



## Assessing the

# Urban Legacy of Paris 2024



## PARIS, LEGENDARY HOST

Paris will host the Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games from July to September 2024, an important event for the city and the country as it will mark the 100th anniversary of the 1924 Paris Summer Olympic Games. Since the bidding phase in 2015, Paris has elaborated ambitious goals for the Games as they are not only a sporting mega event but also a real **development opportunity at the metropolitan level**. Paris intends to show its **uniqueness** by offering the world compact and sustainable games: 95% of the venues are existing or temporary. The 5% left embody one of the bold promises made for the Olympics: the **urban regeneration of Seine-Saint-Denis**. This previously industrial department is one of Paris' historically deprived areas, the poorest of the metropolis that could thus benefit the most from the Games, renowned **urban accelerators**.

Seine-Saint-Denis is at the heart of the Olympic-led regeneration operations, with **major projects taking place in the Department**: the Aquatic Centre as well as the renovation of five swimming pools for training; the Pleyel bridge linking the Aquatic Centre to the Stade de France; the Athletes' Village and the Media Cluster, which will provide new housing; the renaturation of the Terrain des Essences to host a dedicated biodiversity park; the implementation of a cyclable loop to allow bike travels to the venues; the creation of a soundproof wall on the A86 highway and the burial of high-voltage power lines, both highly awaited by residents; the Pleyel station, which will become an important mobility hub at the scale of Greater Paris as part of the metropolitan project of the Grand Paris Express

## AN AMBITIOUS BID

The urban legacy of the Olympic Games is a crucial topic for Paris 2024. The bidding document, a **forward-thinking** operation, paints the vision of the Olympics for the French capital. It defines long-term goals to be achieved after the Games and broad directions, aiming at accelerating the development of the metropolis (be it social, economic, sustainable etc.). The main bidding resolutions of Paris are: to **rehabilitate and enhance the Seine river**, a key landmark in the Games' perspective; to **protect and expand green spaces** in the metropolis; to **increase the reliability and resilience of the transportation networks** in order to make the Games accessible for all by public transport. Paris wants to host spectacular Olympics, a mega-event aiming at bringing the world together and hopefully reuniting the metropolis and the Seine-Saint-Denis area which lacks accessible green spaces, and suffers from spatial fragmentation, public transport inequalities and enclavement.

Olympic urban legacy is a complex and multi-faceted ideal. The aim of this study is to present a framework to understand the urban legacy of Paris 2024. What is at stake for the Games and what will be left for the residents? Within three major themes - **blue and green spaces, mobility & public spaces** - the report highlights an evaluation framework to assess the legacy of all Olympic objects, while presenting the legacies of previous Olympics to give perspective on the 2024 Games.

# UNDERSTANDING PAST LEGACIES

The Olympic Games are a catalyst for long-term development at national and city scale, answering to goals predefined by the cities. The **identification of legacy differences and similarities** of the last three events based on **common indicators** feeds a reflection on the **urban legacy** of the Paris 2024 Olympic Game.

Indicator/ themes	LONDON 2012	RIO 2016	TOKYO 2020
<b>Context</b>	The only city to host the Olympics 3 times	First Southern American city to host the Olympics	Tokyo Olympics 2020 had to be postponed due to COVID-19
<b>Goals</b>	<b>Regeneration and Rejuvenation</b> of East London. <b>OGs as catalyst</b> for social and economic good, nationwide	<b>Catalyst</b> for social integration and economic development. <b>Representation:</b> showing Brazil as an emerging power	<b>Accessibility</b> for all residents in the city and increase general living conditions. <b>Economic booster</b> to balance the impact of the 2011 earthquake
<b>Legacy body</b>	London Legacy Development Corporation, created in 2012, still operating today	Olympic Legacy Governance Authority, created in 2016 but dissolved in 2019	Tokyo Metropolitan Government in charge of the legacy framework
<b>Spatial Legacy</b>	Regeneration of East London (public transport, economic, social, environmental projects)	4 Olympic clusters Barra, Deodoro, Copacabana and Maracanã designed to fit <b>long-term needs</b> of the city (housing and infrastructure)	Creation of 2 zones and a bridge to show the <b>sustainability</b> of the past Olympic legacy while seeking urban development innovations
<b>“White elephants”<sup>1</sup> and venues</b>	None for now: venues were 40% existing, 45% temporary, 15% new	Most are because of the lack of maintenance and funding. Venues were 50% existing, 20% temporary, 30% new	None because of the compactness of the Games. Only 18% of venues were new
<b>Social Legacy</b>	Olympic Village = 2,800 flats (40% affordable). But eviction was inevitable during the construction	No social housing, all housing units were sold to the free market after the Games	Olympic Village = 3,600 housing units but none are social housing
<b>Economic Legacy</b>	Jobs: +117,000 (2017) Tourism: +1,1% In 2018 compared to 2011	Jobs: 5,000 permanent jobs (due to general economic depression) Tourism: +4,6% after 2015	Impact on jobs and tourism are limited because of the Covid-19 crisis
<b>Sustainability Legacy</b>	<b>Positive:</b> venues built with sustainable materials on former polluted site, creation of green areas enhancing biodiversity	<b>Negative:</b> bypassed laws and venues built on protected natural areas	<b>Negative:</b> venue built on former gardens contributing to soil sealing
<b>Mobility Legacy</b>	Stratford becomes the <b>second most connected area</b> of London, ending its enclavement. Station and tracks refurbishments	New public transport lines that don't connect the already disadvantaged areas lacking accessibility	Improvements in public transport increased their <b>resilience</b> for disabled people and beginning of a shift towards <b>renewable energies</b>
<b>Sporting Legacy</b>	National School Sports Week (5 million young people involved); International Inspiration Sports Program aiming at promoting sports worldwide	Transforma policy: 8 million students nationwide to encourage participation in sports	Education program aiming at promoting sports to students

<sup>1</sup> “White elephants” are venues expensive to maintain and without any use to the area which lead to urban decay

# WHAT IS URBAN LEGACY?

By observing the legacies of London, Rio and Tokyo, it is clear that the Olympic Games as a **mega event could spatially transform the urban fabric of host cities**. Following the example of the 1992 Games in Barcelona, one of the first cities to strategically integrate the Olympic Games for urban transformation, it has been a growing trend for cities to bid on **the promise of urban renewal, legitimising the concept of urban legacy**.

Due to the novelty and complexity of the urban legacy concept, **six key characteristics** could be used in defining urban legacy based on Holger Preuss' definition<sup>2</sup> of legacy, the findings of comparative analysis of the past three summer Olympics, and other scholarly literature.



**Urban legacy could be material**, such as the transformation of the territorial landscape **and immaterial** such as its effect on society (tangible & intangible)



**Urban legacy crosses temporality and scales**. Its long lasting benefits are initiated or accelerated by the hosting of the Olympic Games (long-lasting).



**Urban legacy refers to the effects and consequences** we bear from previous actions, visions and strategies for the city. (multidimensional).



**Urban legacy is place-based and territorialised** between the city's strategies and Olympics' vision (place-based).



**Urban legacy is a result of a co-created strategy** through new governance processes (co-constructed).



**Urban legacy could positively affect some stakeholders** where it could also **bring negative outcomes for others**. It is much more than the inherited infrastructure, and encompasses people and biodiversity (diverse stakeholders)

## HOW TO EVALUATE? 5 PRINCIPLES

1/ Urban legacy evaluation for Paris 2024 should focus on **multiple dimensions** such as green and waterscapes, biodiversity, public spaces, and mobility, considering the **multi-scalar** impact of the Games across the neighbourhood, city, and metro area. In view of this, and to better comprehend the complexity of legacy, the evaluation has to be carried out at **different times**, starting with pre-Games assessment (the present), and post-Games evaluation (6 months, 2, 5 and 10 years after).

2/ A **place-based strategy** is necessary to evaluate the urban legacy of the Games and its impact on specific sites and their relation with the existing urban fabric. Special focus should be given on the Seine-Saint-Denis area for urban regeneration, as the place-based approach would be tailored to highlight the spatial features of venues and projects, which can then be applied to other sites as a model.

3/ Evaluation should be done considering **local needs and challenges**. For instance, in the Seine-Saint-Denis area, inadequate public transportation and uneven coverage of green spaces must be addressed. The mega event will have a major impact on the inherent urban planning and project construction process. Therefore, evaluating how the Games respond to local needs and concerns is crucial.

4/ The evaluation should **involve different stakeholders** and their perspectives, such as the IOC, SOLIDEO, local governments, and inhabitants, to gather a comprehensive analysis of the legacy. Understanding who the stakeholders are and their objectives is key to adopting a critical eye in the evaluation of urban legacy, this allows to interpret information provided through official documents and identify narratives in the public discourse.

5/ The evaluation should take into account both **positive and negative aspects** of the Games objectively, avoiding an overly positive outlook. Legacy as a neutral term could even become a burden or a trap, as it impacts the host city in the next decades.

### 1. ANALYSE THROUGH MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS

adopting a timeframe and a scale for evaluation

### 2. BRING IN THE PLACE-BASED APPROACH

defining the spatial distribution of issues and impacts

### 3. RESPOND TO LOCAL NEEDS & CHALLENGES

addressing existing and emerging demands

### 4. ACKNOWLEDGE THE PLURALITY OF ACTORS

assessing the stakeholders throughout the Games

### 5. RESPECT THE DUALITY OF LEGACY

looking at initial expectations and actual positive / negative outcomes

<sup>2</sup> "Preuss, H. (2019) Event legacy framework and measurement, International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics, 11:1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2018.1490336>



## BLUE-GREEN

The term blue-green allows us to expand the definition of water and greenways to encompass **green spaces and water network across scales and uses**. The blue-green projects in Seine-Saint Denis are at the heart of the Paris 2024 vision. They aim to increase the accessibility to green spaces, to make the Seine swimmable, to create a new blue-green network on its banks, to protect the biodiversity, and to renature polluted sites. Grappling with multiple challenges, Seine-Saint Denis faces unequal coverage of green areas, low percentages of green spaces for its inhabitants and limited opportunities to interact along the Seine. **To what extent are the Games addressing the need for more urban green spaces?**

In the Athletes' Village, the main intervention is on the Seine banks, their revival, and their connection to housing, in addition to small parks, new green corridors, and pocket gardens in Ile-Saint-Denis and Saint-Denis. In the Media Cluster, the legacy is mainly the renaturation of Terrain des Essence which was a former military polluted site being transformed into a protected biodiversity spot. While the renaturation is hailed as a positive legacy, the Media village is contested as it is built on park Aire des Vents.

The evaluation of blue-green legacy should be carried across four main interdependent and interconnected dimensions: **spatial, environmental, governance, and social** – with the objective to create **holistic and resilient Seine and greenscapes for inhabitants and wildlife, supported by strengthened policies**. Evaluating this alive legacy is crucial for the protection, long-lasting, just-transitions and integration to networks. To what extent are the Olympic Games contributing to environmentally just spaces and climate change adaptation strategies? Has the legacy planning been limited to the 'reversibility works' of infrastructure? How are the Olympic Games projects linking existing open spaces and blue-green corridors?



## MOBILITY

The mobility legacy is mutual to the Olympic Games and the metropolitan project of the Grand Paris Express. The latter is a long, ongoing project to increase accessibility at the scale of Greater Paris and was cited as a key argument by Paris during the 2015 bidding phase. The Olympic Games are a fundamental element in the realisation of this project: **they accelerate the construction of infrastructure** to provide compact Games and allow 100% of travels to be made efficiently by public transport. Those elements lead to a reflection on what the Olympics bring to Paris in the long-term regarding mobility and how a multiscale (metropolis, department, district level) and multidimensional (diagnosis, evaluation, legacy) process is necessary to assess the mobility legacy.

The Pleyel area, located in Saint-Denis, is at the heart of mobility challenges. The Olympics, urban accelerators, contribute to the regeneration of the Pleyel area notably with the construction of the mobility hub, the Pleyel bridge, and pedestrian and bike lanes. Consequently, the Pleyel area will allow high accessibility to the residents of the whole department in terms of public transports and green mobility, which will in turn help end spatial fragmentation while also improving the pleasantness of the district. **The Olympic Games are seen by local authorities and residents as a real opportunity for development and long-awaited solution to everyday issues**. The analysis of the Pleyel area as an Olympic mobility legacy object (diagnosis) raises the question of its connotation – just a transit hub, a mobility modal shift area, or an implementation site for innovative urban ideas?

The analysis reflects 4 aspects of mobility legacy: **a mutual legacy** between the Games and major transportation projects, **a mindset legacy** (new concepts of mobility practices), **a material legacy** (new infrastructure), and **an opportunity legacy** (development of concerned urban areas).



## PUBLIC SPACES

Olympic Games accelerate new urban developments modifying the **city-scape, skyline** and **quality of life**. Although not mentioned in the official bidding, public spaces are part of the transformation of Saint-Denis area through sports and community activities. Public spaces are difficult to conceptualise into a single definition, but they can be considered as **open and freely accessible** spaces.

Urban developments can be perceived as islands, surrounded by infrastructures that act as barriers and isolate them from the city. Consequently, public spaces may be used as **links to unify the fragmented urban fabric**. This is exemplified by the analysis of the **Stade de France**. The stadium surroundings are perceived as a lifeless plaza due to the lack of local facilities and its high exposure to pollution, bad weather conditions and the heat island effect. It is worth asking how the monumental scale of the venues and their associated public spaces, intended to host major events, can be adapted to **everyday life**.

Moreover, public spaces connect people to the geography of the city through **landmarks** such as buildings (Pleyel tower) and landscape features (Seine River) that last in time and become part of the legacy.

Given that regeneration projects provoke **contestation around exclusionary and gentrifying processes**, the plurality and diversity of people should be taken into account, along with the temporality and evolution of public spaces. The proposed analysis regarding public spaces suggests an evaluation framework through 5 pillars, namely the scale of the **space, attractiveness, connections and accessibility, governance and uses**.