"The Olympic Park model, its opportunities and challenges: reflections on Sydney, Beijing and London"

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Research on the Olympic Park

1. Contextualisation of the “Olympic Park” model
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   2. Historical perspective of the Olympic Urbanisation
   3. Why is the Olympic Park needed?: the IOC’s view and the host city’s view
   4. Challenges in creating the Olympic Park
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2. Case Studies: Sydney, Beijing, and London Olympic Park
   1. Background: Olympic urbanisation since 2000
   2. Comparison: Planning strategies
   3. Identification of the post-Olympic problems
   4. Solution?: Transformation of the post-Olympic Park into “mixed-use” precinct
   5. Consideration: critical views on the post-Olympic planning
1. What is the Olympic Park?

1. No definition

2. Each bid or host city has own definition
   1. The city itself as an Olympic Park (Tokyo 2016 Olympic Bid)
   2. The broader area in the city as an Olympic Park (Lille 2004 Olympic bid)
   3. The specific urban **precinct** as an Olympic Park
      …includes various types of sports venue and supportive facilities (Athlete village and Media Centre etc)

3. Spatial requirement of the Olympic Park
   - It requires approx. 100ha (=1km x 1km square) of land in order to satisfy the IOC requirements today. (Sheard (2001) p. 47)
   - Also required to provide the sufficient transportation network to carry the massive amount of spectators
2. Historical perspective of the Olympic Urbanisation

1. 1896-1904: the origins of Olympic urbanisation, few urban legacy
2. 1908-1928: the dominance of the Olympic stadium
3. 1932-1956: the rise of the Olympic quarter
4. 1960-2012: the Olympics as a catalyst of urban change (quarter(s) + transport)
   4.1 1960-1976: urban expansion
   4.2 1980-1984: avoid over-extravagant project
   4.3 1988-1996: inner-city regeneration
   4.4 2000-2012: sustainable urban form

2. Historical perspective of the Olympic Urbanisation

The six theoretical models of Olympic site integration to the host city
(Source: Liao, H. and A. Pitts (2006), "A Brief Historical Review of Olympic Urbanization"
)

Legend: ○ existing venue; ● newly built venue; Δ Olympic village

Decentralized: Mexico City’68; Los Angeles’84
Inner-city mono-clustering: Helsinki’52; Munich’72; Montreal’76
Inner-city poly-clustering: Tokyo’64; Moscow’80; Barcelona’92
Periphery clustering: Seoul’88; Athens’04; Beijing’08
Satellite clustering: Atlanta’96
Joint clustering: Sydney’00
2. Historical perspective of the Olympic Urbanisation

Inevitable physical legacy of the Olympic Games?

1960 (Rome): The Foro Italico sports complex
1964 (Tokyo): The Komazawa Olympic Park
1972 (Munich): The Olympiapark
1976 (Montreal): Parc Olympique
1980 (Moscow): The Luzhniki Olympic Complex
1988 (Seoul): The Seoul Olympic Park
1992 (Barcelona): The Montjuic hill (Sports complex)
1996 (Atlanta): The Centennial Olympic Park
2000 (Sydney): The Sydney Olympic Park
2004 (Athens): Olympic Athletic Centre of Athens
2008 (Beijing): Beijing Olympic Green
2012 (London): London Olympic Park
3. Why is the Olympic Park needed?

**A. The IOC’s concern**

1. **Practical aspect: reduce the operational difficulties**
   “The geographical area occupied by the sports installations required for the Olympics programme should be as compact as possible. This can be a vital element for awarding of the Games [...] Generally speaking, the IFs (International Federations) wish to have their competition sites as near as possible to the Olympic village and the centre of the Olympic area in general [...] The geographical situation may also be important for post-Olympic use”


2. **Ideological aspect: symbolise the celebration**
   “Modern Olympia will inevitably contain many buildings, as will be seen from the examination which we are about to make of its possible organisation. These buildings, by virtue of their purpose, will often go together. There will be a real inconvenience in separating them too widely. Apart from this practical drawback, beauty would be bound to suffer also from impossibility of taking in the city visually as a whole [...] it is certain that modern Olympia ought not to consist of buildings scattered about a casino park.”

“Prisoner’s dilemma”

“The high competition of bid cities forces them to follow all requirements the IOC sets….it forces the bid cities into so called ‘prisoner’s dilemma’. That means the cities offer ever more to the Olympic Movement and increase their costs without gaining an advanced position due to the fact that all bid cities offer the same.”

(Preuss, The Economics of staging the Olympics, p.290, 2004)
3. Why is the Olympic Park needed?

B. The host city’s concern

1. Understanding the context: importance of urban regeneration in the post-industrial city

“the post-industrial city had to find the new ways of coping with the disappearance of manufacturing and the redundant spaces and lives it has left behind”.

“the organisation of spectacular urban space is a mechanism for attracting capital and people in a period of inter-urban competition…”

“Mega-events could be considered […] one of the most visible elements of the current local strategies of survival.”

2. Justification of urban regeneration

“site of hallmark events are justified in the name of urban renewal”

“The Games turned into an instrument to concentrate all the power of a city on a single goal. […]objectives set out in urban development concepts could be achieved within extremely short period, which would otherwise have been difficult to reach without the Games.”
3. Why is the Olympic Park needed?

3. Historical evidences

"All host cities of the Olympic Games tried to choose sites which were disused or had to be decontaminated. This fact is not surprising since the construction of new sports facilities requires space in the vicinity of the city centre and only land with former industrial usage is affordable for this purpose."


**Table 7.7 Changed land utilization caused by Olympic Games**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Previous utilization of selected areas (Ecological view)</th>
<th>Post-Games utilization of selected areas (Benefit for the population)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Munich 1972</td>
<td>Disused estate, rubble, wasteland</td>
<td>Olympic park, traffic connection, recreational area, housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montreal 1976</td>
<td>Wasteland</td>
<td>Olympic park, recreational area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seoul 1988</td>
<td>Contaminated site (Chamsil, Han River)</td>
<td>Olympic park, leisure time venues (sports facilities), water purification, recreational area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barcelona 1992</td>
<td>Decaying industrial site, old railway lines, run-down port, wasteland</td>
<td>Housing area, port atmosphere, parks, services complex, recreational area, sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta 1996</td>
<td>Contaminated site (city centre)</td>
<td>Office buildings, recreational area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney 2000</td>
<td>Contaminated site, wasteland, dump site</td>
<td>Olympic park, residential area, recreational area, 100 000 trees and shrubs planted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athens 2004</td>
<td>Airport region, military base and industrial site at coastal area</td>
<td>Recreational area, wetland ecosystem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Challenges in creating the Olympic Park

1. Embedding the Olympic agenda into the host city’s planning vision

“The dilemma for a host city is that the ground rules for the event are established by a body external to the city […] they cause cities to manipulate the planning process”

2. Regeneration under time constraint:
-Lack of public consultation & long-term vision
-Abundant of initial promise

“The short timeframe in which governments and industry have to react to the hosting of hallmark events may lead to ‘fast track planning’ where proposals are pushed through the planning process without the normal procedures being applied.”

“Design and construction fast-tracking are now the new enemy of consultation and planning”

3. Regeneration in the age of media

“a city may lead to superficial beautification rather than fundamental regeneration”
4. Challenges in sustaining the Olympic Park

1. Sustainability of a large sports complex:
   - Post-Olympic utilisation?: different demand between during and post Games
   - Social accessibility?: Question of “who’s legacy?” (ex. Lenskyj (2002))

   “Overall, the negative side of accommodating spectacle sees Olympics venues described as costly ‘white elephants’, creating ‘islands of gentrification’ and ‘rich ghettos’ funded by the private sector.”

2. Divorce from the neighborhoods?: problem of “Tourist Bubble”
   “The tourist bubbles create islands of affluence that are sharply differentiated and segregated from the surrounding urban landscape.”

3. Lack of legacy planning before the Games: ad-hoc legacy consideration
   “At a time when legacy comes under serious consideration, after the Games many of the important local Olympic institutions, including the local organising committee, are winding up. There is a great danger that key decisions will be made “on the run” or on an ad hoc basis.”
Case studies
2.1 Background:

Olympic urbanisation since 2000

- dominance of the highly venue concentration approach
- increasing concern about sustainable legacy
The number of bidding city & the number of venue in each Olympic site
(Source: Author (2008) "Concentration and Dispersion, A Critical Question to the Olympic City")
The Evolution of the IOC’s Commitment to sustainability
(Source: Author (2008) )

1990
1991
1992
Barcelona
1993
1994
1995
The IOC established a Commission on Sport and Environment
1996
Atlanta
1997
1998
1999
2000
Sydney
2001
Jacques Rogge was elected as the president of the IOC on 16 July 2001
OGKM (Olympic Games Knowledge Management )data collection start
2002
OGGI (Olympic Games Global Impact )preliminary research start
2003
IOC conference on the Olympic legacy at Lausanne
Olympic Games Study Commission, Report to the 115th IOC Session
Legacy aspect was added to the Olympic Charter at the first time.
2004
Athens
2005
2006
2007
2008
Beijing
2009
2010
2011
2012
London

Environmental aspect was added to the Olympic Charter at first time. (16 June 1991)
Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and issued “Agenda21"
The IOC issued the Olympic movement’s own “Agenda21"
The IOC established a Commission on Sport and Environment
Further amendment on environmental aspect in the Olympic Charter.
The IOC issued the Olympic movement’s own "Agenda21"
Further amendment on legacy aspect in the Olympic Charter.
2.2 Comparison:
Planning strategies

- location
- size
- monumentality
Location of the Olympic Park

- distance from major urban centres
- relationship with major urban centres
The Olympic Park and city development patterns

- location of the OP synchronised with each city’s urban development strategy
- the OP has been expected to become a new urban core for further development
Spatial dominance of the Olympic Park

- Construction of the OP as massive urban regeneration project
- SOP and LOP were indicated as “the biggest urban regeneration project in the country.
- SOP and LOP are located at one of the most deprived areas in the country.
- Different configuration of sports and green space in the OP
Construction of the Olympic Park

- Massive urban regeneration in 7 years.
- Remediation of the former industrial site
- Representation of “green-ness” is imperative
- “Olympic city within a city” during the Games
- OP as spatial and political concentrated space
Sydney Olympic Stadium (110,000 seats)

Beijing Olympic Stadium (91,000 seats)

London Olympic Stadium (80,000 seats)

Iconic stadia in the Olympic Park

- Each OP includes the main Olympic stadium as a centrepiece of the Games

- Each stadium has + 80,000 seating capacity.
  But it would be reduced after the Games

- Different way of achieving its own “uniqueness”
Iconic stadium in the Olympic Park

-Sydney: size (the biggest in the Olympic history)

-Beijing: design (three dimensional steel structure)

-London: changeability (legacy concern)
2.3 Identification of the post-Olympic problems
Issues in the post-Olympic Park  

Sydney

Post-Olympic hang-over (2001-2002)

1. Lack of events at the Olympic Park
2. Problem of “grand” space
3. Location problem (infrequent rail link)

“The problems are not confined to the main stadium. Most days, this sprawling complex resembles little more than a state-of-the art ghost town. It still looks terrific, but now the games are over there are very few good reasons for Sydney-siders to come here.” (CNN, 11 July, 2001)

4. Ad-hoc legacy planning

“...the reason we didn’t produce something by the end of 2000, to be very blunt, is that we were very busy staging and managing the biggest event in the world...could not divert staff from live Olympic tasks to work on post-Games project...”
Issues in the post-Olympic Park

Beijing

Different aspects of post-Olympic Park

1. Lack of events at the Olympic facilities (esp. Bird’s Nest)
   - Only one sporting event at the Bird’s Nest after the Games

2. But, great success as a tourist destination.

“The 91,000-seat National Stadium, built at a cost of $450 million, is perhaps the best symbol both of the pride that rose from hosting the games and the uncertainty of its long-term impact.”

(AP, 5 August, 2009)

3. Uneven usability within the BOP
   - Different character between the north and the south part of the BOP
Issues in the post-Olympic Park   London

1. Utilisation of the post-Olympic park and stadia has been a critical issue (esp. Main Stadium)
   - Utilisation of the post-Olympic Stadium became an political issue as different stakeholders have different opinions.

2. Bid promise as a constrain
   - Sporting concern vs urban concern (LOCOG vs LDA)

3. Impact of the current financial crisis?
   - Difficulty of securing the future investors and developers
2.4 Solution?:
Transformation of the post-Olympic Park into “mixed-use” precinct
1. The Sydney Olympic Park Authority was established in 2001
   - Maintain the SOP
   - Overview furtherer development
   - Secure financial viability

2. Three masterplans were issued since 2002
   - Enhance mixed-use (bring office, commercial and residential functions)
   - Optimise the available land

3. Office blocks, Hotels were already constructed, and high-end residential block and sports hospital will be constructed soon.
   - Financial viability
   - Bring more people to the SOP
“the post Sydney Olympic Park master plan recognised that “the park could not survive on sport and recreation alone and proposed greater residential and commercial development there [...] a new focus on the Park as a multi-purpose landscape may sustain the possibility of a useful post-Games life.”


“…over the next 20 years -25 years, you will see a lot more commercial development, you will see more a lot more residential development. Key for us is to get the balance right between those two things, commercial / residential and great sports event that happen here, and also great parklands.”

Michael Knight (Chair of the Sydney Olympic Park Authority), Comment in the video, “Sydney Olympic Park, from the Beginning…”
1. The post-BOP plan was issued in 2006.

2. The post-BOP will be "multi-functional complex" based on Sports, entertainment, exhibitions, tourism, and business services.

3. The post-BOP will be developed in three phases
   1. Venue adaptation
   2. Promote investment and establish the post-BOP brand
   3. Connection to the international economy

(Ren, H. (2008) "Post-Games Use of Beijing Olympic Park")
1. Legacy masterplan has been prepared even before the Games awarded

“One of our design visions is starting design from Legacy”

David Higgins (ODA), June, 2007

2. Strategic transformation of the post-Olympic Park

- “Transformability” is the key
- Utilising “temporary structures”
- Enhance mixed-use development in the legacy phase

3. Institutional overlaps

- Olympic & legacy transformation planning by the ODA
- Early involvement of the LDA
- Establishment of the Legacy company in 2009
2.5 Consideration:
critical views on the post-Olympic planning
Vitalisation of the post-Olympic Park

“Mixed-use” Olympic Park idea works?

• question of “compatibility” of sporting use and other uses (office, commercial and residential)

“the sports landscape can be defined as ‘topophobia’, which means the fear of place.”

2. Mediating diverse identities of the OP

“a land use planning and decision-making resemble a high-stake competition over an area’s future land use pattern”

3. Managing infrequent nature of the sporting area

“Establishing eurythmia”
(Lefebvre, H. (1992), “Rhythmanalysis”)
Integration of the Olympic Park into the urban tissue

1. The relationship with surroundings?
   - difference between the OP and the neighborhoods
   - the OP as a "tourist bubble"?
     Judd, D. R. (1999) Constructing the Tourist Bubble, In The Tourist City
   - the OP as an "island of gentrification"?

2. Role of the SOP within the broader region?
   - conflict of vision?
     Regional significant centre or local neighbourhood?