

The Olympics and Urban Regeneration: Developing a
Comparative Approach Between London 2012 and Tokyo 2020

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Introduction

The Olympic Games are one of the events considered as ‘mega events’, which are defined as ‘festivals that achieve sufficient size and scope to affect whole economies and receive global media attention’ (Gold and Gold 2008: 301), along with events such as the Football World Cup and the World Expos. Compared with other ‘mega-events’, the Olympic Games have been particularly associated with the idea of urban regeneration as a consequence of executing so-called ‘mega-projects’, which are large scale construction projects related to facilities and infrastructure, often of high risk (ibid.). In particular, the role of the Olympic village as ‘a place where people live together, a place for cultural exchange and a place where athletes train throughout the Games’ plays an important part for the urban renewal of host cities to occur (de Moragas Spa 1997: 11).

Within the field of urban studies, the notion of comparative urbanism is becoming extremely important. Robinson (2015) emphasizes the importance of this idea responding to increasing attention towards a global approach. Taking a look at the list of cities that have recently hosted the Olympics or are to host the Olympics in the near future, London, the host city of the 2012 Summer Olympics, and Tokyo, the host city of the 2020 Summer Olympics¹, are of particular interest. They are two of the few cities in the world that are considered as ‘global cities’, compared in various studies, but not in this particular criteria of host cities of the Olympics.

This report aims to compare how the two cities, London and Tokyo have implemented the construction of the Olympic villages to achieve urban regeneration.

¹ Although the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games have been postponed to 2021 as of July 2020 due to the Coronavirus pandemic, this report will refer to the event as the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games.

The relationship between urban regeneration and the Olympic games

Regarding the association between the Olympic Games and the idea of urban regeneration, there are two ways to consider the relationship between regeneration in general. The first type is ‘event-led regeneration’, where the regeneration of the area is directly led and driven by an event, such as undertaking projects which involve developing new facilities and renovating old facilities to use for an event (Smith 2012: 11). This refers to the ‘mega-project’ mentioned above. For the Olympic Games, this may either involve a project that involves recognizing a large site which needs to be regenerated and working on its renewal as a whole new part of the city, and or a project that focuses on a smaller site closer to the central part of the city for a single venue (Smith 2017: 219). The second type is ‘event-themed regeneration’, where the event is placed within the wider plan of regenerating an area, such as undertaking projects that are not directly required to host an event but are associated with it, involving changes in the urban environment. When considering this perspective, the role of the Olympic Games can be recognized as a ‘flagship’ project which induces future redevelopment and regeneration, or as an agent that accelerates the speed of regeneration (Smith 2017).

Urban regeneration, legacy, and rebranding cities

Urban regeneration is recognized as an important part of the Olympic ‘legacy’. Legacy is defined under this context as ‘the long-term benefits of the Olympic Games that serve the host city, its people, and the Olympic Movement before, during and long after the Olympic Games’ (International Olympic Committee 2020). According to the International Olympic Committee (2012: 40), the urban regeneration which occurs in relation to the Olympics transforms the host

city in to a place more attractive for both residents and visitors, which as a consequence assists the city in achieving long-term goals related to a better quality of life for residents and becoming a more appealing place. This pursuit of urban legacy may be understood in relation to the desire to create a new image of the city; one of the benefits of hosting the Olympic Games is the opportunity to publicize and promote specific images of the city (Gold and Ward 1994: 2, cited in Gold and Gold 2008: 301), or more particularly the favorable circumstance for ‘city marketing’ (Ashworth and Voogd 1990; Jessop 1998; Kavaratzis 2007, cited in Gold and Gold 2008: 301) and ‘(re-)branding’ (Berci *et al.* 2002; Kavaratzis 2004, cited in Gold and Gold 2008: 301). Hosting the Olympic Games makes it possible to engage in long-term activities including mega-projects which are planned to change the image of a city (Gold and Gold 2008: 301).

The importance of Olympic villages for exploring the role of the Olympic games in the processes of urban regeneration

The significance of the construction of the Olympic village and the usage after the games in regards to the relationship between urban regeneration and the Olympic Games may be considered according to the two perspectives mentioned above. For the perspective of ‘event-led regeneration’, as aforementioned, the construction of the Olympic villages as ‘mega-projects’ directly contributes to the regeneration of the area. Not only the construction but the reuse of the village after the games demonstrates a particular case of the transformation of the urban environment, involving either the renewal of an already occupied space and the formation of a completely new territory in the city (Muñoz1997: 27). For the perspective of ‘event-themed

regeneration’, studying the Olympic villages allows the exploration of notions surrounding the development, the planning, and the management of the city. The principles of planning and the successive evolution are related to the study of these ideas due to the outlook of the city identified and its feature as a process of integration to the urban environment (ibid.). In addition, the Olympic village may be considered as the piece of architecture which plays the most significant role in producing the image the host city aims to project to a global audience (Muñoz 2006: 175). This demonstrates how the Olympic village may play a central role in urban legacy. Munoz (1997: 27) argues that although the relation to the city planning may lead to generalization with the assumption of similar acts being repeated across different places and historical times, the specific contexts and structure of each city contributes to the heterogeneity of the Olympic villages, which provides scope for this research.

Factors to consider for the comparison of different Olympic villages

Munoz (1997: 28) introduces the following three subject matters to consider when analyzing Olympic villages from its dimension as an urban item:

- ‘a) the aspects connected with the evolution of architectural ideas, from the different types of housing used to the various formal languages employed;
- b) the aspects referring to the evolution of town planning ideas, from the choice of city models to the conceptions of urban growth behind the operations executed;

c) those aspects connected with the conception of the Villages as "urban items", from the city production processes which are part of their insertion in the post-Olympic urban context'

Based on these aspects, this research will analyse and compare the Olympic villages of the London 2012 Olympic Games and the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games according to the following factors. Firstly it will consider the location of the Olympic Village in relation to both the other venues used in the Games and the wider city. Secondly, it will consider the plans in relation to the legacy which the host cities aimed to achieve.

The 2012 London Olympic Games



Figure 1: East Village (Source: Triathlon Homes 2011)



Figure 2: Map of Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, originally prepared for the 2012 Olympic Games (Source: Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park 2020)

The Olympic Village for the 2012 London Olympic Games was located in Stratford, in the borough of Newham. Stratford is the core of the most impoverished part of the city, and the surrounding neighborhoods have the lowest level of employment, income, education and health in the whole of the UK (Ward 2016: 117). After the London 2012 Olympic Games, it has been renamed East village and developed as a residential area (Figure 1). As Figure 2 demonstrates, it is located close to the other venues used for the Olympic Games. East village consists of 11

separate buildings, with at least 6000 individuals living in a total of 2818 properties. Out of these properties, 1439 housing units are managed by Get Living London (GLL) private rent and belong to the Private Rented Sector. The owner of GLL is QDD, which is a joint venture between Qatari Diar Real Estate Company and Delancy. QDD also owns The rest are owned and managed by Triathlon Homes providing affordable housing with the various options of social rent, shared ownership and intermediate rents (Watt and Bernstock 2017: 99).

When London was running to host the Olympic Games, the bid placed the largest emphasis on the legacy and positive impacts of hosting the Games (Evans and Edizel 2017: 380). It aimed to ‘transform the heart of east London for the benefit of all communities who live there’ (Ward 2016: 117). The 2012 London Olympic Games addressed a long standing issue that the city had, which is the structural imbalance between East and West London. East London suffered excessively from de-industrialisation and the damage from World War 2. The Games provided an opportunity to take measures that would enable to diminish the inequality between the East side and the West side of the city (Smith 2012: 105). The particular site chosen for constructing most of the venues was the Lower Lea Valley, which flourished in the nineteenth century as the first industrial and manufacturing zone of London. With the decline of the role of London as a city of manufacturing, the area was abandoned and of insufficient use. The ‘regeneration’ of the area has been the interest for a long period, and strategies have been carried out at both the level of the wider area, such as the creation of the London Thamesway Gateway Development Corporation, and at a more local level, including the establishment of a new international station and the city and the obtainment of a major commercial facility, which is now known as the

development of Stratford City (Ward 2016: 115-116). The Olympic village was part of this plan, and was used as a justification for London hosting the Games (Bernstock 2014: 130). It was thought that Stratford by bringing the Olympic Games could serve as a catalyst to attract more investment in the future in East London.

The East London village provides an interesting case to look into in terms of a mixed community as 'an evenly balanced between market and affordable housing; includes family housing in both types and its design is intended to promote accessibility for disabilities (including wheelchair housing) and includes a magnet school aimed to be attractive to people from socio-economic groups' (Bernstock 2014: 129). This reflects the legacy trying to be achieved through hosting the Olympic Games, trying to benefit the locals who have been in this area and are in a socio-economically disadvantaged position. However, the affordability of the East village may be questioned. The rent for the four-bedroom townhouse and one-bedroom apartment increased significantly from September 2013 and October 2015, 31 percent and 20 percent respectively, which is above the mean levels for this period (Delancy 2015; Shelter Housing Databank, cited in Watt and Bernstock 2014: 97). This may be considered as being affected by the upgrading of the land value from the subsequent investment after the Olympics. The increases in rent make it even more difficult for the majority of residents in East London, especially in Newham, as many are experiencing difficulties due to low income levels and austerity cuts (Watt and Bernstock 2014: 97-98). For social rental tenancies, the issues being raised is the exclusiveness, where families in paid work or the 'deserving poor' such as veterans and people with disabilities seemed to be favoured over those who belong to the 'rougher' part of the working class who are

recognized as the 'undeserving poor'. In addition, as income levels are much lower in East London than the rest of the city, those not eligible for social rent housing are struggling as well, described as affordable housing not being affordable (Watt and Bernstock 2014: 100-101). For example, for immediate rent, where properties are let for 80 percent of the market price, it accounts for 52 percent, 46 percent and 41 percent of the median wages in Hackney, Newham and Hamlet respectively, which makes it out of reach (Shelter 2013: 7). This demonstrates how the legacy is not reaching the wider community.

The 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games

The Olympic Village for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games was built in the Harumi waterfront area in Chuo-ward, Tokyo. The area of Harumi refers to the reclaimed land located at the mouth of the Sumida river. The construction was completed in 1929 and it was the intended site for the 1940 World Expos which did not happen due to the Japan China War. Although it flourished as the heart of physical distribution with the first high rise apartment houses built by the Housing Corporation during the 1950s to early 1980s, it went through decline from the late 1980s when they had to shut down the Harumi ferry line due to the construction of the Rainbow Bridge and had to demolish the apartment buildings due to deterioration. It started going through redevelopment starting in 1997 when the Harumi Triton Square was built (The Nihon Keizai Shimbun 2019). After the Olympic Games, renovating the used properties and adding two high-rise buildings of fifty stories with 11 Japanese developers involved, the Olympic village will be transformed into a residential neighbourhood with a total of 23 buildings and 5632 housing units (Bureau of Urban Development Tokyo Metropolitan Government 2020). The name of the

community will be HARUMI FLAG, which naming comes from the hope for this neighbourhood to become a flagship for a new urban lifestyle. It will consist of four ‘villages’ (PORT VILLAGE, SEA VILLAGE, SUN VILLAGE and PARK VILLAGE) and a commercial facility, along with other stores and nursing facilities. Out of the 5632 properties, 4145 properties are for sale and 1487 properties are for rent which includes service homes for the elderly and the flats for sharing purposes (HARUMI FLAG 2020).

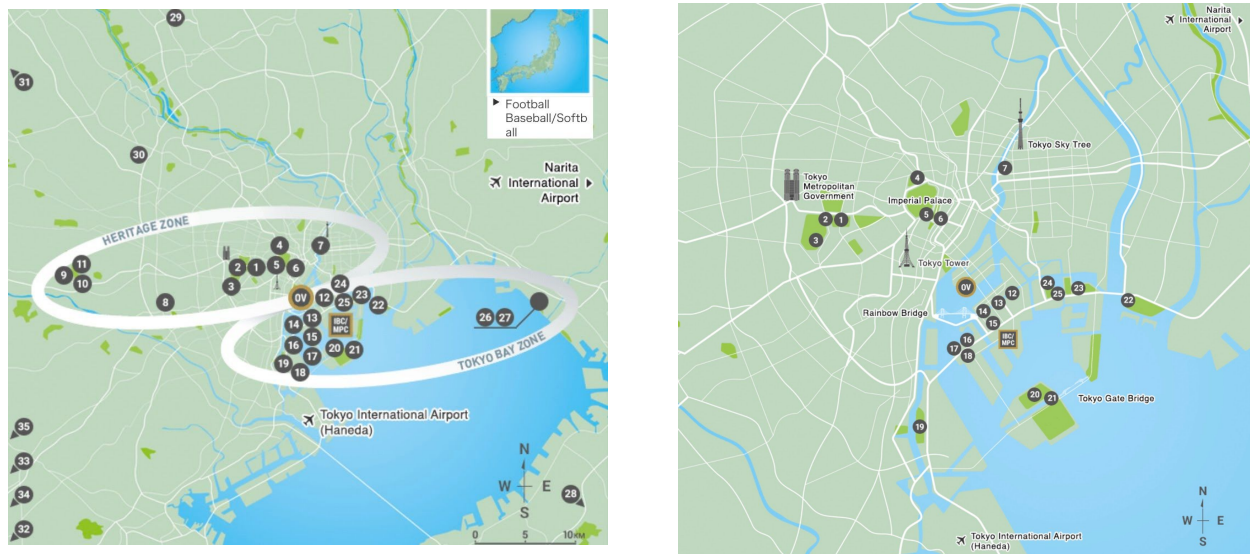


Figure 3: Map of venues for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games - OV stands for Olympic Village (left - the two zones; right - focused on Tokyo downtown) (Bureau of Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 Preparation 2020)

▶ 10 International Business Centers



- 1 Otemachi (Tokiwabashi) (finance / business exchange)
- 2 Otemachi 1-chome (international exchange)
- 3 Hibiya (arts & culture / startups)
- 4 Yaesu (bus terminal / business exchange)
- 5 Shinagawa station (new maglev train / international center)
- 6 Takeshiba (contents industry)
- 7 Toranomom (new subway station)
- 8 Roppongi (mixed-use MICE / residences for foreigners)
- 9 Rinkai Sub-center Ariake (serviced apartments for foreigners)
- 10 Former Haneda Airport Site (business matchups)

Figure 4: Map of International Business Centers (Tokyo Metropolitan Government 2020)



Figure 5: Map demonstrating proximity of HARUMI FLAG to major areas of Tokyo (HARUMI FLAG 2020)

Figure 3 is a map of the venues for the 2020 Olympic Games. The plans for the venues for the Tokyo Olympics involve two theme and function based zones: the ‘Heritage zone’ and the ‘Tokyo bay zone’. The ‘Heritage zone’ contains the venues for the previous Olympics held in Tokyo in 1964, such as the Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium and the Yoyogi National Stadium, and preserves the continuing legacy of the previous games. On the other hand, the ‘Tokyo bay zone’, which includes the newly built Tokyo Aquatics Centre and the Ariake Gymnastics Centre, is to serve as a model for a new type of urban development (Bureau of Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 Preparation 2020). The village is located where the two zones intersect. They correspond to the areas which will be designated as International Business Centers, shown in Figure 4. Furthermore, Figure 5 shows the distance to the various parts of the city, highlighting the proximity. To overcome the disadvantage of the inconvenience from being quite far from the major train station which has been widely recognized in the area, a BRT system is going to be developed (HARUMI FLAG 2020). The strength of HARUMI FLAG seems to lie in the location respective to these areas going through development, mainly business districts trying to attract to foreign companies and investors.

Aoyama (2017: 424) argues that it is necessary to understand that Tokyo viewed the Olympics as ‘an opportunity to refashion Tokyo into a twenty-first century city, and Japanese society into a twenty-first century society’. One of the terms that is often used to describe a ‘twenty-first century city’ is global. The candidacy file for Tokyo mentions how it was inspired by the Olympic Games in London as it demonstrated ‘how a modern global city can embrace the games, and using all the incredible assets of such a developed and iconic city, deliver sport and

celebration that set new benchmarks' (Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Bid Committee 2013). 2020 Tokyo Vision presents the long-term visions for the city from 2020 and onwards, introducing relevant policies, plans, and means to achieve these goals. The year 2020 indicates the significance of the Olympic Games in the overall plans, and how the success of the Games will provide a route for further development, and of the strategies put forward is titled 'Leading Global City', which introduces different measures taken to promote Tokyo as 'the best city in the world to do business'. This could be understood under the context of the competition between different cities; in terms of the industrial structure, according to Fujitsuka (2017: 324), the proportion of finance and insurance and real estates is 9% in London while it is 8% in Tokyo, and the proportion of professional and technical services is 13% in London but it is only 5% in Tokyo. Lutzeler (2020: 40) argues that the mega-event including the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games is a part of 'entrepreneurial city policies', where cities earn for schemes of economic growth focusing on attracting 'external sources of funding, new direct investment, or new employment sources' (Harvey 1989, cited in Lutzeler 2020: 40), endorsing partnerships between the public and private sector. Measures such as the Law on Special Measures for Urban Renaissance which play a role in driving urban regeneration are intended 'to both support the repopulation of the city center (by upper-middle class citizens) and attract foreign investors and expatriates to successfully compete with other global cities' (Lutzeler 2020: 40). This earn for a global status is well represented in the descriptions of the community which the Olympic Village aims to create after the Games. According to the Bureau of Urban Development Tokyo Metropolitan Government (2020), 'to build a community and neighbourhood which would become a legacy of the Olympic Games, taking advantage of the location being close to both the

sea and the city center, the Olympic Games will endorse the interaction between different people such as families with children, the elderly and foreigners'. Explicitly stating the inclusion of foreigners is quite striking in a country where the majority of the population have a similar ethnic background, highlighting the role the Olympic village is expected to take.

Lutzeler (2020: 43) claims that the Olympic village is a representative example of 'new-built gentrification', which means the 'upgrading of central urban districts by new stylish housing complexes on abandoned sites'. Winning the Olympic Games candidacy in 2013 had an significant impact on Harumi and the surrounding areas (the Tsukuda island where the districts of Tsukishima and Kachidoki are located), in particular accelerating the trend of increasing land prices and population at a higher rate than anywhere else in the city. In addition, some facilities which have characterized the area in the past and provided a sense of community and locality have been either demolished or gone through repair, such as the Harumi Passenger Ship Terminal and the Hot Plaza Harumi, a spa / health promotion facility which has been popular among the locals (Toyo Keizai 2019). This demonstrates how the Olympic village is bringing changes to the area, which may not be favorable for existing residents.

Discussion / Conclusion

This report looked at how the 2012 London Olympic Games and the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games have implemented the Olympic villages in order to achieve urban regeneration, looking at the two factors of location and legacy. In terms of location, the Olympic villages in the two cities differ when considering the presence of other venues. For London, the Olympic village was

located in Stratford along with the majority of other venues, whereas for Tokyo, the Olympic village was located at the intersection of two zones prepared for the rest of the Olympic venues. This difference may be attributed not only to how each city wanted to organize the games but also to which area each city wants to attract more investment. For London, with the other venues being quite close, the site Stratford is able to attract attention as the main area of the Olympics. For Tokyo, the Olympic Village is discussed more in reference to the wider city, and there is an emphasis on the proximity to the central districts. This shows how important the idea of urban regeneration is in both cities: for London, the urban regeneration of Stratford is a major motive for hosting the games, whereas for Japan, although the revival of the Haruma area is important, the significance does not lie in itself. In terms of legacy, the Olympic villages in each of the cities have been designed to create a community that represents the legacy that the both cities wished to achieve. Although the creation of a completely new community through building the Olympic village is an important part of urban regeneration for both cities, there is a difference in what the new image wants to promote about the area most. For London, there is a strong emphasis in creating an image of 'equality and diversity', with almost half of the housing being composed by social housing, whereas Tokyo highlights the idea of 'global', taking a rather direct approach for attracting businesses and their employees by providing residency. For both cases, the Olympic villages may have had to be questioned in terms of affordability, and how the surrounding areas may have been affected as well, indicating that urban regeneration does not benefit the whole community.

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