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# STATE OF THE LEGACY

## State of the Legacy Report

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*It has been ten years since London hosted the Olympic and Paralympic games. London's bid differentiated itself from other host cities in its commitment to Legacy, covering a range of themes from public participation in sports to the regeneration of East London. There have been more academic papers generated about London 2012 and its aftermath than any other Olympic host city, many of which have been produced by academics working in different disciplines at our host institutions - UCL (University College London), UEL (University of East London), University of Cardiff, and Oxford Brookes University - but never collated in one place. Therefore, it was agreed that to coincide with the tenth anniversary of London hosting the games we would produce a literature review examining the 'State of the Legacy' from a critical, academic perspective, that would provide a summary and overview of the key themes and findings that had emerged in the literature over this period and identify any significant gaps for ongoing interrogation.*

The report is an outcome of a collaboration between academics and postgraduate students at the aforementioned universities. Students worked with supervisory input on allocated topics linked to the Olympic legacy promises for the regeneration of East London and the governance context in which these have evolved and been delivered over this period. The resulting report provides an overarching insight into the contribution that has been made across a wide range of academic disciplines, including architecture and planning, urban studies, the social sciences, environmental studies, political science and law, to understandings and critique of the urban legacy outcomes of London 2012. This body of work, itself produced through a great deal of intensive collaborative work between academics and several generations of students, as well as with numerous external organisations and interlocutors, stands alongside, and often in counterpoint to, the more celebratory and affirmative outputs embodied in policy and governmental reviews of the Olympics Legacy over the last decade. In that sense, it reflects the role and value of universities as independent centres of critical urban thinking and expertise, that can provide an important balance to the indicators and measures of success that inform decision-making in other domains of public life, and a depth of qualitative analysis that may be missing from policy-driven interventions.





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## GUIDE TO CONTENTS OF THE REPORT

*The full report is organised in five core sections, covering The Promise of Legacy, The Governance of Legacy, Employment and Opportunities, Housing, and The Park. The content of each section is summarised below.*

### SECTION 01

## THE PROMISE OF LEGACY

In section one, Luz Navarro Eslava and Juliet Davis analyse the evolving definition of legacy and its promises over time, in the context of a shifting political and economic landscape. As many commentators have noted, the successful outcome of London's bid rested on a clear articulation of a vision for and concept of legacy. While elements of that vision have remained at the heart of London's distinctive framing of legacy, of the promises that have been made to the future beyond the Games at different times and, indeed, to what has transpired on the ground over the past ten years, the notion of legacy has been fluid. The Games have been described at different times as the 'Regeneration Games' and the 'Games for a Nation', speaking to quite different social goals and effects.

Priorities, commitments, plans, targets, and outcomes have all changed over the period from the initial document bid launched by Ken Livingstone as Labour Mayor, and in the context of Prime Minister Tony Blair's New Labour government, to today. These changes, as the report shows, owe much to the changing political landscape of London and the wider UK - the shifts from Livingstone/ Blair to Johnson as Conservative Mayor with Gordon Brown as Labour Prime Minister and, soon after, David Cameron as leader of a Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government, to Sadiq Khan as Labour Mayor and a Conservative central government under several changes of leadership.

It is in the context of the original bid that we see legacy defined in urban terms as regeneration and the delivery of material, life-changing benefits for a deprived area of East London, building on years of discussion about the post-industrial regeneration of this part of the city, and effectively 'de-risking' the capital's standing as a de-regulated, global financial centre from a private investment perspective (Smith 2014). The Games were seen as a catalyst (Bishop, Everett and Fawcett, 2020), accelerating the process of the regeneration of East London beyond what could have otherwise been achieved, especially following the 2008 financial crash. In 2008 Livingstone rebranded these "beneficial impacts" as London's 'five legacy commitments,' in the process advancing the goal of 'transforming the heart of East London' (Mayor of London, 2008): a comprehensive redevelopment of the section of the Lower Lea Valley designated as the Olympic site, with regeneration encompassing economic and social development (Calcutt, 2015, p. 285), anchored in thousands of new homes targeted at low-income Londoners, 50,000 new jobs, and £10bn of investment in transport infrastructure.





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Under Mayor Boris Johnson and the new Conservative-majority coalition government, as well as in the context of economic recession and the rise of new national austerity policies, local authorities faced massive budget cuts, including the host boroughs. Given their reliance on public funds, this had ramifications for the legacy plans launched in 2008 and the newly launched 'convergence' agenda (Lock, 2015, p. 75; Gunter, 2017, p. 294), aimed at bringing East London into line with the rest of the city in terms of its social and economic outlook and opportunities. In December 2010, the DCMS (Department for Culture, Media and Sport) published new plans for the legacy of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, re-branded as 'Games for a Nation'. Now notably lacking in detail, they created in Mike Weed's analysis, a new openness to legacy in the wake of the numerical specificity of Livingstone's commitments, "that will allow the outputs and outcomes from as many programmes as possible to be claimed as legacies secured from the Games" (Weed, 2013, p. 285). This is the contested narrative that unfolded in the aftermath of the Games, in the absence of both a clear and coherent conceptual framework for legacy (Poynter, Viehoff and Li, 2015), and 'a lack of robust evidence relating to longer term benefit' (Davis 2012, p 316), which this report seeks to unpack.

## SECTION 02

### THE GOVERNANCE OF LEGACY

In Section 2, Michael Berry, Penny Bernstock, and Sue Brownill, provide a comprehensive review of the shifting landscape of governance which accommodated and shaped this shifting narrative, positioning the evolution of Legacy as 'a governance issue' (Leopkey and Parent 2017: 439). It demonstrates firstly, how the agencies and mechanisms for decision making and delivery themselves helped shape legacy and who was engaged in it; and secondly, the lasting impact of Legacy governance on the governance arrangements and cultures in East London. Whilst the literature is diverse, there is an agreement that the defining characteristic of Olympic and legacy governance has been its complex and shifting nature, and the frequently evolving and 'complex assemblages of firms, consultancies, agencies and organizations' (Moore et al, 2018) that constitute the Olympic legacy governance model. Girginov, 2011, submits that it is the 'tension between what is being done in the name of legacy, for whom, and at what cost and to what effect that turns Olympic legacy into a governance issue' (see also Leopkey and Parent, 2012, 2017). This, submits Leopkey and Parent, (2017: 439) makes the focus on the stakeholders, or 'event actors' and how they influence decision-making a key aspect of understanding Olympic legacy

The legacy governance model is described as including supernational, regeneration planning and sport governance





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components, blurring the lines of governance between different sectors (Davis, 2019). The literature overwhelmingly characterizes London's Olympic legacy governance model as one replacing a 'hierarchical' mode of government to one of 'governance', a system subject to negotiations between a wide range of stakeholders, whose interactions give rise to a relatively stable pattern of policymaking that constitutes a specific form of regulation, or mode of coordination (see Lo, 2018:650). The chapter traces the evolution of the legacy governance arrangements and the consequential impact on the lack of accountability and transparency of the emerging complexity (Bernstock, 2014). It then goes on to discuss the different governance structures including public private partnerships and networks which underlay this complexity, how they have been understood and characterised in the literature, and how this has influenced which stakeholders have been able to influence the decision-making organizations in the shaping of East London regeneration. Finally, it discusses in more detail the operation of power, the inclusion and exclusion of certain interests, and the marginalization of alternative perspectives (Brownill et al, 2013).

## SECTION 03

### EMPLOYMENT AND OPPORTUNITIES

In Section 3, Lui Tam reviews the academic analysis of the Olympic legacy of employment and opportunities. It may seem something of a contradiction that a development process predicated on generating an employment legacy from an Olympic Games should begin by comprehensively redeveloping an area devoted to employment. However, this is what the first stage of developing the Olympic Park entailed. In 2005, at the time the London Olympic bid was won, the designated Games site was largely a place of employment. Tam explores what redevelopment and the long-term promise of regeneration meant for existing landscapes, uses, and people at that time, followed by the literature related to the employment generated in the delivery of the Games, and finally the more limited data and commentaries on the unfolding legacy of development related to employment on the site after 2012.

Whatever long-term gains in employment are made through the Olympics and legacy development should be balanced against the 5,000 odd jobs lost through the process of compulsorily purchasing the site and displacing all businesses and other occupants in order to free it up for redevelopment. Further, it is important to recognise the relationship between ideas of regeneration and the social construction of a particular image of place (Raco and Tunney 2010; Davies et al. 2017). Notions of regeneration as presented in London's Olympic bid, the legacy commitments and in the extensive documentation of the compulsory purchase order hinged on a representation of the site of the Games as declined, poor, and at least partly derelict - an inevitable focus for change (Raco and Tunney 2010; Davies et al. 2017).





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The aspiration to get long-term economically inactive people into work characterised all the recruitment activities of the main organisations - The London Development Agency (LDA), the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) and the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG) - employing people to prepare the Olympic site, construct the venues, provide training, delivering the Mayoral commitments, and stage the Games (Vadiati 2020b, p.60). These, as Vadiati argues (ibid, p. 61), shared a “mission” to address structural issues of employment in the host boroughs, emphasising the intersections of skill and opportunity. The overall achievement of the employment-focused projects, according to Vadiati’s analysis, is the creation of around 70,000 jobs, far exceeding the jobs accommodated previously on the pre-Olympic site (Vadiati 2020b, p.100). However, Minnaert (2014) argues that inclusivity and diversity were defined or understood differently by these different organisations with consequences for evaluation of impacts and effectiveness.

Overall, the site is more diverse in terms of land uses, and even employment uses, than in 2005. This reflects a policy of economic diversification rather than transition entirely away from industry.

The estimated total number of jobs created as a result of the development of employment areas and workspaces across what is now branded the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (QEOP) by 2030 is 13,300 (LLDC, 2020). Around the QEOP, the development of employment areas has proceeded apace since 2012, encompassing Chobham Farm, the huge shipping Centre at Westfield Stratford city, and the International Quarter with its high-rise office buildings. However, while the amount of workspace and number of jobs may seem impressive, these are clearly not opportunities for local people in and of themselves. A detailed analysis of the employment legacy is clearly needed as data sources on what has been achieved today against plans and promises are scant.

## SECTION 04

### HOUSING LEGACY

The fourth section of the report, by Mark Sustr and Anna Minton, focuses on the Olympics’ Housing legacy. The candidate file submitted in support of the Olympic and Paralympic bid described the proposed legacy as a ‘model of social inclusion’, and a promise of new and affordable housing was one of the central drivers underpinning legacy. This resonated with local communities given most of the Olympic boroughs scored highly on the government’s Index of Multiple Deprivation, of which poor housing conditions was an important indicator, including overcrowding - identified as an acute problem (Bernstock, 2014; Brittain & Mataruna-Dos-Santos, 2017; Watt & Bernstock, 2017).





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In 2011 published findings by the housing charity Shelter aligned with other research and rated Hackney, Waltham Forest, Tower Hamlets and Newham amongst the top 8 percent of 'very unaffordable' boroughs in the country (Bernstock, 2014). Additionally, studies also reported some of the longest housing waiting lists in England and high incidents of homelessness (Ibid; Watt & Bernstock, 2017; Sagoe, 2017).

The literature demonstrates early housing predictions were portrayed as both expansive and ambitious, yet they were also vague and changeable. During the lifetime of the development so far, housing priorities have fluctuated with different targets promised by different agencies and stakeholders responding to shifting economic, political and policy landscapes. Bernstock's research makes clear that there were no firm plans for affordable housing beyond those in the East Village, and that there was a presumption that adequate levels of affordable housing would be extracted from private developments through planning gain mechanisms. In fact the plan was always to build a predominance of market housing aimed to attract new communities to the area. This was underpinned by the philosophy of 'mixed communities' and the creation of what are sometimes described as 'socially-balanced communities'. Corcillo explored the trajectory of emerging Olympic neighbourhoods by mapping the development of the East Village, but concluded that the stated ambition of a socially mixed neighbourhood is yet to be realised in practice.

Sagoe further explored the LLDC's formulation of its first local plan in 2015 and the inherent tensions in the LLDC's role as landowner hence the need to maximise returns on the sale of land and its remit to deliver a meaningful affordable housing legacy, and argues this resulted in a lower requirement for affordable housing despite the extensive housing need in the area (Ibid). In a recent article by Oliver Wainwright for the Guardian newspaper, he claims that so far, the number of homes delivered as part of the Olympic legacy is approximately 13,000 of which only 11% are truly affordable to locals on average wages; he states that in the four host boroughs that straddle the Olympic Park, there are over 75,000 households on waiting lists for council housing which is why many East Londoners regard the legacy as a massive betrayal (Wainwright, 2022). Bernstock's recent analysis of legacy housing promises and outcomes reinforces the shortage of genuinely affordable housing provision in the Olympic Park. Based on a detailed breakdown of planning applications approved by the LLDC Planning Committee between 2005 and 2021, Bernstock documents the number and percentage of affordable units receiving approval before applying a test of genuine affordability linked to median local incomes. This analysis shows that of 4,200 homes approved between 2012 and 2017, less than 500 or around 11% met the genuine affordability test. This dropped to 8% in 2017/18 and 6% in 2018/19. However, Bernstock documents a noticeable policy change between 2019 and 2021 resulting in an increase in affordable housing to 20% in 2019/20 and 17% in 2020/21.





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## SECTION 06 THE PARK

In the final section of the report, authored by Jason Katz, we examine the Olympic Legacy promise to deliver a new urban park, one of the biggest in Europe for 200 years. As a key element of the legacy masterplan it would significantly contribute to its green urban design credentials, and to improved health and wellbeing outcomes in East London by providing a substantial new public open space accessible to local communities for leisure and participation in sports activities through the re-use of Olympic venues such as the Aquatics Centre. Under the terms of the 2007 planning approval, the authorities were obliged to provide 102 hectares of open space, but subsequent plans for housing and other developments during the post-Games decade have led to concerns that this provision would be eroded by a 'creeping urbanism'.

This section discusses the transition from the Olympic promise of delivering a green open space and public amenity, to the emergence of a narrative focused on cultural regeneration, through the development of the surrounding area as a cultural destination and the park itself as a site for public art installations, such as the Arcelor Mittal Orbit, and events. Provision of parkland was regarded as vital given the shortage of open space in adjacent boroughs. The northern part of the QEOP would be characterized by waterways and landscaped parklands, with the emphasis on outdoor recreation and biodiversity; the southern area (around the Olympic Stadium and close to Westfield Shopping Mall) is leisure- and events-oriented - intended, according to Gold and Gold, to become "an animated space along the lines of the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen or the South Bank in London" (Gold & Gold, 2017; ref. OPLC, 2010). However, the literature shows how the legacy and sustainability principles embedded in the original promise gave way to a concern with cost-saving and income generation, which repositioned the park as a development asset rather than a public or environmental good.

This section assesses how the different considerations surrounding development of the park, specifically sustainability, regeneration, and securitization, evolved and complicated the process of delivery, resulting in what might be viewed as a compromised legacy promise. The "island site" was well suited for the security and themes of the games, but despite the intention to "stitch" the landscape into the wider site, the academic literature largely finds that the park remains isolated and underused by the local community, creating a similar disjunction in historical continuity and place attachment through the erasure of a pre-existing local heritage and identity with a new narrative of top-down placemaking focused on arts and culture and embodied in the East Bank development.





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## SUMMARY CONCLUSION

The State of the Legacy report has been produced concurrently with, and will be published in full following the two-day conference, *State of the Legacy: interrogating a decade of 'Olympic regeneration' in East London*, 12th - 13th September 2022, which brings together past and current research into the legacy of London 2012, alongside articulations in a variety of media of the lived experience of regeneration in East London during the decade following the Games. Some but by no means all the authors whose work is referenced in the report will contribute to the conference, alongside the new and emerging researchers whose voices will inform both the direction for new avenues of debate and future research in this field, and insights into the practical and transferable lessons which the legacy of London 2012 offers to future Olympic cities starting with Paris 2024. As such, we recognise that this report already represents a partial perspective on the ongoing task of documenting and analysing the long-term impacts of the legacy promises, and look forward to embracing the opportunities it offers to promote the next generation of critical urbanists in addressing the challenges around development and regeneration that cities face in the mid-21st century.

*The State of the Legacy Report is produced by the Conference co-ordinating team and Research Assistants:*

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