during the Games that less police intervention was warranted? And surely the presence of approximately *fifteen times* the normal number of security personnel would imply that *more* rather than *less* interactions would be likely? That this did not manifest gives weight to the theory of security spectacle advanced by Boyle and Haggerty (2009); the *appearance* of security was important, but equally important was the *appearance* of the city as liberal, tolerant, and welcoming. As John Rennie Short notes in his study of the Summer Olympic Games, the efforts of Olympic host cities to secure global city status relies on creating an image 'of modernity and multiculturalism, part of the shared global discourse of democracy and liberalism while also adding a touch of the uniquely global' (2004: 106). Given the intense focus on Vancouver by global media during the Games, any incident that might suggest that the police were engaging in targetted enforcement that infringed on the human rights or civil liberties of marginalized peoples within the city would not have enhanced the image that Vancouver elites were hoping to convey.

The spectacle of security thus intersects in important and complex ways with strategies of city marketing that are intimately tied to the hosting of Olympic Games, resulting in particular

– and sometimes unpredictable -- policing experiences for homeless and street-involved youth. For instance, Sandy conveyed being harassed by police, with escalating degrees of violence, in the weeks and months leading up to the Games, particularly when she and her friends were sitting on the steps of the Vancouver Art Gallery. Significantly, the Art Gallery is located adjacent to Robson Square, the centre of Olympic celebrations within Vancouver. However, once the Games began, she reported the following:

Sandy: Oh, that [being moved on by the police] doesn't usually happen anymore, with that big TV screen there [near the steps of the Vancouver Art Gallery].

Interviewer: OK. Why?

Sandy : Because the TV screen's there. ...It's a big fucking TV screen, have you seen it?

Interviewer: Yeah, but why does that matter?

Sandy: Because now we're not loitering. [laughs] Now we're not loitering *because* we're watching TV. Isn't that awesome?

Captured in this vignette is the malleable nature of so-called criminal behaviour; what had been intensely surveilled and punished in the weeks preceding the Games had now become banal or innocent in light of the media spectacle of the Olympic Games ('now we're not

loitering *because we're watching TV*; see also Kennelly and Watt, 2011). Thus the spectacle of security at Olympic mega-events does not produce monolithically negative interactions for homeless youth with police; it can indeed have a mitigating effect and permit youth, temporarily, greater mobility and freedom from surveillance than they typically experience within Vancouver. Such freedom is certainly short-lived, and not predictable; nor does it outweigh the intensification of security experienced by the youth in the year preceding the Games.

The contradictions between the requirement to appear liberal and tolerant and the city marketing imperative to 'clean' the streets may provide an explanation for two additional observations offered repeatedly by the youth with whom we spoke. One was their sense of the gradual manner in which city cleansing strategies were carried out, incrementally shifting the sites of visible poverty into less visible areas of the city (specifically, into alleys). The second was the repeated circulating rumour that homeless or street-involved people were being forced off the streets and into shelters, or even out of the city itself. Both are examples of how city cleansing strategies were experienced by the youth as being carried out surreptitiously, reinforcing the pervasive sense that their presence would not be tolerated in visible areas of the city.

An example of the first instance can be found in this focus group exchange in 2009, during which the youth were discussing the disappearance of activity from a community park in the middle of the Downtown Eastside, locally referred to as 'Pigeon Park':

Woman 1: I just noticed that the people that are getting arrested are the people that are really out in the open, like Pigeon Park and stuff. Like, every night I go home [after I] work till 9 like Monday to Wednesday. And when I go by ... the

cop is always sitting by Pigeon Park now. And that's like a visual point because when you're going by on the bus, people on the bus are like, 'oh! Look at all the [people], oh where they'd go? Where'd they all go? Oh, well. I guess they must have gone away somewhere.' And I'm like 'aaaaah.'

Woman 2: But I don't get it. What happened to all those people?

Woman 1: They're in the alleys.

Woman 3: Yeah. They're in the alleys. Now the cops don't go down the alleys any more. Like even I still walk around there. When I first came here [Pigeon] park was crammed with people fighting, doing whatever. Now you're lucky to see more than one person sitting there for more than five minutes. So what happened? What did they do?

Woman 1: I'm telling you! [laughs]

Woman 2: The alley, like who do that?

Woman 1: The cops! The cops come and they put their car right next to Pigeon Park. Nobody wants to be even sitting there. Like if you're high and you have nothing on you, you don't want to be sitting there while a cop is looking at you. So you go into the alley. They don't drive down the alleys anymore. There's so many cops but they never come down the alleys.

Man: It is true. Hmm.

The exchange above documents one phase of city cleansing observed by the youth in 2009: pushing the visible poverty and criminal behaviour previously endemic to the Downtown Eastside into the less visible alleys (see also Eby, 2008). By the time the Games began in 2010, participants reported that even the alleys had been emptied. Youth also reported various individual experiences with the police pressuring them to move out of highly visible downtown neighbourhoods, both the year before the Games began, and during the weeks immediately preceding the Opening Ceremonies:

Walt: I've been told [by the police] to get off Granville Street for the whole night just because I was alone and had a suitcase.

Interviewer: Oh. When did that happen?

Walt: Just before the Olympics.

Interviewer: Ah. Interesting. And did they give a reason?

Walt: Because I was homeless.

Amongst the constellation of policies put in place in preparation for an Olympic Games, one common tactic is to increase police powers prior to the event itself, in order to ensure the

efficient implementation of city marketing strategies (McCann, 2009; Short, 2004; 2008). In British Columbia, the province in which Vancouver is located, this manifested in a controversial piece of legislation called the 'Assistance to Shelter Act.' Dubbed the 'Olympic kidnapping act' by activists, the Act gave the police power to insist that people sleeping on the streets be moved to homeless shelters or other services. Although police claimed that they would not make use of these powers (CBC News, 2009, December 7), the youth in this study relayed stories that are remarkably aligned with the Act's intentions and effects. These comments were made during a focus group discussion in 2011:

Man: I remember, during the Olympics they just shoved everyone into shelters. Just like, temporary shelters. It was just a temporary solution. Once the Olympics were over they just got pushed right the fuck out.

Woman: The ones that didn't find an SRO [single residence occupancy], like a hotel to stay in, and refused to go to a shelter, they were just put in jail. They were put in jail. And they were held to the end of the Olympics.

During an interview in 2010, Mike remarked 'I myself haven't been moved but I woke up with people who the cops have forced into shelters. Well, not forced, but they forced them into it: it's your choice. Go to the shelter or go to jail.' In the same year, Stephanie noted that she had heard about police trying to intimidate people into shelters: 'If you're not going to willingly go to a shelter I will force you to go to a shelter. Which is like ridiculous.'

The youth also repeatedly relayed stories of others they knew being given bus tickets out of the city; others reported knowing people who had been given money to leave Vancouver and move to nearby cities such as Chilliwack. Although it is impossible to verify or negate these

stories within the context of this research project – efforts to find formal documentation of such practices came up empty – it is clear that homeless youth were feeling immense pressure to absent themselves from visible tourist areas of the city, as well as potentially leave the city altogether. Despite the slight alleviation of policing pressure during the Games under the glare of global media attention, homeless and street-involved youth in Vancouver knew themselves to be an unwelcome part of the global Olympic spectacle. As one woman reported in a focus group in 2011, ‘I just felt like I was being pushed away, out of the scene. Like ‘We don’t want to see you during the Olympics, just go hide during the Olympics.’

Self-governance in the global Olympic city: neoliberalism and symbolic violence

City cleansing strategies, such as those described above, can be seen as one aspect of wider efforts to enhance a city’s reputation within the global marketplace of urban competition for human and economic resources. Such strategies have become one of the touchstones of the ever-increasing neoliberalization of both state and urban economies. Another well-documented aspect of neoliberal logic, at both the city and population level, is the individualized imperative to become self-governing (Rose, 1999; Brown; 2008). In the case of an Olympic city such as Vancouver, the city’s residents are expected to align themselves with the larger goal of promoting their city on the global stage. Those who do not are seen to ‘get what they deserve,’ since all members of the city’s population are expected to discipline themselves in keeping with the larger supposedly common goal of promoting their city.

One example of such self-governance requirements associated with the Games can be found in the form of a Vancouver Olympic protocol guide, directed at 600 City of Vancouver employees. The protocol includes such detailed instructions as ensuring that one’s socks

match pants, the proper manner in which to shake hands, and the degree of openness with which to smile:

A smile denotes warmth, openness and friendliness. Smile 'gently' and with sincerity. Be careful not to overdo it. False smiles can look artificial, and never-ending smiles may invite suspicion. A frown or a furrowed brow suggests anger or worry, even if your words are positive (as quoted in Vallis, 2010).^{vii}

The protocol guidelines make it clear that the task of City of Vancouver employees during the Olympics is not only to perform their jobs, but also to stay 'on message' with city marketing strategies, ensuring through their own good behaviour that the city is represented in the best possible light.

A similar, and less trivial, example of population governance in the name of city marketing can be found in the 'Civil City' project, initiated in 2006 by then-mayor Sam Sullivan. In his description of the project, Sullivan made it clear that the goal of introducing the project was to ensure that the city was ready for the arrival of the Olympics in 2010 (samsullivan.ca, 2006; see also Boyle & Haggerty, 2011). 'Readiness' here is implicitly synonymous with 'civility,' as denoted by the name of the project itself, a quality that might be understood as belonging to individuals rather than a characteristic of a physical space such as a city. A significant part of the Civil City initiative was the Downtown Ambassadors program, run by Genesis Security Corp in collaboration with the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association. Unlike other Ambassador programs in major Canadian cities, this one made use of trained security guards to patrol city streets and ensure that the codes of 'civility' implied by the title of 'Civil City' were respected (see Sleiman and Lippert, 2010). While the program was eventually

scaled back, the youth in this research project had many negative reports of interactions with the Ambassadors. Marianne described the following encounter:

The Ambassadors are the ones that like, I remember when they first came out I was pregnant and I was sitting down on Granville Street. Like, I wasn't panhandling. I wasn't asking people for money and they were like, 'you need to move.' And I was like, what? And they walked right up to me and I'm like, 'I'm eight and a half months pregnant.' They're like, 'we don't care. It's not our job, we're trying to make our city look more nice.' You know? They told me, 'it doesn't help to have homeless people kicking around on the streets. Sitting around everywhere.' They're like 'you can't just sit anywhere you feel like.' And I was like, 'what the fuck are you talking about? Because before it was a free country and you could sit in the middle of the sidewalk if you damn well pleased.' And now they're like, 'no, no, no. You're making our city look bad. Don't you know? We have the Olympics coming.'

Marianne's experiences with the Civil City program's Downtown Ambassadors highlight the links between neoliberalism, city marketing, and Olympic-related security practices. Increasingly immured within the neoliberal requirement to become self-regulating (which in this case manifests as being 'civil'), the city attempts to polish its image as a clean and liveable locale, brandishing the Olympic Games as one means by which to do so. In the process, those who do not fit this image of clean civility are asked to move on, their own needs for housing, support, or in this case a pregnant woman's need for rest, ignored.

The continuation between the neoliberalizing city and the imperatives for self-regulation have been theorized by critical geographers and others interested in the phenomenon of city marketing. E.J. McCann (2009: 119) notes that city marketing schemes generally promote 'the city as welcoming and safe, vibrant and fun, tolerant and accepting of social and cultural difference, environmentally friendly, culturally rich, business friendly, and as strategically and conveniently located.' In order to enhance such an image, McCann suggests that cities will often engage the following tactics:

[T]he provision of packages of business incentives, the (re)building, policing, and cleaning of the urban built environment to keep its appearance in line with the city's marketing image, and continual efforts to maintain coherence in the city's marketing message by keeping disparate interest groups either 'on message' or out of the spotlight (2009: 119).

Such city marketing practices are consistent with Foucault's governmentality thesis, wherein liberal democracies are reproduced and sustained through the willing compliance and self-regulation of their population; the converse to this is that those who do not carry out such self-regulation are seen to be at fault, and thus requiring appropriate intervention to ensure their alignment with the successful governance of the population (Foucault, 1991; Rose, 1999; Rose, O'Malley & Valverde, 2006). When this intersects with city marketing strategies and the security spectacle attached to a mega-event such as the Olympic Games, the result is a series of strategies designed to enhance the city's image in preparation for the moment when the 'world is watching.' Some of these strategies I have described above, such as city cleansing through enhanced policing as experienced by the youth participants. Here the focus is on the

pressure that homeless youth felt to craft themselves in an image that was consistent with city marketing strategies, their resistance to doing so, and the consequences of such resistance.

As the above section documented, participants largely felt that the police pressure they typically experienced, which had escalated in the period leading up to the Games, was less during the Games themselves. There were, however, exceptions to this experience, and they seemed to be grouped around policing the 'image' of Vancouver during the Games. On the one hand, policing the image meant less interactions for young people for hanging out on the steps of a central Olympic site, as described by Sandy above. On the other, out of view of media cameras or tourists, youth reported being harassed by police during the Games for what I would call 'image breaking' – actions that would otherwise be tolerated but were seen as inappropriate in the context of an Olympic Games. These grouped around such petty crimes as public intoxication, skateboarding, and jaywalking. Several of the youth reported being arrested for public drunkenness, or for smoking marijuana in public, both infractions which are typically tolerated in the context of weekend nights out in Vancouver. One participant recounted his friend's skateboard being confiscated by the police, who claimed it was dangerous to others despite the skateboarding happening early in the morning when there were no other people around. Another reported being given two tickets for jaywalking during the Olympics. Each of these incidents were identified by participants as being atypically policed during the Games, identifying each as actions they or their friends had taken outside of the context of the Olympic Games without problem.

The youth participants were quite clear about the reasons behind this intensified pressure, understanding the city's obligation to portray a particular image. The following comments emerged in separate interviews:

Richard: [The Olympics mean] you've got to fit a certain [image]. The city has to fit a certain look. Like a certain way.

Jonathon: They just want to keep the Olympics very organized, so. It's pride, right?

Jeremy: But mainly [an increase in] police and that. To have a city that's a little fancier.

Such sentiments were broadly shared by the youth participants. They thus recognized the imperatives of the city to 'look good' under the auspices of an Olympic Games. They simultaneously knew very clearly that they themselves were not part of the city's marketing strategy. Reflecting on the pressure he had experienced and witnessed to get off the streets, Chris commented 'I know they're moving people to make it look better...Make it better looking so tourists can come up and say yeah, this place is [awesome].' Youth were thus clear about the fact that city marketing strategies, and the related aspects of city cleansing, positioned them and their peers as the 'dirt' which needed to be cleaned. Such a positioning within the global city speaks to the increasing processes of stratification and, ultimately, dehumanization that has become the new normal under neoliberalism.

Despite such a positioning, most of the youth were adamant in their critique of the securitization of the Olympic city and the effect it was having on them and their communities. In an individual follow-up interview to the focus group discussion noted in the first half of this article, in which the participants discussed the disappearance of people from Pigeon Park in the Downtown Eastside, Alison offered the following comparison:

Alison: And you know it's funny because when I was at Broadway [Skytrain] Station I saw all these people getting ready to go to UBC [the University of British Columbia] and stuff, right? And it just looked chaotic. Like, Broadway Station looked chaotic. But nobody cared. You know? There was nothing being painted. Like no covering up that was going on. And, but then you go by Hastings [the main street in the DTES] where all these people like, they have nowhere else to go. Like, the difference was that the people that are at Pigeon Park have nowhere to go. And the people at Broadway Station are just going somewhere. But they have somewhere to go and nobody cared about those people because, it's almost like they have an opinion. *Like they're allowed to be humans.* Because they have somewhere to go. Because they're contributing and you know? And then there's the homeless people that are just hidden. Like, where did they go? And as soon as those kids said, 'Where did they all go?' I was like, where did they put them? Because they didn't just get up and walk away. They don't have anywhere to go.

[italics mine]

Alison's insightful observation gets to the heart of the dilemma of intensified mega-event security regimes under neoliberal governance: the homeless people in these cities *have*

nowhere to go. This is the core issue: not their manners, not their behaviour, not their visibility in tourist locations. The root dynamic of neoliberal governance and intensified security regimes in Olympic cities is that all of the resources are being poured into Olympic priorities, diverting attention, time, and money away from the social issues of the residents themselves. As Jess noted in 2009:

Jess: Well I was on the street like four months ago and all that I would hear people talk about is when the Olympics come here they're either going to like find [temporary] housing for people or stick them in jail when they see them on the street because we don't want to look bad because we're getting the Olympics. So what? You're going to toss us out because some richie-rich people have the Olympics for a few days? That's bullshit. Right? They don't have any money to spend on low-income housing because they're spending all the money on the Olympics.

Such reflections raise the question posed earlier in the article: who benefits from Olympic security, and indeed from the hosting of the Games themselves? Much is made within Olympic promotional materials of the so-called 'legacies' of an Olympic Games for a host city, and it is on the basis of these legacies that bid committees convince local populations and governments to stand behind their bid. Yet evidence is increasingly mounting to document that the positive legacies of an Olympic Games are questionable at best, certainly appearing to create more difficulty than benefit for those who are already most marginalized within a host city.

Displaced and rejected by the neoliberal Olympic city

This article has engaged in an ethnographic investigation of the on-the-ground experiences of homeless young people caught in the cross-fire of neoliberalism as exacerbated and accelerated through the hosting of an Olympic Games. Based on a phenomenological approach that privileges the meaning-making processes of the youth themselves, the article has explored the manner in which the spectacle of security intersects with city cleansing and marketing strategies to position homeless young people as ‘undesirables’ who need to be hidden or removed in the context of a mega-event such as the Olympics. While seeing the relationship between the Olympics and neoliberal urbanization as one central aspect of these experiences, it is important to note that the presence of mega-events also shifts the configuration of security practices, marginalization, and processes of city cleansing. In other words, while hosting the Olympics has clearly become part of larger strategies for enhancing a city’s global reputation and thus competing in the wider marketplace of city competition for status and recognition, the presence of the Olympics does not advance neoliberalization in a straightforward manner. Focusing within this article on security practices, we can see that the presence of the Games can in fact have (temporarily, at least) a *mitigating* effect on marginalized populations within host cities. Rather than taking this as evidence of compassionate restraint on the part of the security apparatus, a more compelling explanation can be found in what Boyle and Haggerty (2009) have termed ‘spectacular security.’

Neoliberal logic extends beyond city cleansing strategies to also incorporate pressures on a city’s population to fall into line with the city’s marketing image, becoming self-regulating in the process. This sets the stage not only for the publication of somewhat comical protocols, but also for placing pressure on a city’s marginalized residents to conform to the clean and

liveable image that is deemed most appropriate for the consumption of a global audience, often through removing themselves (or being forcibly removed) or substantially modifying their behaviour. Such pressures are rarely explicit, as part of the image of a tolerant, liberal, Western democratic city is that it does *not* engage in such practices. Thus, while increasingly draconian legislation is put into place that increases police powers over marginalized populations, police reassure the public that they will not use these powers (CBC News, 2009, December 7). Such apparent contradictions can be understood as actually existing along the same continuum of both city marketing strategies and spectacular security associated with mega-events. As Boyle and Haggerty (2009: 264) note, 'The spectacle of security must strike a fine balance so that it is not *too* spectacular.' In other words, it is in a city's marketing interests to appear safe, yet simultaneously *not* appear like a repressive police state that might deter tourism or investment.

The experiences of the youth, as captured through qualitative methods, raise important questions about the priorities and focus of a city once it has secured the prize of hosting the ultimate in sporting mega-events, the Olympic Games. While bid committees make extravagant promises of social legacies, including expanded social housing, opportunities for young people, and a commitment to protect a city's low-income residents, the reality after the Games are completed is that the majority of these commitments remain unfulfilled (Impact on Communities Coalition, 2010). What remains is a security legacy (Giulianotti and Klauser, 2010) as opposed to a social legacy; city marketing as opposed to enhanced citizen rights to their own city; and the widespread experience of the city as 'not for us' for homeless youth, as opposed to enhanced opportunities for youth to be supported and integrated into positive social structures.

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ⁱⁱ Other critical scholars have noted how pre-Olympics policies were designed to 'clean up' poor neighborhoods prior to the Games. See Boyle & Haggerty, 2011.

ⁱⁱⁱ It is relevant here to note that Olympic security officials claim that community consultations were carried out with affected communities (Toronto Star, 2010b). While technically true according to at least one key informant within this project, critics contend that such efforts were tokenistic at best, and did not encompass the promised level of meaningful consultation with inner city residents promised by the Inner City Inclusive Statement that was submitted as part of the bidding process (see Porter *et al*, 2010).

^{iv} Honoraria for research with this particular population is common practice, and was strongly recommended by staff who had experience facilitating the relationship between researchers and the youth at the homeless shelters. It was not understood as an undue incentive, but rather as a standard that needed to be met by any researchers interested in working with this population.

^v Due to time constraints and concern for the youths' safety, this photo method was not repeated in the following fieldwork period (during the Games). Safety concerns revolved around potential police suspicion of individuals taking photos of Olympic infrastructure, given the circulating paranoia about terrorist attacks.

^{vi} I have opted to avoid 'cleaning up' the language of the youth respondents, though perhaps some readers will find some of their language offensive. Altering their language-in-use seems to me to undermine their highly legitimate adoption of charged language to convey their frustration about very frustrating circumstances. Editing such language so as to avoid offending academic readers would be, in my view, a betrayal of their trust in me to convey their realities as accurately as possible, which is already confined by academic protocols and the limitations of the written word.

^{vii} Interestingly, this guide can no longer be accessed through the web, though media accounts of its presence remain.