



## Vancouver's Story:

*Looking at the images of Vancouver's Winning Winter Olympic Bid*

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## Introduction

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Social interaction has changed through time from oral based, to textual and now to image-centered communication. The shift into image-centered communication has created new discussions around the power of this method. Society has begun to argue that images are more than mere pictures; in today's world they are power-marketing tools. The marketing companies of the world use images as cultural representations, for the explicit purpose of gaining a precise, and thus planned emotional response. Our research takes this precise concept further. We argue that communication centered on produced images is the latest powerful marketing tool for selling places in the hopes of gaining international reputation and a competitive position within the international market. Like other contemporary cities, Vancouver, British Columbia, competes to attract international investment, tourism, and hallmark events such as the Olympic Games; therefore, it is the production of image which sets the city apart from others in this competitive global market. The cultural and emotional attachment created by powerful images makes the city a valuable commodity and thus generates a packaged, sellable product. These images not only present the city's landscape through the perspective of an artist, but also demonstrate the artist's elitist characteristics. In our paper, the 2010 Vancouver bid committee is the artist; who, behind closed doors, produced an image that effectually sold Vancouver to the International Olympic Committee (IOC). These images became the seductive stories of Vancouver's identity and created an overall narrative to motivate the behaviour of the IOC and other 'privileged' viewing audiences to vote for Vancouver to host the 2010 Winter Games. Consequently, we ask the question; what was sold to the International Olympic Committee (IOC)? To answer this question we need to understand the dynamics of the customer, the IOC. By unraveling the Olympic and IOC history we can begin to discover the calculated

demands the IOC has of the host city. Together, with the theory of place selling, we will define the market and its current conditions and then turn our attention to the actual images produced. By deconstructing these images and then placing them in context, we discover their power and their ability to create an emotional connection for the viewers. It is through the process of both the manifest and latent analysis of two of the main publication materials produced by the bid committee, the 2010 Bid Questionnaire and the video “Our Home,” that we discover what was truly sold to the IOC. It is more than creating a romantic narrative about where we live. It is about elucidating how the bid committee represented our local culture, and the resulting interpretation by an international audience.

### International Olympic Committee: the demanding customer

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On a historic day in 1892, the revival of what is now known as the modern Olympic movement was established by Pierre Coubertin. Appearing alongside this revival was the creation of the International Olympic Committee. Composed of 79 delegates from 12 countries, this committee is the concerned guardian of the Olympic movement and thus goes to great lengths to represent the promotion of friendly relationships between people of different countries through the staging of sport competition at a global scale (IOC).

Through the hundred and plus years the IOC, to this day, has remained in essence a non-profit, non-governmental organization of the modern Olympic movement (IOC). It has a foremost interest in building a “...peaceful and better world through the education of youth” as well as the development of global friendship through fair sportive play (IOC).

Beginning in the late 1970’s, the International Olympic committee became aware of the considerable attractiveness of their product to cities from around the world. No longer did the committee need to actively solicit cities to become hosts, they now had cities

clamoring to host the global event. With the realization of the value the Olympics offered host cities, the IOC struggled with defining evaluation criteria to award both the summer and winter games to the best candidate city (Barney et al. x). Today, the Olympics are globally known as the world's largest pageant of athletic skill and competitive spirit (IOC). However this spirit has now increasingly expanded to encompass a global competition between cities to host the games.

So what makes one city more attractive than another with regards to hosting the Olympics? As with the history of the games itself, this question is full of complexities. Formally, each applicant city is required to provide the IOC with answers to a standard questionnaire, which provides an overview of the city's proposal. From these proposals members of the IOC, as well as external specialists, evaluate the host potential of each city based on a number of criteria. The potential of a city is evaluated by their technical traits such as the infrastructure, the political makeup and the economics of place (Agence France Presse September 24, 2003). The IOC does not, and perhaps cannot, directly ask about other aspects such as geography and aesthetics. Some argue that the aesthetics of place and geography may play an even larger role than those that are directly outlined by the IOC.

Traditionally, the committee has placed a large emphasis on the political soundness of place. A politically sound location is essential to the importance of fair play, a fundamental value of the ancient Olympics. On both a local and global scale, cooperation between diverse groups and countries should ensure a future of global friendship, mutual respect, and overall peace. However, the portrayal of a utopia is not necessarily desired. Instead a strong recognition of the potential problems a city has or may encounter is valued. For no place is without internal struggle; yet, the recognition of the problems is equally as important as the city's ability and resources to work through them.

Another emphasized criteria centers on the economic structure of place. Not only must a place be able to accommodate the event at the time, it must have the resources to carry on a positive legacy of the games (legacy report). The IOC wants the current athletes' needs to be met, but they also want to see proper training programs and facilities to meet the needs of future generations of Olympiads. Thus, a city that can show a financial commitment in the years leading up to, during, and beyond the Olympics, has a better chance at becoming a host. To be able to secure that multifaceted commitment, government and local private sectors need to form a finely crafted relationship. The involvement between public and private sectors is a crucial evaluation criterion in the bid process. In light of previous problematic games such as Chicago<sup>1</sup> and Los Angeles, the IOC pays close attention to the dynamics of government and private sector relationships. A secure partnership between public and private sectors better ensures a more stable framework from which the event can foster its traditional set of values and ethics.

The IOC also considers a city's involvement on a global scale during the evaluation process. In the late nineteenth century, Pierre de Coubertin emphasized that part of the uniqueness of the modern Olympic Games can be contributed to the four year rotation of the games in great cities around the globe (Barney, 18). To earn the privilege of hosting the Olympics, the city must demonstrate its global involvement and importance. Even though the Games span just over two weeks, in those two weeks they draw the world's attention to one city only, giving it insurmountable international recognition. The IOC recognizes the power that the Games have in attracting global media attention and works diligently to select a city that is reflective of the organization's fundamental ethics. Throughout the application

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<sup>1</sup> In 1904, Chicago successfully won the rights to host the Olympics, however, the hosting rights were soon moved to St. Louis. This move from Chicago to St. Louis resulted from the IOC hearing of the fundraising efforts involving private investment Chicago's organization committee was employing (Barney et al, 20).

process, the city's ability to connect with the world becomes highly important and clearly visible; however, during the final stage of the evaluation process, the city more clearly presents this in a one hour presentation to the IOC. In this time, bid committees must be able to present and emotionally connect their city with the international Olympic audience to influence the final vote. The words, images and technology of the presentations make an important cognitive connection with the audience, communicating a relatable geographical and aesthetic quality, creating a place that is emotionally connective to each voter on an individual level.

To create this connection, the role of the city's aesthetics and the geography of its place are also two important factors in the IOC's decision, even though not directly outlined in the IOC's candidate criteria. The picturesque quality of a place plays directly into the creation and maintenance of the Olympic image. The IOC wants to be given potential sites for the display of the Olympic rings and torch. Similar to the assessment of the location of athletic venues, the potential location of the Olympic images are yet another factor in the decision of which city will host the games. Like any corporation that owns a brand or image, the IOC wants an effective and unique environment for the placement of their product. This is evident in the 2000 Olympic bid from Sydney, Australia, where they placed the Olympic rings on the famous Harbour Bridge. Thus, an argument can be supported that the more unique the representation of the Olympic "product", the more likely the city is to remain a forerunner in the bidding competition.

Connected to the aesthetically pleasing locations of Olympic images, is the influential role geography plays in the bid decision. Geography's factor in the decision of location has been widely disputed between the media and the IOC. There is a purported pattern in the selection of host cities. Generally speaking, each country can only be awarded the right to

host the games every twenty- two years. For the North American continent there is observable eight-year spacing between the Olympics. “Observers believe that giving the 2010 games to Vancouver bolsters Europe's chances for 2012 because of a reluctance to give back-to-back Olympics to North America” (NBC- Nine Cities bid for 2012 Olympic Games), therefore putting New York’s bid for the 2012 Olympics also on uncertain grounds. IOC president Jacques Rogge has publicly denounced this theory that the IOC’s decisions on host cities are driven by geographic rotation (NBC- Nine Cities bid for 2012 Olympic Games). However it is hard to ignore the presence of these national and international patterns.

As can be seen, the Olympics are a dynamic and intercultural event, fluid in the forces of time and space. The IOC has the unique responsibility to guard this event that has been a rare and continuous symbol of world harmony, throughout countless dissident world histories, for so many years. Therefore, it demands and insinuates certain standards of host cities. Competition, now more than purely sports-related, has arisen between potential host cities. Having established the necessary background on what the IOC looks for in a host city, we will now move into a theoretical discussion about why and how cities compete for the honour to host an international event like the Olympics.

### Place Promotion: the market conditions

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Before I begin the journey into the theory behind place selling, I want to share an experience I had while doing research on the topic of image production. Even though it may sound highly clichéd, this ‘real life’ experience validates the theories this paper assumes regarding images and their power.

While sitting in a café this week, reading Gillian Rose's book *Visual Methodologies*, I overheard the conversation of two elderly men. One man's story piqued my interest, and coincided with my reading. He was describing the sketches of a friend's travels to Europe in the late 1940s. "Those sketches were better than a picture...out of that sketch came Marianne's personality." (31-Mar-04) In sketching classes, the model up front materializes differently on every student's sheet, and through every student's hand a different personality is shown. Whether the different outcomes are a result of the various perspectives from which the students see the model, the quality of materials they use, or simply, dissimilarity in the mind's eye, the characteristics of the artist are told through the product they produce.

The word "product" has relevance for our discussion in this paper. Because the producers of the images that we are studying are not producing art for art's sake, but rather, are creating an image with fiscal value. The Vancouver Olympic Bid Committee has hired an artistic team to produce an image that will effectually sell Vancouver to the IOC. This image, therefore represent more than the value of those who produce it, it also represents the values of those to whom the product is being targeted. In this case, the IOC. We have already discussed what the IOC is looking for in an Olympic city, so now let us more thoroughly explore the realm of image production, especially with the goal of selling place.

To sell something, unquestionably assumes that the product for sale is a commodity. The commodification of place is an interesting concept. Logan and Molotch, in their 1987 book *Urban Fortunes*, acknowledge the unique quality of place that sets it apart from other commodities; "Places have a certain *preciousness* for their users that is not part of the conventional concept of a commodity...place is indispensable; all human activity must occur somewhere."(17) It is irrefutable: our cultural and biological lives play out against a background of place. Place opens new opportunities and relationships and is layered by the

passage of time and the power of meaning. The difference between home and away is defined through place. Cultural and emotional attachment to place makes it an idiosyncratically valuable commodity. Because such value is attached to place, the production of packaged place-images is an important portal through which to study the culture that produces the image. The meaning of a place is negotiated through the hands of its image creators, just as it is in Marianne's sketches, or in the art of the different students. The final product is mediated through situated social filters and reflects greatly upon the creator. In Molotch's introductory words, "the fundamental attributes of all commodities...are the social contexts through which they are used and exchanged."(1)

#### *Why do people sell place?*

In 1996, Molotch coined a new way of thinking about cities as *growth-machines* in the article "The City as a Growth Machine: towards a political economy of place". Molotch argues that in market societies the desire for growth is all consuming.

"Growth ethic pervades virtually all aspects of local life, including the political system, the agenda for economic development, and even cultural organizations like baseball teams and museums...these growth-machines are historical...but take different forms and have different impacts depending on time and context." (13)

Because it permeates all facets of city life, growth becomes more than a goal; it becomes a way of operating, or a state of mind. This ideology of progress is especially strong as cities are attempting to gain an international reputation and a position in the international market. Both domestic and international investments are crucial to a growing city's operations, and therefore cities compete to gain funding.

Those who compete, however, are unevenly represented. Stephen Quilley calls place-selling, "a kind of big-boys game where only the strongest can change." And in effect, place selling is usually contracted out to private businesses that do not go out of their way to

consult the local public, as in the case of Vancouver's bid campaign. When the elite hold such unchallengeable power, there is consequently an uneven distribution of benefits resulting from growth. As Molotch says, "For those who count, the city is a growth machine, one that can increase aggregate rents and trap related wealth for those in the right position to benefit." (50, 1987) Meanwhile, those who do not "count" suffer the costs of unrelenting development.

David Harvey argues that the desire for progress and focus on growth has changed urban governance. (1989) Although capitalism is still the leitmotif of urban processes in the majority of world cities, Harvey argues that capitalism has simultaneously yoked decision makers and increased their power over the local public. "Though urban processes under capitalism are shaped by the logic of capitalist circulation and accumulation, they in turn shape the conditions and circumstances of capital accumulation at later points in time." (Harvey, 1989) What Harvey is saying is that capitalism, through its very means, cannot help but create change.<sup>2</sup> However, because of capitalism's dynamic and progressive characteristics, it will have to deal with the changes it has created, and therefore will need to modify its own form. Urban elites who attempt to control cities' economic viability, therefore, have to change their techniques. In this way, urban elites are enshrined in their role of control over ever-changing circumstances, but enslaved by the change itself. A general consensus<sup>3</sup> among urban governments has been to become more involved in the creation of new enterprises, to drop their managerial role and develop a more innovative approach to ensure the relative success of a city; an entrepreneurial approach. Public and private participation often characterizes contemporary entrepreneurial cities. Both sectors, public and private, take upon some of the qualities of the other. (Ward, 195-197)

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<sup>2</sup> It is therefore akin and complementary to Molotch's growth-ethics.

<sup>3</sup> A consensus that spans national border, political parties and ideologies, Harvey says.

The entrepreneurial approach has played out differently in every city, and is malleable in the hands of time and the shifting of values. Jessop (1998) suggests that the description “entrepreneurial” should only be given to cities that compete *vis-à-vis* other cities. To get a contemporary feel for the role of place promotion, we will now move from this essentially theoretical background to look at how cities sell themselves.

*How do people sell place? With a focus on the role of sports...*

Globalisation has debatably created an unavoidable climate of competition between “entrepreneurial cities”. This is an assumption that underlies the promotion of place. Globalisation has been around for a long time, and so has place promotion. The origin of advertising cities is challenging to track down. In my mind it has existed ever since two factors coincided: firstly, wide accessibility to personal mobility<sup>4</sup> and the mobility of resources; and secondly, the concept that growth was a good thing and that more resources and people would help the city grow. Stephen Ward argues more thoroughly, that the beginnings of place selling are rooted in the “selling of the frontier” in the United States and Canada. (Ward, 9)

Contemporary cities compete for mobile investment, population, tourism, public funds and hallmark events such as the Olympic Games. Strategies to maintain or enhance entrepreneurial competitiveness vary widely. Stephen Ward’s book *Selling Places*, discusses the techniques that cities employ to promote themselves. This general statement in Ward’s introduction, epitomizes what “selling place” entails:

“Place is packaged and sold as a commodity. Its multiple social and cultural meanings are selectively appropriated and repackaged to create a more attractive place image in which any problems are played down.” (ix)

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<sup>4</sup> ...Mobility being more than just locomotion. Family, gender roles, and other duties and cultural values factor in here as well.

Cities create this image through the use of place logos, slogans, advertising, public relations, subsidies, flagship development projects, flamboyant architectural and urban design statements, trade fairs, cultural and sporting spectacles, heritage, and public art. (5) In the post-industrial city, Ward says the repackaging of an attractive place image includes a sense of vitality, spontaneity and continuing human animation. (189-190)

To achieve such an image, metropolitan municipalities seek to transform their economies into urban entertainment destinations rooted in tourism, sports, culture and retailing. For example, sports events like Sail Boston in 1992 attract the tourist gaze (Urry, 1990, 2002) to scenic watersides and enliven regenerated harbour areas, and have great potential for promotional imagery. (Ward, 205) Cities compete to host special events like the Olympics, which attract worldwide audiences and are often seen as the perfect vehicles through which to publicize such qualities as vivacity and human spirit. Sports also have a popular dimension that makes them easy to justify locally. (Ward, 204) Strengthening citizen's commitment to the city is especially important because a robust population is an important part of "human animation". However, if all cities are competing for the same international goals, then "the practice of selling places may even generate sameness, blandness..." (Kearns and Philo, 21).

Ward suggests that perhaps, in time, "we will understand the very concept of the post-industrial city as a purely promotional construct, devoid of real meanings" (209). This prophecy prioritizes the projection of uniqueness of place, as a potential anchor point in a rootless world of tourism and business, which would give one city an edge over another. An attractive city has to be different. More than just different, it must be on the cutting edge. The city has to prove dynamic and progressive, intellectually and culturally stimulating. Ward says post-industrial cities strive for place distinctiveness by calling upon local history, catchy

slogans, positioning, re-invention and surprise tactics. Kearns and Philo propose that cities principally use contextual and historical difference to identify uniqueness. It is ironic that cities should attempt to repackage and rebuff local tradition to create a new cultural script, when their goal is to gain a place in global markets as a world city. This sense of irony confirms the tension between regional identity based on collective cultural values (and their varying intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability etc.) and global identity based on style, commodification and consumption. (Kearns and Philo, 147) Moreover, the “repackaging” and “appropriation” of “social and cultural meaning” risks altering those meanings robbing their ownership from the local inhabitants. Place identity will be diluted in some ways and made more potent in others, morphing the local sense of belonging, and blurring the line between public and private ownership once again.

Entrepreneurial cities and place-promotion evidently have serious impacts on the urban governance and cultures of contemporary cities. Vancouver is no exception. The 2010 Olympic Bid signifies Vancouver’s entrepreneurial goal to become an internationally recognizable city. The urban elite of Vancouver, despite the city’s laidback reputation, are every bit as involved in Molotch’s growth ethics. Local populations will be decidedly affected by Vancouver’s progressive decisions, and an analysis of Vancouver’s place promotion may help elucidate how our local culture is being understood on the international stage. To better understand the processes of place promotion in Vancouver, we will now analyze how the Olympic Bid Committee in Vancouver has represented our city.

## An Introduction to our Methodology

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If “a picture is worth a thousand words” it is surely worth our time to do more than simply look at the pictures that represent our society. As previously discussed in reference to Marianne’s sketches, all images reflect the characteristics of their makers. Perhaps our

focus in this paper on visual representations of Vancouver is guided by a shared societal interest in looking at pictures...

There's an awful lot of hype around 'the visual' these days. We're often told that we now live in a world where knowledge as well as many forms of entertainment are visually constructed, and where what we see is as important, if not more so, than what we hear or read.

This is the introductory statement of Gillian Rose's book about how to interpret visual materials. Rose explains that paying attention to the effects of an image has five main aspects discussed in recent literature (Rose, 10-15). Firstly, the insistence that images do something and are a site of resistance and recalcitrance. Secondly, a concern for how images visualize social difference. Thirdly, the meaning behind an image is not merely how it looks, but also how different audiences look at it. Fourthly, each image is embedded in a wider culture, and needs to be thus considered as part of a larger whole. Finally, to keep in mind is that the audience also might be a site of resistance. The audience may not always respond to an image in a certain expected way, and their interpretation changes the image in a distinct manner.

This section serves as a forward both to acknowledge the powers of images and to adopt the acceptance that our results are interpretations that are affected by our own opinions and values. In this paper the images are taken seriously by appreciating the depth of meaning they may hold. In an effort at creating two kinds of valuable interpretations, both a manifest, more quantitative, content analysis of images and a latent, more interpretive, analysis of images is employed. Our latent focus is on the site of audienceing and the corresponding technological, compositional and social modalities.

## Content Analysis

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### - *Manifest*

To begin to unravel the narrative created by Vancouver's bid corporation, we analyzed a manifest content analysis on the visible and surface content of the communication material, created for the IOC. The questionnaire, part of the first stage application process, is composed of six sections varying in length, each containing three separate images at the top of the page. A weighted random sample was taken to best represent the image Vancouver was presenting through their publication. Essentially our raw data, the images (Appendix A), were coded based on six major categories; nature, sports, people, culture, temporal, and symbols. Using these same categories, we performed a similar manifest analysis with the video "Our Home," produced for the second stage in the candidate application process (Appendix B). Together, these two communication products represented the city of Vancouver at an international level and contributed, to a certain degree, to the success of the Vancouver bid.

#### *Nature:*

Within the majority of the selected questionnaire images, nature was presented in the shadows of the city. Whether part of the background, or an artificial creation, such as a park, nature was represented as a part of the urban setting. In the video, nature was embodied by both the Pacific Ocean and the Coastal Mountains as a link between urban geographical settings. Due to the unique composition of Vancouver's dual location bid, we argue that nature was presented to the international audience as the necessary and emotional cognitive tie between Vancouver and Whistler (the two locations). This concept is further accentuated as a major theme in the Vancouver bid's motto "Sea to Sky." Vancouver will be

the site of the first Winter Olympics to be simultaneously held beside the sea yet framed by mountains. This scene creates a dynamic and unique marketing platform centered on nature. In our discussion with a bid official, the impetus for this theme was not only built on the general cognitive link between Canada and nature but also to confront and embrace the bid's Achilles heel; the transportation problem created by the Sea to Sky highway.<sup>5</sup> By turning this negative aspect into a distinctive concept, the bid arguably helped eradicate the negative connotations associated with the highway.

*Sports:*

An essential part of the ancient Olympic Games is the belief that sport has the ability to act as a unifying force between humans and their spirit. This fundamental belief has transformed through time and is still evident in the images represented throughout both the questionnaire and the video. As a result of the manifest analysis, the questionnaire is shown to focus on the individual in an Olympic setting, whereas in the video, the images are presented mainly in an everyday group setting. This shift to an everyday setting connects to the traditional depiction of Vancouver as a 'naturally active city'<sup>6</sup> while still maintaining the traditional connection between sport, human, and his/her spirit. It can be concluded, on a much larger scale however, that the depiction of sports as part of everyday life in Vancouver can logically relate to the natural fit the Olympics would have in a sport conscious city. It can also be argued that this shift reflects the advancement of the bidding process. In the first stage, the bid committee needed to convince the IOC of their technical traits and abilities to host the Olympics. Thus, images that depicted the infrastructure as well as the

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<sup>5</sup> The Sea to Sky highway is a local infamously dangerous highway between Vancouver and Whistler. It is the only direct route from one locale to the other and has notoriously bad driving conditions during the winter months.

<sup>6</sup> Through television ads, tourist publications, and city tourist sites, Vancouver is promoted as a place where the citizens enjoy the outdoors. There are often images of people running, skiing, bicycling, walking, swimming, ect.

traditional sport images, supporting the traditions of the Olympics were presented.

However in stage two of the bidding stage; the bid committee started to present the city as a 'natural' yet unique fit to the Olympic image. It was thus at this stage, where the city began to not only, present itself as a city that was capable of hosting the Olympics, but a city the Olympics would benefit from.

It is also important to illustrate the difference in the types of sports and their associated speed that is presented in both sets of images. The everyday sporting images, presented in the video, are arguably much slower paced than the competitive Olympic sports, allowing the audience to be drawn into the image and connect on a more personal emotional level. The image of a man jogging along a trail has the ability to be 'placeless' therefore permitting the audience to personally identify with the image. The questionnaire images on the other hand have a potentially different effect. These images represent the fast paced, world class, 'gold medal' capability of the city to provide for athletes and visitors. Often presented in quick clips, these images prohibit any personal connection other than a potential nationalist fervor. However, due to the international characteristic of the audience these images are presented to provide a visual for the intensity of the Olympics and its competition.

*People:*

Quantifying both the questionnaire and video images illuminates interesting patterns. One pattern that emerges is an equal representation of women and men in both products. Most of the people shown are adults. However, in the video there is a focal shift to the youth of the city. This change directly reflects one of the IOC's goals; supporting the education of youth and encouraging their involvement in sport (IOC).

These products also paint a different picture with regards to the ethnic makeup of Vancouver's society. The questionnaire contains images of mainly Caucasian athletes or politicians while the video tries to embody the true ethnic make of the city. Through the multicultural images presented in video format, Vancouver's bid committee builds on a commonly held belief, which implies that Vancouver is where the people of the world gather to live, work, and play (Our Home). This theme is supported by the selective use of images to showcase touristified ethnic areas such as Little India and China town.

*Culture:*

A vast number of First Nations cultures in Canada have been used for decades as vital components of Canadian tourist/cultural marketing strategies. However, in recent years there has been increasing awareness brought to this issue and its ethical implications. On one hand, the image of First Nations peoples is a recognizable and identifiable image at an international scale, which emotionally connects the world to North America. Yet, this image has also been touristified, with unclear consideration of the people the images depict. For many, First Nations are a distinctive cultural asset to the country. While speaking with a bid official it was made clear that the bid committee saw local First Nations culture as setting Vancouver apart from PyeongChang and Salzburg's bids, making the city unique in the eyes of the IOC. The utilization of First Nations images is clearer in the video than in the questionnaire. Images of First Nations peoples and their art was used 70 percent more often than in the questionnaire. A series of representations of traditional dances, songs, and art throughout the video led to the final segment of the video where Squamish Chief Gibby, in his native tongue, welcomes the Olympics to Vancouver and Whistler.

There is also an interesting pattern, which develops in regards to the representation of fine arts and culture as the bid committee moves through the stages of bidding. At the

first stage, Canadian culture, and especially the fine arts, is used very rarely. There are small signs of spectacles such as festivals and fireworks, but for the most part the representation of art in the second stage of the bidding process. It was well known that Salzburg was a strong competitor for host city, and their traditional narrative is based on being the home of Mozart and the Sound of Music. Knowing that these strong cultural legacies will be beneficial to Salzburg's bid; Vancouver presents evidence of restyling their image to be more culturally balanced. This attempt to balance the active sporty nature of the city with a refined artistic side becomes apparent in the video for the final presentation. There is an overwhelming number of images depicting the cultural and artistic side of Vancouver; proving to the IOC that Vancouver has just as much cultural capital as the Salzburg.

*Temporal:*

The temporal aspect of images is very important to the narrative that the bid committee built for Vancouver, and therefore we have included it in our manifest analysis. Not only does the time of day the image is presented in, but also the seasonality of the image becomes important to Vancouver's bid. There can be completely different stories told with similar images presented at different times and seasons. Due to the seasonal nature of the Winter Olympics that Vancouver bid for, we expected to find a majority of shots of Vancouver during the winter. By quantifying the images of the two products, evidence supports this expectation. However, how representative these images are is another question. Generally speaking these images depict pristine winter conditions of snowcapped mountains and bright blue sky, however, in reality, Vancouver's winter is commonly known for overcast skies and endless rain. With respect to the video, it was often difficult to separate the images into the temporal scenes and thus made it harder to come to a final conclusion. There was a noticeable increase in the use of sunrise and sunset scenes in

conjunction with both the speed of the film and the background sound of the video. As the sun rises, the speed increases and the music hits its crescendo. Together, these elements create an emotionally charged scene, igniting a desired sentimentality between the audience and the image.

*Symbols:*

What was discovered in the questionnaire was a frequent presentation of Vancouver's most familiar landmarks. It can be concluded that these landmarks are visual aids to connect the audience to the city and its familiar landscape. The questionnaire provided gentle mental reminders of the city, which is bidding amongst the onslaught of generic Olympic sporting images. Within the video, fewer landmarks are provided as a result of a need for a more encompassing, thus deeper and more detailed, focus of the city from a citizen's perspective rather than from a tourist's. These images directly support the IOC's request for high public support for the city's bid.

Yet another pattern emerges from the use of images in the video. The video makes use of 'typical' Canadian scenes, which do not necessarily belong or even closely represent the city of Vancouver. These images were confirmed to come from a selection of Canadian images used for a variety of the country's tourism promotions. Therefore, the Olympic narrative the bid committee developed is complex in the sense that it builds on yet another well-established narrative. The bid committee is not only creating an image of the city for an international audience, it is using and altering an established narrative of Canada. As Jack Pool, the bid chairman, stated from the beginning, the committee wanted the city's bid to not only be about Vancouver but to be a bid for the country of Canada (Xinhua General News Agency). This idea is strikingly apparent in the video "Our Home"

- *Latent*

The following section is the latent analysis of the video, “Our Home”, which was produced for the IOC final bid stage presentation. “Latent” means that we are considering the video as a whole, and are accepting and using *interpretation* to find the greater power behind the images. We chose to use a latent analysis in this section for several reasons.

Firstly, because we sought to analyse a video with moving pictures, it is very challenging to isolate individual and random images. Also, the question arises whether it would be appropriate to take these images out of their context. The images are not intended as still frames, but as part of a fluid viewing experience. Moreover, the video has already been taken out of context in a number of degrees, and to further do so would be to decrease the validity of our interpretations. The video as a whole proves more meaningful as a production of Vancouver’s image than does each individual image.

Secondly, we did not have personal access to the video, but could only view it if we went to the Vancouver Olympic bid center downtown. The situation downtown was not conducive to the intense and regimented setting that a manifest content analysis demands.

Finally, we wanted to offer as many different kinds of research as possible, to see if they coincided. We think that by combining both qualitative and quantitative research, our conclusions will be more evenly grounded and richer. The format in the following section is rather diverse. This is because they are the relatively raw results of a latent analysis. By keeping our work in this format, not only does the paper gain a little diversity, but it also allows the reader to make his or her own interpretations.

*Contextual notes about our visit to the Vancouver Olympic Bid Committee’s office*

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At 9:10 on the morning of Friday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, the authors met at the Granville Skytrain station in downtown Vancouver. We walked northeast towards the bid committee’s

office located on Water Street. The office is found where the cobblestone roads begin; nestled between historic Gastown and Vancouver's high-class business sector and upmarket port area. A grandly scaled archway provided entrance into the building's near empty foyer.

Six stories up, we padded together across soft white carpets, beneath a low white moulded ceiling, and past several occupied desks, to a room with glass doors. The meeting room boasted a massive window framing the North Shore Mountains, Georgia Straight and the sails of Canada place, Vancouver's international conference centre. Already, we were getting a feel for the Olympic bid's image of Vancouver.

We watched the "Our Home" video that was presented to the IOC in the glass room twice without supervision. Later, a bid official talked us through some of the video and the other two accompanying videos. We had a hard time steering the conversation. His words, despite their generous nature, were tactful, and his voice dominated our conversation. We did not, therefore, set out to accomplish all that we had planned for our visit. Thorough analysis of the sound and language was not possible, but we have formed general impressions and retained a few examples. Our content analysis forms were filled out to the best of our ability, however the film cut images so frequently that it was hard to either create a storyboard or be positive of the number of images we saw. Nevertheless we accumulated plenty of information about the production of Vancouver's image during our visit and while viewing the video.

### *General Scene Progression*

To allow the reader a more situated place in our discussion of images, we have included a general scene progression. This can be found in Appendix C. Why the word "general"? Three factors are at work here: firstly, the large number of clips, secondly; the speed at which they are cut and thirdly; we only had so much time with the video and did

not want to infringe too much upon the borrowed time of an Olympic official. Therefore, this scene progression serves as an extension of the latent analysis of the film's production and composition. The power of the product itself will never be captured through words, but by providing many different forms of discussion and figures like the following, we should be able to communicate its messages to a certain extent.

Throughout the video sound and music is used to heighten the effect of the images and I think it changes the experience of the viewer significantly. This will be discussed later in the section entitled "*A tiny note on sound*". The scene progression itself reflects a lot of values that Stephen Ward allights to in his book *Selling Places*. The techniques used in marketing post-industrial cities that are found in the scene progression are: the focus on vitality, power of lighting, the use of dramatic representations of the cityscape, human-animation and depiction of action and a "characteristic mix of world city credentials, heritage, environment, high technology, sports, and lifestyle." (Ward, 214) "Our Home" is always moving, shows a cosmopolitan city mostly usually during the bookends of daylight, has flashy footage, and has images of all the concepts in the above quote. It is a powerful piece of place promotion.

### *Notes on sites and modalities of the video “Our Home”*

This section answers the questions that are based on the methodological framework of sites and modalities laid out by Gillian Rose. Here, to allow a more narrowed and precise analysis, we only focus on the site of audience. The site is complicated by the three modalities, technology, composition and social. The term audiencing refers to the process “by which a visual image has its meanings renegotiated, or even rejected, by particular audiences watching in particular circumstances.” (Rose, 25) It has been suggested that audience is the most important site at which an image’s meanings are made.

### ***Site: Audiencing***

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#### ***Modality: Technology***

This section implies that the technology used to make and display helps control an audience’s reaction.

#### **What kind of environments has this video been displayed in? How has this video been displayed?**

The video was shown to International Olympic Committee on a large projection screen in a 120 people congress hall in Prague at 11 am. It was the first of three bid presentations and part of an hour-long (max) presentation. The “Our Home” movie was presented as one part of a series of three videos (“Our Plan” and “Our Dream”), and interspersed with 25 minute presentations by Canadian Olympic athletes, a former Canadian IOC member, and the Canadian Prime Minister of the time, Jean Chrétien.

Other venues of display are much less formal and are never intended with the same purpose of the original viewing. This video is a time limited production that was created with one goal; to sell Vancouver’s place (its geography, aesthetics and culture) to an international elite audience, on one day only.

The video is available through the bid committee for scholarly purposes, the media has clips of the video, and the IOC presentation was broadcasted to the Canadian television audience at the time of the event.

### **Who created the video?**

A local image production firm created the video, the name of which is unavailable. Most of the images come from the CBC, or Tourism BC and Tourism Canada. Some of the images were shot specifically for the video, to fill in spaces where they felt something was lacking (young girls in tutus dancing on grass in front of the Vancouver skyline, a female jazz singer's performance at the Orpheum and shots of Chinese cultural festivals.) Many of the images were not even of Vancouver or Whistler. When asked about this phenomenon, a bid official answered that this video was trying to sell the idea of Canada, not just Vancouver/Whistler. Several clips came from outside the province. Supposedly, for an international audience, familiarity lies with general, more globally accessible Canadian images. Vancouver is symbolized in the video as a beautiful place that represents Canada's good and ethical reputation.<sup>7</sup>

### **Who has access to this production?**

The Vancouver bid officials and those who ask their permission. However, because Disney owns the rights to the Bryan Adams song they used in the background (it originally was made for a Disney movie), the legal right to show the video with this song has already run out (it was a limited term contract). So, really, no one has the rightful access to view the video anymore. Yet, this is all irrelevant to the VOCOG now that the bid stage is over. Now, the committee will be creating a whole new set of brands and images through which to represent the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics. An entirely different video, with a different song, and different images, and therefore different messages will be created for a more domestic audience. This is the third stage of image production. (The first was qualifying for the top three and the second was securing the bid.) At this second stage the images were primarily produced for an international audience, and it seems as though this audience was presented a portrayal of Canadian cultural symbols in a Vancouver scaffolding.

### **What were the ideal conditions of display?**

Because it was only created for the IOC presentation, the videos ideal conditions have already been described. This presentation includes the need for big theatre, big sound, clear picture, and an important international audience.

## ***Modality: Composition***

Here, we are considering the organization of the image, the viewing positions offered, relation to other texts, and its content, colour, spatial organization, perspective, light, expressive content etc. We will employ the following framework from J. Monaco's

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<sup>7</sup> For a local viewer, this creates a nostalgia based in a recognition of place and self. The same kind of reaction that one gets when watching a movie filmed in their home city, but set in any world city. Does this make Vancouver simply a setting for an international event? What about community values and individual uniqueness? Are these just clever sales pitches? Stephen Ward and Chris Philo argue yes, this is simply an added gimmick in selling place. In reference to another question earlier posed: How much does a city's image count in this final process?

book *How to Read a Film: Movies, Media, Multimedia* which can be found in Appendix D.

A general discussion is offered here due to the limited nature of our viewing of the video.

The film quality is very good with excellent resolution. Images are clear and focused (with the occasional indistinct background). Colours are bright and crisp; most scenes are shot in natural light (particularly morning and sunset light). Images are framed in a letter-box style, where the edges of the frame are subtly blurred. This lends a sensation of floating, as though the images have no real grounding. They are more than just video clips they are the concepts of a new reality. The images produce a wholesome, silky feeling. It is like the waking experience of a really good colour dream.

The scale of the frame often works in extremes. In the beginning, while describing Vancouver's setting the video shows large scale, panoramic shots, often moving over large spaces of land from above. Large-scale shots purposefully encompass both "sea and sky", the Vancouver Games motto. By creating a visual version of the motto, it becomes a full-bodied metaphor and a powerful connecting theme. "Sea to sky" is a metaphor carefully placed in the natural world. This theme is more than words and pictures. It is a clever alliteration that depicts in three tiny terms the action of looking up, the beauty and infinity of the horizon, and the natural elements that make up Vancouver's environment. In the section about Vancouver's people the film primarily uses close ups of faces, lots of crowd shots and full body shots of people in action. Fast, sports-style shots dominate the Olympic section of the film.

When choosing the style of the video, the image production team offered the bid committee two stylistic options. The one they chose is called "the traditional, more natural" style. The smooth movement in this video and its focus on nature, culture and the connection between body and soul won out over the other option. That other choice was to produce an "American-style, edgy" video, using the sounds of ice, and flashier, faster images. It is interesting that the bid committee chose the style that they did, and more interesting that the bid committee calls it traditional, we can only suppose that means more traditionally Canadian.

The screen is usually dominated by one image, but images are cut so as to make the movement between them seem un-noticeable. Despite the variety of sources from which these images came, there is a remarkable sense of flow. Point of view is often at eye-level, on the plane of the horizon between sea to sky or aerial (but not bird's eye, there is always a horizon in sight.)

## ***Modality: Social***

Here we consider the social practices which structure the viewing of particular images in particular places. How is the video interpreted? By whom? Why?

### **Social practices of spectating...**

The word “spectating” needs a little more unraveling. A spectacle is “a social or cultural event, usually of a temporary nature, attracting a mass audience through its dramatic and sensuous staging.” (Johnston, 782) The Olympic Games itself is quite clearly a spectacle, or a series of spectacles, under this definition. So was the presentation that “Our Home” was a part of in Prague. Therefore the production of this video, and its viewing as a spectacle for an international audience who specializes in placing spectacles, is a very muddled and intimidating concept. The idea of *watching* a spectacle is attached to the idea that the viewers are passive. Under the circumstances during which this video was watched, the viewers may have been watching passively, but their internal judgment had a very powerful aftereffect.<sup>8</sup> At the end of the day, it was the viewers who were responsible for choosing which of the three cities represented by the presentations would host the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. Therefore, in an atmosphere of competition where the viewers get the vote, spectacle becomes persuasive and political. The presentations were competing to convince board members to give them the vote, and therefore were trying to appeal to the tastes of their crowd. The social identities and values of the spectators are spoken about in the first part of this paper. These ideas about the politics of spectacles like the Olympics are interesting and need expanding, but this paper will not cover this issue any further.

### **What were some initial reactions to the video?**

There were no initial public reactions allowed; that would bias the vote. However, Vancouver did win the bid for 2010 Olympics and whether the video helped secure the win is unclear, but likely.

### *A tiny note on sound....*

The music and the narrative help to increase the sense of flow, despite the fast-pace of images. Crescendo and decrescendo in volume, pace of music, music style, and background noise subconsciously heighten the total experience of the viewer.

Background noises like the squawk of a seagull, or the sound of waves or wind often intermingle with not necessarily related images. These noises are once again

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<sup>8</sup> Of course, we do not know whether the presentations actually changed any voter’s decision, because they have access to a lot of different material produced by the bidding cities, i.e. the bid book and answers to the questionnaire.

appealing to the nature card that Tourism BC is so famed for playing. The Olympic bid is playing this card as well. The noises are attempting to give a certain sense of place that is unattainable through image alone.

The narrator's voice is male, medium pitched and smooth. His accent is of the institutional Canadian sort; the kind heard on Air Canada flights directing people to the nearest exit in case of an emergency. The words used are very interesting. The word "corridor" replaces "highway" in every reference to the sea to sky route between Vancouver and Whistler. This replacement smoothes over the negative connotations commonly held about highways and irresponsible environmental stewardship. The "alpine jewel" metaphor is used in reference to Whistler. When discussing the city, phrases that crop up are "one of the world's most *liveable* cities", "moving to the beat of dreamers and doers", and "cultural tapestry". These romantic sayings enhance the notion of Vancouver as a vibrant and attractive city. The selling of place permeates the words and the images of this very carefully thought out and privately produced video.

## Discussion

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The production and interpretation of images that represent place are highly variable. In different communities and minds, numerous different images represent British Columbia. For example, for some, like Ruth Appelhof, "the Northwest Coast will always remain in our minds the way [Emily] Carr saw it." In some ways the construction of a national artist like Emily Carr is similar to the construction of a national and regional image for an event like the Olympics. The nationally symbolic status of both is a combination of artistic quality and historic accident, and a clever fit into ideological slots that define national identity. The audience is free to interpret the meanings of both productions, and their interpretations will

differ dependent on their socio-cultural position. One crucial difference between art and advertising is the direct commodification of the image. Unlike the paintings of Emily Carr, the “Our Home” video was created purposefully for the context of a competitive international market. The meanings of each image are therefore predetermined and politicized. Specific narratives are created for specific audiences. Another discrepancy is *who* is doing the producing. In place promotion, capitalism and the urban elites under its power drive the image production, and private companies compose the final product. Once again, the character of the author is represented in the image they create.

In the effort to create a matchless place image, still appetizing to the standards of an international audience, the Vancouver bid emphasizes themes of “Multiculturalism” and “Nature” as unique to Vancouver.<sup>9</sup> These two themes surface in our analysis of images, and both are slightly ironic. If the urban elites of Vancouver are oriented by growth ethics (as the bid campaign suggests) they are vying for a place for Vancouver on the international stage as a world-city. Herein lays the contradiction. As a bid representative expressed, because of Vancouver’s degree of multiculturalism, the world is already in Vancouver. If Vancouver is already like the rest of the world, then what makes it distinct? How long will Canada’s national reputation as a cultural mosaic hold such cache? Secondly, Vancouver is using the attraction of nature to help secure its place as a metropolis. We can only hope that somehow our fair city will be able to reasonably combine the two, often dichotomous, concepts of natural and urban in an environmentally and culturally responsible fashion. The Olympics is a globally recognized mega-event (and spectacle), whose international reputation is highly valued by the growth-oriented cities that wish to host them. The games not only focus the world’s gaze on the host city, but also attract valuable multinational

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<sup>9</sup> These are two extremely vast concepts, with piles of political and ideological debate that surround them.

investments and other capital inflow. In July of 2003, the IOC chose one winner from the three competing host cities for the 2010 Olympic Games. The Vancouver Olympic Bid Committee successfully pitched and won the bid. Approximately six years from now, Vancouver will be faced with the consequences of this win. Until then, local audiences may ask how has Vancouver been pitched to an international audience, and what is that audience going to expect of their city in 2010?

By creating a marketable and distinct story of a place, the Vancouver Olympic Bid committee did achieve their goal, and they carefully followed every prescribed step along the way. The images are meaningful and telling, but do speak not to the future; especially considering they are already out of date. In the process of creating a sellable story, local narratives have been appropriated for international use. It should be very interesting to see how elites turn around in the next phase of the Olympic program and try to sell the stories back to the people from whom they originally came.

## *Appendix A*

Each image was examined based on these six categories. A mark was given for each characteristic that the image contained.

Content Analysis – Questionnaire																																		
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr style="background-color: #f2f2f2;"> <th colspan="2" style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"><b>Nature</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Urban (parks, greenways, ect.)</td><td style="text-align: right;">15</td></tr> <tr><td>Rural</td><td style="text-align: right;">5</td></tr> <tr><td>Wilderness</td><td style="text-align: right;">8</td></tr> <tr><td>In isolation</td><td style="text-align: right;">4</td></tr> <tr><td>Animals</td><td style="text-align: right;">2</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	<b>Nature</b>		Urban (parks, greenways, ect.)	15	Rural	5	Wilderness	8	In isolation	4	Animals	2	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr style="background-color: #f2f2f2;"> <th colspan="2" style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"><b>Symbols</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Totem Poles</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Native Art</td><td style="text-align: right;">1</td></tr> <tr><td>Maple Leaf</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Canadian Leaf</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Canadian Flag</td><td style="text-align: right;">1</td></tr> <tr><td>Olympic Rings</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Olympic Torch</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Landmarks</td><td style="text-align: right;">6</td></tr> <tr><td>Mounties</td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table>	<b>Symbols</b>		Totem Poles		Native Art	1	Maple Leaf		Canadian Leaf		Canadian Flag	1	Olympic Rings		Olympic Torch		Landmarks	6	Mounties		
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## *Appendix B*

An attempt was made to break the video into individual scenes. Based on those scenes the images were categorized.

### Content Analysis – Video "Our Home"

<b>Nature</b>	
Urban (parks, greenways, ect...)	3
Rural	2
Wilderness	7
In isolation	1
Animals	3

<b>Sports</b>	
Group (more than 2)	3
Individual	2
Women	1
Men	2
Victorious	
Everyday setting	7
Olympic setting	4

<b>People</b>	
Youth	7
Adults	3
Senior	1
Women	2
Men	2
First Nations	6
Visible Minorities	5
disabled	3

<b>Symbols</b>	
Totem Poles	2
Native Art	1
Maple Leaf	2
Canadian Flag	1
Olympic Rings	
Olympic Torch	
Landmarks	2
Mounties	1

<b>Temporal</b>	
Night	4
Day	n/a*
Sunrise/Sunset	4
Winter/Fall	1
Spring/Summer	1

<b>Culture</b>	
Theatre Arts	3
Fine Arts	2
Music	1
Carnivals/Festivals	4
Night life	2
Shopping	1

## Appendix C

### a general scene progression

Blackout ...OUR HOME fades in and out laterally in wide capital letters

Fade in...

Flying above the snow-covered North Shore Mountains at sunrise, zooming down the sparkling slopes and up into the sky over the Georgia straight and into literally dazzling metropolitan Vancouver. *Calm serene chords light the background, a "natural" sound.*



Shot after shot of natural scenes stream at the viewer, often combining wildlife or children. Girl in forest, lake, beaver in river, children playing in pastures, youth dancing on the beach, and ever the shots of the sea and the sky.



To the city, a fast-forward video clip of traffic at night (the only image of traffic, and its filmed in a surreal fashion), vibrant city streets, main corridors, and humans in motion.



Cultural capital and nightlife; scenes of restaurants, clubs, theatre, dance, buildings, transit etc...



Flip to focus on cultures of different peoples. *Up beat music, "ethnic" sound, ie. Pan flutes, drum beats*



Cosmopolitan images; festivals; street parades; public performances



Scenes of sport in everyday Vancouver life; walking around the sea wall, dragon boats...



Canadian pride, fans in full regalia, excitement about sports, shows local support



Olympic scenes, different sports, sports cuts, fast pace, snow snow snow and more snow.



Shots of Canadian athletes and athletes from other countries.



Back to the city; kayakers in False Creek paddle into city skyline. *Bryan Adams at full force here, the climax of the song and the video, "Here I am! Wild and free..."*



**Insert original serene chords and "natural" background noise: birds, subtle rhythms**



Squamish Chief Gibby's welcome

Fade to black

Bryan Adams crescendoes

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