



CHAPTER 2

Chicago 2016 Olympic Bid and Opposition

Abstract Chicago's bid for the 2016 summer Olympics began in 2006 and ended in 2009 when it was defeated in the first round of voting by the IOC. The city's Olympic bid had the support of the mayor and downtown business leaders and appeared to provide an opportunity for redeveloping parts of the downtown core in a manner fitting with the city's neoliberal development trajectory. Yet, the Olympic bid also generated opposition, most notably from a coalition of community activists calling itself No Games Chicago. The efforts of this opposition group helped to raise concerns about the Chicago bid in the international competition and establish a new model for effective opposition to Olympic driven development.

Keywords 2016 Olympic bid • *Book of Evidence* • Community benefits agreement • Gentrification • IOC host city contract • Neoliberal development • No Games Chicago • USOC

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS IN CHICAGO

Chicago was incorporated in 1837 and is a home rule city under the Illinois state constitution. Illinois provides for local home rule and is fairly permissive. Illinois law allows home rule municipalities to tax income or earnings, or occupations, and does not impose a debt ceiling. Chicago city government has a mayor-council structure, with 50 council districts, called

wards, with aldermen elected to four-year terms to represent district residents. The legislative body, the city council, is organized into 16 standing committees to conduct city business. The council also elects a vice mayor. The mayor is the city's chief executive and is responsible for managing city government. Mayoral powers include appointing city officers, directors, and commissioners (including the police superintendent), as well as members of nearly 150 city boards and commissions (including the school board). The mayor submits the city's annual budget and presides over council meetings. The mayor can veto council bills, which can be overridden with a two-thirds vote. Although technically the mayor has weak executive powers, the Chicago Democratic political machine has helped centralize power in the mayor's office. For example, the mayor picks the aldermen he wants to chair the powerful zoning, finance, and housing committees which help determine how public resources are allocated in Chicago. Historically, Chicago has been a city of low voter turnout (Bennett et al. 2017b, 272).

Chicago politics are dominated by the Democratic party, with race and class central to manifesting and maintaining power. Spatially, this plays out in both neighborhood boundaries and council ward boundaries. The 50 wards are roughly contiguous with Chicago's 77 community areas, and these are not exactly the same as Chicago neighborhoods. Chicago, the third largest city in the United States, is also one of the most racially segregated. The political geography of council ward boundaries tends to reflect the city's racial and ethnic divisions, with poorer wards getting fewer resources. The South Side of Chicago has the city's poorest African American neighborhoods, followed by the West Side. These neighborhoods were flash points for urban riots in the mid-1960s (Abu-Lughod 2007, 84).

Historically, politically powerless neighborhoods became the locations for public housing, the Kennedy Expressway, and the Chicago campus of the University of Illinois, all of which contributed to white flight. The highest concentration of public housing construction took place in these politically powerless neighborhoods, amounting to 20% of the total housing stock in communities such as Bronzeville (Abu-Lughod 2007, 86). As core components of the city's economic development policy in the early 1960s, these projects did not employ local workers, did not provide a community development infrastructure for poor neighborhoods, and contributed to the separation and segregation of these communities from the city (Anderson and Pickering 1968; Goldstein 2012; Grimshaw 1992;

Vale 2013). Smith and Judd (1984, 187) noted three changes that emerged in this period: fiscal welfare replaced social welfare, the uneven distributional effects of growth exacerbated urban inequalities, and the privatization of public decision making limited political and policy responsiveness.

When Chicago bid for the 2016 Olympics, Richard M. Daley was mayor (serving from 1989–2011). Richard M. Daley is the son of the legendary Chicago mayor and Democratic machine boss, Richard J. Daley (who was mayor from 1955–1976). Patronage jobs, large campaign contributions from the global economic sectors, professional campaigning, and control over the city council were hallmarks of the Richard M. Daley regime (Simpson et al. 2002, 132). Under the younger Daley, urban development followed a neoliberal path, focusing on corporate center redevelopment and gentrification that benefited developers, investors, and property speculators over residents (Bennett et al. 2017b). The corporate center scheme privileged the Loop and the lakefront, and gentrification took investment into poorer areas where land values were low (Spirou 2007). Since much of the South Side and the West Side were potential targets for gentrification, this meant that low-income housing units were targeted for future redevelopment. These projects were paid for by a tax increment financing (TIF) scheme. The state legislature permitted the use of TIF in 1977 and Chicago first used this redevelopment tool in 1984 (Lentino 2017). As a result, Chicago employed TIF rules for physical redevelopment activities. Analyses of the city's TIF districts show that power has become more centralized in the mayor's office and policy making was less transparent (Kane and Weber 2016; Weber 2010). Furthermore, redevelopment policy decisions are responsive to investors and insurers. The city paid a premium to sell speculative TIF bonds for redevelopment in nonresidential real estate, ultimately shifting the costs to residents in terms of higher property taxes when the 2007–2008 financial crisis hit Chicago which prompted public outrage. The shifting of public resources toward business and corporate beneficiaries has been ongoing for some time. As had been the case in the past communities were neither considered in policy making nor were they guaranteed any benefits from policy choices.

The old vision of Chicago-as-manufacturing-center had crumbled and the new politics of economic development focused on remaking Chicago into a global, consumption-oriented city, with familiar components including entrepreneurial government, market-oriented social values, and a

better business climate (Wilson and Sternberg 2012, 983). Wilson and Sternberg (2012) describe Chicago's neoliberalization process as evolving through three phases. In the first, Mayor Daley emphasized a narrative of decline that needed to be changed. Wilson and Sternberg describe this rollback phase as retrenching the welfare state and rehabilitating poor, predominantly African American, neighborhoods.

The mid-1990s marked the second phase that used new rhetoric to support a new vision. This rhetoric included an entrepreneurial city government, the importance of public-private partnerships, and a globally competitive city with a gentrified and redeveloped downtown. The Commercial Club of Chicago, with a number of Chicago's biggest corporate, construction, and real estate businesses serving as co-authors, weighed in with its Metropolis 2020 Plan, which envisioned an upscale city built around a gleaming corporate center in the Loop. Tax increment financing became the preferred method of implementing this vision. The Loop, South Loop-Bronzeville, South Campus-Pilsen, and the East-West Wicker Park areas became the places where this vision took root in the form of 123 TIF supported projects in the 1995–2000 period alone (Wilson and Sternberg 2012, 983). Although this period was a difficult environment, the political incorporation of some neighborhood groups and community organizations occurred, albeit without funding from a federal Urban Development Action Grant as had occurred in the past (Boyd 2008). A coalition of Bronzeville community groups formed the Mid-South Planning and Development Commission in 1990 with a \$271,000 grant by the McCormick-Tribune Foundation. This community coalition worked with the Chicago Department of Planning and Development to write the grant application and to increase the number of organizations and residents involved (Boyd 2008, 59). As investment began to target poor and minority areas outside the Loop, so did efforts to reduce the risk for investors by isolating and containing the poor through more intensive policing practices.

The third phase of Daley's neoliberal program included shifting the rhetoric about the poor as conditions on the ground changed (Wilson and Sternberg 2012, 984). As in the past, the racism of Operation Disruption, a policing approach that began around 1996, increased both police crackdowns (using sting and shakedown tactics) and surveillance activities (such as placing 30 cameras around African American and Latino neighborhoods). These neighborhoods were "seen" as uniformly crime ridden. But increased police activity was the extent of what these poor neighborhoods

received and the deterioration continued. The terrorist attacks of September 2001 helped to further consolidate mayoral power in Chicago. There was, however, little effect on the city's political economy as the continuing decline in local revenues was having increasingly dramatic effects on administering city services (e.g., Simpson et al. 2002). For example, by 2005, before the national subprime mortgage crisis hit with unrelenting force, Chicago's South Side neighborhoods were suffering seven times the national average of mortgage foreclosures, leading Wilson and Sternberg to conclude that "these neighborhoods...seemed to be consigned to an alternative reality" (2012, 986). As the city's budget woes grew, Daley looked for "creative" responses such as privatization agreements for Midway Airport and for the city's 36,000 parking meters. Daley's administration sought to end Chicago's high-rise public housing and to restructure the public school system with an emphasis on charter schools. These initiatives further divided Chicagoans as the Olympic bid was rolled out.

After the failure of the Olympic bid, the city continued to pursue mega-project developments funded by TIFs under the leadership of Mayor Rahm Emanuel. The city established 135 Opportunity Zone census tracts under federal legislation that covered tax breaks and other incentives for development that cover the city's most economically distressed neighborhoods on the South and West Sides (Ori 2019). One parcel sits across both: the 49-acre Michael Reese Hospital site. This site originally was purchased for \$86 million in 2008 by the city of Chicago as the intended home for the Olympic Village and later offered as part of Chicago's unsuccessful bid to land the second Amazon headquarters (Nitkin 2019a).

THE 2016 OLYMPIC BID

In his inaugural address to start what would be his final term in office, Mayor Daley (2007) said:

Now, with the support of the people of Chicago, we've embarked on a bold new vision for our city—hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games in the summer of 2016. We're all proud that Chicago was selected to become the United States applicant city. Our bid committee and the business community provided the plans, but it was the commitment and enthusiasm of people across our city and region that made the difference. The United States Olympic Committee understood that the people of Chicago are its greatest

strength. And it was the promise of what the Games could do for all our people that convinced me to support this effort.

They would be a catalyst for transit improvements, more affordable housing and new facilities in our neighborhoods. They would bring new businesses, jobs, revenue and other economic benefits that would help all our people. And as we move forward on the international bid process, we'll make sure that all Chicagoans have a voice in the plan. I believe deeply in the Olympic spirit—that people from different backgrounds and ethnicities can come together to pursue their dreams.

In the period 2006–2009, Chicago bid to host the 2016 Olympic games. Chicago's bid ended when it was knocked out in the first round of voting by the IOC in its meeting in Copenhagen in October 2009. The origin of the bid was typical of cities using the mega-event strategy to redevelop the downtown for tourism, gain short-term revenues, and enhance the city's image (Burbank et al. 2001). It started in May 2006 when Mayor Daley announced that a newly formed public–private partnership, the Chicago 2016 Committee headed by a retired insurance executive but with Daley serving as an honorary chairman, would bid for the 2016 games on behalf of the city. The committee numbered 300-plus members from the city's corporate, business, government, civic, neighborhood, and sports communities. Its board of directors included a number of politically connected and powerful Chicagoans such as former planning commissioner Valerie Jarrett and financier John W. Rogers, Jr., both also personal friends of Barack and Michelle Obama (Stein 2011). The bid was premised on the use of public space and existing facilities in order to provide a compact spatial footprint in downtown Chicago, providing “a games in the heart of the city” (Zervas 2016, 217). Three locations ultimately were central to plans for Olympic redevelopment: Grant Park and Monroe Harbor, east of the Loop and adjacent to McCormick Place; Washington Park on the South Side; and on the West Side spanning University of Illinois, Chicago's sports facilities, the United Center, and Douglas Park (Bennett et al. 2013, 370). In addition to making it easily accessible to athletes and spectators, this compact design would focus investment in the downtown area's tourism infrastructure—which would provide a revenue stream long after the games ended—and would yield a \$500 million profit for the city as the host.

In fall 2006, the bid committee decided that its Olympic Stadium would be erected in Washington Park in Chicago's mid-South Side; the

\$400 million stadium would be a temporary structure capable of seating 80,000 (Bennett et al. 2017a, 233). This plan was indicative of the general thinking of the bid committee and its membership (city government, the Chicago Park District, and the city's business and civic elites): Chicago parks and other public spaces, many located in poor and working communities in the South Side and West Side neighborhoods, were identified as the sites for most of the Olympic venues (Bennett et al. 2013, 366). The Chicago bid book that was submitted to the USOC in January 2007 indicated that the \$1.1 billion Olympic Village would be constructed at McCormick Place on a site overlooking the lakefront on the Near South Side, adjoining the convention center (Bennett et al. 2017a, 233). After being selected by the USOC as the United States' candidate city, the bid committee looked to make the proposals for facilities and venues more concrete. As is typical, the bid book was modified before it was submitted as Chicago's candidature file to the IOC in early 2008, although there was ongoing conflict between the USOC and 2016 bid committee and between the USOC and the IOC (Baade and Sanderson 2012; Macur 2009). When the IOC announced that Chicago was among the four finalists for 2016 consideration, Mayor Daley's chief of staff, Lori Healy, joined the bid committee in January 2009 in a newly designated position, president of the committee. The bid committee again modified its physical plan to host the games (Bennett et al. 2013). In this iteration, the \$125 million swimming venue was moved to Washington Park, from Douglas Park on the West Side (Bennett et al. 2017a, 233). The final candidature file was submitted to the IOC in February 2009 and the IOC conducted its site visit in April 2009.

In spring 2009, the bid committee announced the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with a coalition of neighborhood organizations, labor unions, and businesses. The MOU established goals for local hiring and affordable housing from Olympics-related construction and hosting operations, all of which was contingent on Chicago actually getting the games. In June, the Chicago bid committee (and the bid committees from the three other international competitor cities) made its pitch to the IOC in Lausanne. At the same time, the City of Chicago purchased a large property—the Michael Reese Hospital—adjacent to McCormick Place for construction of the proposed Olympic Village. After returning from Lausanne, the bid committee visited all 50 council wards, holding “public hearings” to present their 2016 plans to the communities. In September 2009, just ahead of the IOC vote to select the 2016 host

city, the Chicago city council voted to provide a financial backstop for the costs of hosting the 2016 games, one of the conditions in the IOC host city contract (Bennett et al. 2013, 378).

CONTESTING THE OLYMPIC BID

Early in the bid process, there was very little broad-based criticism of the Chicago 2016 Olympic bid. Over time, however, there were two main sources of opposition to the bid. One was a grassroots coalition of activists and community organizers with disparate interests calling itself No Games Chicago (NGC). This avowedly anti-Olympics group questioned whether the city could afford to host the games. This group “as a rule, anticipated insider deals, profit taking, and cost overruns that would be borne by the public” (Bennett et al. 2017a, 231). The second source of opposition was from neighborhood activists mainly from the South Side communities “who distrusted the Chicago 2016 Committee’s pledges to support sustainable economic development and who feared Olympics-generated gentrification” (Bennett et al. 2017a, 231).

The NGC group came together in a kickoff meeting at the University of Illinois, Chicago, in January 2009. The meeting coincided with Chicago being named the United States candidate for the 2016 games. This started a very busy year of anti-Olympics organizing and contestation that followed the IOC calendar, including a candidate city site visit in April by the IOC Technical Team, the June presentation in Lausanne by the bid committee, and then the IOC host city selection vote in October.

Social activist Bob Quellos became interested in the local consequences of hosting the Olympics after reading an article by sports journalist Dave Zirin on the human costs of the transformation of Athens for the 2004 games when he was in graduate school (personal communication, June 18, 2019). In spring 2006, as Chicago’s political leaders established an exploratory committee for the 2016 Olympic games, Quellos met with a like-minded activist, Ramsin Canon, in Millennium Park and over a two-hour meeting they sketched out a rough plan for opposing the 2016 bid. Their next year, 2007, was spent doing basic groundwork such as setting up a website and other media, developing factsheets, making buttons, and doing basic research on how the Olympics affected host cities. Quellos (2007) contextualized Chicago’s 2016 bid in a critical analysis published in *Counterpunch*. Quellos noted the ongoing transformation of Chicago from a city of and for its residents into a city for the wealthy and for

visitors. Quellos also spelled out the disregard for poor and working class Chicagoans and the growing sociospatial inequalities in the city. As Quellos (2007) stated “the Olympic torch will be blazing a trail of gentrification through the South Side.” NGC focused on the “glaring contradictions highlighted” by the Olympic bid on residents and neighborhood communities, such as declining urban habitability and economic dispossession punctuated by new housing rules making the right to return to old neighborhoods problematic, diminishing public space, and the lack of policy access to decisions about large-scale gentrification. The NGC activists tried to meet with community organizations and neighborhood groups in order to build a larger coalition, but the most common responses they received were silence, or that these groups would not oppose the mayor, or people simply would not show up for meetings. Quellos attributes this, in part, to Mayor Daley and the power of Chicago machine politics: “Daley was good at making sure people didn’t oppose him; he kept the opposition close and used it to his advantage” (personal communication, June 18, 2019). The city’s fabled political culture, the “Chicago way”—where dissent is not tolerated and information is provided on a need to know basis—was evident.

After reading *5 Ring Circus: Myths and Realities of the Olympic Games* on the community-level effects of the Vancouver bid, Quellos contacted the book’s author, Chris Shaw. Shaw was the spokesperson for the No Games coalition in Vancouver and thus an excellent resource for the Chicago activists because Vancouver had experienced what Chicago was facing. Shaw was one of the featured guests at NGC’s kickoff meeting in January 2009 at the University of Illinois, Chicago. Ramsin Canon organized the meeting by bringing together progressive activists from the Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE) in the Chicago Teachers’ Union (CTU), Southside Together Organizing for Power (STOP), and the Coalition to Protect Public Housing among others, and contacting the press. The NGC organizational meeting was inadvertently aided by the Chicago 2016 bid committee, which sent out an email blast about the meeting. The meeting was attended by 200 people, including national and local news media representatives, the heads of Chicago unions, as well as some 2016 bid committee staff. The meeting opened with the reading of letter of support from Martin Slavin of Games Monitor and featured a number of speakers. The big story, however, became cost overruns. When he left Vancouver that morning to fly to Chicago, Shaw took the morning edition of the *Vancouver Sun* with him. The newspaper’s headline story

was news on the growing cost of the 2010 winter games: up to \$6 billion. Shaw held up a copy of the newspaper during his remarks at the meeting (Canon 2009), and this image became the lead story on the local Chicago ABC news. After the kickoff meeting, No Games Chicago emerged as a voice that the media relied on to discuss costs and the issues surrounding the potential consequences of winning the bid and signing the IOC's host city contract. At their next organizing meeting, NGC had 50 new attendees.

The remainder of 2009 was spent publicizing the community consequences of bidding for the Olympics through dozens of community meetings and 75 media appearances. Although the privatization process had started earlier, the anti-Olympics opposition narrative was built around the Daley policy of privatization as a solution for Chicago's growing financial crisis, the lack of transparency and integrity in city hall, and the general dismay with the Daley administration's mismanagement of the city's infrastructure services in housing, education, health care, and transportation. These topics were widely covered in the local news media, and NGC summarized these as "no money," "no ideas," and "save the city with the games." The deleterious effects of the city's problems affected the everyday lives of Chicagoans but disproportionately affected poorer Chicagoans. NGC's Tom Tresser noted that message clarity and discipline were important to the NGC media strategy, which he described as both "doing due diligence for the IOC" and "speaking out for the public's interest in Chicago" (personal communication, March 20, 2020). For NGC, the Olympics were "the wrong project, for the wrong city, at the wrong time." This message was consistently presented, and carefully documented on the NGC website; the website remains available, is regularly updated, and a resource for anti-Olympics organizing.

A number of different protests were on display for the IOC Technical Team site visit in early April 2009 (Chicago was the first of the four candidate cities on the IOC itinerary). Around 3000 off-duty members of the Chicago police union protested at City Hall, one of the many represented groups working without a contract for the nearly two years of the financial crisis (Tareen 2009). The IOC visit gave this protest added visibility and was a reminder of the financial problems facing the city's workforce, and the police chanted "no contract, no Olympics." No Games Chicago hosted a rally at Federal Plaza attended by more than 200 people to hear speakers, including Chris Shaw, discuss the city's financial problems, mismanagement of recent urban development projects, crumbling

infrastructures of housing, schools and hospitals, and question the mayor's and 2016 bid committee's openness with their pledge to privately produce an Olympic games. After the rally, the protestors marched to the Aon Center, the home of the 2016 bid committee, located adjacent to the Fairmont Hotel where the IOC technical team was staying. The protestors chanted "IOC, leave us be" among others chants. NGC requested a meeting with the IOC technical team, following a suggestion by Chris Shaw based on his experience with the IOC in Vancouver (Quellos, personal communication, June 19, 2019). Among the groups protesting were the coalition group Communities for Equitable Olympics, which was seeking a community benefits ordinance from the city prior to the IOC site visit.

In the month before the IOC site visit, the Chicago police conducted undercover surveillance to monitor the activities of NGC and Bob Quello, attended NGC meetings, monitored websites, collected pamphlets, and went through their trash. These activities were detailed in a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) public records request that later was reported by a columnist in the independent weekly *Chicago Reader* on six instances of police department spying on Chicagoans during the Daley and Emanuel mayoralty (Joravsky 2015). Joravsky noted the irony of the police protesting against the Olympics because the mayor, pleading poverty, would not give police officers a raise but was ready to spend "hundreds of millions" on the Olympics. In addition, Joravsky (2015) reported that in a follow-up call regarding the FOIA request, the FOIA officer told Quello that he had the "First Amendment worksheets" on NGC. This term was the name on the forms the Chicago police department used to open a surveillance operation and investigate groups exercising their First Amendment rights.

In June, when the Chicago 2016 bid team went to Lausanne to make their presentation to the IOC, NGC sent three members there as well. NGC claimed to have an unnamed IOC insider to observe the proceedings and to make the pitch as best as they could to IOC members to award the games to someone else. The Chicago bid presentation was a big news story in Chicago with the focus on the question of signing a host city contract with the IOC. This contract stipulated that the host city government is responsible for any cost overruns. In the months preceding this meeting, Mayor Daley took every opportunity to state that the games would not cost Chicago taxpayers and that he would not sign any agreement to the contrary. In Lausanne, Daley and the Chicago 2016 committee told the IOC they would sign a standard host city contract (Joravsky 2009).

While in Lausanne, NGC activists Tom Tresser, Martin Macias, Jr., and Rhoda Whitehorse stood outside the Olympic Museum, where the presentations were taking place, to answer questions for the media and to hand out copies of their *Book of Evidence*, explaining why the IOC should not award Chicago the Olympics (No Games Chicago 2009a). The activists delivered 125 copies of their anti-Olympics bid book to the IOC, through its communication director, to be distributed to each member. In addition, they met with IOC members and members of other candidate city delegations in public spaces around the Museum and hotel. Back in Chicago, Quellos, Francesca Rodriguez, and Rachael Goodstein did an anti-Olympics media blitz. After the Lausanne meeting, NGC followed up with continuous daily emails to IOC members from mid-July until the October selection vote, touching on the points that they made in the *Book of Evidence* and covering the scramble on the ground in Chicago following the June presentation.

When Daley and the bid committee returned from Lausanne, damage control was on their agenda. First, bid committee members met with small groups of aldermen (perhaps to circumvent the state's open meetings regulations). Later they went on a "50 wards in 50 days" tour across the city, ostensibly meeting with community members to discuss the Chicago bid and to reassure Chicagoans that the 2016 committee was listening to them. NGC attended all these meetings and displayed signs, modeled on the yellow, diamond shaped road warning signs that said "Staged Event Ahead." NGC members also met with community groups during this time. When the Chicago Civic Federation examined the 2016 bid's revenue and expenditure projections and issued a report in support of the bid, NGC issued a factual rebuttal and pointed out the interlocking relationships between Civic Federation members, the Daley administration, and the IOC (No Games Chicago 2009b). The NGC report also provided a review of the 2016 committee's budget model. NGC pointed out the problems previous Olympic host cities experienced in getting ready to host the Olympics and drawing heavily on the news of Vancouver's preparations. At the end of August, the *Chicago Tribune* (2009) reported on the results of a telephone survey of 380 registered Chicago voters and found that 45% of respondents did not want the Olympics at all and 84% did not want the games if it meant spending public money on them. The poll also found that 75% of Chicago respondents opposed Mayor Daley's promise of an unlimited guarantee of funding if the games lost money which the host city contract signed by Daley in Lausanne stipulated.

In the week before the IOC selection meeting in Copenhagen, NGC held an anti-Olympics rally at City Hall on September 29, 2009. The rally was endorsed by a number of organizations and included local media follow up (No Games Chicago 2009c). NGC also organized “Clout Fest,” a way for Chicagoans to respond creatively to the city’s bid. Among the responses to the call for messaging against the bid was the “Chicagoans for Rio” parody website that temporarily flummoxed the city’s media which reported that it was traced to a computer in Rio de Janeiro (Gilmer 2009). Once again, NGC raised money and sent three members to Copenhagen to monitor the events, publicize their interests, and try to influence the selection vote. Along with other items, the NGC activists distributed a postcard with the *Chicago Tribune*/WGN poll results to IOC members, via the IOC communications office. While in Copenhagen, NGC members took time to meet with their counterparts from Tokyo. The Copenhagen meeting resulted in a surprise for the Chicago bid committee, and delight for the NGC activists, when Chicago was defeated in the first round of IOC voting (see No Games Chicago 2009d; Tresser 2009).

After the Copenhagen meeting, NGC members largely went their own ways. Some NGC members met with activists from the Sochi 2014 resistance while attending a conference sponsored by the Vancouver Resistance Network in February 2010. Quellos spoke at that conference, but another member of NGC, Martin Macias, Jr., was detained and interrogated for two hours at the Canadian border and sent to Seattle (Committee to Protect Journalists 2010). After the Vancouver 2010 winter games, NGC members were in contact with Catalytic Communities activists establishing RioOnWatch, a community observation project in Rio de Janeiro concerned with the impact of the Olympics on Rio’s *favelas*. NGC members also talked with opponents of the Boston 2024 Olympics and gave them the NGC signage which was later used in Boston. In all of these instances, NGC shared the contact information they had compiled and research findings on the IOC, the Olympic games, and contesting the games with this network of anti-Olympics community organizers and activists. Although there was a fledgling effort to coordinate opposition by organizers from Chicago, Vancouver, London, and Rio de Janeiro in 2009–2010, this action never got off the ground (Quellos, personal communication, September 19, 2020).

THE MEANING OF OPPOSITION TO THE CHICAGO OLYMPIC BID

Bennett and his collaborators (2013) interviewed civic and business elites, members of the bid committee, and some activists to determine what was learned from the bid experience. They found that the elite insiders had not examined why the bid failed and this lack of retrospection meant that the bid's failure held no lessons for future projects (Bennett et al. 2013, 375). Community organizers and activists noted that the bid committee did not consider process concerns, such as meeting with neighborhood residents and community organizations, to develop the bid (Bennett et al. 2013, 374). One attributed some of the change in IOC members' opinions to the No Games Chicago campaign. Another team of scholars addressed the question of learning from failed bids for the IOC and reported that the mayor's office had issued a memo requesting that staff not talk to researchers about the 2016 Olympic bid (Salisbury et al. 2017).

The rationale for bidding was based on three objectives: enhancing Chicago's international brand, providing a youth sports legacy through World Sport Chicago, and improving city cohesiveness (Salisbury et al. 2017, 35–42). This latter objective focused on Chicago's history of racial separation and segregation. "There were hopes that bringing the Olympic games to the city and integrating it into all of the neighborhoods would help rally the city" (Salisbury et al. 2017, 42). Interviewees reported that the acrimonious relationship between the USOC and the IOC over sharing sponsorship and television revenues and the desire of the IOC president to go to a new country were the factors that sunk the Chicago 2016 bid (Salisbury et al. 2017). The report also noted two other important outcomes from the bid: the purchase of the Michael Reese Hospital complex with \$140 million spent and no real plan for development even though the bid book said that housing would be built regardless of the outcome of the bid, and the ten-year union contracts the city negotiated with its public sector workers to ensure peace during the Olympic games to meet the IOC host city contract requirement of a no-strike clause.

The NGC community organizers focused on issues that were relevant on the ground in Chicago without the Olympics: cost overruns, gentrification and displacement, and civil rights abuses. For them, the Olympics simply would have exacerbated an already untenable situation by increasing the scale of gentrification and displacement and the intensity of civil rights abuses. So why bid for the Olympics? NGC's Bob Quellos observed

that “the people in communities don’t believe how awful the IOC is” as an institution (personal communication, June 18, 2019). For Quellos, one important lesson was learning about the IOC and what the IOC expected from the host city government. This knowledge can then inform a conversation about what hosting the Olympics means to each community’s right to the city. Second, it is important also to examine how decisions to build the Olympic city are made and that includes everything from how the games are financed, to the creation of special Olympic traffic lanes, to the implementation of more intensive policing methods. Putting out the full case, including who is included in policy decision making and why, is an important way of understanding the larger and more intensive scale of activities that hosting a mega-event now entails. To this end, NGC provided links to anti-Olympics critical analyses of other cities’ experiences on their website (No Games Chicago, n.d.). The commercialism and gigantism of the Olympics translate into a more complex field of anti-Olympics contestation. Looking back, opponents in Chicago understood that the anti-Olympics struggle is time consuming and difficult and support is needed. Plugging into the international network gave organizers and activists outside resources to call for advice, assistance, and reassurance. The formation of this network of opponents was just beginning to develop during the 2006–2009 period. Another lesson was the life changing experience of organizing against a mega-event. For some members of NGC, the election of six Democratic Socialists of America aldermanic candidates in 2019 was evidence of a leftward and progressive shift in some Chicago wards (Nitkin 2019b). In part, these organizers saw this shift stemming from the organizing efforts that started after Chicago lost the 2016 bid, although it had deeper roots in local activism. The shift from protest to seeking elective office perhaps demonstrated a maturing of the activist vision and overcoming sectarian and territorial ambitions. For Quellos, these politics focus on working on local issues, and the strategy is: get in early, go grassroots, and say “no” (personal communication, June 18, 2019). But the organizational aspect is also important. NGC was a coalition without an office or phone number. Their efforts took place in an uncertain and turbulent environment (e.g., before Occupy Chicago which started in September 2011) and they came together to oppose a high profile event in the Olympic bid. After the bid ended, and without other unifying issue, members largely left the coalition and went their own ways. A last lesson was to create an effective media strategy for organizing against the Olympics. The NGC activists were well-educated and

dedicated organizers, motivated by social justice concerns in their city. Doing research, documenting everything, organizing it, putting it on the internet, and maintaining and updating the website as a knowledge base and practical resource contributed to building a discourse arena for local and grassroots concerns in Chicago.

It is worth noting that a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was negotiated by Alderman Toni Preckwinkle, one of the few council members to vote against the bid (the document is on the No Games Chicago website). Community benefits agreements—this MOU was such an agreement—have become a tool for bringing an explicit concern for equity into the negotiation of economic development projects. While the efficacy of these community benefit agreements (CBA) continues to be debated (see Gross et al. 2005; Chaskin 2005; Cummings 2006; Simmons and Luce 2009), the range of options associated with such agreements has been expanded (e.g., Partnership for Working Families and the SPIN Project 2007). Mowatt and Travis (2015) examined how community organizations negotiated with the 2016 Chicago bid committee over the period spring 2007 to November 2009 to ensure some benefits from Olympic development would go back into the affected South Side communities, including Washington Park, Kenwood, Grand Boulevard, Oakland and Bronzeville/Douglas. The coalition group Communities for an Equitable Olympics 2016 (CEO), and the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization, along with the Chicago Urban League demanded greater public participation by community groups and lobbied for neighborhood employment opportunities in construction, concessions, event logistics, and public use of facilities (e.g., *Chicago Defender*, 2008). This was the second source of opposition to the Chicago 2016 bid.

CEO participated in the Chicago 2016 bid committee outreach meetings in February and March 2009 and produced a document listing community demands. When Lori Healy was dispatched from the mayor's office to take the new position of president of the bid committee in January 2009, one of her first actions was to expand the bid committee's outreach committee from 10 or so members to 80 to include people who represented community organizations and non-profits across the city. The new group then reconstituted the committee into five subcommittees, opening up the Olympic planning process. The coalition disrupted the city finance committee meeting in March, holding up signs saying, for example, "Our lives are not a game" and "Better Housing, No Olympic Games" (Mowatt and Travis 2015). When the city did not get the community benefits

agreement completed before the IOC technical team site visit in April, CEO held a press conference at city hall to express their unhappiness. In April, the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization led a protest march calling out the city and the 2016 bid committee for a lack of transparency, lack of community participation opportunities, and deception by elected officials when CEO dealt with them for a community benefits agreement (Mowatt and Travis 2015).

These actions led to the MOU with provisions for affordable housing in the Olympic Village, Olympics contracts to be awarded to minority- and women-owned businesses, union and local hiring, job training, and business development programs (Lavine 2009). Whether these provisions would have been enforceable was open to question, since the city of Chicago was not a full party to the agreement (Blue 2009; Cholke 2009). Still, the CBA would have only applied to Olympic construction. As a consequence, with the Michael Reese Hospital complex now part of a proposed \$2 billion dollar development project, there was no discussion of applying the provisions of the CBA to that project.

Efforts by community groups to negotiate benefits for their residents from the promise of Olympic-related development are not uncommon in the public processes surrounding Olympic bids in American cities. What was more notable about the case of the Chicago bid for the 2016 Olympics, however, was the creation of the No Games Chicago opposition. While the concerns of NGC were firmly rooted in mitigating the impact of the 2016 Olympics on their neighborhoods and their city, the creation of NGC was also something more. This organization not only opposed the Chicago bid because its members feared the negative consequences of holding a mega-event, but this grassroots group blazed a new trail by explicitly raising issues about the IOC, the host city contract, and the promises of the local bid committee. The actions of NGC to raise difficult questions about Olympic finances and who would pay helped to shift the conversation about the nature of the Chicago bid. Furthermore, NGC also developed innovative oppositional tactics, such as attending IOC meetings in protest, and developed connections to activists in other cities such as Vancouver, London, and Rio de Janeiro. As such, No Games Chicago marked an important transition in Olympic opposition.

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