The TERRITORY: The Olympic Park

the SITUATION: The Olympic Games which occur every 4 years have been a tradition since 1859, and originated long before that in ancient Greece. The Games have developed over time, and now include Summer and Winter Olympics. Cities that host the games have incredible obligations to meet to accommodate the influx of people during the Games. Stadiums, hotels, cultural centers, transportation systems are among the things that become revamped or built as icons of the host country for the rest of the world to see. The city is transformed for that period of time to a welcoming, internationally visible, space of diplomacy. Separate surveillance systems are put in place, additional security hired, and the city is essentially taken over by the activities of the Olympics. It is the one time that economic hardships seem to be irrelevant in the architectural/urban development of the city. The money for the necessary building and infrastructure projects always seems to surface, perhaps at the cost of other things.

The three main constituents of the Olympic Movement are the International Olympic Committee (“IOC”), the International Sports Federations (“IFs”) and the National Olympic Committees (“NOCs”). Belonging to the Olympic Movement requires compliance with the Olympic Charter and recognition by the IOC.¹ The Olympic charter to establish principles and values of Olympism, to serve as IOC law and to define the rights and obligations of the 4 main constituents of the Olympic movement: the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the International Federations (IFs) and the National Olympic Committees (NOCs), and the Organizing Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOGs).²

While preparing a ground of neutrality, where every country is represented and an equal competitor, the Olympic games also serve as a peaceful international gesture of a type of politically removed camaraderie, or at least desire to cooperate and participate in the world community, and in the diplomatic organizations that surround the Olympic Games. The buildings that come out of the Olympics become just as much icons of international cooperation and globalization as they do welcoming places for athletes to compete, and citizens of many countries to cheer on their athletes. They become the exception in a globalizing world where the rift between haves and have nots is ever growing. Social/economic problems are temporarily eclipsed by the spirit of the Olympic games. The cultural geography movement defines culture and landscape as constituents of social and political processes rather than mere reflections of them; landscapes are often used to advance the attainments of social and political goals and to naturalize and legitimize social reality.³

Often hosting the Olympics becomes the opportunity for the global cities to receive a much needed facelift for the public. These changes often come at an expense to other priorities in the country. Even within the culture of the Olympics there are tradeoffs and concessions that host countries must make for the safety and well-being of the visitors and athletes.

¹ [http://www.olympic.org/content/The-IOC/Governance/Introductionold/](http://www.olympic.org/content/The-IOC/Governance/Introductionold/)
the PLAYERS: The IOC and Olympic Charter representing the Olympic Games as a quasi-sovereign body, Sovereign Host Nation and its communities (for 2014 it is Rio De Janeiro), visitors and athletes from all the international competing countries.

the SCALE: Is at the scale of the city, but specifically the site is about how the buildings advance cultural political ideologies beyond the short time of the Olympic Games. I’m interested in the international perception of the host cities and how the perception changes before during and after the Games. What happens to these icons after the games are over? Do they still get used by the city, absorbed into the urban fabric? Do they become monuments (as in Atlanta)? Do they become discarded, abandoned, places of violence (as in Athens, Greece)? Why? What is the Architects role in the use/misuse of the Olympic village?

possible PRECEDENT STUDIES:

![Seoul Olympic Stadium](image1)
![Atlanta’s Centennial Park](image2)
![Birds nest, Beijing Olympics](image3)

Also, Munich Olympic Park, Athens Olympic Park

the DEFINITION: In this study, the space of diplomacy becomes defined as a temporary condition where a sovereign nation that unofficially assumes a new “government”, the Olympic Games. The ability of the Games to occur fairly and for everyone to be safe and enjoy them requires many concessions and compromises between the Olympic committees and the host countries, between the citizens of the city and the visitors. Because the Olympic Games have so much international clout they take over a city’s consciousness, rendering problems of inequality less important temporarily as the world unites to support their athletes and become welcomed/introduced to the host city. During this space of diplomacy, the architectural artifacts produced, stadiums, parks, hotels become economic catalysts for the city and international symbols of power and goodwill.

Amusing example of “cultural” compromise:

< 100,000 condoms were given to the athletes at the Beijing Olympics. Free condoms existed since the Barcelona games of 1992. Initially there was public concern that because of China’s more conservative culture, they would not agree to the tradition. The Olympic tradition prevailed. They capitalized on the opportunity to educate about preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS.  

4 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8345961.stm