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Urban regeneration: towards a more progressive, integrative and regenerative approach

Andrew Smith

Urban regeneration is often cited as one of main justifications for staging the Olympic Games (Smith, 2012). The 1992 edition in Barcelona highlighted the potential of the Olympics as a vehicle for regeneration, inspiring subsequent host cities - particularly London - to use the Games to regenerate disadvantaged urban areas. Regeneration legacies have been principally pursued by the hosts of summer Games, but they are increasingly relevant to winter editions too, for example the Milan 2026 Games (Del Bianco, 2021). There are also examples where urban regeneration has resulted from losing Olympic bids (Oliver, 2011), further highlighting the way the Olympics have become *regeneration games*. The aims of this chapter are to explore how and why the Olympic Games are used as a vehicle for urban regeneration, to outline the outcomes of these initiatives, and to suggest how Olympic regeneration might evolve in the future. Through this analysis, the chapter draws some important conclusions about the Olympic Games, but also about urban regeneration processes in general. Regeneration can be understood as a practice and an outcome, but also a discourse, and this chapter critically analyses the commonly cited rhetoric that the Olympic Games provides ‘flagship’ projects and ‘catalysts’ for regeneration. Rather than trying to use the Games to stimulate urban regeneration; the chapter concludes that the best outcomes are achieved when the Olympic Games are integrated within ongoing regeneration plans. The chapter also highlights the need for more emphasis on social regeneration and (ecologically) regenerative urbanism, rather than physical and economic regeneration. Relevant editions of the Olympic Games are used to illustrate the discussion but, rather than discussing cases in turn, the chapter is organised around themes that help clarify the complex relationship between the Olympics and urban regeneration.

Regeneration: definition and critique

Urban regeneration means reversing the cycle of decline which afflicts many urban areas. The term is directly linked to the post-industrial era (post-1973), a period when many cities and citizens have struggled to adapt to new economic circumstances. In this context, urban regeneration encompasses policies, programmes and projects designed to help specific parts of cities recover from decline. Regeneration has become a rather generic term, but it can be differentiated from wider urban policy by its geographical focus: it involves targeted interventions in post-industrial, brownfield sites. To provide focus, and to prevent too much overlap with other chapters in this book, this spatially focused interpretation is adopted here. Thus, initiatives to stimulate economic development at wider scales - for whole cities, regions, nations - are not addressed directly.

Leary and McCarthy (2013, p. 9) define urban regeneration as efforts 'to produce significant, sustainable improvements in the conditions of local people, communities and places suffering from aspects of deprivation'. This focus on long-term, broad-based ambitions reflects the most widely used definition of regeneration: 'to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, social and environmental conditions of an area that has been subject to change' (Roberts, 2000, p. 17). Definitions such as these highlight that, in the contemporary era, the term refers to social and economic ambitions as well as those linked to physical improvement. This holistic approach represents a welcome reorientation towards the needs of people, although one downside is that it means regeneration has come to mean almost anything to do with urban change. Regeneration is inherently linked to other processes such as renewal, remediation and renaissance - producing an alliterative lexicon which causes confusion. These three terms are often used inter-changeably, but are best understood as more specific phenomena than regeneration: remediation means the reclamation of land; renewal refers to physical change, and renaissance implies the revival of urban culture.

The definitions cited above make regeneration sound like a very laudable, if rather vague and optimistic endeavour. However, there are critics of the concept who point to some of the inherent problems when it is practised rather than merely proposed. Allen and Cochrane (2014, p. 1611) describe regeneration as 'a troubled and troubling concept' because it involves making promises

which are incompatible and therefore impossible to achieve. For example, making an area more economically productive may require radical change that doesn't assist the people who currently live there (Ibid). Too often we see the regeneration *of* communities rather than regeneration *for* communities, a trend which means that regeneration is now regarded as a negative phenomenon by many communities and commentators, for example, in the context of London's housing estates (Watt, 2021). There are other reasons to be sceptical about regeneration. Like other normative ideas (e.g. sustainability), the term has been appropriated by a range of interests for their own ends. For example, it is now part of the language of property developers which is used to add value to real estate. Even more worryingly, regeneration is often used as a euphemism for radical urban transformation; something that helps to justify the eviction of people and businesses.

The Olympic Games and urban regeneration

Staging the Olympic Games requires hosts to provide appropriate sports facilities, as well as suitable accommodation and transport provision. Therefore, it is unsurprising that post-industrial cities have decided to use the Games as an opportunity to improve amenities, housing and infrastructure in areas which have suffered decline. The scale of facilities required for the contemporary Games, particularly the summer Olympiad, means that densely populated cities can only accommodate them within the existing urban fabric by using sites that were formerly occupied by industrial installations such as railway yards, docks, warehouses and factories. Following this logic, regeneration is a practical requirement to stage the Games, rather than an overriding objective. However, cities have gone beyond what is necessary merely to host the event; using the Games as an opportunity to make more radical and more extensive improvements to specific urban areas. This adds to the costs of staging the Games and causes confusion over what is and what isn't part of the Olympic budget when overall costs (and cost-benefit analyses) are calculated.

During the post-industrial era, two main regeneration strategies have been used by Olympic hosts. The first is to identify a large, peripheral site that requires regeneration and redevelop it as a new

piece of city. For example, in Sydney (760 hectares) and London (250 hectares), large sites and were assembled, reclaimed and developed as Olympic Parks. In both cases, a large amount of toxic industrial land was decontaminated - something that might not have occurred without the impetus provided by the Games. Post-event these have been re-developed as multi-functional sites which are typical of a new breed of mixed-use mega-projects (Lehrer and Laidley, 2009). These include sports stadia, but also office space, housing, retail and cultural facilities and parklands. A second approach, adopted by cities such as Athens, Barcelona, Rio de Janeiro and Vancouver, has been to regenerate a series of smaller sites close to the city centre. These often include converting port infrastructures into leisure-oriented waterfronts (Pinto and Lopes dos Santos, 2022). For example, Barcelona used the Games to regenerate its waterfront as one of four main Olympic sites used to host the Games. In a similar manner, former industrial land in the south east corner of False Creek was remediated to build the Olympic Village for the Vancouver 2010 Games.

The idea of the Olympic Games as an agent that regenerates cities has become widely accepted; but this is an over-simplistic and problematic interpretation. The Olympic Games do not and cannot regenerate urban areas. Regeneration achievements are sometimes attributed to the Games when they are actually the result of parallel urban initiatives or macro-environmental factors. However, staging the Games does offer certain advantages for governments and urban regimes wishing to pursue regeneration ambitions. It may unlock funding that would otherwise be unavailable, help to generate civic support for large-scale public investment in urban districts, and it provides a clear narrative and justification for urban change (Smith, 2012). The high profile nature of the event means that political actors are forced to undertake improvements that might not otherwise be delivered. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, staging the Olympic Games imposes a non-negotiable deadline for urban projects. These characteristics and associated issues are discussed further below.

The Olympic Games as a flagship

One way that new Olympic venues and associated infrastructure have been linked to regeneration is via their role as ‘flagship’ projects that kick-start (re)development in ex-industrial sites. Urban flagships are designed as a ‘marshalling points for further investment’ (Smyth, 1994, p. 5) to encourage a ‘flotilla’ of other developments in their wake (Bianchini *et al.*, 1992). This mode of regeneration involves a top-down, property driven approach that emerged in the 1980s. In such cases, regeneration represents an intervention that helps to address the failure of market forces to instigate post-industrial transformation. Staging the Olympic Games provides a good excuse to remediate land, provide new infrastructure and venues; on the basis that this will lead to future commercial investment and jobs. The 2000 Sydney Games is a good example of this type of approach. Before the Games organisers had not planned the post-event era: they merely assumed that remediating a well-located site, providing new infrastructure (rail and road connections) and Olympic venues would encourage future growth.

The Olympic Games are seen as particularly valuable flagship project because investors know that governments have to deliver; so, unlike in other regeneration projects, there is less chance that development will drift, stall or collapse. The global financial crisis that began in 2008 demonstrated this: private consortia were unable to deliver Olympic Villages in Vancouver and London, so the government stepped in and funded them. These bailouts wouldn’t have happened if these Villages had been conventional housing developments, but Olympic projects were deemed too important to fail. Government intervention and public funding reassured private sector companies, encouraging them to invest in these regeneration projects. This highlights the way the Games act as a tool that ‘de-risks’ urban areas for potential investors (Smith, 2014). Improvements to the area’s image derived from Olympic symbolism help to achieve this effect, but the scale of public investment is a major factor too.

Using Olympic projects as flagship developments sounds like a practical solution that unlocks the unrealised potential of large derelict areas. However, there are several problems with this type of approach. Olympic regeneration tends to involve using large amounts of public money to lower risks

for private investors. So, even if investment is attracted to Olympic sites, commentators have argued that this represents a dubious public subsidy (Scherer, 2011). For example, Van Wynsberghe et al. (2013) suggest public investment in Vancouver's Olympic Village involved a socialisation of risk, and a privatisation of benefits. The same thing happened a decade previously in Sydney: large state subsidies were needed to help 'offset the risk' for the consortium tasked with building and converting the Olympic Village (Searle, 2012, p. 198). This links to a wider concern about Olympic regeneration: it tends to serve the interests of the construction and property sectors, rather than the interests of local citizens (Smith, 2012).

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

A further problem with flagship-led regeneration is that further investment does not automatically follow, or that it takes longer than expected for it to materialise. For example, in Sydney there was a relative lack of building activity post-2000 and urban densities remain very low in and around the city's Olympic Park (Yamauraki and Duarte, 2014). The area now competes for investment with other Sydney suburbs, so further development is at the expense of projects in surrounding districts like Parramatta (Searle, 2012). Even if Olympic facilities do stimulate further development, it is hard to control what types of investment follow. Types of development which are most commercially viable might not be appropriate for the wider environmental or social objectives for the area. And, aside from their symbolic value, it is unclear whether stadia, indoor arenas, swimming pools and the other Olympic facilities are effective flagship projects that help to attract private sector investment. In some examples of Olympic regeneration, parallel development or infrastructure is deemed to have had a more significant effect. For example, Thornley (2012) argues that the contribution of Olympic venues to urban regeneration in East London is minor compared to the adjacent shopping centre and transport improvements. Here, as in Sydney's Olympic Park, businesses are lured by the availability of infrastructure and parkland, rather than the proximity of sports facilities. However, Olympic structures and associations provide useful visibility for these sites that might otherwise seem rather bleak and

anonymous. This symbolic function helps to justify the notion of Olympic projects as flagship developments.

The Olympic Games as a catalyst

One of the noted advantages of incorporating the Olympic Games into urban regeneration is that it speeds the process up. Regeneration inherently involves long term objectives, but these might be achieved more quickly in Olympic host cities. Hence Olympic projects are touted not merely as flagship urban developments, but as ‘catalysts’ for urban change’ (Essex and Chalkley, 1998). A catalyst increases the rate at which a reaction progresses and, using related metaphors, some accounts suggest the Olympic Games help to achieve ‘fast-tracked’ or even ‘turbo-charged’ regeneration. The imposition of an immovable deadline (the date of the opening ceremony) means projects have to be finished within a specified timeframe. This, along with the potential for global exposure of dereliction, provides the necessary impetus to deliver projects more quickly.

The increased ‘speed’ of regeneration attributed to the Olympic Games varies between cases. It is claimed that the project to regenerate Homebush Bay in Sydney was delivered in half the original timeframe because of the Olympic Games (Wilson, 1996; Cashman, 2006). In Munich, the pre-existing (1963) plan to regenerate the Olympic Park site was scheduled for 15-20 years, but the 1972 Games meant it was delivered in 5 (Chalkley and Essex, 1999). But the gold medal for accelerated regeneration seems to go to London. Officials claim that the project to regenerate East London was accelerated by 50 years because of the 2012 Games. At the Emerging Host Cities conference in 2013 Tessa Jowell (the UK Government’s Olympic Minister) argued that a project that would have normally taken sixty years was delivered in less than ten. This accelerated development explains why a senior official from London’s Olympic Delivery Authority referred to the project as ‘regeneration on steroids’ (Smith, 2014).

It is important to analyse in more detail how the Olympic Games speeds regeneration up. The imposition of a deadline creates a sense of urgency, but complex ambitions still need to be realised. One advantage of the Games is that it tends to focus the minds of politicians, which means decisions are made more quickly. Olympic projects also tend to achieve greater 'buy-in' from key stakeholders than conventional regeneration efforts, and this helps to achieve a faster rate of progress. Regeneration inevitably requires effective partnerships between different government departments, and between the public and private sectors, and staging the Olympics seems to make it easier to get a range of individuals and organisations working together for a common cause. This joint working can persist after the event allowing long-term regeneration objectives to be addressed. In short, the Olympics helps to speed up regeneration processes via the 'resources, political will and institutional co-ordination' that are seemingly mobilised when the Games is awarded to a city (Raco and Tunney, 2010, p. 2020).

Claims of accelerated development need to be treated with caution – this rhetoric is part of the way Olympic projects are justified. Although the Olympic Games can speed up the initial phases of urban regeneration (e.g. land assembly and remediation), wider projects often remain incomplete long after the event. In Sydney, work is still being undertaken to redevelop the main site of the 2000 Olympic Games and the latest masterplan provides a vision for 2030 (Davidson and McNeill, 2012). Similarly, the 'legacy phase' work for London's 2012 Olympic Park is programmed to 2030. The need for redevelopment in the post-event era to transform event sites into functioning areas means that the risks of slow, or stalled, urban development persist. The Olympic Games may ensure ambitious urban regeneration projects reach a certain stage, but they do not guarantee completion.

Even if acceleration could be proven - which it can't because it is impossible to quantify a counter-factual rate of development - speeding up the regeneration process isn't necessarily that helpful. There are good reasons why some urban regeneration projects take so long. Shortened timescales restrict opportunities for consultation with the local population and other planning procedures may also be compromised. The pressure for timely delivery means organisers circumvent normal processes.

During Sydney's Olympic preparations, a new Environmental Planning Policy was created which exempted Olympic proposals from proper assessment (Kearins and Pavlovich, 2002). Several years earlier, Montalban (1992, p. 9) described how Barcelona's politicians 'sacrificed the ethical obligations of their office under the pressure of completing preparations on time'. Rushing to finish work may lead to a reduction in quality and extra payments for contractors are usually required to ensure timely completion, pushing budgets higher. As deadlines approach, the requirement for extended shifts can lead to injuries and fatalities amongst construction workers. In short, accelerated regeneration comes with considerable costs.

The need to speed regeneration up is also used as a justification for new governance models. Regeneration is predominantly something that is 'funded, initiated, supported or inspired' by the public sector (Leary and McCarthy, 2013, p. 9), but Olympic projects are used to usher in new 'entrepreneurial' forms of urban governance: public-private partnerships, and / or new dynamic public organisations that pursue commercial activities. Rather than using existing governance apparatus, Olympic regeneration projects are usually managed and delivered by specialist agencies through which public funds are channelled (Raco, 2014). Local authorities are often under-represented or bypassed, which undermines the democratic legitimacy of Olympic regeneration (Owen, 2002).

The problems with time pressures noted above are important, but they may be alleviated by recent changes to Olympic bidding processes which mean that hosts cities now have longer to prepare. Officials in Barcelona, Atlanta, Sydney, Athens, London, Rio, Tokyo and Paris had seven years to prepare for the Games, but in the cases of Los Angeles 2028 and Brisbane 2032, the period between winning the candidature and staging the Games was extended to 11 years. These changes - driven by the difficulties the IOC had in recruiting candidate cities for the 2022 Winter Games and the 2024 Summer Games - should allow Olympic hosts more time to plan and prepare, whilst still allowing them to benefit from the advantages of a fixed deadline.

Strategic and integrated Olympic regeneration

Relying on flagship or catalysts is a rather speculative and spurious approach to urban regeneration, but these approaches can be better justified if Olympic projects are integrated within an existing strategy. If a stimulus is required to advance established plans for a derelict area, then the Games can be used to kick-start or speed up the development process. This is where Olympic projects can perhaps play the most effective role in urban regeneration. The IOC has recognised this: following Agenda 2020 and Agenda 2020+5, the IOC now encourages hosts to consider how the Games fit into wider plans for their cities (Wolfe, 2022). Barcelona is usually cited as the inspiration for and epitome of this approach. Plans to recover and reorient the waterfront area had existed for many decades (since 1966), but preparations for the Olympics (1986-1992) were used as the opportunity to undertake the work. This strategy was further strengthened because Barcelona's new waterfront district was linked into a wider urban plan. This helped to ensure that Barcelona's regeneration was not led by Olympic projects – instead Olympic projects were used to achieve Barcelona's plans. The Olympic Games provided funding, urgency and civic support for strategic projects that might have otherwise been difficult to achieve.

This strategy of using the Olympic Games to advance pre-existing plans was also deployed in London. The remediation and regeneration of Olympic Park was originally justified on the basis that it contributed both to the 2004 London Plan (the city's statutory spatial plan), and to the wider regeneration of the Thames Gateway region. Famously, Ken Livingstone (London's Mayor 2000-2008) expressed his disinterest in hosting a major sport event, but supported a London Olympics because it would help to achieve his plans for East London. Over time the limitations of this strategy have been exposed. Whereas building the Olympic Park was originally conceived as a way to assist the wider regeneration of East London, regeneration post 2008 refocused on the Olympic Park as a project in and of itself. This was partly an inevitable consequence of the global financial crisis and the more focused ambitions that emerged, but it was also due to the political capital associated with the Olympics. More mundane regeneration ambitions were side-lined in the quest to deliver the Games. Resources were devoted to dealing with the legacy issues that generate most media attention - for

example, the future of the stadium - rather than more significant ambitions for East London. This illustrates how Olympic projects can override, disrupt or distort existing regeneration plans – something Muller (2018) has dubbed ‘event seizure’. Even in Barcelona, much lauded as the epitome of good practice, the Games is thought to have disrupted the city’s record of impressive and progressive urban transformation (1976-1992) by ushering in an approach more focused on entrepreneurialism and place marketing (Degen and Garcia, 2012).

Outcomes

Regeneration is often regarded as merely an objective or an intervention. However, it is also an outcome, and various researchers have tried to measure whether regeneration has been achieved. This type of research is notoriously difficult: regeneration involves multiple objectives and appropriate indicators are difficult to ascertain and / or measure. The timescales involved are usually long which makes it difficult to know when to assess outcomes. The scale at which we measure these is also difficult to pinpoint and it is hard to attribute any changes observed to specific interventions. In the case of Olympic regeneration this is even harder as it is not clear what is and isn’t part of the intervention. What constitutes regeneration is also highly subjective and contested: it varies according to ‘different vocabularies and imaginations’ (Raco and Tunney, 2010, p. 2087). This makes establishing the outcomes of Olympic regeneration even more difficult.

Hemphill *et al.* (2004) used a series of weighted indicators to measure ‘sustainable urban regeneration performance’. Their research is particularly relevant here as one of the projects analysed was Barcelona’s Olympic waterfront complex (Vila Olimpica). Of six developments analysed (in Barcelona, Belfast and Dublin), Vila Olimpica scored highest, with the authors surmising that it was a notable example of good practice. As an example of urban design Vila Olimpica has undoubtedly been successful, with generous provision of open spaces and clever submergence of transport infrastructure. One interpretation of the project is to see it as a democratic one that returned the waterfront to its citizens (Rowe, 2006). But its contribution to the social dimension of regeneration is

more controversial. The expropriation and clearance of working class housing and industrial units to deliver expensive housing and a new yacht marina benefitted some people at the expense of others (Arbaci & Tapada-Berteli, 2012). It was always unlikely that former residents would be able to remain here as none of the new flats were offered as subsidised or social housing, 'despite promises made to the contrary when the project was first made public in 1986' (Montalban, 1992, p. 6). The wholesale redevelopment of this district had been resisted for many years, but the Olympics Games provided a vehicle with which to placate opposition. This case highlights that, when considering the Olympic Games as a 'force majeure' that allows development barriers to be overcome (Evans, 2010), we need to acknowledge that this includes its capacity to nullify opposition from incumbent residents and businesses.

Concern about the contribution of Olympic projects to gentrification in Barcelona reflects a wider re-appraisal of the city's transformation, which, according to Arbaci and Tapada-Berteli (2012, p. 307):

cannot be considered a successful case of regeneration since it has not fully addressed the needs of the long-term (low-income and more vulnerable) residents. Rather than tackle the main sources of deprivation, it has instead increased issues of neighbourhood affordability and housing affordability.

Barcelona's project was one that was successful physically, but not necessarily socially, and this reflects longer term assessments of other Olympic regeneration projects – for example, in London (Bernstock, 2020). The contribution to land remediation and physical regeneration is generally impressive (notwithstanding issues with redundant venues discussed elsewhere in this volume), but it is harder to find Olympic regeneration projects that have helped to improve the lives of disadvantaged people. This relates to difficulties reconciling physical and social regeneration. Olympic regeneration tends to be funded through property sales: the public or private (or public-private) organisations involved hope that Olympic interventions will raise land values allowing them to recoup investment via the sale of assets. This provides an in-built incentive to build the most lucrative housing which,

rather than assisting disadvantaged citizens, tends to displace them (see Figure 2). Analysed through a social lens, rather than a physical one, Olympic urbanism promotes gentrification not regeneration.

[INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE]

Complex issues such as gentrification highlight the contested nature of regeneration objectives and outcomes. For many of the professionals involved, gentrification is not an unfortunate by-product of regeneration projects, it is the specific aim. East London's Olympic transformation provides a useful illustration. In London there has been much debate about why, given London's shortage of affordable housing, more extensive social housing provision wasn't prioritised as an Olympic legacy (Bernstock, 2022). Of the 2,818 units available in the converted Athletes Village (now renamed East Village), just under half were made available at subsidised rates (675 social rent, 356 intermediate rent, 269 shared ownership, 79 shared equity). Cost was one obvious factor which prevented more generous provision, but another consideration was that key stakeholders (including local housing officials) wanted to use the new accommodation to change the composition of the local population. They wanted more middle class families to rebalance both the socio-demographic profile and the composition of new development - which was dominated by flats for young professionals (Smith, 2014). Gentrification was envisaged as a vehicle for positive change, not a negative outcome. This approach was opposed by citizen groups who felt that housing existing residents should be the priority, not targeting new ones. The case underlines that regeneration is a political process, not a purely technical one, with any assessment of outcomes politicised too (Raco and Tunney, 2011).

Towards a more people oriented and regenerative approach

The limitations of regeneration projects that rely too heavily on physical transformations are now increasingly acknowledged. These tend to deal with the symptoms of decline - dereliction - rather than more fundamental issues and problems faced by local people. Accordingly, organisers of recent editions of the Games have tried to implement social programmes aimed at disadvantaged citizens in

deprived areas. These programmes seek to provide more opportunities for local people, and / or to restrict the negative impacts of Olympic regeneration.

During the build-up to the 2010 Winter Games, Vancouver developed a series of social regeneration initiatives. The Organising Committee initially committed to an Inner City Inclusivity Commitment Statement (ICICS) to protect the interests of low-income communities (Van Wynsberghe *et al.*, 2013). Employment initiatives were also formulated for those who faced obstacles preventing them from accessing 'traditional employment' (Van Wynsberghe *et al.*, 2013). The company awarded the contract to develop the Olympic Village on False Creek signed a Community Benefit Agreement that required them to provide 250 social housing units (Scherer, 2011). However, during the course of the city's Olympic preparations these commitments unravelled (see Figure 2). This was partly due to economic circumstances but it was also because there was little genuine commitment to these initiatives – they were designed to get community groups on side during the early stages Olympic regeneration. As this example shows, when Olympic projects go over-budget - as they invariably do - social regeneration ambitions tend to be watered down or abandoned all together. These initiatives are more vulnerable to political and economic shifts because there is less political consensus regarding the social dimension of regeneration. Within the prevailing (neoliberal) political philosophy, regeneration is about providing [physical] 'platforms' for growth - not about direct assistance for low income people. In this context, progressive projects which 'leverage' social inclusion and social development remain an underdeveloped aspect of Olympic regeneration.

[INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE]

Alongside a more people-oriented approach, the climate emergency and acute environmental issues also mean there is an urgent need for an approach which is *regenerative*, rather than merely one that seeks urban regeneration (Foth *et al.*, 2021). As Thomson and Newman (2020) note, regenerative cities are those which are ecologically restorative, and pursuing regenerative urbanism requires urban planners to recognise that cities are part of their local bioregion and a global ecosystem. Only by

adopting this approach can cities be sustainable and liveable (Thomson and Newman, 2020). In the context of the Olympic Games this means restricting the development of new buildings, minimising carbon intensive travel and reducing levels of extractive consumption, but also planning the Games to advance the host city's sustainability. This might be by promoting active travel, by converting brownfield sites into green spaces, or by nurturing pro-environmental behaviours amongst citizens. In this context, future Games precincts can only be justified if they are exemplars of, or experiments in, sustainable living (Mair and Smith, 2021). Future Olympic regeneration needs to be less focused on restoring the economic functionality of post-industrial cities, and more focused on restoring the ecological processes that will allow cities to remain liveable (Foth *et al.*, 2021). This is best summarised as a shift from urban regeneration to regenerative urbanism.

Conclusions

This chapter has discussed the various advantages and disadvantages of regeneration associated with the Olympic Games. Staging the Games can help to unlock the potential of areas which have stubbornly resisted regeneration through market forces or more modest interventions. The deadlines and political commitment involved can speed development processes up; especially in early stages - land assembly, remediation and infrastructure provision. However, the discussion has also introduced a series of problematic aspects of Olympic regeneration. These include an over-emphasis on the physical and economic dimensions of regeneration (at the expense of the social and the ecological), the way the Games are used to make wholesale (rather than incremental) urban transformations and the dubious use of public funds to subsidise private enterprise.

It is unfair to suggest the various issues noted here are uniquely Olympic problems, as these tend to feature in large-scale urban regeneration projects generally. For example, in a comprehensive review of European examples, Swyngedouw *et al.* (2002) suggest these tend to neglect social issues, create segregated islands of wealth, ignore local democracies and direct capital from the public to private sectors. This chapter has outlined how Olympic projects neglect incumbent populations and contribute

to gentrification; but these are problems with regeneration generally and are linked to the incompatible objectives of many regeneration projects (Allen and Cochrane, 2014). It is unrealistic to expect Olympic projects to surmount these problems or buck the trend for urban development that exacerbates socio-economic polarisation and ecological damage. The failings of Olympic regeneration reflect the failings of large-scale urban regeneration projects generally. However, there are some reasons to be optimistic. There is now increased recognition of the need to give social aspects more attention within regeneration projects generally and within Olympic regeneration in particular. A new emphasis on the social dimension provides an opportunity to link regeneration to some of the other legacies sought by host cities: sports participation, education and cultural activity. This trend may be assisted by the IOC's new insistence that host cities should use more temporary and existing venues and avoid building expensive, carbon intensive, new ones. The Paris 2024 Olympic Games is an interesting example of economic efficiency and eco-realism: with 79% of venues existing or temporary structures (Wolfe, 2022). Spending less time and money building venues provides more scope to implement programmes that lever the Games for social development (Smith, 2012), but also for ecological restoration (Foth *et al.*, 2021). Ultimately, the aim should be regeneration *for* disadvantaged communities, rather than the regeneration *of* disadvantaged communities; combined with a new emphasis on regenerative urbanism, rather than urban regeneration.

Adopting an integrated and strategic approach has helped to achieve more positive outcomes in some host cities. In Barcelona, the Olympic Games were used to advance long-held regeneration ambitions, and approach recently emulated by Paris, where 2024 Olympic Games projects in north Paris were used to help implement the longstanding Grand Paris plan (Wolfe, 2022). But this enlightened approach is rarely employed: most cities decide to stage the Games and then think how it might be used to assist regeneration, rather than vice versa. Political, economic and symbolic motivations - not assistance for socially and ecologically deprived areas - tend to explain why most urban regimes want to stage the Games. In these cases, rather than a strategic objective, regeneration is best understood as part of the way in which Olympic Games are justified. Regeneration rhetoric is particularly valuable in early stages of the process when it is used to get the media and public onside. The relationship

between the Olympic Games and urban regeneration should not be merely understood as what the Games can do for regeneration, it is also about what regeneration can do for the Games.

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Captions for Figures

Figure 1: Olympic Villages post-Games in: Barcelona (top left); Sydney (top right); Vancouver (bottom right); and London (bottom left). Photos: Andrew Smith.

Figure 2: A note fixed to fences surrounding the latest phase of development in London's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. Photo: Andrew Smith.

Figure 3: A banner protesting against the changes made to Vancouver's Olympic Village project on False Creek. Photo: Andrew Smith.