

Assessing and augmenting the potential for Global Mega-Events to support sustainable urban development: A study of the Olympic Games

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ASSESSING AND AUGMENTING THE POTENTIAL FOR GLOBAL MEGA-EVENTS TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Highlights

- Original research which explores the potential for changes in event franchise models, governance structures and funding policy to augment long term impacts and public value of mega-events
- Mega-Event hosts with clear vision for long term impacts can optimise sustainable urban development

EVENT MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Global urbanisation finds cities at the challenging nexus of growth and sustainability. Many are simultaneously pursuing a strategy of attracting global mega-events – the pinnacle being the Olympic Games. The sustainability and value of such events has been a source of debate, but a gap exists in the research looking from the lens of the city to see whether hosting an Olympic Summer Games could be adjusted towards sustainable urban development. This qualitative research adopts a constructionist hypothesis: *With adjustments to governance, funding and event franchise structures, global mega-events such as Olympic Games could make significant contributions to sustainable urban development and the events themselves, more sustainable.* To explore its validity, 36 senior experts from the fields of urbanism, city leadership, Olympic movement and academia were interviewed, whilst the Games of London 2012 and Rio 2016 provided case studies. The hypothesis proved resilient but incomplete. Changes to governance, public funding policy and event franchise were found to be potent but only if host cities have generation-long, sustainability goals. The findings prompt policy change which would generate significant, positive impacts for leading cities and a more sustainable model for the Olympic Games.

Keywords: Mega-events; Olympic Games; Sustainable Urban Development; Transition theory; Governance; Legacy; Event Franchise

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Introduction & Literature Review

“Sport has the power to change the world. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair.” Nelson Mandela (2000)

As the world continues to urbanise, cities in the Global South and North grapple with significant, sometimes existential, sustainability challenges. Simultaneously, many of the same cities compete to host mega-events such as the Olympic Games. Their motivations are mixed, and controversy has surrounded the merits of such projects, but this article will explore whether the goals of sustainable cities and global mega-events can be aligned (Flyvbjerg et al., 2021; Zimbalist, 2020).

The UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs, (United Nations, 2015) provide a challenging urban agenda not just towards 2030 but ahead to the net zero goal of 2050 and beyond. Resilience to climate change sits alongside cutting carbon emissions, transforming heating, industry and other energy use (SDGs 7 and 13). Providing sustainable habitation takes its place with provision of public transport, wider mobility, clean water and other services (SDGs 6, 9 and 11). Public health is high on the agenda – from the availability of sustainable diet and medical services to the growing challenges associated with sedentary lifestyles (SDGs 2,3, 6 and 12). The sustainable city will also need to address profound issues of poverty, equity, social justice and cohesion, deploying education, welfare, employment policy and progressive governance to generate sustainable growth (SDGs 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10 & 11).

Against this backdrop cities invest billions of dollars to host mega-events such as the Olympic Games, World Expos and FIFA World Cups. Mega events, according to Roche (2000) in his significant study, “Mega Events and Modernity”, are defined as

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“large scale cultural (including commercial and sporting) events which have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance” (Roche, 2000, p. 1).

Cities have articulated myriad ambitions (or justifications) for event-hosting, some citing economic growth, inward investment or global promotion; others point to legacies of much needed infrastructure, public health or societal benefits. National pride and public morale are often cited whilst critics dub such claims: “vanity projects” (Minnaert, 2012). Disputation about rising costs, “white elephant” facilities and unfulfilled promises has sometimes equalled the crowd acclamation at Opening Ceremonies (critics include Armstrong et al, 2011; Barclay, 2009; Flyvbjerg, 2007,2011, 2017; Flyvbjerg et al., 2003, 2005, 2012 whilst counterarguments come from Hill, 2022 and Preuß 2004 and Preuß et al, 2019). Commentators, politicians, academics and plebiscites have challenged whether city-hosts secure appropriate long-term value from investment in event-hosting (see Baade & Matheson, 2016; Coates & Wicker, 2015; Zimbalist, 2010, 2020). For instance, Barcelona, often heralded as a successful edition of the Games, has subsequently pursued a less top-down strategy of urban development in reaction to the experience of hosting the Games (Charnock & Ribera-Fumaz, 2011). This has led to the question how a temporary, two-week event can have legacy and permanent impact on the hosts of the Olympic Games (Vijay, 2015) particularly when considering displacement effects of urban development (Gillespie et al., 2018). More recently, academics and transnational bodies have sought to evaluate event impacts with a richer mix of sustainability measures – social, environmental and urban, as well as economic (see Dawson, 2012, McPherson et al., 2017 on “Public Value”, Neri, 2021, the OECD’s significant ministerial recommendation on Global Events and Local Development 2018

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or more controversially, Crompton, 2004). Equally contested are claims of sporting legacy and impacts on public activity/health (sceptics include Bauman et al., 2021 and Grix & Carmichael, 2012).

This paper will not seek to resolve all differences of perception or reality about motivations, processes, costs and impacts of such events, but instead assess a more important goal: whether such events have the potential, with adaptation, to support sustainable urban development and if so, how. The foundation for our research was to assay the following hypothesis:

With adjustments to governance, funding and event franchise structures, global mega-events such as Olympic Games could make significant contributions to sustainable urban development and the events themselves, more sustainable.

More specifically, the hypothesis informs and demands our research questions to interrogate it:

1. How potent are mega-events like the Olympic Games as agents of urban/human transformation?
2. How much of that potential is translated into positive sustainable urban development?
3. How effective are current governance, public funding streams and event franchise models to support sustainable urban development?

If our hypothesis proves valid, a host-city-centric perspective would transform from simply bidding to mount the event, to assessing their community's strategic needs over the coming decades and analysing the extent to which the Games could help deliver long term sustainable goals. A positive conclusion would not just result in a stronger

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pitch for the event, but a generation-long sustainable development programme into which the Olympic Games becomes a pivotal slingshot. This highly significant scenario was also explored.

Although the range of mega-events traversing the world is broad, this study will focus on the Olympic Summer Games (mapped in Figure 1) – not only the most watched of such mega-events, but also the most complex, or as Sir David Higgins, then Chief Executive of London 2012 Olympic Development Authority (ODA), explained, “33 world championships held simultaneously in one city - by far the largest logistical event occurring in the world outside a reasonable sized war” (Higgins, 2007, p. 28).

<<INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE>>

The study is underpinned by theories of transition (Loorbach, 2010) aligned to urban development in which structured but pragmatic “learning-by-doing” is validated as a response to complex inter-disciplinary social and structural change, particularly related to the daunting challenges of sustainability. In the manner of Loorbach, transition was explored via foundational hypothesis and associated research questions, deployed in a series of semi-structured interviews with leaders in commissioning, mounting and evaluating the Olympic Summer Games.

Coalescing existing literature and original qualitative data from expert interviews, we distil emerging themes, draw conclusions, assess the validity of the hypothesis, and explore forward pathways for policy making and future research.

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Methodology

Introduction

When an event is witnessed, through broadcast, by half the world's adult population (Baker, 2016, International Olympic Committee 2021a) its magnetism is beguiling, even to scholars. Hence, it is no surprise that Olympic Games are a focus of study with the event itself as epicentre. However, the question for this thesis requires an adjusted lens. It starts not from the event, but from the needs of sustainable cities. Whilst the *object* of our research is the Olympic Games, the *subject* (as the end product of primary concern) is the *city* which elects to host it. Hence, whilst a naturalist may see the event as the start of a cycle of processes and outcomes, we will adopt a constructivist methodology to assess much that has already been observed but from a different perspective, or as Hancké (2009) articulated, 'the world is not objectively given, waiting to be discovered' (p9). The hypothesis and research questions outlined in Chapter 1 may result in impacts to the Olympic Games, but their intended target is otherwise – the many long term needs of sustainable cities. As Flyvbjerg (2001) observed in relation to constructivist interpretations of complex contexts, "a grammar is not a language, the rules for chess are not chess, the traditions are not actual social behaviour" (p43). Consistent with this approach is the construct of a hypothesis to guide the study (see Diesing, 1992); equally aligned with a constructivist stance, the study will be based predominantly around a qualitative approach, ground in storytelling and comparative views of the same histories from differing dimensions (whilst auditing such accounts against quantitative data and other sources) – a process seen by Moses and Knutsen (2007) as providing "a remarkable diversity of approaches, some of which

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appear serendipitous or casual to the untrained eye.....but can generate great understanding and insight”(p220).

Research Design

Consistent with the constructivist approach, this study draws widely from literature to provide context, evidence and data but also identify gaps for fresh perspective. The emergent hypothesis, and research questions framed to interrogate it, demand a “mixed methods” framework of response – a social science research paradigm that deploys a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches (Cresswell, 2009). Qualitative methodologies view research as a subjective practice in which the positionality of researchers cannot be abstracted from their study while quantitative approaches adopt the language of physical sciences in favour of positivism (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). “Mixed methods” adopts a pragmatic and agnostic course in which the benefits and pitfalls of both are countered whilst conclusions can be corroborated by the dual methodologies (Johnson et al., 2007). Whilst much of the data was sourced from semi-structured, qualitative interviews, the volume, spread and expert nature of interviewees also contributed quantitative evidence, triangulated by other sources (official data, other academic scholarship and primary sources). The constructionist hypothesis which frames our research is as follows:

“With adjustments to governance, funding and event franchise structures, global mega-events (such as Olympic Games) could make significant contributions to sustainable urban development and the events themselves, more sustainable” .

To explore this, thirty six interviews were conducted in the summer of 2022 with senior leaders from stakeholders directly involved with the Olympic Summer Games,

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the cities that host and those who study them. To enable comparison, whilst testing common questions, interviews followed a similar structure and were composed to address the following research questions:

1. *How potent are mega-events like the Olympic Games as agents of urban/human transformation?*

- to assess the extent to which Olympic Games can be agents of urban and social change, the scope of such change and realistic timescales for impact. This question also assesses difference in perspectives from stakeholder groups and individual experience.

2. *How much of that potential is translated into positive sustainable urban development?*

- a measure of how effective the current structures and processes are in translating potential energy and agency of change into positive long term sustainable development.

3. *How effective are current governance, public funding streams and event franchise models to support "2"?*

- an opportunity to explore the effectiveness of key methodologies with those who operate, experience or study them in relation to long term urban impacts.

Two case studies were also constructed to further interrogate and illuminate the theory – a form of enquiry described by Yin (2011) as, “an essential form of social science research”, or by Ridder et al. (2014) as, “synergistic, antagonistic and pluralistic dialogue for theoretical contribution” - built around recent Olympic Games of London 2012 and Rio 2016. The number of interviewees from these cities/Games was upweighted to reflect this.

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Research Parameters

A priority for research was to reflect perspectives from all main stakeholders so interviewees needed to be drawn from the following groups:

- International Olympic Committee, IOC, (Strategic Leadership, Legacy, Sustainability, Hosting and Broadcast)
- Organising Committees of Olympic Games, OCOGs, (Strategic Leadership, Communications, Public Engagement, Education, Legacy)
- Host City Government
- Urbanists/Planners
- Commercial Partners
- International agencies (including Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, World Health Organisation, WHO etc)
- Academics and commentators from diverse geographic, cultural and ideological groundings

An extended scope for this research could have included more direct representation of diverse citizen or community groups – but Host City Governments were, for this purpose, the nearest proxy for this important stakeholder interest.

The Olympic Games selected as case studies (London 2012 and Rio 2016) have extensive literature and evaluation and are recent enough to be relevant but sufficiently distant to offer perspective. Reflecting both Global North and South, they illustrate contrasting goals, contexts and outcomes.

Whilst a full list of interviewees can be found in *Table 2*, their distribution, by typology, is shown in *Table 1*, below. Participants confirmed their willingness to be

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identified and according to ethical standards used (see 2.6, below), were briefed on the right to anonymity and the right to withdraw. They were selected because their seniority and experience offered not just authority and insight into policy making but potential for influence over mega-events of the future.

<<<INSERT TABLES 1 AND 2 HERE>>>

Method and Data Collection

Interviews were conducted over a two month period from June 2022, mostly remotely using Microsoft Teams, enabling video and audio recordings and transcription. A minority were conducted face-to-face using Otter.AI for recording. Interviews lasted 45 to 70 minutes, following a semi-structured format. They were based around a generic script (see Appendix 2), advocated as an Interview Guide by Rubin and Babbie (2001), not only to provide common shape to the interview but assist with organising and analysing data. Modest variation from the script was optimised to reflect the background, experience and perspective of each interviewee.

Data Analysis

Transcripts from interviews were analysed in analogue form to explore trends in response to research questions, to test the hypothesis and other future scenarios. Analysis was based on an inductive approach, identifying patterns in the data through the use of thematic codes, or as Patton (1980) articulated, “the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis” (p306). Data were studied with reference to the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) in which relevant segments of each interview were reviewed and

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compared to ascribed codes and themes suggested by the data. Responses from each interview to all questions were tracked according to an axis of agreement/disagreement, enabling analysis for a measure of consensus. As the questions were “open” and the interviews extensive enough for follow-up discussion, illustrative quotes and comments proved as stimulating as raw data.

Ethical Considerations

Given the significance of semi-structured expert interviews, the research approach including draft questions and scope was submitted to, and approved by, the University of Oxford’s Research Ethics Committee. Interviewees were identified and approached only through personal contacts or networks of those contacts. They were provided with background information about the project, the University’s research ethical principles and conditions for participation, including permissions for use of responses generically and specifically with or without identification. Their permission was sought for recordings to be made and the nature and extent of data capture and storage. Those quoted had the opportunity to review, withdraw or make changes to their texts.

The lead author is a practitioner in the sector as well as an academic. The potential for bias was mitigated by academic ethical compliance, whilst an up-side provided access to the highest level of participants.

Findings and Discussion

Research Question 1. How potent are mega-events like the Olympic Games as agents of urban/human transformation?

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Whilst consensus about definitions of success for Olympic Games was limited, the structure of how success is framed had greater commonality. All interviewees identified the duality of, and distinction between, operational delivery of the Games versus longer term impacts. Further subdivisions came between domestic versus global impact and the split between physical/economic infrastructure set alongside human/social influences.

Delivery-based outcomes

Typically, and predictably, operational OCOG representatives put greater weight on technical delivery and public feedback. Former London 2012 CEO, Paul Deighton emphasised social engagement and pride, commenting that, “other more concrete, measurable success factors are all powered by having the population feeling they are part and proud of it”. Deighton, an ex-investment banker, went further focusing on, “heart and emotion,” concluding, “it’s the first time in my life I ever made decisions which weren’t based on net present value in pounds and pennies, but which would favour more people feeling good about themselves.” Rio 2016’s ex-Communications Director, Mario Andrada, agreed, viewing success as participation by all parts of society, “sharing every step of the journey of the Games – a truly successful Games needs the public.” Academics are not immune to less tangible impacts of event “feel-good factors”, with Sir Harry Burns (Professor, Public Health, Strathclyde University) noting their role in building society and wellbeing, “if you involve people who feel alienated and helpless and get them shaping the plans, they begin to feel useful, and better about themselves.”

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Longer term impacts

Other stakeholders give greater weight to longer term impacts – ranging from urban planning and public health to economic growth, environmental sustainability, and global soft power. Prof. Beatriz Garcia (Liverpool University and leading commentator on the Cultural Olympiad (Garcia 2014)) perceives the Games transcending sport into a “a cultural advancement of human aspiration” and “only successful if it translates into an advanced conversation about identity and international relations.” Other academics, international organisations and NGOs advocate success factors based on their specialism. The WHO look for incremental public health gains and societal cohesion – a goal shared by Swiss NGO, Evaleo, the agency behind the Global Active Cities Network (Active Well-being Initiative, 2022). The OECD favours economic gains alongside balanced progress towards the UN SDGs.

Whilst one IOC participant prioritised smooth and efficient delivery - “just getting it over the line” (understandable, given Gavin McAlpine is Associate Director of Games Delivery) - other IOC interviewees were the most consistent group prioritising success through wide-ranging, long-term benefits to host communities. Even McAlpine reported the IOC now articulate success through a balanced score card of benefits to hosts and the Olympic Movement. Christophe Dubi, IOC Executive Director for the Olympic Games, emphasises the Games and the movement must change to reflect sport, social and environmental trends, but believes success and inspiration will be mined from, “Excellence and perfection – always at the core and starting from the athletes.”

Uniquely, it was the Chief Executive of an NGO championing social legacies, who remarked that positive legacy is only possible if the event is successful, “had

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London 2012 been a disaster, arguably we would not be having this conversation – delivery has to be world class.” (Ruth Hollis, CEO, Spirit of 2012).

Potency for change

If definitions of success remain contested, far greater consensus was displayed regarding the potency of Olympic Games to deliver long term impacts: “the Games can uniquely galvanise different groups, sectors and organisations in society to collaborate like nothing else,” (Yiannis Exarchos, CEO Olympic Broadcasting Service), “It’s very powerful, obviously. The catalyst for change is great, but the responsibility is enormous,” (Beatrice Garcia, University of Liverpool), “The Games have energy. Use the power and political support to attract resources and accelerate the development your city needs,” (Prof. Holger Preuß, Mainz University). Drawing on the work of Crompton (2004), Prof. Tracy Taylor (RMIT University, Melbourne) added that in addition to political and economic power, Games can generate “return of investment in terms of social capital or psychic income”. One outlier, however, thought such talk boosterism. Head of Education for London 2012, Nick Fuller, accepts that Olympic values are powerful educational tools (International Olympic Committee 2021b), quoting Lord Coe (ex-Chair of London 2012) who claimed, “sport is the hidden social worker in all our communities”, (see McEvoy, Daily Mail, 2010). However Fuller cautions that Games are, “less potent than the people who are on the inside think.” After surveying UK-wide teachers about London 2012 in 2007/8, Fuller found little interest, unless the ‘inspiration’ was properly matched to existing educational priorities. Significantly, he was forced to rethink the design of London 2012’s education offering - a programme which, later, reached 90% of the nation’s schools - by, “providing flexibility to enable schools to

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mix and match resources to best fit the learning journey individual schools were already on". Fuller's response and others suggest that even if the Games provide a rich source of energy, effective translation into long term impacts cannot be taken for granted – the topic of the second Research Question.

Research Question 2. How much of that potential is translated into positive sustainable urban development?

Fuller articulated the need to install "effective plumbing" to distribute Olympic energy into sustainable projects – in his case, the "London 2012 Get Set Education Programme", which continues 10 years after the Games (British Olympic Association, 2022). Other respondents note potential legacies fall short of expectation through lack of such plumbing or ambition. Taylor addressed naivety of those who believe inspiration alone will drive lasting benefits, "many Games tried to argue there was a trickle down effect. I think we've seen it doesn't really eventuate". Prof. Gayle McPherson (University of West of Scotland) also points to, "huge promises that didn't materialise – the difference between what you put in a bid and what is delivered in the end. That is the tension between what a city and people are promised and the lack of follow through."

"A vision without a plan is only a dream"

Most respondents, including some from OCOGs and the IOC, acknowledge potential Games energy wasted through lack of clear vision or plans to deliver it. Tania Braga, the IOC's Head of Impact and Legacy explains that hosts have won three vital assets, "a unique timekeeper, global profile, and resources," but adds succinctly that, "a vision without a plan is only a dream." The OECD created its Global Events Toolkit

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(OECD, 2021) to help cities realise more potential and build sustainable visions into such plans. The OECD's Martha Bloom explains that hosts, "should be encouraged to understand the potential benefits and opportunities to leverage the event as a tool for further development – a fantastic opportunity to capitalise on." Preuß adds a note of scepticism, warning of short termism or misdirection caused by "principle-agent theory" producing "opportunistic behaviour and not enough transparency which leads to politicians and their friends in the powerful construction sector wanting contracts to build more and more." Neale Coleman, former Advisor on London 2012 to two of the city's Mayors, summed up the contributions of many, concluding, "In all cases you need people who are really focused on their objectives, have a clear vision and the resources to carry it out – and make sure they are absolutely integrated to the existing, overall plan for your city".

While potential has been demonstrated and various tools available, realisation of positive outcomes often depends on clear planning, vision, and proper alignment with broader city objectives, discussed in research question 3.

Research Question 3. How effective are current governance, public funding streams and event franchise models to support "2"?

Adjustments to **governance**, **public funding** streams and the **event franchise model** formed the basis of the hypothesis underlying this research. Each component was explored with interviewees.

Governance

Whilst Governance models for the Olympic Games are rooted in a "Host City Contract" signed between the community (usually the city mayor) and the IOC (IOC,

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2017), the primary operational relationship is between the IOC and an OCOG – a special purpose organisation (public, private or hybrid) acting as lead Games delivery body, keeper of the devolved Olympic intellectual property and interlocutor between stakeholders and the IOC. The OCOG forms within a year of the Games award (until recently, 7 years in advance) and dissolves shortly after the Games. Indeed, although OCOGs retain a winding-up function for a year or so, 90% of their headcount usually departs within a month and 99% within four months. Whilst such independence and ruthless focus is seen as an asset for Games delivery, it is also identified as a weakness by most in translating Games energy into long term impacts.

The OECD's Bloom refers to, "an imbalance of governance given the full lifecycle of Games impacts." Prof. Stuart Biddle (University of Southern Queensland) was more direct: "If the OCOG is the driving force and most of them have left soon after, I think that tells you half the problem. It gives a message that the Olympic Games has finished, and the job is done. Mariana Behr (Rio 2016 OCOG) recalls the experience vividly in the final years before Games, "you lose sight of everything else because you don't have time – you're super-stressed and you just have to deliver this." Her remedy? "It's almost like you need two projects – not separate organisations but maybe separate people thinking about them."

Perhaps cognisant of Vijay (2015), Mark Camley (Director of Operations for London's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park) believes long term outcomes would be optimised through a single organisation with a forty-year remit, transitioning between roles, "at some point it will be mainly about planning or building, then estate management." Erin Bromaghim, Los Angeles City Mayor's Director of Olympic and

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Paralympic Development, is also conscious that OCOGs focus on delivery and commercial partnerships whilst the host city holds local context that ensures the Games fit to the city over the long term, “The OCOGs are going to be some of the best and brightest folk at what they do, but may not be perfectly plugged into the host community - so our partnership needs to build up that reservoir of community engagement to draw on when you`re in those last two or three years when its operations and logistics all the time.” Hollis (Spirit of 2012) sees potential conflicts of interest given the primacy of time limited OCOGs which will, “fundraise, build corporate partnerships and seek public funding with a priority for money to deliver the event”. Preuß’s solution is a separate legacy body, independent of the OCOG but with resources and teeth because, “If you are president of the OCOG your main target is the best possible Games, and you don’t care about what is after because this is not how you get judged.” McPherson illustrated the point, recalling an interview with a (non-Olympic) Games CEO who declared, “Legacy is not my concern. I`m not interested. I`m just here to deliver the Games.” A counter case comes from Deighton, ex-CEO of London`s OCOG, arguing that, “having the wrap up of the OCOG is quite healthy,” but adds, “the city needs to take over and there`s no reason why they can`t hire some people out of the OCOG.” Acknowledging Deighton`s proposal, Hiromi Kawamura (ex-Senior Director, Tokyo 2020) explains that OCOGs in Asian cities adopt a different hiring policy, prioritising temporary secondments from government, creating some deficit in Games experience but premium on long term impacts, “I think it`s a very good model and projects such as the Tokyo Urban Sports Park will now be managed by people who used to be in the OCOG but have now returned to Tokyo Metropolitan Government.”

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Taylor concluded with a view shared by many respondents, “we need a governance structure to facilitate better sustainability and legacy - the current one does not do that.”

Public Funding

Funding models for the Olympic Games, and the role of public funding, are complex, frequently misunderstood and, like governance models, flex according to local contexts. Notwithstanding a common split between private funding for operations and public for infrastructure, there are grey areas where governments (or occasionally private sources) are called upon to fill gaps or exploit opportunities not met by the OCOG. Previous studies have fully exposed contestation about value for money, budget discipline and transparency, but this research has different focus – to assess the effectiveness of public investment in driving long term public benefit.

Interviewees were all broadly content with the common funding split, as outlined above (excepting the Los Angeles City Director who noted that US practice for its Games of 1932, 1984 and 2028 has been to operate entirely through private funding). There was more debate about effectiveness and hypothecation when public money is invested in the grey areas. “With public funding, you are touching on something very important,” believes Garcia, “To avoid just dealing with emergencies, you need to make sure you are ring fencing and putting funds aside that are not just about delivering those two weeks.” Others commented that instances when the public purse is called upon to support Games budgets offers maximum leverage to demand long term public benefit – a lever not used as rigorously as it might according to Hollis (and acknowledging Minnaert (2012)?), “Public funders often want the shine of being a principal event funder, but they should stick to the stuff that happens afterwards because that’s where

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you can make an impact”. She adds that franchise holders, such as the IOC, should also, “have a long-term interest in the investment in place” to help secure and retain commitment to long term benefits. The IOC’s Braga, referencing IOC policy (International Olympic Committee 2017a), shares the impetus for long term funding packages, independent of the two weeks of sport, and which are less prone to governmental changes, but she is agnostic regarding the source – public or private. Michelle Lemaitre (IOC Head of Sustainability) supports the primacy of the OCOG, but believes that when public money is invested there should be “a good mapping process to ascertain roles and responsibilities of the relevant stakeholders. Funding should be tied to agreed outcomes.”

Event Franchise Model

Discussion around the Event Franchise Model is apposite: the IOC is in a phase of change (IOC, 2021a, 2022b, 2022c)). Some, such as Deighton – albeit a fan of the IOC’s contractual regime and disciplines (International Olympic Committee 2017b) - argue it’s a change driven by tough realities, “They had to get there the hard way, right? It’s clear they were going to get nobody bidding at some point”.

Until recently, the IOC allocated Games to single city hosts based on complex and costly bidding processes, seven years in advance. Once awarded, the IOC devolved delivery, alongside most financial risk, to the OCOG and host city, acting mostly as remote advisor, inspector, and cheer leader, with modest interest in the period post-Games. Now, host selection will be through “dialogue” rather than auction, with hosting dispersed across regions (or even cross-border). There is discouragement from fresh construction and stipulations to see how the Games meets hosts’ long term

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urban plans. “Co-creation” is the new mantra, with IOC staff and expert advisors collaborating with hosts throughout. The new process (IOC, 2022b), visible in Paris 2024 and Los Angeles 2028, comes to fruition in the Games of Brisbane 2032 (awarded more than 10 years in advance).

Preuß is guardedly optimistic about greater flexibility in the process and particularly the dialogue phase, “in which we have to find the best legacy plan and long-term development for the city with all their needs.” The IOC’s Dubi argues that the Games must change and, “remain relevant. It’s a mission, otherwise we are at risk.” He charts previous shifts: greater complexity, professionalism and a new commercial model in the 1990s, a new emphasis on public engagement and fan experience around the time of the London Games and, “the next generation of Games where in addition to delivering back to community, being centred on legacy, we’re investing our Games to serve the long-term needs of cities like London, Paris or Los Angeles”.

Jacqueline Barrett, the IOC’s Director, Future Olympic Games Hosts, acknowledges the extent of change. “This is relatively new to us. For many decades we concentrated on Games delivery, then somebody else takes over the legacy.” Now she urges potential hosts to look 20 years or more into the future and assess the city/region’s future challenges, “your starting point depends on where you want to get to. Is it economic, is it infrastructure or it is social? Or a mixture – but for a future Games to be successful it really has to align with the long-term development needs of the city, the region or the county.” Barrett also foresees the IOC taking a more proactive role over longer periods, “we often saw potential, but we were not on the ground early enough or long enough to see responsibilities passed to the right people “.

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Brisbane's Chief City Planner, Dy Currie, confirms that, as the first city to be selected through the IOC "New Norm" dialogue process, the IOC were searching in their enquiries about the Games "fit" with long term urban needs. "They were not interested in new glamorous buildings for the sake of it. We really needed to show that it was needed for the growth of the city, and they were very clear in requiring me to demonstrate need." Describing the city's motivation for securing the Games, Currie continued, "For Brisbane, there's a very clear vision for the future of the city and how we want to get there and that's the only reason we and the surrounding region's Councils (Council of Mayors, South East Queensland) commenced this process back in 2015 when we identified an opportunity to deliver the infrastructure needed for the region's growth". However, Currie identifies a gap for methodology which has, as its starting point, the long-term sustainability needs of a city, mapped on to the opportunities of events like the Olympic Games, "an assessment which starts with the vision for the city, matches it with the role of the Olympics and helps to prioritise what we want to achieve and measure".

Australian academic, Taylor, is guardedly optimistic that a Games model focused on long term development will eventually build public support, "It should be a much more viable proposition than it currently is because there's just so much negative association with the costs, the blowouts and the negative legacies." Taylor favours longer planning periods too (Brisbane and Los Angeles were awarded the Games more than a decade ahead) if time is used to build community engagement and "long term investment in relation to the demographics of the host country." Reflecting on recent flooding in Brisbane, Taylor believes climate change is one such project, "wouldn't you

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argue that mounting the Games gives you the absolute motivation to make your city more climate resilient?”

Commercial interests should not be a drag on the new franchise model, according to James Williams, former executive with one of the IOC’s global sponsors, citing “greater foresight from the IOC to pick cities that are legacy driven and that are going to transform things in the city for the better. I think you can start to build a different level of sponsorship” – a view endorsed by another ex-sponsor, Thierry Borra, who believes commercial partners would relish the opportunity to build longer partnerships, “For me its fundamental that we see brands playing a meaningful role – not just about visibility.”

Motivations to host

Beyond the core research questions, interviewees were invited to discuss, from an urban development perspective, broader motivations for hosting. Brisbane’s Currie reflected the city’s Games ambition as merely a sub-question (albeit potent and emblematic) within a 30- or 40-year sustainable development plan. Urbanist experts were quick to align with this but even event- focused contributors proved eloquent. London’s Deighton describes it as, “the right strategic thinking. The city should say, OK, the world’s changing fast, we’ve got all sorts of issues, what’s the 30-year plan? It’s part of a broader programme. You don’t have to make the games responsible for changing everything, but you can be clear on the ones the Games ought to be about.” But wouldn’t this diminish focus on Games delivery or add further complexity? Not according to Deighton, “It should make it easier to deliver the Games because the early work you’ve done makes it clearer how the Games fit in.”

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Theory of Change

Iain Edmondson, consultant on Games Legacy and previously from the Mayor of London's Economic Development Agency, agrees, but believes cities need assistance to connect their long term needs with catalytic impact of major events," My first question is what are your objectives and what do you want to achieve with the event? A lot of the time, people don't know. They need help to analyse the issues and the connections – the basics like a "theory of change" and a methodology for producing a dollar value on social change." The OECD's Bloom concurs: "event hosts should be encouraged to understand the potential benefits and opportunities to leverage the event as a tool for development", adding that there appears to be a gap for a matrix which could help hosts to analyse long term development alongside event impacts. McPherson also urges cities to start with a "theory of change" based on agendas of urban needs for the next generation, "and through the process we might then decide to bid for a series of events, including the Olympic Games, to look at, for example, sustainability and climate change." "Spirit of 2012" has created its own "theory of change" for optimizing the social benefits of major events (Spirit of 2012, 2022a, 2022b) and CEO, Hollis, distils it as, "an excuse to invest in the things you want people to do differently afterwards – perhaps, for example, ramping up public policy on physical activity." She cautions, however, about the need to be selective, "One of the traps we've fallen into with legacy is people think it's going to solve everything. It absolutely can't. So, pick the things within your control to change."

Evaleo (Swiss NGO) sees the Olympic Games not as a solution, but a significant catalyst for change. CEO, Gabriel Messmer agrees that cities should start with long

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term sustainability needs but emphasizes contextual difference, particularly between Global South and North cities, “an issue in Brisbane might not be there in an African city and a solution in a small city in Switzerland might not work in Sao Paulo.” Like Messmer, Burns works in public health but sees a broader application for setting mega-events in a context of long-term sustainable development, urging cities to ask themselves, “What do you want to change, by how much and by when? Then sit down and test those methods and work out if we’re going to have the Olympic Games, what do we do with that to help us? - whether it is public transport, ill health or improving communities.” Preuß also wants a change of mindset in which potential hosts begin by establishing long term development issues and a vision for their community over the next two or three decades, and then more specific targets in which the Games could play a positive role, “A clear vision must be composed of the different sectors – a vision for sport, but also for other legacies which could be about, for example, employment, housing, regional planning or schools and education, physical or social infrastructure.” There was equally strong consensus from most respondents that if, after analysing its long-term urban challenges, a city could not see how the Games would add value, it should withdraw.

The IOC’s Dubi concludes that, “The IOC has to continue to transform itself, its capabilities, its behaviour and its posture,” to meet this, “greater ambition.” He goes on, “You could say, the biggest challenge for our cities is heading to net zero or fighting obesity and sedentary lifestyles or the transition from a car-based to a public transport city – and any one of these is going to take 30 years, so the longer you can use the Games franchise the better.”

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Themes emerging in response to the three research questions were then tested against the experiences of two recent Olympic Summer Games.

Games Case Studies

London 2012

The Games of London 2012 were founded and won on two headline promises – redevelopment of the city’s East End and inspiration for a generation of young people to take up sport (Lee, 2006). A comparison of these two key impacts is the basis for the case study.

Redevelopment of London’s East End

The recent 10th anniversary of London’s Games afforded ample opportunity to reappraise their impact. Regarding the 226-hectare Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (see Hill, 2022), the Observer’s Architecture Critic, Rowan Moore (2022) wrote, with uncharacteristic effervescence;

“This is the kind of place that planners have dreamed about for decades, but rarely achieved, with a multiplicity of uses – culture, work, homes, education, shopping, sport – where no single facility dominates. It has achieved at least two things usually thought difficult: the creation of a thriving new urban district, and the making of a large new park to which people actually come”

To explore the origins of the project Neale Coleman (then Political Advisor to London’s Mayor, Ken Livingstone) recalls a meeting in 2003 when the British Olympic Association (BOA) brought a London Olympic bid proposal for Mayoral approval.

“Livingstone had no interest whatever in sport, but he said yes on two conditions – firstly

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that the bid should address deprivation in the East of the City and secondly it had to be focused on the largely derelict sites in Stratford and the Lower Lee Valley.”

Coleman explains that after becoming Mayor in 2000, Livingstone was responsible for the first spatial strategy plan in a generation. It identified that London would grow rapidly in coming decades. but Green Belt planning constraints and sustainability principles would demand focus on brown-field sites. Concurrently, there was growing embarrassment that a large post-industrial region just a few miles east of the wealthy City of London, could exhibit extreme levels of deprivation and decline. “That was the basis for Ken’s vision for the Games, and they turned out to be a massive accelerator, deliverer and enabler of jobs, homes and aspiration too.”

Coleman outlines that budget increased from optimistic early estimates not because of the Games directly or overspending, but a more ambitious scope for public infrastructure and regeneration. “Five or six of the final nine billion pounds was spent directly on infrastructure such as remediating land, powerlines, bridges and two power stations, but this was money we wouldn’t have been able to access in the normal course of events.” Deighton concurs, “It’s clear the initial ambition was large and pretty much fulfilled. In a heartbeat Ken had figured out that having the Olympics in east London was the only way the Treasury was ever going to put that kind of money into the area. It was just a horrible, fragmented, disconnected, sprawling mess that we turned into a very efficient platform and all the investments are now beginning to bloom.” Deighton refers not just to the sports venues, housing, retail and office sites, but the more recent arrivals of university campuses, museums, arts, music and broadcast centres (see *Figure 2*).

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<<INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE>>

Camley credits the Park's success to several factors in addition to stimulus and deadlines provided by the Games, including clarity and focus on the original vision, reliable and consistent public/private funding streams and a relatively stable governance structure which has largely "taken the politics out of it". Camley explains, "there were three master plans drawn up for the park – one for the Games, one for transformation and one for 2030." Although the park straddles land from four London Boroughs (Newham, Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Waltham Forest), governance rested with the Olympic Development Authority (ODA) in the construction phase, and post-Games transitioned to the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC), expecting to operate until at least 2032, "and these are the levers that will allow us to do all that", says Camley (perhaps in response to Gillespie et al. (2018)), "and now we can see what success looks like".

Inspiring a generation to take up sport

Shortly after Rowan Moore's paean to London's Olympic Park, sports correspondent, Barney Ronay (2022), shared a markedly different assessment of the participative sport impact of the Games in sister paper, The Guardian:

"Look back at the charts and national obesity levels continued to rise even as the Games were staged. Childhood obesity has gone through the roof. As early as 2015 Sport England figures showed participation levels dipping below their pre-Games levels. A decade on from London 2012 British people are less not more likely to participate in sport, and more prone to health inequalities along social, wealth, race, and geographical lines.

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Simon Cooper (then an official in UK Government, later responsible for sport in the Mayor of London's office) remembers the London bid team taking a group of 30 children to Singapore in 2005 to be part of the presentation to the IOC with Lord Coe promising, "On behalf of the youth of today, the athletes of tomorrow and the Olympians of the future, we humbly submit the bid of London 2012" (Lee, 2006 p 182). "And then we did not do enough to follow up on the commitment," says Cooper, "There was nothing in place nationally in terms of governance for delivery of the participation legacy. It should have had the same level of resource and thoroughness that there was for delivery of the Games themselves." Cooper moved to work for the Mayor of London in 2008 and found the team focused primarily on regeneration rather than sport participation, "so there was nothing in place when I arrived."

Meanwhile Sport England and the UK Department for Education had become involved. In 2006 the School Sports Partnerships, run by the Youth Sports Trust, were extended to cover all English Schools, promoting exercise, activity and sport for all (see Ofsted, 2011) - an initiative described by Nick Fuller as, "a very efficient piece of plumbing in the system". He explains that elite athletes can supply inspiration but, "the key difference is the ability to channel that in a way which reaches all demographics in an efficient and consistent way." At the end of 2010, the UK Government's austerity policies, following the global financial crisis, caused School Sports Partnership funding to be cut which, according to Cooper, "meant that the commitment on sport for young people did not have the necessary level of governance, infrastructure or resources required".

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Deighton believes Games have potential to promote sport and public health but only with, “coherence around Government policy, putting for example, Education and Health Departments together to think about wellness.” However, in the case London 2012 he is unequivocal, “It got kyboshed. Government cut the funding. In hindsight, they probably realised that was a mistake”. Cooper reflects that in addition to lack of consistent governance and funding cuts, there was no clear and consistent vision, prompting him to ask (in terms familiar to Grix & Carmichael (2012)), “to what extent was this ever taken as seriously as it ought to have been.”

There are those who dispute Ronay’s damning analysis – the IOC’s Braga believes powerful trends in Global North nations mean UK participation rates and public health issues could now be even worse had it not been for 2012, “Looking at the studies we have to remember we are trying to go down on an upwards escalator”. However, Iain Edmondson wonders if a consistent governance and funding model, such as that applied to London’s Olympic Park would have produced a different result, “the opportunity to make it a success would have been to put an organization like the ODA and the LLDC overseeing it or to re-shape Sport England completely behind the one-off opportunity of London 2012”. Cooper concludes that the question will remain open until a Games and their hosts address the opportunity thoroughly, “we will have to see what happens when hosts make all the investment and proper governance in such a social programme – but this hasn’t happened yet.”

Contrasting experiences of two long term impact areas related to the London Games provide graphic evidence regarding both the potential for sustainable

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development, but also the measures needed to improve the chances of success. The experience of Rio 2016 was significantly, but not entirely different.

Rio 2016

CNN's summary report card for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, headlined "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly" (CNN, 2016) and Globo's more recent review, "Five years later, Rio 2016's legacy has unfinished works, failed projections and projects still on paper", (Globo, 2021) typify the folklore about South America's first Olympic Games. The case study proves more nuanced.

"A New Vision for the City"

City Planner, Washington Fajardo documents that the Games were part of a strategic response to long term decline, triggered when, in 1960, Rio lost its status as Brazil's capital. Governmental and industrial exits, along with informal inward migration, left the city reeling, "we lost 80% of our industry in the 1980s and were beginning to lose relevance. So, at the beginning of the 90s we needed to look for a new vision for the city." Fajardo and his colleagues realised that, internationally, Rio still played a dominant role in defining Brazilian lifestyle and could be, "a global gateway for the country and a cultural capital." The city's first Strategic Plan was in 1993. Given the success of Barcelona's 1992 Olympic Games, Rio drew heavily on the Catalan capital's urban and marketing re-make. In addition to urbanists seeking to re-model public spaces and re-set parts of the city, Fajardo outlines that, like Barcelona, "the city started to pursue global events, especially sporting events."

The Pan-American Games were successfully hosted in 2007, fuelling winning bids for the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games. Glauter Rocha

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remembers when the Olympic bid was submitted in 2009, “the economic situation in Brazil was very favourable, with commodities boom and strong political project”. His city colleague, Eduardo Paes, who would soon become Mayor, had a clear vision for how to exploit the Games (not unlike that of London’s Ken Livingstone), “he had a good understanding of the possibilities”, says Rocha, “and his expectation was to transform the city by capturing investment from federal and state government, and he did it.”

Marta Tellez was brought from Barcelona to build Rio’s global marketing profile and was equally positive about the city’s vision and plan, “It involved urbanists, scientists, marketers, communicators, architects – and the planning was excellent – most compelling.”

Fajardo continues, explaining Paes’ plans would deploy public transport to reconnect sub-regions of the city, choked by traffic and natural barriers of hilly terrain, whilst also transforming the derelict downtown port district as a revitalised city hub. “The bid for Rio was based totally on facing the problems of the city - mobility problems, environmental issues and social issues – that’s why we wanted to host the Games.”

Expectations, however, outstripped even Fajardo’s ambitions. “For sure the Olympics is not enough to deal with all the issues of the favelas – a quarter of our population – and people didn’t realise that.”

Both the Rio OCOG contributors, Mario Andrada and Mariana Behr, accept the city’s ambition was compelling, but report the IOC’s bidding system of the time generated inflated promises – some of which would prove undeliverable. “I think you can either do a bid that caters to what the IOC demands, or a bid for what the country

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actually needs,” says Behr “and I think we did the first.” Andrada concurs, “we need to make it clear what was indeed possible and what was just a dream to push us all.”

Ambitions delivered and stalled

Beyond the media headlines, the final Games scorecard would show that much of the new public transport (Bus Rapid Transit and trams – see *Figure 3*) was installed and largely successful, both economically and socially (see Pereira, 2019). The Porto Maravilha project to transform downtown was opened for the Games and, according to Andrada, “Brazilians still live through the energy and pride created.”

<<<INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE>>>

However, many other aspects of the plan, including legacy uses for sports venues and environmental remediation were either never started or stalled. The global financial crisis, a subsequent collapse in commodity prices, controversial fiscal policies, political maelstrom and widespread corruption radically changed the mood in Brazil from 2013 (see Neri et al. 2021). Budgets were cut, projects frozen, and Mayor Paes replaced soon after the Games by a mayor who “for political motivations, “according to Rocha, “did not provide the necessary support for the continuity and effectiveness of the Olympic legacy.”

Neri et al.’s (2020) analysis of the impacts of the Rio 2016 Games reflects the same balance in which much of the “legacy” was delivered early. “During the preparation phase for the Games, progress was made in 29 of the 38 social indicators for the city” (p 290). Rocha’s own research (2018) suggested that even during the financial and political crises since 2016, Rio has proved more resilient because of Games stimulus to productivity and inward investment.

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In summary, Rio 2016 didn't lack vision, or a credible long-term plan. It began with healthy public funding and workable governance, but the franchise model then applied to the Games over-inflated promises. There were, and continues to be, tangible benefits to the Cariocas but optimization of the legacy collided with post-Games collapse in effective governance and funding, alongside political contest over the vision.

Both London 2012 and Rio 2016 demonstrated the potential for Olympic Games to act as catalysts for urban or social change. Both benefited, to varying extent, from long term vision, but mixed commitment to appropriate governance and hypothecated public funding resulted in contrasting outcomes for sustainable urban development.

Evidence focused on three research questions tested against the experiences of London 2012 and Rio 2016 enables distillation of conclusions.

Conclusions

Against a context of extensive literature, 36 expert interviews explored, from a different urban lens, a constructionist hypothesis, the basis for this original research. Themes were identified by addressing three research questions, followed by specific focus around two Games Case Studies (London 2012 and Rio 2016).

Q1. How potent are mega-events like the Olympic Games as agents of urban/human transformation?

Whilst definitions of success varied significantly, there was consensus that two dimensions of impact should be assessed – immediate event delivery - followed by long term impacts - over extended periods before and after the Games, totalling 30 or 40 years. Equally vehement was agreement from all expert perspectives that such mega-events create public energy and political motivation sufficient to act as highly potent

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catalysts through short term inspiration and long-term systemic change. As agent provocateurs, the Olympic Games were believed by many respondents, to transcend tactical benefits (such as sporting venues or elite sporting performance) with potential to impact major urban sustainability issues such as public health, climate change or social inclusion and equity – though, importantly, only if, first, the challenge of event delivery is successfully met.

Q2. How much of that potential is translated into positive sustainable urban development?

Evidence from most experts (and previous research) demonstrates that, with notable exceptions, potential benefit for hosts is not regularly or sufficiently translated into sustainable development. This is not to say that Games have not and do not generate positive impacts, but the potential for such benefits is either misdirected or not fully exploited. Over-promising or under-planning were evidenced, as was naivety on behalf of hosts ill-equipped to harness Games energy.

Q3. How effective are current governance, public funding streams and event franchise models to support sustainable urban development?

Governance arrangements emerged as a key factor in determining long term impacts with much debate surrounding the short term, delivery-focused nature of the pivotal OCOG. Whilst the specialist capabilities and motivations of an OCOG were considered vital for operational Games delivery (the challenges of which, according to many experts, should not be underestimated), it was concluded that greater long-term continuity of ambition and community engagement could be underpinned with more balanced governance around, or integrated with, the OCOG.

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Public funding policies vary according to the host cultural, political, and economic systems – (from dominance in hosts such as China to largely absent in the USA and focused mainly on public infrastructure and security in European and other cities) but the evidence suggested further scope for hypothecated public funding to be deployed by hosts as a powerful lever in favour of long term, targeted impacts.

It was noted that the event franchise model for the Olympic Games has undergone significant revision in recent years (particularly in host selection and flexibility of hosting requirements) with the IOC aligning itself clearly with sustainable goals of future city hosts (and in so doing, making the franchise itself more sustainable). Such is the lead time for an Olympic Games, the impact of such changes will require more time for evaluation but in the meantime, there is scope for further franchise adjustments and support for hosts.

Evidence from the case studies of London 2012 and Rio 2016 provided vivid illustration relating to all three questions. London demonstrated contrasting experiences from its two headline ambitions. The QE Olympic Park benefited from clear, long-term vision, stable and effective governance and public funding streams which were partially ring-fenced from political vacillation. Its success is now being celebrated more than ten years on. By contrast, the goal for a generation of young people to be inspired to take up sport, is more contested, with little evidence of marked progress. Expert testimony revealed lack of clarity over vision, shifting goals, dispersed and fluid governance and public funding which was curtailed mid-programme.

Rio 2016 benefited from greater clarity of urban purpose and planning than is widely appreciated (delivering significant infrastructural and financial benefits to the city).

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However, economic, political, and social crises in the later period of planning and post-Games significantly disrupted governance and public funding, interrupting the fulfilment of wider Games impacts.

Whilst it is too early to assess the impacts of future Games in Paris, Los Angeles and Brisbane, all hosts appear to be taking steps to learn from previous experience and exploit more flexible franchise models to leverage sustainable benefits for their cities. Brisbane is of particular interest as it was appointed under a new “dialogue” selection process, rooted in the Games adapting to the long-term needs of the host. It also benefits from more than ten years of planning before its Games in 2032.

Considering, therefore, our hypothesis for this research, *“With adjustments to governance, funding and event franchise structures, global mega-events such as Olympic Games could make significant contributions to sustainable urban development and the events themselves, more sustainable,”* the core components were validated by the evidence gathered. However, it was also found to be incomplete. The expert actors demonstrated that in addition to governance, public funding and franchise arrangements, a fourth dimension is equally important in matching Games potential to sustainable development goals: “clarity of vision,” defined after careful analysis of their long-term needs by potential host communities. Reflective of Loorbach’s (2010) Transition Theory, this was believed to underpin the effectiveness of the three other measures.

Future Pathways

Original evidence from the expert group, alongside the early experience of Brisbane’s urban planners and other future Games hosts, suggests the emergence of a

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welcome new mindset for hosts. Instead of framing an independent decision about whether to seek selection to host the Olympic Games, cities, regions or even nations should begin the process by thoughtfully appraising their long-term urban development needs (over the next 30 or even 40 years), followed by cool-headed analysis of the extent to which the event could offer sufficient positive impact to warrant investment. If potential hosts find a causal benefit, they will proceed to prioritise and define their sustainability vision for hosting. Following community consultation, they will seek dialogue with franchise holder, the IOC, keen to select only cities with such a plan. If insufficient benefit can be identified (or lack of resources or political will to implement), then either the city should withdraw, or the IOC should be transparent (or brave?) enough to seek other partners. The IOC will then provide flexible support to the new host over its longer lifecycle to help fulfil not just the Games, but its wider ambitions. Such a model would also motivate changes to governance and public funding arrangements as outlined above, as well as garner greater community support for hosting.

If such a process draws on the experience of Brisbane's selection, it should be noted that the Australian city planners and others have also highlighted the current absence of an evaluation tool which assesses long term sustainable development goals alongside the assets and attributes of a mega-event such as the Olympic Games. This could present a barrier to effective operation of the new model.

The conclusions of this research signal several policy pathways for future Games hosts, franchise holders and academics.

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Games **governance arrangements** should be adapted to more tightly integrate long term sustainable development with short term event delivery. **Public funding** flows around mega-events offer powerful levers and should be hypothecated towards long term sustainable development priorities.

Franchise holders such as the IOC are to be encouraged in their current direction of greater flexibility, seeking hosts with appropriate goals for their city, extended pre-Games planning periods (as per the decade-plus for LA and Brisbane) and active support over the full lifecycle of the Games project. They should be open-minded to host construction projects, but only if integral to sustainable urban planning. They will also continue to benefit from collaboration with similarly interested international partners – such as the OECD, UN, WHO and Global Active Cities Network.

Cities should host *only* if, first, they are confident about their long-term community and sustainable development needs and secondly, the event will sufficiently add value to meeting such challenges. **Academics** can collaborate with cities and franchise holders to develop a **matrix analysis tool** to assess each city's sustainable urban development needs against the assets of events such as the Olympic Games.

The Olympic Charter, first published in 1908, specifies that, “The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind” (IOC, Committee 2022a, p.8). Original evidence in this research opens a new opportunity for Baron de Coubertin's ambitions to be fulfilled, whilst furthering the debate about mega-events and sustainability – why cities should seek them and how they should be deployed. By adopting the lens of long-term city-needs, and insights from a diverse group of high level, expert actors, a pathway emerges in which changes

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of policy, planning and franchise models, alongside further research, could see the Olympic Games deployed as a significant engine of sustainable urban development.

Ethics statement

Research methodology for this study was approved by the University of Oxford Ethics Committee. Interviewees were recruited only through personal contacts or networks of those contacts. They were provided with background information about the project, the University's research ethical principles and conditions for participation, including permissions for use of responses generically and specifically with or without identification. Those quoted had the opportunity to review, withdraw or make changes to their texts and gave permission for their names to be used. The authors were not in receipt of funding for this research and no conflict of interest to disclose. The lead author has worked in mega-events, and specifically the Olympic Games, for over two decades, and since 2013 as a consultant Senior Advisor to the International Olympic Committee (alongside other clients in the sector). He is also a trustee of the Spirit of 2012 Trust and served as a commissioner on its National Inquiry into the Social Legacy of Events.

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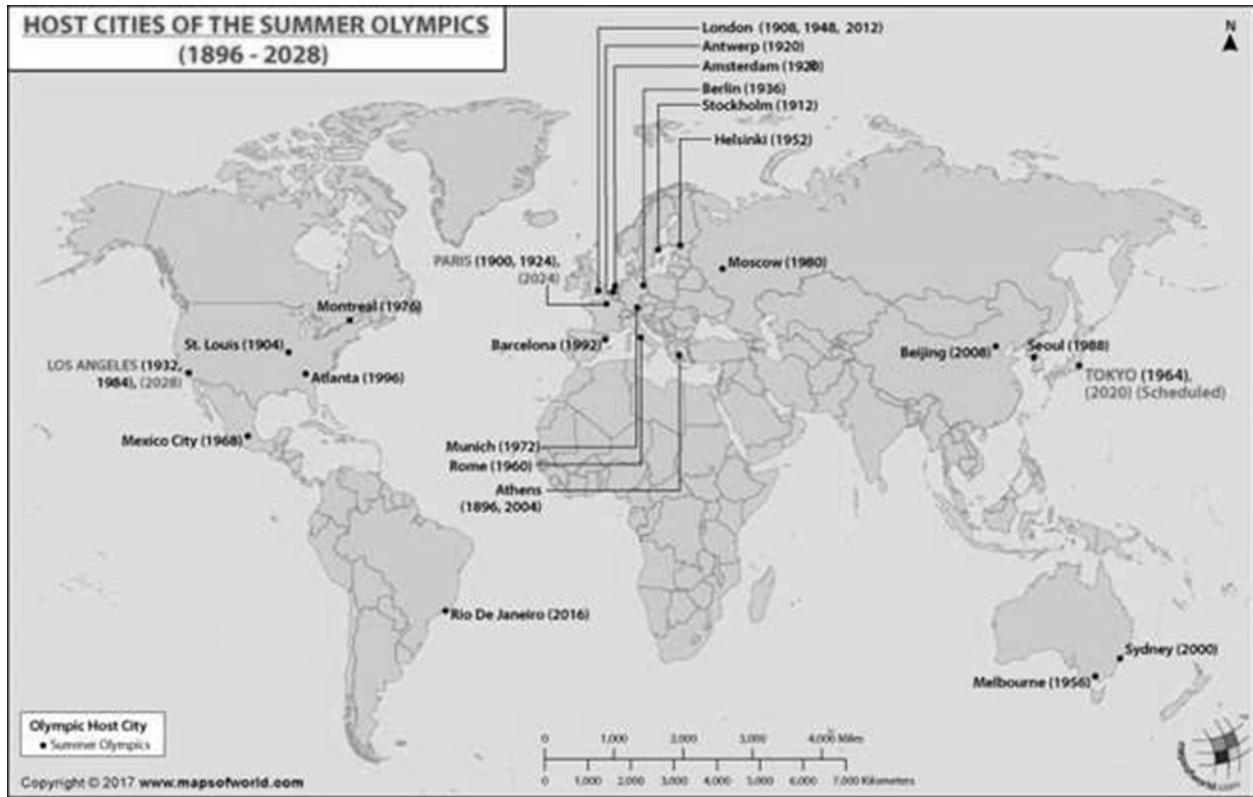


Figure 1: World distribution of Olympic Summer Games, published, 2017 before award of Brisbane 2032 and postponement of Tokyo 2020 to 2021 (Maps of The World.com 2017).

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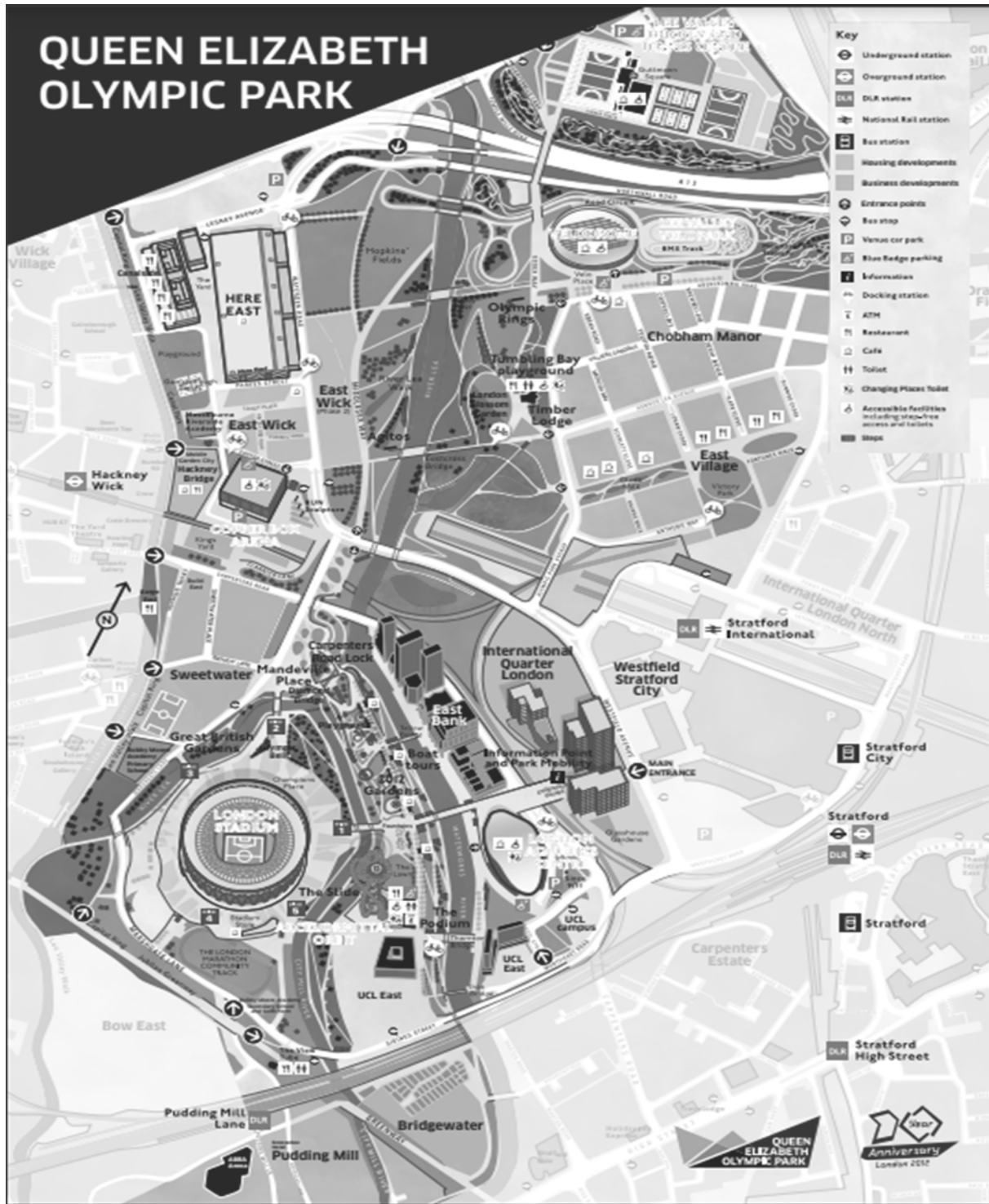


Figure 2: Map of Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London, (London Legacy Development Corporation, LLDC 2022)

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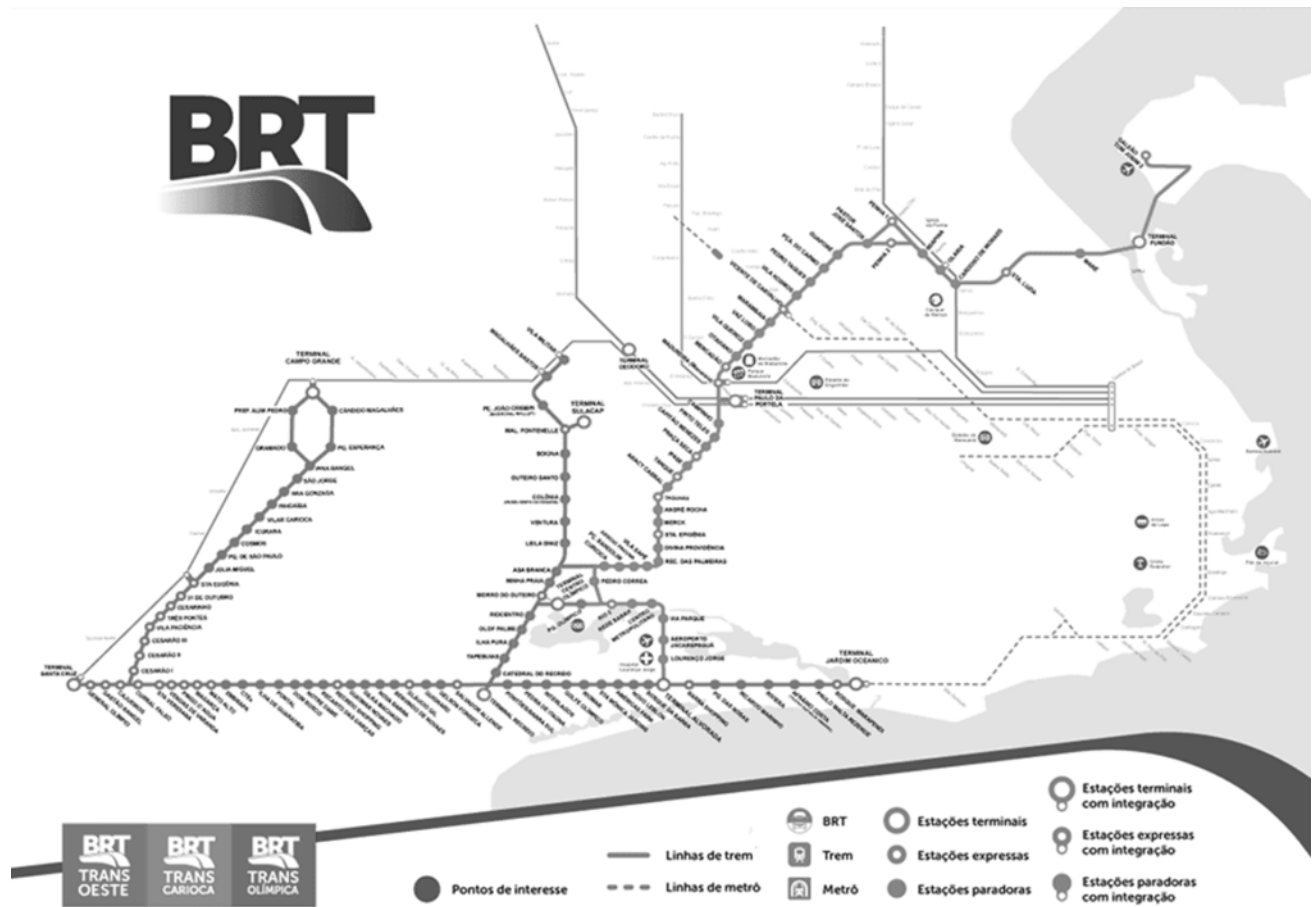


Figure 3. Rio de Janeiro 2016 public transport expansion via new BRT/Tram (RioAccueil.com.br 2018)

ASSESSING AND AUGMENTING THE POTENTIAL FOR GLOBAL MEGA-EVENTS TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Table 1. Distribution of interviewees by typology

List of Expert Interview by type

| | | | | | |
|---------------------|---|-------------|---|-------------------|---|
| Academics | 6 | IOC | 6 | International/NGO | 6 |
| London 2012 | 6 | Rio 2016 | 5 | Tokyo 2020 | 1 |
| Paris 2024 | 2 | Los Angeles | 1 | Brisbane 2032 | 1 |
| Commercial Sponsors | 2 | | | | |

EVENT MANAGEMENT

ASSESSING AND AUGMENTING THE POTENTIAL FOR GLOBAL MEGA-EVENTS TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Table 2. Full list of Expert Interviewees.

Full list of Expert Interviewees

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| ANDRADA, Mario | Rio 2016 |
| | <i>Ex Director of Communications, Rio 2016 OCOG</i> |
| BARRETT, Jacqueline | IOC |
| | <i>Director, Future Olympic Games Hosts, Olympic Games Department</i> |
| BARSACQ, Marie | Paris 2024 |
| | <i>Director of Impact and Legacy, Paris 2024 OCOG</i> |
| BEHR, Mariana | Rio 2016 |
| | <i>Ex Head of Engagement, Education and Torch Relay, Rio 2016 OCOG</i> |
| BIDDLE, Prof. Stuart | Academic |
| | <i>Professor of Physical Activity and Health at the University of Southern Queensland</i> |
| BLOOM, Martha | International Organisation |
| | <i>Policy Analyst in the Culture, Creative Industries and Local Development Unit, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)</i> |
| BORRA, Thierry | Sponsor |
| | <i>Commercial Sponsorship Advisor, ex-Executive with Coca-Cola and Advisor to the IOC</i> |
| BRAGA, Tania | IOC |
| | <i>Head of Impact and Legacy, IOC</i> |
| BROMAGHIM, Erin | Los Angeles 2028 |
| | <i>Director of Olympic and Paralympic Development for the Office of Mayor, City of Los Angeles</i> |
| BURNS, Prof. Sir Harry | Academic |
| | <i>Ex Director of Public Health for Glasgow & Chief Medical Officer for Scotland, now Professor in Health and Care Futures, Strathclyde University</i> |
| CAMLEY, Mark | London 2012 |
| | <i>Executive Director, Park Operations and Venues at London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC)</i> |
| COLEMAN, Neale | London 2012 |
| | <i>Ex Advisor to Mayor of London for London 2012 and Ex Chair of LLDC</i> |
| COOPER, Simon | London 2012 |

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| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| | <i>Ex Parliamentary Private Secretary to UK Sport Minister, instrumental in bid for London 2012 Games, then leading on Sport for Mayor of London before and following London Games</i> |
| CURRIE, Dy | <i>Brisbane 2032</i> |
| | <i>Chief Planner, City of Brisbane</i> |
| DALRYMPLE, Alister | <i>International NGO</i> |
| | <i>Consultant, Evaleo, Paris</i> |
| DEIGHTON, Lord Paul | <i>London 2012</i> |
| | <i>Ex CEO London 2012 OCOG</i> |
| DUBI, Christophe | <i>IOC</i> |
| | <i>Executive Director, Olympic Games</i> |
| EDMONDSON, Iain | <i>London 2012</i> |
| | <i>Founder and Managing Director, Legacy Delivery Limited (Agency), Ex Head of Major Events, London and Partners, Mayor of London's Economic Development Organization</i> |
| EXARCHOS, Yiannis | <i>IOC</i> |
| | <i>Chief Executive of Olympic Broadcast Services, IOC</i> |
| FAJARDO, Washington | <i>Rio 2016</i> |
| | <i>Chief Planner, City of Rio</i> |
| FULLER, Nick | <i>London 2012</i> |
| | <i>President, EVERFI International, Ex Head of Education, London 2012 OCOG</i> |
| GARCIA, Dr. Beatriz | <i>Academic</i> |
| | <i>Associate Director of the Centre for Cultural Value. University of Liverpool</i> |
| GRENON, Georgina | <i>Paris 2024</i> |
| | <i>Sustainability Director, Paris 2024 OCOG</i> |
| HOLLIS, Ruth | <i>NGO</i> |
| | <i>CEO, Spirit of 2012 Trust - grant-giving and research NGO supporting long term social impact of events.</i> |
| KAWARMURA, Hiromi | <i>Tokyo 2020</i> |
| | <i>Japanese Education Ministry on secondment to OECD, Ex Senior Director, Executive Office Tokyo 2020</i> |
| LEMAITRE, Michelle | <i>IOC</i> |
| | <i>Head of Sustainability</i> |
| McALPINE, Gavin | <i>IOC</i> |

ASSESSING AND AUGMENTING THE POTENTIAL FOR GLOBAL MEGA-EVENTS TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

| | |
|--|--|
| | <i>Associate Director, Delivery, Olympic Games</i> |
| MESSMER, Gabriel | <i>International NGO</i> |
| | <i>CEO; Evaleo, Switzerland</i> |
| McPHERSON, Prof. Gayle | <i>Academic</i> |
| | <i>Director of Research Centre for Culture, Sport, and Events. University of the West of Scotland</i> |
| OGGERO, Giulia | <i>International Organisation</i> |
| | <i>Technical Officer, World Health Authority</i> |
| PREUB, Prof. Holger | <i>Academic</i> |
| | <i>University of Mainz and Chair of Paris 2024 Legacy Evaluation Committee</i> |
| ROCHA, Glauter | <i>Rio 2016</i> |
| | <i>Brazilian Federal Government, Ex Operations Director for Rio 2016, City of Rio and Ex Researcher, Federal Institute for Economic Studies</i> |
| TAYLOR, Prof. Tracy | <i>Academic</i> |
| | <i>Associate Deputy Vice Chancellor Research & Innovation in the College of Business and Law, Specialist in Sport Management, RMIT University, Melbourne</i> |
| TELLEZ, Marta | <i>Rio 2016 Games</i> |
| | <i>Ex Communications and Marketing Director, Municipal Olympic Company. City of Rio & Advisor to IOC</i> |
| VUOLO, Elena | <i>International Organisation</i> |
| | <i>Senior Technical Officer, Emergencies (WHE), Management and Operations, World Health Organization</i> |
| WILLIAMS, James | <i>Sponsor</i> |
| | <i>Ex Marketing, Sponsorship and Coms Director for Coca Cola Corporation, Tokyo 2020 Games (plus Rio 2016 and London 2012)</i> |
| <i>NB: The convention will be adopted that contributors will be fully identified at the point of first quotation. Thereafter only surnames will be used.</i> | |

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Appendix 1 – Full List of Interviewees

| Interviewee | Organization | Role |
|------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| ANDRADA, Mario | Rio 2016 | Ex Director of Communications, Rio 2016 OCOG |
| BARRETT, Jacqueline | IOC | Director, Future Olympic Games Hosts, Olympic Games Department |
| BARSACQ, Marie | Paris 2024 | Director of Impact and Legacy, Paris 2024 OCOG |
| BEHR, Mariana | Rio 2016 | Ex Head of Engagement, Education and Torch Relay, Rio 2016 OCOG |
| BIDDLE, Prof. Stuart | Academic | Professor of Physical Activity and Health at the University of Southern Queensland |
| BLOOM, Martha | International Organisation | Policy Analyst in the Culture, Creative Industries and Local Development Unit, The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) |
| BORRA, Thierry | Sponsor | Commercial Sponsorship Advisor, ex-Executive with Coca-Cola and Advisor to the IOC |
| BRAGA, Tania | IOC | IOC |
| BROMAGHIM, Erin | Los Angeles 2028 | Director of Olympic and Paralympic Development for the Office of Mayor, City of Los Angeles |
| BURNS, Prof. Sir Harry | Academic | Ex Director of Public Health for Glasgow & Chief Medical Officer for Scotland, now Professor in Health and Care Futures, Strathclyde University |
| CAMLEY, Mark | London 2012 | Executive Director, Park Operations and Venues at LLDC |
| COLEMAN, Neale | London 2012 | Ex Advisor to Mayor of London for London 2012 and Ex Chair of LLDC |
| COOPER, Simon | London 2012 | Ex PPS to UK Sport Minister, instrumental in bid for London 2012 Games, then leading on Sport for Mayor of London before and following London Games |
| CURRIE, Dy | Brisbane 2032 | Chief Planner, City of Brisbane |
| DALRYMPLE, Alister | International Organisation | Consultant, Evaleo, Paris |
| DEIGHTON, Lord Paul | London 2012 | Ex CEO London 2012 OCOG |
| DUBI, Christophe | IOC | Executive Director, Olympic Games |
| EDMONDSON, Iain | London 2012 | Founder and Managing Director, Legacy Delivery Limited (Agency), Ex Head of Major Events, London and Partners, Mayor of London's Economic Development Organization |

ASSESSING AND AUGMENTING THE POTENTIAL FOR GLOBAL MEGA-EVENTS TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

| | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| EXARCHOS, Yiannis | IOC | Chief Executive of Olympic Broadcast Services, IOC |
| FAJARDO, Washington | Rio 2016 | Chief Planner, City of Rio |
| FULLER, Nick | London 2012 | President, EVERFI International, Ex Head of Education, London 2012 OCOG |
| GARCIA, Dr Beatriz | Academic | Associate Director of the Centre for Cultural Value. University of Liverpool |
| GRENON, Georgina | Paris 2024 | Sustainability Director, Paris 2024 OCOG |
| HOLLIS, Ruth | International Organisation | CEO, Spirit of 2012 Trust - grant-giving and research NGO supporting long term social impact of events. |
| KAWARMURA, Hiromi | Tokyo 2020 | Japanese Education Ministry on secondment to OECD, Ex Senior Director, Executive Office Tokyo 2020 |
| LEMAITRE, Michelle | IOC | Head of Sustainability |
| McALPINE, Gavin | IOC | Associate Director, Delivery, Olympic Games |
| MESSMER, Gabriel | International Organisation | CEO; Evaleo, Switzerland |
| McPHERSON, Prof. Gayle | Academic | Director of Research Centre for Culture, Sport, and Events. University of the West of Scotland |
| OGGERO, Giulia | International Organisation | Technical Officer, World Health Authority (WHO) |
| PREUß, Prof. Holger | Academic | University of Mainz and Chair of Paris 2024 Legacy Evaluation Committee |
| ROCHA, Glauter | Rio 2016 | Brazilian Federal Government, Ex Operations Director for Rio 2016, City of Rio and Ex Researcher, Federal Institute for Economic Studies |
| TAYLOR, Prof. Tracy | Academic | Associate Deputy Vice Chancellor Research & Innovation in the College of Business and Law, Specialist in Sport Management, RMIT University, Melbourne |
| TELLEZ, Marta | Rio 2016 | Ex Communications and Marketing Director, Municipal Olympic Company. City of Rio & Advisor to IOC |
| VUOLO, Elena | International Organisation | Senior Technical Officer, Emergencies (WHE), Management and Operations, World Health Organization (WHO) |
| WILLIAMS, James | Sponsor | Ex Marketing, Sponsorship and Coms Director for Coca Cola Corporation, Tokyo 2020 Games (plus Rio 2016 and London 2012) |

ASSESSING AND AUGMENTING THE POTENTIAL FOR GLOBAL MEGA-EVENTS TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Appendix 2. Semi-structured Interview Format

Interview Questions areas:

1. What was/is your role in the delivery of an Olympic Games?
2. How would you define success in relation to an Olympic Games?
3. What are the major factors that will influence that level of success? Based on your experience, what advice, if any, would you pass on to future Games hosts to optimize their long term impact?
4. It usually takes 10 years to secure, plan and then deliver an Olympic Games and most people think the scale of the event will be felt for 20 years or more. So what ambitions should hosts have for the next 30 years when they plan to mount a Games?
5. How potent can an Olympic Games be as a tool of urban development/transformation? Think of both hard and soft development...(physical infrastructure such as stadia, public transport etc – but also inward investment, social cohesion, education, sustainability etc - What are the barriers to this impact?)
6. Specifically, how could the allocation of public funding be used to support longer term sustainable urban benefits related to mounting an Olympic Games?
7. How could Governance structures related to an Olympic Games be optimized to drive long term sustainable benefits?
8. What could the IOC and its stakeholders do to enable the Games to operate with such long term benefits?
9. Finally, I'd like your comments on a hypothesis.....

The hypothesis is this “With adjustments to governance, public funding mandates and the long term vision of hosting, the Olympic Games could become a positive driver of sustainable urban development” – discuss.....

- a. How realistic is this? What would it mean in practical terms?
- b. Can you identify Games which have already operated, at least partially, in this way – and with what effect?
- c. How different would things have to be to make this happen?
- d. How would this impact the attractiveness of mounting an Olympic Games?