

Centre on  
Housing Rights  
and Evictions



# HOUSING, EVICTIONS AND THE SEOUL 1988 SUMMER OLYMPIC GAMES

Background Paper

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### **Background**

This background research paper is part of the COHRE Mega-Events, Olympic Games and Housing Rights Project. It was prepared as a preliminary independent study of the impact of the Seoul Olympics on housing rights. Similar studies were done for the cities of Atlanta, Athens, Barcelona, Beijing, London, and Sydney. The background research papers were used in the preparation of COHRE's *Fair Play for Housing Rights: Mega-Events, Olympic Games and Housing Rights* report, launched in Geneva on 5 June 2007. The contents and opinions of the material available in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily correspond with those of COHRE. All documents published as part of this project are available at: [www.cohre.org/mega-events/](http://www.cohre.org/mega-events/).

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*Multi-Stakeholder Guidelines on Mega-Events and the Protection and Promotion of Housing Rights*

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## I. Executive Summary

This inquiry takes the long view of the effect of the 1988 Olympic Games on housing, evictions, and housing rights from the perspective of urban citizens. It pieces together evidence from existing studies, historical documents, eyewitness testimonies, and recent historical contributions to reevaluate the legacy of the Olympic Games on the city of Seoul. The process of bidding for the Olympics is examined, asking how housing issues were considered at the time of debates over candidature. Housing concerns came out front and center in the forceful arguments by city government against pursuing the Olympic bid, but were squelched by a national government avid to gain legitimacy nationally and internationally for political and economic gain. Noteworthy was the primacy of the national government in deciding questions about urban form and process in 1980s Seoul.

Next, the historical evidence for many of the allegations by the human rights community concerning the 1988 Seoul Olympics are reexamined. First, two basic assumptions turn out to be supported by available documents; it is verified that there was a marked increase in housing demolitions, eviction, dislocation, and new units of housing built in the period of Olympic Games preparations. Documents repeatedly show that the new units are not inhabited by the same residents who populated the old neighborhoods.

Secondly, the uncomfortable issue of causality is taken up related to the Olympic Games. It is determined that urban redevelopment in and of itself was not caused solely by the advent of the Olympic Games, but was a result of underlying dynamics of changing political economy and escalating urban land values. Some of the same pressures driving urban redevelopment also lurked behind motivations for hosting the Olympic Games, such as the increasing importance of international financial investment and the burgeoning tourism and service industries. Concerning eviction, however, the evidence supports the notion that the practice of eviction did become more frequent and more violent as a direct result of Olympic Games preparations.

In reviewing the public's struggles against eviction in two of the more infamous sites of Olympic-related redevelopment, in Mokdong and in Sanggyedong, the record traces an emerging housing rights movement which gradually gains influence beyond particular localities in the era after the Olympic Games, as police state practices subside in the 1990s. The positive aspect to a dark side of an otherwise fondly remembered success, the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, lies in this mobilization of citizens to call for affordable housing and a plethora of new social movement groups working proactively with city managers to create constructive housing policy.

## II. Introduction

This study was undertaken in order to reassess the effect of the 1988 Olympic Games hosted by Seoul, South Korea on that city's housing situation, evictions record, and housing rights social movement groups eighteen years after the fact. When reports first surfaced internationally during Olympics preparations that housing stock was being demolished and families evicted on an unprecedented scale, it was unclear whether these were isolated occurrences or part of larger trends in the rapidly changing Korean society. Relying on existing studies and documents, a reassessment of the initial trends identified by domestic and international human rights activists were reviewed.

In reexamining the evidence for housing conditions during the 1980s and the practices of evictions in the name of urban redevelopment, this review begins with an examination not available before in English of how South Korea came to host the 1988 Olympic Games. As the bidding process was borne out of one military dictatorship and carried out by a second dictatorship, this information was not available for consideration by a broad cross section of the public until more recent changes in political atmosphere affecting intellectual freedom and clarification of the historical record. After clarifying the terms under which the Olympics were pursued and won by the South Korean government and how housing concerns figured into candidature debates, this report goes on to look at some of the many extensive studies of the urban housing situation and eviction struggles.

First, two basic assumptions of the housing rights literature which followed are reconsidered. The evidence for increases in demolition and rebuilding of housing, along with eviction and dislocation of existing residents, is presented. Next, the causal nature of the linkages between the Olympic Games and urban redevelopment, as well as mass evictions, is interrogated. In tracking the history of housing struggles in two of the larger redevelopment areas undertaken right before hosting the 1988 Olympics, the birth of a housing rights movement becomes evident.

One contribution of this work is to place the 1980s events into their historical context. In that regard, several observations are warranted. First of all, it was not the first time that forced evictions and some type of attempt at residential redevelopment based upon regulating land occupation and land ownership on a system-wide basis had been attempted on a large scale in South Korea. The first such push was in the second half of the 1960s, ending with two disasters for the Seoul city government in 1970 and 1971, including massive riots by dislocated urban residents and falling buildings from shoddy, corrupt construction. The second such push occurred in the mid- to late-1970s, during the "Yushin" period of the same military dictatorship which was marked by a crackdown on civil liberties. (Whang 1986, Chang 1989, Lee 1990, 1993, 2000; Seoul Metropolitan Government 1998, Ministry of Construction and Transportation 2000, Son 2003) Both of these earlier pushes concentrated spurts of eviction and clearance occurred under periods of harsh government rule with curfew, no freedom to associate or freedom of the press, large counts of political prisoners held, common practice of torture and death for dissenters, and so on. The third such urban redevelopment push was the one in preparation for the 1988 Olympics.

Another observation about the Olympics-driven redevelopment is that the evictions, demolition and redevelopment did not come to an end after 1988. In fact, the process of preparing the city for the Olympics imparted lessons of confidence and ambition upon government and construction industry alike, such that the practices intensified from 1990. The lesson learned from the 1988 Olympics regarding substandard housing was that it was

indeed finally possible to eliminate almost entirely the existence of permitless, substandard dwellings within city boundaries; 1990s redevelopment policy moved relentlessly toward that final goal with one major difference. There was now, as a result of the abuses of the 1980s and the Olympics-related publicity, a housing rights movement, and included among key government figures were well-trained architects of housing policy as a necessary component of social policy. As low-cost housing has disappeared from the city landscape, correspondingly, informal settlements have cropped up in new forms and new places as well, increasingly hidden from the public eye. (KOCER 2000) It remains for future observers to examine whether housing policy corrections of the 1990s have relegated the Olympic-era dislocations a relic of the past.

### **III. Housing, Evictions, and Winning the Bid to Host the 1988 Olympics in Seoul**

#### **1. Summary**

In order to make clear the connection between the urban housing situation in Seoul, South Korea, and the city's hosting of the 1988 Summer Olympic Games, in this section the process undertaken by South Korea to win the hosting bid is reviewed from candidature through to successful conclusion of the bidding competition. The analysis, which relies on existing literature, asks to what extent and in what ways did housing concerns figure into candidature debates between 1980 and 1981. The secondary goal of this section is to situate housing struggles related to the 1988 Olympic Games, which will be fully dealt with in the subsequent section, into historical perspective taking into account the political economy of the era. This is important because studies of social policy and of large-scale events both hold limited prescriptive potential when presented devoid of the historical context needed to understanding how decision-making occurs locally and nationally. In reviewing the candidature process of South Korea for hosting the Olympic Games, the centrality of housing concerns in early debates on hosting the Olympics is clear. Tracking how broad debate about housing was quelled is essential for comprehending the housing policy measures adopted once preparations for the Olympics were underway.

#### **2. The context of South Korea and the Korean peninsula**

##### *Brief Historical Sketch of South Korea*

South Korea, also known as the Republic of Korea (ROK), was created after the end of World War II. The Korean peninsula, which had been colonized by Japan since 1910, was divided in half at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel by U.S. military officers and the division approved by the Soviet Army in August 1945 (Cumings 1997, p. 187; Eckert et al 1990, p. 335), on the eve of Japan's surrender. The Korean War, 1950-1953, reflected a civil war which escalated immediately to an international war due to the overwhelming participation of superpower military forces, including the U.S., the Soviet Union, and China. The result was an unresolved temporary cease-fire agreement which remains in effect today, preserving the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel division of the Korean peninsula into southern and northern halves. (Cumings 1981, 1990) North Korea, or the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (DPRK) is a Stalinist, centrally-planned, military regime run by the son of its original founder. Currently dependent on foreign aid for basic goods, the DPRK experienced near economic collapse in the 1990s after the fall of the Eastern bloc; up to 1/5 of the population is thought to have perished from famine in this period.

Defended by the U.S. military since its inception, South Korea (ROK) has become a capitalist, industrialized nation and a major player in the world economy. Despite South Korea's new-found wealth, reunification of the Korean peninsula remains an obsession of Korean people. The border between north and south remains one of the most heavily militarized zones in the world, a last vestige of Cold War conflict. Hence, the relationship between North Korea and South Korea is always a priority consideration for the South Korean government and played a major role in influencing South Korea to bid for the Olympics. In fact, negotiations between the sides in the time leading up to the 1988

Olympics to include North Korea in the Games, which were ultimately unsuccessful, took as much attention as the actual Games preparations themselves (Palenski 2004). The outcome of those efforts was that although North Korea declined to participate ultimately in the 1988 Olympics, they did not disrupt them. Although the divided nature of the Korean peninsula may seem irrelevant to a superficial account of the 1988 Olympic Games, in fact most international and domestic projects of South Korea, including hosting the Games and concurrent planning for housing supply by the Chun dictatorship, are pursued with calculations taking into consideration the entire peninsula.

### *The Economic Context*

From the 1960s to the 1990s the Republic of Korea experienced rapid industrialization, economic expansion and population migration to urban areas. The per capita Gross National Product rose from 94 US\$ in 1960, to 1,481 US\$ in 1980. By 1990 it had risen to 6800 US\$, and after topping out at US\$10,000 in 1996, was at US\$ 8,000 in 2000 after the currency crash of 1997/1998. During this period of expansion, the per capita income of the Seoul area has remained considerably higher than the national average. Reflecting the shift from an agriculture-based economy to a manufacturing economy, from 1960 to 2000 the rate of urbanization of the South Korean population grew from 36% to 80%. At the same time, Seoul's population grew from 2 \_ million to 11 million, and the population of the Seoul Metropolitan Region jumped from 5 million to 20 million. (Kim and Choe 1997; Republic of Korea, 1995, 2000; Seoul Metropolitan Government, assorted years)

### *Political History at the Time of Candidature*

Several main aspects of the political history of South Korea and of Seoul, its capitol, during the period from 1979 to 1988 are worth foregrounding when considering its candidature for the Olympic Games host. The first aspect to note is that the national government oversaw the governance of the city. The second main theme is that this decade was a harrowing period for national government; four presidents served during this period in successions which could hardly be considered lawful. The main leader for this period took power by military coup, following upon the end of a popular military regime which had governed from 1961 to 1979. Hence, the third aspect of the period is the lack of free civil society in this period of government upheaval and social unrest. To write, speak and organize at the grassroots level in South Korea was to face harassment, detention, imprisonment and torture during this period, as many in fact did (T.K. 1976, Lee 1985, Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development 1988, Asia Watch 1990). All three of these main themes influenced Seoul's host city candidature as well as how Olympic preparations dealt with issues of housing.

Seoul was the administrative capital of Korea from 1392 to the end of WWII, and of South Korea since its inception in 1948. Under the administrative status of "special city," the Mayor of Seoul was appointed by the President. This has changed, as from 1995 on the system of local democratic elections was gradually re-instated for the first time since 1960. At the time of the 1988 Olympic Games, Seoul was subject to oversight by the national government. An unexpected side-effect of a top-heavy style of governance which was significant in the housing scuffles discussed later is that local authorities of Seoul neighborhoods and suburbs ended up with a large amount of latitude in deciding how to actually carry out clearance for redevelopment, i.e. what deals to cut, whether and when to do forced evictions, during Olympic preparations. However, the importance of local government's prerogative in how redevelopment is crafted on the ground is reflected only in indigenous language literature and not in English-language publications. (Chang, 1989; Kim HG 1989, Kim and Ha 1998; Lee 1990; Son 2003)



South Korea experienced an unusual number of major domestic political upheavals in the ten years from when the idea to bid for the Olympics began to be pursued seriously to when the 1988 Olympics opened, which can be categorized as first, changes in the Presidency, with the transitions not of an institutionalized, peaceful nature, and second, a sea change in the public's acceptance of dictatorship as a result of the Kwangju Uprising and Massacre of May 1980.

As already mentioned, from 1979 to 1988 the Republic of Korea (ROK, or South Korea) had four different Presidents. On October 26, 1979, just weeks after preparations for an Olympic bid was announced, President Park Chung Hee, who ruled as an iron-fisted military dictator for 18 years, was assassinated by his Korean Central Intelligence Agency chief. The prime minister Choi Kyu Hah was made a figurehead Acting President. On December 12, 1979, one of the younger military officers who was in charge of investigating Park's assassination and had been a protégé of Park, took control of Seoul and of the South Korean military after one night of fighting in a multi-staged military coup. (Eckert et al, 1990, Wickham 1999) In this manner, Chun Doo Hwan began his final ascent to the rank of 4-star general and of president.

Throughout the 1970s, civil and labor unrest had been growing, although the government actively detained, imprisoned and tortured dissidents including many journalists, writers, academics and other pro-democracy leaders. This civil unrest continued to intensify in 1980 as it became clear that the Choi interim presidency was not evolving into a democratically-elected government. In April 1980 Chun had himself appointed head of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency, leading to nationwide protests. During "The May 18 Uprising," student-led civilian demonstrations met with violence and finally were crushed by the South Korean Army Special Forces. Some believe that the escalation of violence was intentionally provoked by Chun's command, beginning from extending martial law on May 17, 1980 and sending paratroopers in to the city who dragged out and beat upon young males who were sitting in cafes and bars, as another stage in the coup begun in December. The ensuing Kwangju Massacre, where over ten days either several thousands or several hundreds were killed, depending on whose account one buys, ended in a total military victory for Chun, followed by the harshest yet crack-down against dissent. (Clark 1987, Lewis 2002, Weber 1997, Wickham 1999)

During the last two weeks of August 1980, Chun promoted himself to 4-star general and resigned from the army, the ineffectual President Choi was forced to resign, and Chun was elected President by his ruling junta. Later, in February 1981, Chun held elections for himself and for the National Assembly, and was officially inaugurated as President under terms more acceptable to the U.S. military whose backing South Korea depended on. (Eckert et al, 1990)

Chun ruled for over seven years. By June of 1987, a massive coalition of pro-democracy civil constituencies forced the Chun government to issue the "June Proclamation" promising direct elections. Vice-president, General Roh Tae Woo, who had been Chun's right hand man since the December 12, 1979 coup, became the presidential candidate for the ruling party. He was elected President in December 1987 and inaugurated in February 1988. The June 1987 events are now commemorated as the turning point for the people's democracy movement; they mark the start of a gradual slide away from military-controlled government. After Roh's term (1988-1992), former opposition leader Kim Young Sam was elected President by joining Roh's party, and the first person to be elected with no taint of military support was Kim Dae Jung (1998-2002). In 1996 both Chun and Roh were convicted for their past actions of 1979 and 1980, and symbolically sentenced to death and

life in prison respectively. (Joong-ang Ilbo 1996, Hwang 1997) They were pardoned in 1998 after a short time in prison. The events of the May 1980 massacre, the June 1987 democracy movement, and the Seoul 1988 Olympic Games are intricately related to one another.

### **3. Olympic Games Host Candidature Prioritizes National Issues Over Urban Issues**

Although President Park had initiated study of the possibility of hosting the Olympics in the summer of 1979, after his October assassination no one running South Korea was initially interested in bidding for the 1988 Olympics. The person who had promoted this dream, Pak Chong Gyu, resigned as head of the Korean Amateur Athletic Association fearing arrest, and other persons in leadership roles from the Park regime were imprisoned. (Son 2003, p. 11, p. 14)

By July of 1980, however, national leadership's attention to athletics began to ascend in order to distract the public from the May 1980 Kwangju Massacre. Hosting the Olympics held promise as part of the '3 S' policy of promoting 'sex, sports and screen' to distract attention from the bloody political and economic struggles taking place and to reduce public disapproval of national political leadership. Censorship restrictions on lewd cinema were relaxed, 'love' motels proliferated along sightseeing routes, and color television was instituted from the end of 1980. In May 1981, within two weeks of a final internal government decision to continue with the Olympic bidding process, 1981 Guk P'ung, a drunken folk arts festival (Son 2003, p. 26) referred to as "a chauvinist cultural event" (Lee Jai Eui in Weber 1997, p. 139) was staged and one-year memorials of the Kwangju Massacre banned. Also in May 1981 South Korea inaugurated professional baseball. Bids for the 1986 Asian Games, awarded in November 1981 and the 1988 Olympic Games, won in late September 1981, were large jewels in the crown of the '3S policy.' (MBC 2005, Son 2003, Son 2004)

By autumn, a full-scale disagreement was occurring within the government about whether or not to bid. Chun had tried installing several different mayors by this time, but they all came to the same conclusion, that it was not a good idea for Seoul to bid for the Olympics due to dilapidated housing stock, facilities, infrastructure, and pollution, with inadequate time and monies to fix all of this. Finally, Chun decided autocratically in favor of proponents of bidding, who were officials of the Education Ministry, Athletics division, Korean Amateur Athletic Association, and Korean Olympic Committee. Organizationally, the Korean Olympic Committee (KOC) was led by the (South) Korean Amateur Athletic Association head. This person worked for the Ministry of Education of the national government. Official notice of the intent to bid was sent to the International Olympic Committee in Lausanne on December 2, 1980.

At this early stage, the "Bid Measures Working Committee" was composed of two persons from the Ministry of Education, two persons from City Hall, and three persons from the Korean Amateur Athletic Association. This was the team of people who compiled the extensive response to International Olympic Committee questions in order to continue to the next stage of the competition. Responsibility lay with the Education Ministry of the national government.

From March 1981 on, when the competition was narrowed down to just two cities, Seoul and Nagoya, a higher level group was convened to deal with whether to go through with

the bidding or not. “The Committee to Carry Out the Bidding Process” had the following membership: the Prime Minister as committee chair, the Economic Planning Minister, the Foreign Affairs Minister, the Education Minister, the Minister of Culture and Public Information, the Mayor of Seoul, the Korean Amateur Athletic Association head, South Korea’s International Olympic Committee representative, and the head of the Prime Minister’s Office of Public Administration as Secretary-General. This cabinet-level group took charge, and tellingly, the responsibility shifted from the Education Ministry to the Prime Minister’s office.

After this stage, two of the four bidding cities dropped out, and Seoul was left to compete with Nagoya, Japan. At this point a “Committee to Carry Out the Bid Process” was appointed with oversight moved from the Ministry of Education, Athletics Division, to the Prime Minister’s office. The Prime Minister chaired this committee, which also consisted of the National Security Planning head, the Economic Planning Minister, the Foreign Affairs Minister, the Education Minister, the Culture and Public Information Minister, the Mayor of Seoul, the KAAA head, the IOC representative, and head of the Prime Minister’s Office of Public Administration as Secretary General. Representatives of this Committee’s members were the ones present when the final decision to continue with the competition was made on May 16, 1981. This decision, to the dismay of Seoul’s leadership, was made only after an undercover attempt to cut a deal with Japan whereby Japan would support South Korea for the 1986 Asian Games bid if South Korea withdrew its Olympic host candidacy failed. (Son 2003, v. 5, p. 24, 27)

By the time that the official bid committee traveled to the Baden Baden International Olympic Committee meeting in October 1981, where hosting would be decided, it was notably dominated by nationally prominent figures and lacked urban leadership (see, for example, Koo 1990) other than Mayor Pak Yông Su. The final bid committee also included Cho Sang Ho, Korean Olympic Committee and Korean Amateur Athletic Association head; Chông Ju Yông, chair, Olympics Preparation Committee and head of the Hyundai Corporation; Lee Wôn Kyông, Korean Olympic Committee permanent advisor; Yu Ch’ang Sun, Trading Association head; and Lee Wôn Hong, chief executive officer of the Korea Broadcasting System television station, as the spokesperson. (Son 2003, v. 5, p. 33)

Regarding transparency of the candidature and bidding process, South Korea was not a democratically-governed country at the time it competed for, was awarded, and hosted the Olympic Games in the 1980s. The country was being ruled by a second consecutive military dictatorship, still in the midst of consolidating its takeover of the government and had not even begun to implement any kind of transition to civilian rule until the Olympics time drew near. Correspondingly, the bidding process was not transparent to the public at all, and the list of stakeholders excluded citizens’ groups, labor unions, and other organizations such as the many tenants groups (Seoul Evictees Union 1988), who were closely monitored by the Korean Central Intelligence Agency and could not operate openly.

#### **4. Housing Issues: at the center of initial candidature debates**

The position of Seoul city government on whether to bid was repeatedly negative. The reasons given included inadequate sports facilities, inadequate housing facilities for visitors, and inadequate city environment, including hundreds of neighborhoods of permitless housing stock which would have to be put in order, cleaned up, for visitors’ eyes, meaning too large of a redevelopment effort. There was no explicit reference to forced evictions, but the need to do something about “substandard” housing settlements in and around the

city in relation to the Olympics was central to the arguments against bidding. (Son 2003, v. 2, pp. 185-189)

Discourse on upgrading urban neighborhoods to be ready for the eyes of the world visiting and viewing the Olympic Games used terminology such as “city environment improvement” with environment referring to built environment as well as pollution. “City environment improvement” and “city beautification” became code terms for clearance and redevelopment, which given the enormous number of people involved and the short time span, would entail forced evictions. (Lee 1993, Son 2003, Kim HG 1989, Kim and Ha 1998)

As such, housing was a major issue in the host city candidature in two respects: first, the need to vastly increase the availability of lodging at standards acceptable to Westerners for international competitors, their entourages including coaches and press, and tourists, and second, the problem of local residents’ housing.

At the time that the bid was made in 1980, the status quo of working urban poor peoples’ housing was small, 1-story houses with more than one family residing in each, in the case of renters. The housing had running cold tap water, electricity, and wood or coal briquette heating. Toilet facilities were out back and bathing done at the public bath houses. Although this type of housing served its function for housing the city’s vast workforce and the occasional foreign anthropologist or missionary, it was not considered fit by Koreans for international viewing and certainly not for hosting international visitors. An effort was reportedly made to avoid taking visiting members of international sports associations and national Olympic committees through the many poor neighborhoods during the bid competition period (Son, p. 31, *Sin Dong’a* 1981).

Koreans felt that the standard of living of the average Seoul family was different than what international visitors would find comfortable. Part of that was an issue of “Westernized” living standards becoming the standard against which to evaluate Seoul’s housing stock. However, part of the issue had to do with Koreans defining for themselves what living standards they wanted. In labeling old neighborhoods as “substandard,” (the word *bulhyang chutaek* is often translated as “slum” rather than literally as “substandard housing”) certain common features such as leaky roofs, drafty walls, lack of hot tap water, lack of paved floor in the kitchen area, toilets outside in the back, and lack of shower or bath beyond a basin in the outdoor courtyard if there was one, were becoming less tolerable to Koreans. (See Davis 2005, Chapter 4, for a partial explanation of why.) The issue of what sort of physical facilities Koreans wanted to live in was overtaken by an escalation in real estate prices for the central city, making one-story houses not economically expedient from the investor viewpoint. Kim wrote that as this happened, the well-to-do began to decide for the working classes what type of residences were acceptable, indifferent to the plight of low-income tenants. (Kim HG 1989, p. 240)

The local housing stock was considered a problem from several perspectives. It was a problem of image, insofar as if they were to host the 1988 Olympics at all South Korea wanted to present a positive view of Seoul as a prosperous, happy and healthy place and not as a squalid, impoverished city run by a brutal military dictatorship experiencing an awkward adolescent phase of industrial urbanization. The economic diplomacy of showing Seoul as an up-and-coming, global city worthy of international investment depended upon successful image-making. Local housing was also a problem of substance, which Seoul governments had been struggling with since the 1920s colonial period. There was a pronounced shortage of supply, issues of material conditions and quality of dwellings, and broader legal framework issues of registration of the urban housing stock that were linked

to systematically assigning private property ownership. Because of manner in which people flooded into Seoul at different periods since 1945, an enormous percentage of the housing was built without permit. Resolving this land use situation was at the top of planners' agendas and was seen as important for governability as the city was morphing from an administrative center to a international hub of world capitalist production and exchange

All of the arguments against hosting were based around either expectation of financial loss related to expedited urban upgrading or around the difficulty of cleaning up the urban environment to a standard suitable for international show so quickly. Indeed, at the critical point of deciding whether to bid at the very end of November 1980, practical considerations voiced by leaders of Seoul were dismissed by the Chun regime which had plenty to gain by forging ahead with the bidding. This had the practical effort of halting internal discussion about whether to redo residential neighborhoods en masse.

The public statements made announcing Seoul's candidature to host the Olympics did not make reference to domestic housing at all. They referred only to hosting the Olympics as a project of national significance calling for unprecedented national unity. However, local histories reveal that each neighborhood had its own internal struggle when faced with demolition and redevelopment. The battle lines were not always drawn dividing rich and poor inhabitants, either;(Chosôn Ilbo 1983, Chang 1998) individual building owners often faced off against the corporate giants overseeing the redevelopment who would own the new high rise residential and office buildings.

After the surprise victory of winning the bid to host, city planning changes were dictated from the top down with a "we can do it" mindset (see, for example, Son 2003, v. 5, v. 2) that left no place for questioning or non-cooperative city officials. Thereafter, the urban development component of preparing to host the 1988 Olympics consisted of updating the Seoul infrastructure for the benefit of those Korean nationals and international parties involved in making Seoul an international economic hub for South Korea's export-led manufacturing industry, international finance, and tourism.

The type of modern city envisioned by Seoul planners in the 1980s catered to a large, prosperous middle class imaginary in addition to the well-to-do. The new half of the city where the Olympic facilities were built was designed with a private car culture in mind and featured large avenues with planned traffic patterns connecting to expressways through and out of the city, which were hurriedly completed in time for the Games. One idealistic aspect of planning the Olympic facilities was to further the development of leisure space for the public in the form of parks and recreational sports venues. This upper-middle class would eventually emerge in the 1990s to enjoy the well-designed apartment developments and leisure facilities left behind by the Olympic Games, athletes' villages, and related efforts, but the housing situation of large numbers of urban poor people who comprised the labor force of the industrializing economy worsened as a result of the successful hosting bid and subsequent Games preparations. Seoul city embarked on an accelerated program of infrastructure updating and "city environment improvement" from the time the 1988 Olympics were awarded to Seoul onward. Specific public laws were promulgated to carry out the extensive infrastructure work. These laws did not mention the issue of forced eviction, and there was no broad public debate over the type of improving to be done.

## **5. Olympic Games Preparations Charge Forward Without Public Input**

Once Seoul was selected as the host site for 1988, the responsibility for developing the Olympic infrastructure shifted to the Seoul Olympic Organizing Committee (SLOOC). Seoul city government officials planned and implemented the details of preparations in cooperation with the national government authorities. Urban housing policy had been part of national five-year economic plans since the early 1960s, without marked success, but the speed and top-down decisiveness demanded by Olympics preparations were to change that. Mechanisms were already in place for local implementation of the housing plans to be carried out by a collaboration of the Ministry of Construction and City Hall. The Redevelopment Office at City Hall then worked with local district officials to implement plans.

As a result of the efficiency required by the Olympics preparations, a shift in predominant administrative method of urban redevelopment took place between 1983 and 1984. In the Mokdong redevelopment project, owners and tenants both created obstacles to development of a new area of the city. As a result, City Hall turned to the “joint redevelopment” method, whereby private construction companies formed a private corporation with house owners and took charge of clearing the land of pre-existing settlements. This removed city officials several layers from directly carrying out the awkward stages of urban redevelopment such as forced evictions and clearance, and paved the way for increased extralegal hiring of private eviction companies who employed thugs and criminal elements to assist with getting rid of existing residents.

The Olympic Games Preparation Committee Chair appointed after the May 1981 decision to compete for hosting to the end was Chông Ju Yông. One of the most prominent Korean corporate figures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Chông was the head of the Hyundai Group until his death on March 21, 2001. In this capacity as Chair, Olympic Games Preparation Committee, he was part of the six-member official delegation to Baden-Baden in 1981. After his death, Chông was credited with assisting with financial arrangements which made it possible to successfully host the 1988 Olympic Games. It may never be known what Chông’s precise contributions to the preparations were; this is left to future historians.

## **6. Conclusion**

The 1988 Olympic Games were used as political leverage by both the military dictatorship and the pro-democracy South Korean public during the 1980s, a tumultuous time for South Korean national politics. The Chun Doo Hwan regime, by deciding to bid for the Olympics, prioritized national issues over urban issues, overruling opinions and advice from Seoul’s leadership who repeatedly counseled against hosting the Olympic for reasons of an inadequate housing environment and accompanying dilapidated infrastructure at all levels ranging from roads to sports facilities.

The initial impetus in 1979 for bidding for the 1988 Olympics was Park’s attempt to save a faltering regime. The next dictatorship eventually picked up the bid process once again to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the disgruntled South Korean public after the May 1980 Kwangu Massacre and international powers including international investors, and to stave off North Korean military ambitions temporarily. The reasoning in this latter case was that North Korea wouldn’t attack during the seven years of preparing and holding the Olympics, buying time for Chun’s new regime to build up its lesser military strength (Son 2003, v. 5, p. 25).

Were there no Kwangju Uprising and Massacre of civilians by the South Korean armed forces in May 1980, the government may not have resurrected the Olympic bid idea in the second half of 1980. On the other hand, many from various locations on the political spectrum believe that the burgeoning pro-democracy coalition of the 1980s wouldn't have met with the success of the June 1987 proclamation in such a timely fashion had the 1988 Olympics not been on the horizon. (See, for example, Cumings 1997, pp. 332-333; Son 2003, v. 5, p. 26.) Nationalist historiography in the 2000s might take issue with this, in retrospect, but it seems that public pressure for the illegitimate Chun regime to step down, inflamed by the death of a protestor hit by a teargas canister in the spring of 1987, was amplified by the impending 1988 Olympics, as all parties in South Korea wanted the 1988 Olympics to go off smoothly.

In the end, the 1988 Olympics was judged a great success by the international sports world (Palenski 2004, p. 221) and by the South Korean public. The extent to which massive forced evictions were carried out in a sped-up urban renewal crash program to prepare for the Olympics reveals the extent to which a military dictatorship was able to force through controversial projects. In fact, over the next decades the emerging civil society would increasingly favor bourgeois interests. In the June 1987 democracy uprising, urban poor people were thought to be represented primarily by the large and active labor movement. However, the labor movement of course focused its activities on workplace negotiations and not on far-flung residential neighborhoods as a site of conflict.

Spatially dispersed, the places where urban poor people lived were vulnerable to authoritarian government plans. Indeed, pro-democracy movement components, including religious leaders and students, did rally to the side of neighborhood activists in the largest of the pre-Olympics period redevelopment clearances, boosting their cause, but in sum the alliance between wealthier classes of urban residents and urban low-income tenant families was weak and sporadic at best. It was not enough to prevent the industrialization of substandard housing clearance in preparation for the Olympics. The South Korean official organizing bodies for the Olympics did not take a position on forced evictions. In fact, the Olympics appealed to Korean nationalism in uniting the public behind whatever massive urban improvement projects were deemed necessary in order to create an imagined modern city, and old neighborhoods of "substandard" buildings were seen as an obstacle to that vision of the city.

## **IV. Housing, Evictions and Activism during the 1988 Olympic Games Preparations**

### **1. Summary**

In the analysis below, the question of the relationship between the 1988 Olympics and urban residential redevelopment is revisited. Was urban redevelopment a result of the 1986 Asian Games and the 1988 Olympic Games preparations? If the relationship was not causal, what was the nature of the linkage? Next, the nature of the connection between the international event and forced eviction is reexamined. Were forced evictions a result of the 1988 Olympics preparations? Were they a direct result, an indirect result, or neither? For both matters, the issue of causality is considered.

Before reopening these historical questions, first it is necessary to interrogate two basic assumptions from which they arose. The first starting assumption is that there was in fact a boom in residential redevelopment before the 1988 Olympics, and the second assumption is that there was an increase in the practice of forced evictions in the same period. The purpose of this review is to look again twenty years later at the available evidence in order to construct a nuanced understanding of a complex and pivotal decade in the historical geography of Seoul housing.

### **2. Effect of the Olympic Games on Housing and Evictions**

Earlier research revealed with disconcerting clarity that slum clearance was a major element of the preparation periods leading up to Olympic Games in both Rome, Italy, before 1960 and Seoul, South Korea, before 1988 (Davis 2005). In the case of South Korea leading up to the 1988 Olympics, dislocation of residents reached such enormous proportions that its practice of forced evictions became known internationally. Until this period, the Urban Poor Peoples Movement, under whose auspices tenants' rights struggles were fought, had been a lesser player among domestic South Korean social movements. In the mid-1980s the invisible plight of tenants left without a place to live in a changing economy at least temporarily ceased. Several large local struggles over redevelopment began to sporadically attract the attention of a nationwide pro-democracy coalition composed of labor, students, intellectuals including journalists and academics, and religious leaders who fought against repressive police practices, harsh labor conditions and human rights violations in the form of torture and large numbers of political prisoners, throughout the 1970s and 1980s. (Asia Watch 1990) The period of forced evictions prior to hosting the 1988 Olympics, a large-scale international event, galvanized nationwide support for a more humane low-income housing approach.

Urban restructuring in preparation for the Seoul 1988 Olympic Games accentuated an already severe housing shortage, with violent struggles over forced evictions involving the dislocation of hundreds of thousands of people reported by international media at the time. In the almost twenty years that have passed since, the ruthless situation faced by South Korean low-income tenants during this period has been mentioned often in the literature of international organizations concerned with housing advocacy and human rights. (Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) 1988, Sôul Ch'ôlgômin Hyôbûi 1988, ACHR and Third World Network 1989, ACHR 1989b, Kim HG 1989, Purûn Yôngsang 1989, Kim JC 1991, Sturdevant 1991, Greene 2003) as well as in mainstream histories of the Olympic



Games. (Daly JA 2004, p. xix) The incontrovertible evidence, caught on camera, was condemned by the United Nations Habitat 1987 conference and helped to speed establishment of a new regional advocacy group, the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights.

In addition to families living in old houses, homeless persons and street peddlers were also dislocated, albeit more temporarily, under the rubric of “city beautification” for the Olympics. Leaders of urban poor peoples groups throughout Asia reasoned that with its unprecedented economic growth rate in the 1980s, South Korea was a model of capitalist industrialization for the region. If this was the best it could do for its labor force, what brutalities were in store for low-income people in other countries? Within South Korea, the pre-Olympic evictions spurred the broad engagement of domestic activists, policy-makers, planners and scholars, on the issue of urban housing for all societal classes, and independent and government research institutes continue to build upon a large body of published studies to the current day. Perhaps no other internal challenge has proved to be as intransigent to solve despite the so-called economic miracle that South Korea represents.

In gathering data to answer the research questions laid out above, various methods were utilized including collection and review of both primary and secondary sources. Primary materials include print and visual media records, government documents including statistical reports and official narratives, and interviews with key individuals. Secondary materials consist of key theses, dissertations, articles and monographs issued primarily by domestic experts, a number of whom participated in the cases discussed below as either graduate student activists or as government officials. Where possible primary source figures were compared with reported figures given in the main domestic studies, a representative but necessarily partial sample of a vast body of Korean language literature on the topic of housing, eviction, and planning. Oral interviews of housing movement leadership and participant observation at the local level took place in 2000 and 2001 as part of a larger research project on Seoul redevelopment.

### **3. Effect of the Olympic Games on Housing - Was there a boom in residential redevelopment?**

In reviewing the literature on housing, forced evictions, and the Olympic Games in South Korea two basic assumptions underlie the question of the nature of the connections. The assumptions are questioned here not because they seem to be misguided, but because they have become accepted as common knowledge. In the interest of transparency it is important to be clear about what is known and how that knowledge is constructed. First of all, it is assumed that there was an increase in urban redevelopment leading up to both the 1988 Olympic Games. Is this in fact the case, and can it be demonstrated?

#### *Urban Restructuring for the Games*

The list of urban improvement projects initiated after winning the bids for the 1988 Olympics and the 1986 Asian Games is long and ambitious, initiated by the national government who at that time had formal administrative oversight over the capital city. The South Korean government used both the 1986 Asian Games and the 1988 Olympic Games dates as deadlines for a laundry list of needed upgrades to the city. The Olympics hosting decision was made first, on Sept. 30, 1981, and had a positive influence on the subsequent awarding of the 1986 Asian Games to Seoul as well. The Asian Games hosting decision was made in New Delhi on November 25, 1981, where Seoul had been competing with Baghdad and Pyôngyang (Son 2003, volume 5, p. 40). The latter two both withdrew their

candidacy prior to the vote. Had Seoul not won the 1988 Olympics, it is not at all clear that they would have won the 1986 Games either. At any rate, in the early stages, scheduling of preparations beyond event-specific facilities made mention of both international festivals in the same breath, one as a preliminary and one as a final deadline.

The consensus among all sorts of written literature is that Seoul used the preparation period for the events to accomplish urban restructuring including infrastructure building and redevelopment of older areas that would normally take decades in just a few years. (See, for example, Son 2003, volume 2, p. 188; volume 5, p. 46; or any official historical account.) Indeed, the 1988 Olympic Games is listed as a key event in the “historical mutation process” of the city’s evolution along with longer, cataclysmic phases as the Japanese colonial occupation (1910-1945) and the Korean War of 1950-1953 by the official city research organization (Seoul Development Institute 2000, p.3, pp. 302-334). The record for major projects undertaken in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s supports this conclusion (Son 2003, volumes 1-5, Seoul Development Institute 2000).

The breadth of the changes ranged from a number of large commercial buildings, several new highways, a new river bed and river banks flowing through the middle of Seoul, updated waterworks and sewage infrastructure related to the river, furthering development of the relatively new southern half of Seoul by adding sports facilities and middle- and upper-middle class housing, to several new subway lines. It is worth listing some of the projects to give a feel of the grandiose scale of the preparations:

- Han River Comprehensive Development – 1) water storage facilities, 2. aquifer maintenance, 3. flood plains repair and creation of public parks by riverside, 4. building of the Olympic Expressway, 5. sewage and drainage duct works and sewage treatment improvement. (Son 2003, volume 5, p. 42)
- rezoning of Karak district
- redevelopment of Ulchiro and other main downtown commercial districts
- creation of the Asia Park and Athletes’ Village (Asian Games)
- creation of the Olympic Park and Athletes’ Village (Olympic Games)
- developing the Karak Agriculture and Fisheries Wholesale Market
- developing the Yongsan electronics shopping district
- building the Yongsan tour bus terminal
- building a branch of Mokdong New City
- finishing one subway line, building parts of several new lines
- widening streets, expanding parking
- reorganizing ordinances on signage
- introducing landscape architecture to numerous sites
- planning additional public monuments, bridges, parks
- installing modern office buildings (Son 2003, volume 5, p. 46; volume 2, p. 185-188)

Those projects involving buildings were planned and carried out by the city government, mainly the Department of Urban Planning and the Department of Urban Renewal, in conjunction with the national Ministry of Transportation and Construction. Changes involving constructing new buildings included downtown commercial districts, substandard residential districts large and small, and farmland inside the borders of the city. There were people living in all of these areas, be it residential, commercial, or agricultural. In order to free up the regulatory climate for construction, the president of South Korea proclaimed Law #3646 on December 31, 1982, to make urban redevelopment faster and easier. One especially unpopular piece of the legislation relaxed limits on building height and size in the central business districts of Seoul’s older northern half. Even a leading pro-government newspaper bitterly assessed the easing of controls with the proverb “ruining both one’s self

and one's family to pretty up for the party" (*Chosôn Ilbo*, Feb. 10, 1983). Small- and medium-sized business owners stood to lose ground, literally, to the large corporate conglomerates in whose name tall office buildings were soon to be constructed. It is impossible to imagine the Seoul of the 1990s without these buildings, but they are a recent legacy of the 1988 Olympics preparations.

### *Housing Redevelopment as part of the pre-Olympics Restructuring*

Residential redevelopment was an integral part of the centrally-planned restructuring proposed and implemented rapidly from 1982 on. Much of this fell under the category of "city beautification" (ACHR and Third World Network 1989, Kim HG 1989, Lee JY 1993, Kim UH 1993, Son 2003). "City beautification" came to be understood by the time of the 1988 Olympics as 'slum clearance' because it entailed demolished tracts of buildings constructed without permits and replacing them with high-priced condominiums. Although it may have been superficially understood as an aesthetic project to make the city look better to international tourists, and by extension, foreign investors, the underlying process was nothing less than a historical transformation in land regimes. A society's land regime governs land use and ownership practices. Considered in aggregate, the residential redevelopment undertaken in Seoul as part of the Olympic preparations can be seen in retrospect as comprising a key moment in a seismic shift in land regimes to one befitting South Korea's political economic vision.

An often overlooked component of the "city beautification" campaign was a public relations effort to re-define ordinary Seoul residential neighborhoods as "slums" in the eyes of the public, which involved cultivating new normative expectations of living quarters standards in the direction of "modern" or "Westernized" style of living (Davis 2005). When a large portion of the people in a country live in a certain type of house with certain facilities, they don't think of those housing areas as "slums." The English word "slum" connotes poor quality in relative terms. It implies that there is better to be had, within reach of the average family. So, in order to redevelop Seoul residential districts into a different type of housing under "city beautification," planners had to define what qualities were "substandard." Then, many areas were categorized as containing majority "substandard" housing and counted. After defining, categorizing, and counting, the city could list "substandard" districts requiring redevelopment and start to schedule projects. This was part of a land regularization effort, in accordance with changing land regimes, which was undertaken by the government beginning in 1962 as part of each 5-year economic plan. Of course, this labeling of "substandard" buildings had gone on for decades, but efforts to get rid of them were sporadic and easily outpaced by the number of new such buildings built at the same time. Ha eloquently articulates the distinction between slums in Western cities, and slums in so-called developing countries where the usual practice for families coming to live in the city is simply to build one's own house on empty land (Ha 1998, p. 53). This form of settlement is tacitly condoned at a time when the city has become the site of industrial production and labor needs are acute. In this manner informal settlements for the laborer class come to be the norm under such economic conditions in cities.

During the 1980s and 1990s most of the house-owner public gradually came to agree with the vision of the old houses as "slums," motivated by the prospect of financial reward. These "owner-squatters" were paid for their houses and given the opportunity to buy property in the form of a new apartment in the redeveloped district. This creation of a beneficial policy for "owner-squatters" which divided them from "tenant-squatters" (Lee JY 1990) became widely practiced beginning in the pre-Olympic period, when redevelopment plans looked to create large numbers of private apartments for sale at

market prices. It was the beginning of the end of tolerance of permitless house districts in Seoul. By the time one decade had passed after the Olympics, most of the public preferred apartment living with hot tap water and inside bathrooms with bath or shower facilities over the old low-rise houses, and the trend was away from charcoal briquettes as the central heating method. In evaluating the 1980s “city beautification” campaign effect on the tenants in these districts of permitless houses, however, Kim wrote, “City beautification is a standard of affluent people. Forcing that standard on poor people is immoral.” He went on to argue that ‘were the public to decide that the affluent standard was to be supplied to poor people, too, the government would have had to reallocate resources differently than it in fact did.’ (Kim HG 1989, p. 264)

Measuring residential redevelopment, whether done by South Korean authorities or by citizen advocates, raises questions of precision, but most importantly, overall trends are in agreement when various types of sources are compared. One can count the number of substandard dwellings disposed of, number of new units created, number of new units available for rental, number of people evicted, number of people violently evicted, the housing supply ratio for Seoul, or the number of districts redone. (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 1962-2003; SMG 1998, Ministry of Transportation and Construction 2000; Chang 1998; Kim and Choe 1997, Kim SH 1996; ACHR and Third World Network 1989) Each has its validity and its pitfalls.

For example, comparing number of districts redone over time is imprecise because the size of districts varies widely. The number of permitless structures disposed of is a fairly firm category over time, except that new ones crop up as well that are not counted for a time. Counting the number of new units created is misleading because of the multiple driving forces behind the housing shortage. There might be a gain in total number of units, as the density over land area of the high rise apartment towers is many times that of the old low-rise neighborhoods.

But at the same time, there has been a simultaneous evolution in the definition of household, average rooms per household and amount of persons per room, since the 1980s which has resulted in a huge increase in the absolute number of household units needed. In urban poor districts, prior to apartment-style living, families often doubled or tripled up in one small house, living in one or two rooms per family. Apartments are rarely used in this way. Also, apartment units are less suitable for the extended family system, and the definition of household has been steadily evolving toward the Western nuclear family system. Whereas in the past, three generations could be found inhabiting one unit, now the practice is for one couple to have one unit. The result is that over time, more and more housing units are required for the same number of people in Seoul.

Another problem with counting the number of new units created in order to estimate housing needs is that in recent decades the new units cost orders of magnitude more to occupy than the destroyed buildings. Whereas one might be able to “purchase” occupancy rights to a vinyl shanty house for U.S.\$3,000, it might cost \$200,000 to buy a new apartment. Even to occupy a public rental apartment in one central city neighborhood in 2001 required about \$30,000 down as a security deposit plus monthly fees (Davis 2005, p. 168), calling into question whether these public rental apartments were really meant for low-income families. The new units replace cheaper old units, hence worsening the housing shortage for low-income people. These are just a few examples of points to keep in mind when reading official housing policy reports carefully.

One widely cited international investigation states that around 100 sites were redeveloped between 1982 and 1989 (ACHR and Third World Network 1989, p. 5). It goes on to

report that between 1983 and 1988, 48,000 buildings housing 720,000 people were destroyed (p.23), saying later that government officials verified these figures in face-to-face meetings (p. 43). That breaks down to 15 persons or roughly 3 families per house, at 5 persons per household, a reasonable estimate for the more densely-populated of low-income districts at that time. The estimate of the number of buildings removed is plausible if one considers that a 1979 survey showed 186,436 illegal houses in Seoul, a large increase over 136,650 illegal houses identified in 1966, when the government reported 35% of the city's population residing in such houses (Whang 1986, p. 270).

A government publication states that 332 districts, most of them in Seoul, were redone from 1973 to 2000; "from 1986 to 1987 through the city beautification program for the Olympics... 40 districts were undertaken..." The same source shows 82 sites completed between 1982 and 1989, slightly fewer than the 100 above. It also reports a much lower number of buildings taken out between 1983 and 1988, about 23,000 (MCT 2000, p. 56). A Seoul government publication shows much the same figures (SMG 1998, pp.33-34). There are several possible explanations for why the number of buildings removed is lower than in the first report discussed above (ACHR and TWN 1989). It may not include the many evicted residents of commercial districts undertaken at this time, and it may not include communities located in agricultural areas within city limits which still existed at that time.

According to another respected source, the following schedule was announced during General Chun's annual tour of City Hall on February 8, 1983: "42 neighborhoods lining the main arteries and 53 neighborhoods in the city center, for a total of 95 neighborhoods were targeted for redevelopment. Of those 71 areas were to be finished before the 1986 Asian Games, and the remaining 24 before the Olympic Games." (Son 2003, volume 5, p. 45). 93 of the 95 neighborhoods were finished by 1988 (p. 46). Interestingly, the former mayor of Seoul who had presided over the South Korean delegation to Baden Baden in 1981, where the final Olympic bid competition was decided, was appointed head of the Korea National Housing Corporation, a public development body, later in 1983 (Son 2003, volume 2, p. 197).

At least three projects involved large areas with numerous communities, the first time apartment development was undertaken on such a massive scale, as part of the pre-Olympic preparations; they are Sadangdong, Mokdong, and Sanggyedong. Each entailed clearing a large patch of the city, with numerous neighborhoods. The latter two became sites of landmark conflict permanently etched in the annals of housing history. The first involved no shortage of tenant struggle, either, involving tens of thousands of persons (Cho and Cho 1992, p. 23, Kim SH 1996). Only those directly involved in the Sadangdong struggles at the time, or attending the nearby Seoul National University, are likely to remember as it ended unsuccessfully for tenants.

Using government figures, it is possible to diagram the number of houses removed over time, and the number of new apartments created for sale. No matter which of a number of different kinds of sources is used, all show a steady rise in both beginning between 1981 and 1983. Those sources with figures continuing past the mid-1980s place the peak at 1986, with numbers falling but remaining high through 1988 until 1989. (Chang SH 1989, p. 206; Kim SH 1996, p. 89; SMG 1998, p. 34; and MCT 2000, p. 56) In another remarkable graph of housing produced between 1960 and 1990, Kim and Choe (1997, p. 116) show twin peaks of new housing construction, occurring at 1985 and 1987. The peaks coincide perfectly with preparations for the Asian Games of 1986 and the Olympic Games of 1988. Because there was little empty land for development in Seoul since the late 1960s, one can

conclude that new housing construction in the 1980s meant corresponding eviction and housing demolition.

Indeed, Son writes, “In this manner, redevelopment caught fire in the 1980s...” (2003, volume 2, p. 188) Official accounts concur, including the period from 1986 to 1987 as one of the historical high points for redevelopment “due by and large to the city beautification maintenance project in preparation for the Seoul Olympics.” (SMG 1998, p. 33) There isn’t any disagreement over the basic trends of the Olympics preparation period; all evidence points to the conclusion and all sides agree that there was an urban redevelopment boom in preparation for the 1988 Olympic Games.

#### **4. Effect of the 1988 Olympic Games on Evictions and Activism - Was there an increase in evictions during the preparations for the 1988 Olympic Games?**

The second assumption to confirm is that there was a spike in evictions during preparations for the 1988 event. Here one looks for some way of measuring which would be comparable over time across neighborhoods, a gauge of the lawlessness or brutality of a redevelopment land clearance process, while steering clear of minor measurement issues which could obscure the issue. Of course, a measure of the number of people evicted is one such number. The number of people forcibly evicted would be even better. Other important considerations are how concentrated the violence is over time, how big the resistance is, over what duration the violence continues, what compensation is offered, to whom it is offered and not offered, how successful the give and take of negotiations is, and whether the conflicts leads to the development of a more humane process.

The numbers of people or households forcibly evicted gives at best only a rough picture of what was happening because counts are unreliable. They are likely to be consistently undercounted. Forced eviction is not legal but has been regularly practiced against urban poor people in Seoul since the 1960s without incrimination. Scores of people have been incarcerated for tenant activism, but not for maltreatment of tenants. The city government has done its best over time to redesign redevelopment mechanisms such that the authorities themselves are distanced from the actual forced evictions, and they do not release accurate counts of number of homes forcibly evicted over time. This is because of the lawlessness of it and because of the use of hired thugs employed by “service” companies who are called in to do the dirty work. The government does keep count of the number of permitless buildings removed over time; this number is used to estimate the number of households and persons evicted. One has to consult the records of the Korea Coalition for Housing Rights or its predecessor organizations, or case studies in the historical record to determine where evictions became forced evictions, or evictions involving the use of violence. Advocacy groups bear witness to, document, and count forced evictions at sites where there exists organized resistance with connections to city-wide coordinating groups, but the overall count of forced evictions will always be partial.

An additional consideration is that the use of violence in the form of professional thugs at redevelopment sites is wider than just at the specific event of “forced eviction.” With the frequent visits by gangster groups hired by the redevelopment corporation, the common outbreak of violence at sit-in protests, large meetings which turn violent, and basic patrolling by gangsters at night, one might ask when does an “eviction” become a “forced eviction.” There is a phase at many Seoul redevelopment sites, when part of the residents have left and part are resisting, when the gangsters working for “service” companies are

brought in to intimidate residents to leave. This is accomplished by the mere presence of hired thugs circulating in the community; by the homeowners' and the hired thugs' common practice of demolishing already-emptied houses with sledgehammers to prevent squatters or speculators from reoccupying them; by covertly setting fires at night in empty houses to frighten remaining residents; or by physically-violent clashes going so far as sexual assault during negotiations, sit-in protests at the "joint development" cooperative office; and destruction of temporary structures of dwelling by communities refusing to leave territory. Commonly reported by veterans of redevelopment tenants groups are chunks of hair pulled out; or fingers, arms and ribs broken or twisted, causing lasting injury (Davis 2005, pp. 117-172). Short of the actual physical expulsion from and destruction of still-occupied houses, which is definitely classified as forced eviction but may or may not be reported in the news media, both the use of violence and the threat of violence permeate the redevelopment process.

Besides the number of people evicted using violence, and how much of various instances of violence occurs in the process of clearance, also of interest is the intensity of the violence and the length of time over which it repeatedly occurs. Redevelopment site clearance drags on for years using a mixture of legal battles, group negotiations with various factions, eviction, and forced eviction. Only a small percentage of clearance struggles have achieved the status of urban spectacle in the historical record.

As discussed above, the human rights international literature cites a Seoul National University report of 48,000 buildings destroyed, evicting an estimated 720,000 people, in the four to six years leading up to the 1988 Olympics (ACHR 1988, p. 4; ACHR and Third World Network 1989a, p.23, p. 25). A follow-up report states that government authorities did not question this number in face-to-face meetings (ACHR and Third World Network 1989a). As already discussed, this number of evicted buildings is higher than what current official documents show, which may be because of separate counting of strictly residential areas which is not inclusive of commercial districts.

Below are brief overviews of two large redevelopment sites where eviction conflicts achieved historical proportions in the years immediately preceding the 1988 Olympics. They are often mentioned as key events in the history of housing policy in South Korea.

### *Mokdong*

Mokdong was one of the last remaining farm areas in the city, located in southwestern Seoul. The city government announced its intentions to develop it on April 11, 1983, and detailed plans were released on May 11, 1983. (Son, volume 4, p. 312) Mokdong did eventually become a new city within the city of Seoul for middle-class residents, with a prize-winning layout including wide roads, parks, recreation centers, hospitals and schools, but not before facing a relatively long period of vitriolic protest lasting from April 1984 to March 1986. (Lee JY 1990, p. 138) During this period, at this site, the contemporary housing rights movement as it exists today coalesced; numerous books and studies were authored, today's scholars, housing activists, policy-makers, and planning officials alike cut their teeth on the unfolding events and negotiations. (See, for example, Lee DC 1985; Kim YS 1987; Hong 1988; Sôch'ôlhyôp 1988; Lee JY 1990, 1993, 2000; Son 2003, volume 4; and Greene 2003).

The Mokdong New City project began in 1983 with Mok 1-dong, which had a population of 25,888 or 5,832 households. About 38% of residents were house owner-squatters, and 62% were tenants. (Lee JY 1990, p. 128) The profile of residents was slightly younger, more-educated, and higher income than the average urban poor person of Seoul (ibid., pp.

128-133). Mok 1-dong was first settled in 1964, under the “Five-Year Squatter Clearance Plan” of the Seoul government, when 74,759 households were removed from 52,534 houses in central Seoul neighborhoods. The initial residents were allotted a tiny plot of land by the city and built their own houses out of home-made mud bricks. The houses were gradually upgraded. (ibid., p. 126) This is how the house owner-squatters of Mok 1-dong originated. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Mokdong New City project ran into opposition early on.

Lee outlines four main phases of the protests: 5 initial months of attempts to negotiate through official channels; 3 months of direct action protests, some of which grew violent and attracted the attention of Catholic and Protestant social justice organizations; 15 months of expansion of the protest groups; and a final 5 weeks of the most intense protests and repeated negotiations. By this time the protests of owners and tenants had spilled beyond local bounds and were taking place city-wide, at the district headquarters, City Hall, the Catholic cathedral downtown, and at the top universities. A major highway near the site was blocked, the YWCA hosted a forum for the residents, and the development office was burned down. Many people were arrested. Nearly two years after the beginning of the protest, almost half of the residents were still living there. (Lee JY 1990; Kim YS 1987, appendix; SôCh’ôlhyôp 1988)

Due to the large show of solidarity from around the city which was growing larger over time, and the perseverance of the protesters, the two years of unrest ended far better than most redevelopment protests, with both house owners and tenants receiving concessions from the city in March 1986. This was done in the interest of expediting a construction project that had been scheduled to be finished in December 1986 (Kim YS 1987). House owners received compensation for their buildings, moving fees, and priority tickets to purchase a new apartment on the site. Tenants received a ticket entitling them to rent one room in a new apartment on site, moving fees, and the option of subsidized relocation to rural areas or relocation as a group to a site outside of Seoul. (Lee JY, pp. 152-153) For tenants to receive any kind of right to access even one room of an apartment in the newly redone site would come to be a measure of success attainable by only a minority of the most fiercely organized tenants groups in the decades to come.

The Mokdong redevelopment struggle was unique in several ways. It was a development project on a large scale, involving at least five neighborhoods. Mok 1-dong was the first of these. It involved evicting households that had been forcibly moved to this site by the city government itself, as mentioned above. This time the city government used a method called “Public Management Redevelopment Method,” whereby the city took on the task of assembling the land parcels, and then contracted with private builders to do the construction. After, the city would sell the apartments. It stressed the idea of “public land use” and was suited to a site where much of the land was city-owned from the start. (Lee JY 1990, pp. 133-134). The government intended to use the profits from the sale of new apartments to help finance the Olympics. Due to difficulties encountered from the start of this project, the city found a new way to do most future redevelopment projects. The new policy, called “joint redevelopment,” was proposed in the fall of 1983 and implemented from 1984 on to the present day. It entailed an ingenious new method of organizing the involved parties whereby the government was distanced from actual involvement in the clearance process. Under “joint redevelopment” house owners and a private construction company formed a corporation overseeing the redevelopment through the various stages. This shift in policy was the major legacy handed down from the Mok 1-dong struggle; it would make it harder for urban poor people to fight for inclusion in redeveloped sites and easier for redevelopment corporations to evict residents forcibly.



Another unique trait of the Mokdong protests was that house owners were often aligned with tenants, opposing the development. This was initially because the government changed the plan of what apartments were to be built after it was already announced, reducing the number of lower-priced, small apartments and raising the number of large, expensive apartments. House owners foresaw that they would not be able to afford to live in the new apartments, either. In fact, both the house owners and the tenants were bought off by the city in the end through the distribution of priority tickets. The compensation finally won by the protesters at the end of the conflict included priority entry tickets for house owners, in the form of priority to buy a new apartment, and for tenants, too, in the form of rental rights to one room of an apartment. This was a major concession for the developers and not often repeated. Both house owners and tenants sold their rights to remain in the newly developed area for cash and most left. The government was forced to cave in to the protesters' demands because they were unable to play the house owners against the tenants as occurred in later redevelopment projects; plus there was a schedule to adhere to with the upcoming international events. Theorists date the awareness of the possibility of differing interests between owners and tenants to these days, a divide which was exploited by redevelopment authorities as well as motivating the formation of a housing rights movement.

### *Sanggyedong*

Sanggyedong was another of the neighborhoods cited for redevelopment in Seoul; it was to become infamous, the eviction most associated with the vanity of hosting the Olympic Games. This notoriety sprung out of a sequence of mismanaged conflicts combined with injustices heaped one upon another with finally a specific link to the Olympics.

A large neighborhood of about 1,500 households (1,000 households of owners, 520 households of renters) in northern Seoul, Sanggyedong Sub-area 173 went under the bulldozers of redevelopment in the mid 1980s, as part of the effort to create large numbers of high-rise apartments for the middle class. The small houses had been built in the 1960s and 1970s with government assistance when the residents were relocated there from central Seoul, especially from Hannamdong and Ch'onggyech'ôn. Demolition began in 1986. No media attention was paid to this area until June 26, 1986, when there was a big protest of tenants opposing the redevelopment and one person died; after that, the newspapers took an interest. There was still censorship of newspapers then and no protection of freedom of the press; journalists were routinely detained, imprisoned, tortured, and forced into foreign exile. Kim quotes a report describing this day; there were 1000 renters confronting 500 gangsters and tramps, 500 police, and 100 plainclothesmen, plus a variety of local officials (1989, p. 241). By the day's end, one person was dead, crushed by wreckage from a gangster's demolition, one person was severely wounded, and forty people were treated for slight injuries (1989, p. 242). The evictions and demolition continued. In protests of December 1986 through March 1987, a number of tenant leaders were imprisoned. That winter 160 evicted families gathered and lived in tents on the site opposing the redevelopment.

By the end of winter there were 73 families left. In the spring of 1987, a child was killed by a collapsing ruin on the construction site while playing, and a young man burned himself to death in protest. The gangsters and police kept destroying the tent village as well as the old houses. In March 1987, the remaining families moved to the plaza in front of the Myôngdong Cathedral in the center of Seoul. In this location, supported by Cardinal Kim Su Hwan, the evictees gained the attention of middle-class persons who worked and shopped in the Myôngdong area. The public saw what was occurring in regular media coverage all over the country and sent money and food to the evictees, who were still living

there in June 1987 when the Chun dictatorship began to give in to the public's demands. That spring, the cathedral was the site of many happenings. At one point, 500 students protesting for democratic reforms entered into the cathedral where they were shielded by the Cardinal, as well as priests and nuns who came there in solidarity, forming a human line to keep riot police out.

The demands of the tenants were to have a place to live, and more generally to be allowed to live with basic respect even though they were not rich people. They asked for government land for resettlement, and government loans or grants to assist with rebuilding costs. The government-proposed site of P'och'ôn outside of Seoul was rejected by many families because it was 25 miles north, up by the DMZ, although about \$1,000 per family was offered for going. Furthermore, the plot of land where people were expected to go live had been a chicken coop and was a foul environment. Of the 73 remaining families at the cathedral, 39 households moved to NamYangjugun in the greenbelt surrounding Seoul; the newspaper reported that these evictees were evicted from here four days after the Olympics ended for building in the greenbelt zone (Kim HG 1998, p. 333).

The remaining Tenants Committee members refused to be split up. Government negotiations with the Tenants Committee was handled by staff from the Korean Central Intelligence Agency instead of city bureaucrats.

Eventually, only 34 households were left living at the cathedral. They purchased land in January 1988 with help from the Roman Catholic Church and donations from all over the country, in Puchôn, a suburb city attached to western Seoul and built their own structures to live in with the donations and loans from religious groups and the public. The houses were destroyed repeatedly all winter by Puchôn city officials for not being up to code in terms of building materials and method, and the group ended up living in cave-like sheds dug into the embankment. Coincidentally, the land they had arranged for abutted a major highway leading into Seoul from Inch'ôn, where the Olympic Torch would pass on its way to the opening ceremony of the Games, so local officials were desperate to clear out any visible evidence of the self-built settlement. (See Kim YS 1987, Purûn Yôngsang Film Collective 1988, Kim HG 1989 and 1998, Kim JC 1991, Sôch'ôlhyôp 1988, Sturdevant 1991.)

The Sanggyedong Sub-area 173 debacle was an extremely long-lasting set of protests against a large-scale implementation of the new "joint development" method, involving by the end a small number of households (Lee JY 1993, p. 349). It represents repeated, systemic failure to handle situations arising when tenants are expelled from land claimed for redevelopment. What the tenant movement here lacked in numbers was made up for by the magnitude of the ferocity of government and development corporation members actions against the urban poor, causing an outpouring of support for the dislocated households from all over the country, and later from the international community.

Sanggyedong is also the neighborhood most directly associated with the dark side of Olympics preparations. The entanglement of one faction of the dislocated with the "city beautification" efforts of Puchôn public officials who were doing their utmost to ensure that the Olympic torch route was free of houses built without permits resulted finally in a crowning public relations disaster for the government. Recall that in Puchôn the police headquarters had been the site of a landmark case of rape torture of a woman university student held as political prisoner in 1986, and another police rape hit the international human rights radar as recently as 1991 (Davis 1994, p. 235). When an Olympic Organizing Committee leader commented that local officials responded dutifully to enact "city beautification" along the torch route which he inspected regularly in 1988 (Park SJ 1991),

the demolition of the Sanggyedong evictees' temporary structures in Puchôn is an example of what he was referring to.

This overview of redevelopment struggles which took place in the years of most intense preparation for the 1988 Olympics touched upon the neighborhoods of Mokdong and Sanggyedong because of the legacy these two struggles left in the annals of housing history of Seoul, from both the viewpoint of officials and of civil society. The second assumption reviewed in this section was that there was an increase in forced evictions as part of Olympic preparations. In terms of aggregate numbers, more precise empirical work is needed from social historians to show how the numbers of forced evictions compared to those of previous periods when police repression was even more complete, and to those periods after when the movement to eradicate small houses as a residence form intensified. However, the record shows that the practice of forced evictions was especially widespread and energetic in during the Olympics preparations, resulting in arrests and deaths. This conclusion was drawn looking at the graph of the numbers of permitless houses removed over time (Kim SH 1996, p. 89), historical accounts of the Olympics and Seoul city planning (Kim and Choe 1997, Son 2003), and the flood of documentation by civil society groups advocating for humane relocation and compensation policies in the large struggles reviewed above. (See Yôsông 1985, Kim YS 1987, Sôch'ôlhyôp 1988, ACHR 1988, Kim HG 1989, Cho and Cho 1992, Kim SH 1996, Kim and Ha 1998, Chang 1998, Seoul Metropolitan Government 1998, Ministry of Transportation and Construction 2000, etc.)

What is clear from the historical record is that the clash between groups sponsoring eviction and communities resisting eviction reached a high point in terms of visibility, intensity of conflicts, and length of conflicts in the pre-Games preparation period. In terms of numbers of permitless houses removed, by the time that the Mokdong and Sanggyedong redevelopment areas were finished several years after the 1988 Olympics, a large chunk of the total number of small houses still existing in Seoul was gone. If one adds to that the Sadangdong redevelopment which occurred also in the mid-1980s, which removed another large urban poor settlement, that is three large areas of hundreds of acres each that were redone under the Olympics preparation plan. Even if the numbers of forcibly evicted persons might have been lower than in previous or in upcoming decades, the nature of the clashes resulted in public sympathies for the evicted communities to a greater degree than before or after this period. (See, for example, Ahn 1988, "Evictees are Regular People, Too.") Furthermore, the rush to destroy old homes in the pre-Olympic period can be seen in retrospect as a turning point for the style of residential architecture and the price structure of housing for low-income populations for the long term. "Not only was the shape of the residential districts of housing built without permits changed, but in the end, the result was that the problem of substandard districts of central Seoul was gotten rid of from its roots." (Son, volume 5, p. 46)

## **5. Establishing Causal Linkages to the 1988 Olympic Games**

Finally, then, it must be asked what was the nature of the connection between the 1988 Seoul Olympics, urban redevelopment, and forced evictions. To what extent can it be said that the urban redevelopment was a result of the 1988 Olympic Games preparations? Also, the link between the September 1988 international event and forced eviction is reexamined. To what extent were the forced evictions which achieved international notoriety a result of the 1988 Olympics preparations?

## 6. Establishing Causal Linkages - Housing Redevelopment and Preparations for the 1988 Olympic Games

The above sections show that there was indeed a boom in urban redevelopment during the Olympics preparation period which was specifically part of the planned infrastructure upgrades to prepare the city for hosting as detailed in the Urban Redevelopment Law (Public Law #3646) (Son, volume 5, p. 46) on December 31, 1982. But to what extent can it be ascertained that the 1986 and 1988 large-scale international sports events caused the boom in urban redevelopment? Or, were both urban redevelopment and hosting the international large-scale events driven by some of the same motivations? Was there some other relationship between the international events and the redevelopment projects?

In untangling these phenomena, it is helpful to consider once again why South Korea sought to host the 1988 Olympics. The dominating logic was first of all one of international political economy, to boost the national image for purposes of acquiring foreign investment and business ties for exporting. The second dominating motivator was an international relations exercise, particularly important given the unstable predicament of the divided Korean peninsula, still technically at war even in 2006. Playing Olympic host was expected to boost the image of South Korea as a prosperous, successfully-run state in the eyes of long-time rival Japan, and in the eyes of the superpowers - U.S., China and USSR - that kept North Korea at bay. Furthermore, the Chun government calculated that it could buy seven years to build up its weak military forces *vis a vis* North Korea if the bid was won, as North Korea would probably not attack with such an internationally visible event on the horizon.

The third motivator for pursuing the Olympics was that the Chun government had taken power by multi-stage military coup de tats from the end of 1979 through 1980, and the Kwangju Massacre of May 1980 when the army fired on civilians and slaughtered thousands was an unforgettable legacy constantly undermining the legitimacy of the national government. (Weber 1997, Wickham 1999) It is no accident that the Olympic bid project, begun late in the regime of the previous dictator Park, was of no interest to Chun's officers early in the take-over of power, but by the fall of 1980 the unpopular regime developed a sudden interest in reviving the bid attempt as part of the "3 S" (sex, sports, screen) policy of soothing public unrest by loosening restrictions on entertainment. The "3 S" policy was responsible for creating professional baseball in South Korea, along with hosting the 1988 Olympics, allowing the proliferation of "love hotels" along domestic tourist routes, and permitting on-screen nudity. (Son 2002, MBC 2005)

Nowhere in the logic for bidding to host the 1988 Olympics is urban redevelopment mentioned as a positive. In fact, it was shown in the previous section that the bid process went forward in defiance of the opposition of City Hall, and that mayors were replaced repeatedly until some were found that would pursue the built environment restructuring called for to present a modern-looking city by Western standards. The lack of support for hosting from City Hall in late 1980 shows that hosting was indeed linked to expectations of redevelopment, but it also shows that City Hall had extensive previous experience with redevelopment and was aware it was entering onto difficult territory.

The evidence for a city beautification campaign specifically engineered to prepare for hosting the 1988 Olympics is both famous and notorious, discussed in some detail above. It is bragged about in official histories of Seoul and its planning history. It also won condemnation by the UN Habitat conference in 1987 for being one of the world's most physically violent, brutal housing relocation policies, along with South Africa's township system.

The changeover to high rise apartment towers in the redeveloped zones was driven by the larger political economy of land development in the central city rather than as a result of aesthetic planning for the international events. It had more to do with soaring land prices and need to increase density. Had national economic growth not taken off around 1981, along with certain macroeconomic dynamics of excess capacity in the building industry and excess capital, it might have been possible to keep the low-rise building style with safer and more convenient heating, hot water, and bathroom facilities. In fact, in one stage of negotiations by the Tenants Association in the Mokdong struggles covered above, tenants asked for small homes still heated with charcoal briquette, as a low-cost option for low-income housing in compensation for leaving their current residences. The larger political economy worked to obliterate consideration of less expensive, low-rise options for housing upgrade which might have achieved goals of “beautification” and practical affordability at the same time, dooming low-income households to deepening poverty and housing insecurity as low-cost options were wiped off the map.

Looking at these larger dynamics of international politics, economy and domestic political legitimacy leads to the conclusion that the hosting of the 1988 Olympics and massive urban redevelopment were connected phenomena, definitely linked, but that it would be simplistic to state that the Olympics caused the redevelopment. It served as an immediate impetus to invigorate the practice of eviction, including forced eviction, clearance of wide swaths of land, and rebuilding, certainly lubricating the political feasibility of such large-scale centrally planned projects, but did not in and of itself cause redevelopment. The redevelopment in the form of luxury highrise apartment towers was driven by some of the same underlying economic and political dynamics as the drive to host the Olympics: the need to store capital in the built environment, the need to create the urban image of an international financial center, the need of the capitalist system to install a system of private property ownership where previously the norm had been collective use of public land (Lee JY 1990, Davis 2005), excess building capacity, and so on. Furthermore some have argued that the need to upgrade the housing standards of low-income people, to get them out of self-built housing without municipal sewage, was partially fueled by competition with North Korea over living standards (Son 2003, v. p. , KCHR 2001, p. ) although that factor would not have dictated the highrise apartment form that emerged.

The clinching factor against the Olympics as the sole explanation for the redevelopment phenomenon is revealed by again inspecting the diagrams of new housing units created and permitless buildings destroyed which was used to show that there definitively was a redevelopment boom preceding the Olympics.

Within this context of a concerted, multi-decade push to establish government-registered, private ownership of property and homes, the urban residential redevelopment push which was immediately instigated by pre-Olympics central planning takes on a new significance as a forerunner of a new system of land regime, and furthermore a new regime of housing production whereby home building was taken out of the realm of the urban worker’s household and assigned to private conglomerate companies, acting under central government sanction. The result, seen in the redevelopment boom of the 1990s, is a new mode of housing which has been corporatized and industrialized.

## **7. Establishing Causal Linkages - Evictions and the 1988 Olympic Games**

Above it has been shown that there was indeed a redevelopment boom as part of the pre-Olympic preparations, that there was an increase in severity and visibility of forced evictions during the same period, and that the urban redevelopment linked to the pre-Olympic preparations had multiple causal factors. Finally, it is left to ask whether the Olympic Games caused the forced evictions of the mid-1980s.

Looking at the practice of forced eviction and forcible relocation of urban poor people in Seoul from 1960s to 2000, some necessary conditions for forced mass evictions emerge. Firstly, there had to be a dominant vision by leadership for the city's built environment which was in conflict with current reality. This vision had to be made a centerpiece of city governance for ambitious redevelopment to occur. Secondly, there had to be a readily available labor force to do the physical work of forced eviction. Thirdly, there needed to be a fixed temporal horizon for taking control of the land for redevelopment. Fourth, city and national government had to make a political calculation that use of force would be tolerated by most of the public, based upon the households being cleared for the most part not being property owners and also on it not being near election time (Lee JY 1990). Fifth, the broader context of housing at the time mattered in that political calculation about the permissible use of force, depending on what options were available for the expelled to relocate to.

In the Olympics preparation period, all of these five necessary conditions were present. The difference between the situation leading up to the Olympics and previous redevelopment pushes was that the third factor, a fixed temporal horizon was very much operating. In the past when forced relocation ran into political opposition or when redevelopment experienced political difficulties, evictions subsided and clearance of permitless houses declined. It is the temporal horizon which provided the necessary and sufficient factor among the list of conditions leading to forced evictions. Based on this, it is arguable that the 1988 Olympic Games did cause the forced eviction of resisting populations of Mokdong, Sanggyedong, Sadangdong, and numerous other residential and mixed-use central city neighborhoods, not to mention Olympic site villages.

## **8. Conclusion**

Enough time has passed since the mid-1980s that there is now a large body of literature, particularly in Korean language, on the forced evictions and redevelopment of that period to be assessed against primary evidence. Several conclusions can be drawn from the above analysis of primary and secondary literatures.

First of all, urban redevelopment happens everywhere in the dynamic, enormous cities of the world. What is unique about the Seoul case leading to the 1988 Olympics is that it cemented into place an underlying shift in property regimes – terms of ownership and terms of usage of land – which had been languishing, spurring its advent as the new dominant practice. In this shift “tenants” emerge as a more profoundly disadvantaged class than before in the resulting city. By separating “owner-squatters” from “tenant-squatters” and fundamentally reducing the possibility of squatter use of land, the pre-Olympics redevelopment process spatially rewrote the patterns of residence across the city pushing low-income people away from central neighborhoods and arteries.

Secondly, the 1988 Olympic Games did not unilaterally cause large-scale housing redevelopment. It took place in the two decades before and the two decades after 1988 as well. However, the 1986 and 1988 international games did reinvigorate the practice,

increase the size of redevelopment projects undertaken at one time and the speed of their completion, and in a lasting way reshaped policy-makers expectations of what was possible, enlarging the scale of subsequent redevelopment in the 1990s. As South Korean officials had studied the experience of 1960s Tokyo in designing their Olympics preparations, China studied South Korea's use of the 1988 Olympics for transforming land use and residential form, and has taken it up to an even larger scale today. The result in South Korea was the industrialization and corporatization of home building, meaning an end to a mode of living common to the newly industrializing city.

Thirdly, it was shown in an earlier piece that surprisingly, City Hall did not favor hosting the international event; the hosting bid was made in spite of City Hall opinions and mayors replaced until some were found who would carry out the "city beautification" policy from 1983-1988. In this way national leaders forced the reshaping of the urban.

Lastly, with the emergence of "tenants" with a distinct identity who were uniquely disempowered by the 1980s redevelopment process, a housing rights movement began to coalesce. From 1990 on, for a few years, the government created a program for low-income long-term rental housing and oversaw the production, intending it to alleviate the tenants' plight; but in 1994 they turned this program over to the hands of private developers. It became de facto a subsidized middle-class housing scheme, and low-income households faced fewer and fewer options except to disperse to cheaper rental housing at the city's fringe. Low-income housing policy remains a challenge that government planners, residents, and advocates for the urban poor people grapple with daily. In the meantime, the urban poor face spatial dispersal to either the far reaches of the city, or to new forms of informal housing, such as vinyl greenhouse communities, which emerge hidden away within the city.

## V. Study conclusions

With the passage of time and advent of a more open political and social climate in South Korea, it is appropriate to reevaluate and refine the record of the impact of the 1988 Olympic Games on the Seoul housing situation and the use of violent force for clearance. The positive achievements of the 1988 Olympics are widely recognized by Koreans around the world, as the event itself went off smoothly, leaving behind a legacy of improved facilities for recreation and leisure, modernized roadway systems in the city, and exceedingly popular, upper-middle class housing developments inherited from the 1986 Asian Games and 1988 Olympic Games athletes' villages. The darker side of the rapid preparations for hosting the Olympic Games began to be heard internationally before the event opened and remain as well in mainstream accounts of event history. (Purûn Yôngsang 1989, Daly 2004)

Human rights monitors began to report large-scale evictions of poor neighborhoods being bulldozed because they were proximate to travel routes of international visitors. World press also covered the sweeping up of street peddlers, beggars, and homeless persons in the weeks prior to the event (Greene 2003). Between 1983 and 1988 nearly 100 sites were evicted, cleared and redeveloped within Seoul (Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR), 1989, p.5), containing an estimated 48,000 buildings housing approximately 720,000 people (ACHR 1989, p. 23) in a rush to "beautify" the city in time for hosting the 1988 Olympics.

### 1. Study Results

It was shown in Section 3 of this report how concerns about the city's housing stock were at the forefront of city leadership's objection to competing to host the Olympic Games. However, national political leadership went forth with the bidding against the opinions of city leaders. Considerations of domestic political legitimacy and of international relations for a new regime, a dictatorship, took priority. This forces the realization that decision-making affecting the city is not necessarily made at the city level in some countries. In the case of Seoul, the Olympic Games were hosted by a city, but under orders from the nation. Understanding the play of levels of decision-making regarding the Olympic Games gives hope that pressure on national leadership could set a higher standard for the practice of Olympics preparations.

It also emerged later in this study that with the tone set by national leadership that Olympics preparations had to be quick and efficient, somewhat counter-intuitively the actions of local officials became extremely influential in determining the outcome of particular redevelopment struggles. One can read in memoirs of key officials overseeing the Olympic event in Seoul of the endearing cooperation of local authorities in cleaning up their unsightly neighborhoods; the flip side of their efficiency was the abrogation of the humane treatment of low-income citizens as the topic of replacement housing was not well-thought out. Local leadership, then, might also be held firmly to the same international standards of practice during Games preparations.

A review of quantitative measures in Section 4 revealed that there were in fact spikes in demolitions and housing units constructed, one before the Asian Games in 1986, as a dress rehearsal for 1988, and one before the 1988 Olympics. The new units of housing constructed were not for the same people who were evicted from the old houses, resulting in a worsening shortage of low-income housing in the name of "beautification."



Furthermore, the evidence showed that the 1988 Olympics were indeed the immediate cause of an increase in evictions as the strict time horizon provided by the international event dovetailed with improved administrative efficiency via the “joint redevelopment” model. This section argued that the long term effect of hosting the 1988 Olympics was to instruct city and national government officials involved in urban redevelopment of new possibilities in scale and speed of demolition and rebuilding.

## **2. What Went Wrong**

The international publicity given the dire situation of evicted, low-income renters as a result of Olympics preparation policy did have the effect of highlighting the need for low-income housing to replace what was being demolished. Old systems of providing for dislocated city residents via mass relocation and self-built housing programs had ceased to function, as several of the largest pre-Olympics period urban redevelopment areas housed residents who’d been forcibly moved several times in earlier decades, by the military, to these very sites.

It appears that there was a long hiatus in low-income housing policy during the 1980s. The number of public rental units created in 1985 and 1986 numbered in the low hundreds, tiny compared to the scale of the evictions, and there were no units created right before or after these two years. No meaningful activity in the creation of public rental units appears until 1990, when for some six or seven years a considerable number of rental apartments were built (Ministry of Construction and Transportation 2000, p. 56) under the “2 Million Homes Construction Plan” of 1988 to 1992 (Chu 2000, p. 180) which was enacted to correct for Olympic-era deficiencies. In the period of Olympics preparations low-income housing policy was neglected while the decades-old ad hoc solution of re-squatting ceased to be tolerated due to the stress on “city beautification.”

## **3. The Bright Side of a Dark Legacy**

The most hopeful result of this less-heralded effect of the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul is the emergence of a nationwide housing right movement in South Korea. Hundreds of local tenants organizations, set up to fight for inclusion when neighborhoods are redesigned, and concerned citizens’ groups are loosely united by the Korea Coalition for Housing Rights. Regionally, the Asia Coalition for Housing Rights in Bangkok also accelerated its formative stages in reaction to the brutal South Korean eviction practices of the mid 1980s. In Seoul, a large and diverse cadre of scholars, policy-makers, and advocates emerged from the Olympic-era struggles committing their professional lives to the crafting of housing as social policy, including setting minimum housing standards and obtaining a higher degree of transparency from city government. Certainly, there are problems with the 1990s attempts to build affordable housing in Seoul, in that many of the centrally located units went to the middle class; also the privatization of responsibility for building these units may have eroded their initial purpose as low-income, affordable housing. The challenge of building institutionalized systems to ensure housing for working-class citizens, whether as tenants or owners, is still a work in progress.

## Appendix A: A Timeline of South Korea's Political History, Olympic Games, and Housing Policy and Housing Movement History

### I. National political history from 1945 on:

Japanese colonial rule of Korea ends when Japan surrenders August 15, 1945, ending World War II. The U.S. and U.S.S.R. oversee and divide Korea into 2 halves in what becomes an enduring national tragedy.

The Korean War 1950 to 1953 – North half attacks the south half; it is meant to be a Korean civil war to reunify country under one government but, with the blessing of both sides, superpowers become involved and outcome is a stalemate, a cease-fire agreement continuing into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Korea remains divided into 2 countries. (see Cumings)

In the south half, U.S. installed government is elected under U.N. auspices; called the “1<sup>st</sup> Republic,” Syngman Rhee rules the Republic of Korea (also known as the ROK, South Korea, *Taehan Minguk* in Korean)- Aug. 15, 1948 to April 26, 1960.

2<sup>nd</sup> Republic - Yun Po-son, President and Chang Myon, Prime Minister; known as the “Chang” regime, they are democratically elected and rule for 9 months, from July 29, 1960 to spring 1961. (see Han Sung Joo book)

### II. 1988 Olympic Games

### III. Housing policy and housing movement history:

Refugees migrate south to flee Communist north half before the new border closes. Shanty towns proliferate in and around cities including mud dugout huts and self-built shelters.

More refugees flood south of the DMZ.

1953-1957 ROK government built emergency housing with U.S. aid.

(for rest of column see Eckert, Lee, Lew, Robinson and Wagner, eds. 1990)

Gen. Park Chung Hee (Pak Chong-hui), who was an officer in the Japanese Army during the colonial period, late 1930s-1940s, takes over. His May 16, 1961 military coup brings an end to the popularly-elected 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic; military junta named Supreme Council for National Reconciliation (SCNR) rules from 1961-1963 under martial law.

3<sup>rd</sup> Republic - 1963 to 1972. Gen. Park is under pressure from the U.S., which is providing half of national budget in the form of foreign aid, to move toward "civilian rule." He lifts martial law, reinstates National Assembly, holds pseudo-elections in 1963 and wins. The ROK enters Vietnam War fighting for the U.S. 1965 on.

4<sup>th</sup> Republic - October 1972 - Oct. 1979. Known as the "Yushin" constitution (translates as "revitalizing reforms") period, Park returns to the autocratic style of the initial stage of his military dictatorship. Called his "Coup in office," he again declares martial law, suspends constitution, dissolves

South Korea backs out of hosting the 6<sup>th</sup> Asian Games (1970), pays \_ million dollar fine and endures heckling at Bangkok Asian Games; a national embarrassment.

Park issues order in late September, 1973 to plan for a large sports facility in Chamsil, as part of the development plan for the new area begun in 1971.

1962 Korea National Housing Corporation created

November 1963 Public Housing Law enacted; December 1963 Housing Fund Operation Law.

Urban renewal of Seoul begins under Mayor Kim Hyun Ok who was also known as the "bulldozer."

1968-9 forced relocation to outskirts of Seoul to create Songnam City; project fails due to neglect to prepare infrastructure beforehand.

1971 Kwangju Daedanji - forcibly relocated urban poor people riot. Worst riots August 10, 1971.

Greenbelt created by law around Seoul.

Yoido Island and Chamsil area south of river development begun.

1972-1981 Park regime's "Ten-Year 2.5 Million Housing Units" plan

Wau apartment building collapses; city-run "citizens apartment" building program halted under cries of corruption.

National Assembly and all political parties, and forbids free speech and political activity. Park rules via the National Council for Unification (NCU). Pak Chong Gyu is dismissed as head of the Presidential Security Force (presidential guard) after this incident.

1974 assassination attempt on Park fails but kills his wife. Plans to build Chamsil sports facility are announced in September 2, 1976. The Seoul Mayor announces Seoul is preparing to host the 9<sup>th</sup> Asian Games in 1982 the same day.

Start building Chamsil Stadium Dec. 1976 and finish April 1979.

Mid-1970s: atmosphere of continued unrest by pro-democracy movement, labor unrest, strikes, demonstrations, etc. Government gets low scores for human rights and civil rights.

Start building indoor swimming pool at Chamsil on November 28, 1977 and finish in December 1980.

(see IDC 1976) Politicians call for “sports nationalism” policy to earn public support for the regime. Pak Chong Gyu, as head of the National Marksmen’s League, oversees the International Shooting Championships hosted by Seoul in the fall of 1978.

Economic recession 1979; labor and civil unrest worsens. Feb. 15, 1979 Pak Chong Gyu appointed head of the S. Korean Amateur Athletic Association located in the Ministry of Education, thus becoming the chair of the KOC. He submits a book with guidelines for bidding for the 1988 Olympics to the Vice Minister of Education after one month.

U.S. President Carter visits S. Korea from June 29 to July 1 to express disapproval of the Park regime’s suppression of human rights. Sometime after July 23 the ‘3 Parks’ (President Park, Pak Chong-gyu, Pak Ch’an

July 23, 1979 opposition party under Kim Young Sam calls for restoration of democracy, release of prisoners of conscience, immediate revision of Park's Yushin constitution, and judicial reform.

Aug. 1979 YH Trading Co. protest turns violent in Seoul; woman laborer falls out window during siege at opposition party headquarters and dies. Police put an end to the siege by force August 11. Opposition party members hold sit-in protest at National Assembly.

Opposition leader Kim YS expelled from National Assembly Oct. 4, 1979;

Opposition party walks out of National Assembly on Oct. 11; civil protests spread in Pusan and Masan calling for reform. Paratroopers sent in to intimidate demonstrators.

Oct. 26, 1979 KCIA Chief assassinates President Park. Prime Minister Choi Kyu Hah becomes acting president and declares martial law, "elected" Dec. 6, rules as figurehead only until his resignation August 16, 1980. It is ironic that Park is assassinated allegedly for wanting to use force against demonstrators, and then that the replacement government ends up firing on demonstrators within 7 months.

"12.12 Incident" – A younger Army officer loyal to Park enacts a military coup against the group that assassinated President Park, led by Colonel

Hyôn - Minister of Culture) meet and decide to try to bid for the 1988 Olympics to try to calm the political mood of the public.

A new mayor, Chông Sang Ch'on is installed October 1, 1979, and given the order to prepare a draft document announcing intent to bid for the 1988 Olympics and the 1986 Asian Games.

October 8, 1979 Intent to bid for the 1988 Olympics is announced at a government press conference in Seoul.

Chun Doo Hwan. From December 12, 1979 to August 29, 1980, Chun consolidates his power as head of ROK in stages: December 12, 1979 takes over Army, April 1980 takes over KCIA, May 17 declares expanded martial law, August 1980 is elected President by ruling junta.

\*May 18 to 27, 1980 Kwangju Uprising and Massacre - Army fires on student-led protesters in battles over 10-day period resulting in slaying of several hundred or several thousand civilians, depending on whose estimate one believes. U.S. government which is officially in charge of ROK Army stands by passively.

August 22, 1980, Chun promotes self to 4-star General, resigns from Army. August – figurehead President Choi Kyu Hah resigns. August 27 Chun elected president by military-backed National Council for Unification.

July 14, 1980 Cho Sang Ho is appointed head of the S. Korean Amateur Athletic Association.

November 27, 1980 Seoul City Hall issues internal document against the Olympic bid.

November 29, 1980 General Chun Doo Hwan sees the Seoul City Hall report juxtaposed against a report from the Ministry of Education recommending the bid be pursued.

December 2, 1980 General Chun decides to pursue the bid and the telegram announcing ROK's intent to bid is sent to Lausanne.

1980 Building Law enacted to improve urban atmosphere.

August 1980 - Chun regime creates "5 Million Housing Units" campaign for next 10 years

October 1981 S. Korea chosen as host for 1988 Olympics in Baden-Baden; known as the "Baden-Baden Miracle" in Korean history.

So-called 5<sup>th</sup> Republic (1981-1988) begins - February 1981 Chun "elected" president formally and new National Assembly is elected. Chun implements "3S Policy" to calm public unrest, a social appeasement policy of relaxing restrictions on 'sex, sports, screen'.

Through 5<sup>th</sup> Republic, civilian unrest due to oppressive atmosphere; students, labor, religious social justice, intellectuals, many imprisoned and tortured, and press is censored. See Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch reports 1980s ROK.

June 1987 - coalition of pro-democracy protesters forces the Chun government to give in; Chun appoints his vice-president General Roh Tae Woo to succeed him. Roh promises direct elections, which are held in December and won by himself. Roh is sworn in February 1988. Still, there is curfew at midnight, air raid drills every Friday, press censorship, government surveillance of civilians, imprisonment and torture of dissidents, non-government backed labor unions are illegal and activists outlawed, the teachers union is illegal... Most of these restrictions on civil liberties fall gradually over the next

November 1981, S. Korea chosen as host for 1986 Asian Games in New Delhi by Asian Games Federation.

April 22, 1983, Presidential decree #11,107 creates Seoul Olympic Organizing Committee.

1986 Asian Games held in Seoul

1988 Summer Olympic Games held in Seoul, South Korea.

December 31, 1981 Urban Redevelopment Law (#3646) decreed.

Mokdong new town development 1984-1986 in western Seoul entails forcibly evicting poor people who were forcibly moved there in Chonggyech'on and other downtown redevelopment in the late 1960s. Clearance becomes violent. Initially government hoped to profit from the new apartment complexes and use the profits for Olympics preparations but public forces abandonment of this scheme.

"City beautification" projects clean up for Asian Games hosting.

1986-1988 Sanggyedong northern Seoul clearance and redevelopment grows violent and earns international coverage. One village of squatters is unable to stay on land they were relocated to due to Olympic torch route visibility. Sympathy of national public goes with the dislocated group.

February 1988 - Roh regime announces "2.5 Million Housing Units" plan.

Homeless people collected and

decade.

National Assembly conducts inquiry into 1980 Kwangju Massacre; in 1996 former President/General Chun Doo Hwan and President/General Roh Tae Woo are convicted for mutiny, corruption; both serve time before being pardoned by Kim Dae Jung.

continue with elections every 5 years (1987, 1992, 1997, 2002, 2007)

1993 Kim Young Sam inaugurated as the first elected civilian President since 1960, after his party joins the party of General Roh Tae Woo.

1998 Kim Dae Jung inaugurated as President.

2003 Roh Moo Hyun inaugurated as President.

banned from streets prior to Olympics.

April 1989 - Two new towns announced for outskirts of Seoul, Bundang and Ilsan.

Redevelopment continues through the 1990s with forced evictions but due to the “joint redevelopment” system of alliance between land owners and construction companies, responsibility is transferred to private auspices.

1998 City Hall releases first 5-year plan of redevelopment in response to demands from civic groups.

2000 National government adopts minimum housing standards law, considered a victory for the Urban Poor Peoples Movement.

Redevelopment in central Seoul aims to permanently dislocate “Mia-Ri Texas” red light district in northeast central Seoul. Sex industry groups protest.

2006 - Most 1960s era neighborhoods of Seoul have been replaced.



## Appendix B: A partial listing of organizations and archival sources covering housing issues and the struggle against forced evictions in Seoul

### 1. The Urban Poor Peoples Movement:

Past and present activists and leadership in major religious institutions, social movement organizations, and research institutes, including:

Korea Coalition on Housing Rights (Chugô Yônhap)

The Catholic Church - Urban Mission Committee

The United Presbyterian Church

The Methodist Church

The Won Buddhist Conference

Catholic Organization of the Urban Poor (formerly known as the Federation of Catholic Pastoral Workers Among the Urban Poor)

Bogumjari (Bird's Nest) intentional communities created by Fr. John Daly and Rev. Jae Jong Ku

National Urban Street Vendors Association

Ministers, priests, monks and nuns of former "moon village" districts and of redeveloped neighborhoods

Purûn Film Collective video documentaries 1) Sangyedong Olympics (1988) - English version, Korean version, 2) Bongch'ondong Resistance (1994), 3) Haengdangdong People (1997), 4)

Another World We Are Making (1999)

Urban Poor Peoples Newspaper (1987)

homeless persons advocacy groups and shelters (since late 1990s)

### 2. Print archives of national non-profit organizations and research institutes; also past and present community organizers of these groups:

Korea Center for City and Environment Research (KOCER)

Citizens Coalition for Economic Justice (CCEJ)

People in Solidarity for Participatory Democracy

Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development

### 3. Government sources - interviews with current and former officials, advisors, researchers; archival collections of documents and statistical data:

Seoul City Government -

City Hall Archives

Mayor's Office

City Plan - annual

Seoul Statistical Yearbook - annual

Seoul Development Institute

Local Government - borough (gu) and district (dong) offices

Korean Census on Population and Housing - every 5 years

Ministry of Construction and Transportation

Korea Research Institute for Human Settlement (KRIHS) – (Kukt'o Yônguwôn)

Korea Development Institute

Korea

Housing

Corporation

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