

Exploring the (un)sustainability of Paris 2024 and Los Angeles 2028

Sven Daniel Wolfe

Department of Geography and Sustainability, University of Lausanne

dwolfe@geo.uzh.ch

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4517-6056>

AUTHOR'S ACCEPTED VERSION

CITE AS: Wolfe, Sven Daniel. "Exploring the (Un)Sustainability of Paris 2024 and Los Angeles 2028." pp95-115. In *Olympic Games and Global Cities: What Future for an Olympic System in Turmoil?*, edited by Alexandre Faure. Springer Nature, 2024.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-9599-8_7.

Exploring the (un)sustainability of Paris 2024 and Los Angeles 2028.

Sven Daniel Wolfe | Department of Geography and Sustainability, University of Lausanne

This work was funded by the Interdisciplinary Center for Sports Research at the University of Lausanne.

Authors Accepted Version

Introduction: Olympic Reform

The economic, social, and political risks inherent in hosting the Olympics are well-documented. The existent literature features a litany of problems for host cities and societies: exorbitant costs and broken budgets (Baade and Matheson 2016; Flyvbjerg, Budzier, and Lunn 2020), ambitious urban redevelopment agendas that harm cities (Müller and Gaffney 2018; Smith 2017), socio-spatial exclusion that further marginalize the already-vulnerable (Kennelly 2015; Watt 2013), and lasting damage to the natural environment (Hayes and Karamichas 2011). The costs and controversies associated with hosting have led increasingly fewer cities to bid for the Olympics (Lauerermann 2022; MacAloon 2016).

In order to manage this hosting and credibility crisis, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) launched a series of wide-ranging organizational reforms. The overall aim is to minimize controversial and deleterious impacts to host cities. This is done by restructuring how the Games are bid for, organized, and deployed. Overall, one of the primary goals of the reforms is to improve the alignment between the Olympic Games and the city's existing development trajectory and needs (IOC 2018). By better adapting the Games to the host city, the IOC hopes to interrupt the trend of damage, decline, and bad publicity, and thereby reawaken global interest in hosting the Olympics. Throughout these reforms, the IOC has contextualized their work within the broad notion of sustainability, attempting to convey a commitment to long-term planning in concert with the host city's needs.

The Olympic reform process began in 2014 with a plan called "Agenda 2020" (IOC 2014), a series of forty recommendations addressing a variety of problems such as high costs and cost overruns, white elephant infrastructures, and IOC public mistrust (MacAloon 2016). A series of further reform documents followed Agenda 2020, including the Olympic Games Framework (IOC 2015), the New Norm (IOC 2018) and the Agenda 2020+5 (IOC 2021). These

documents aimed to put into practice various aspects of the reformist objectives originally launched by Agenda 2020. Given the scope and time scales of preparations for Olympic hosting, it has taken time for reforms to become visible, particularly since it is not possible to implement some or most of these changes in midstream. Thus, the Summer Olympic Games in Paris 2024 and Los Angeles 2028 are the first to be organized almost entirely under the auspices of the Agenda 2020 and New Norm reforms. For this reason, the chapter takes both Paris and Los Angeles as exemplars – at least in a limited comparative sense – to provide an early exploration of the effectiveness of Olympic reform.

Defining and Measuring Olympic Sustainability Over Time

One of the challenges in conducting research on the Olympics is the relative paucity of longitudinal, comparative studies. While single-case studies are invaluable, they do not provide the perspective necessary to identify and analyze longer-term trends and tendencies in regards to hosting. To address this lack, we designed with Müller et al. (2022) a mega-events database, collecting 177 indicators and sub-indicators for every Summer and Winter Olympics, Men's Football World Cup, and International Expo from 1960 – 2020. One of the outputs of this database is an evaluation of sustainability in the Olympics (Müller, Wolfe, Gaffney et al. 2021), using a tripartite model based on the economic, ecological, and social dimensions of sustainability. We built this model on three indicators per dimension, all sourced from the mega-events database (Müller, Wolfe, Gaffney et al. 2021, 341). We determined economic sustainability by looking at budget balance, financial exposure, and long-term viability, using the database variables for cost overruns, public share of event funding, and after-use of venues, respectively. Similarly, the measures for ecological sustainability were based on event size, visitor footprint, and new construction, using the variables for number of accreditations, number of tickets sold, and the share of newly-built venues. Finally, social sustainability came from public approval, social safety, and rule of law, sourced from variables for public support, population displacement, and modification of legislation. Each indicator was ranked from 0 (least sustainable) to 100 (most sustainable), and weighted equally. The result was a balanced view of the sustainability of a given event, while placing the events in chronological order produced a view of the decreasing sustainability of the Olympic Games over time.

Another challenge for mega-events research is the problem of accurate attribution, meaning the difficulty in determining whether a certain outcome is due to hosting or not (Vanwynsberghe 2015). The New Norm and Agenda 2020 reforms complicate this issue significantly, since one of the goals is to align hosting with the city's development trajectory, thereby reducing or eliminating many problems, including white elephant infrastructures (IOC 2018). As part of these efforts, existing venues must be prioritized, new venues must be designed multi-purpose (not only for a single sport), and new infrastructures should be part of broader plans, rather than solely for the event.

In this light, fieldwork to Paris and Los Angeles revealed many complications with regards to attribution. For instance, it is not feasible to try to extricate the preparations for the 2024 Olympics from the broader Grand Paris transit developments (Le Grand Paris 2021), since in many cases they are the same interventions, legitimized through identical means. Similarly, while Los Angeles organizers promised a sustainable Games through the use of existing venues and infrastructures (LA24 Bid Committee 2017a), in actuality there are numerous interventions into the urban fabric that are associated with the 2028 Olympics, even if they do not necessarily appear on the organizing committee's budgets or balance sheets. Because of these overlaps, it is not necessarily clear to what end a venue or an urban intervention would have been built if not for hosting the Olympics, particularly since organizers and boosters are known for making beautiful-but-impossible promises before the Games (Boykoff and Mascarenhas 2016; Müller 2015). This suggests a need to update the mega-event sustainability model in order to account for the new difficulties in attribution caused by Olympic reform.

Thus, the chapter builds upon our tripartite sustainability model to explore the Summer Olympics in Paris 2024 and Los Angeles 2028. There are some important adjustments to note, however. Notably, this study is conducted *ex-ante* rather than *ex-post*. This is unlikely to affect actual results for some of the variables under discussion, due to long timescales and the scope of interventions inherent in mega-event hosting. For this reason, the chapter makes use of reasonable projections and estimations in order to build as accurate a picture as possible, in line with our *ex-ante* projections for the Tokyo 2020/2021 Olympics (Müller, Wolfe, Gaffney et al. 2021). Once collected, each of these indicators (whether actual or

projected) was ranked and weighted in accordance with the scoring criteria from the original study. Other variables, however, are impossible to determine beforehand, such as the number of tickets sold, the number of accreditations, any cost overruns, and the ultimate after-use of venues. For these variables, the article posits several potential scenarios based on best-available data, and explains outcomes not through a quantitative rating, but rather through qualitative thick description. Ultimately, this chapter presents an imperfect solution to the problems of attribution, but nevertheless the contextualized qualitative work serves as a reasonable stopgap measure to try to make sense of hosting-related interventions.

The data for this chapter was sourced from several fieldwork visits to Paris and Los Angeles from 2019 – 2022, as well as the standard run of official documents (bid books, organizing committee reports, etc.), as described in Gaffney, Wolfe and Müller (2018). This fieldwork was part of a larger project to examine the preparations for Paris 2024 and Los Angeles 2028, and consisted of site visits, attendance at organizing committee and delivery organization events, and interviews and conversations with residents, activists, and academics. On this foundation, the chapter endeavors to fill the gaps in the sustainability model caused by the ex-ante process and the attribution problems, and produce a preliminary investigation of sustainability issues in the first Olympic Games planned and deployed under the Agenda 2020 and the New Norm reforms.

Paris 2024

In many respects, Paris 2024 might be seen as a model for how to host mega-events with minimal damage. This is not to claim that there are no costs or deleterious outcomes, but rather to highlight the ways in which Paris appears to diverge from the outsized economic, social, and environmental impacts witnessed in previous Olympic Games. Taking stock of Tokyo 2020/2021 (Boykoff and Gaffney 2020; Trendafilova et al. 2022), PyeongChang 2018 (Kim and Grix 2021), Rio de Janeiro 2016 (Barre 2016; Silvestre 2017), and Sochi 2014 (Karbainov 2013; Wolfe 2020), the Olympics too often are a story of busted budgets, unnecessary infrastructures, evictions, environmental destruction, and greenwashing.

Economically, mega-events traditionally suffer from broken budgets, regardless of the specificities of the host nation (Flyvbjerg, Budzier, and Lunn 2020). Actual costs are difficult

to calculate, however, due to a variety of complications such as organizational secrecy, political pressures, and the problems of accurate attribution, to say nothing of the challenges of different accounting methodologies. These complications have led to significant academic debate about the economics of hosting. What is beyond dispute is that mega-events tend to suffer from an under-estimation of costs (Müller 2015). That is, whether from poor planning, intentional obfuscation, or bad luck, the final tab comes out higher than what organizers promised.

In their bid for 2024, Paris organizers promised a financially-responsible Games, budgeted at 3.58 billion EUR (figured in 2017 costs), or 3.8 billion EUR as figured for 2024 and taking inflation into account (Paris 2024 Bid Committee 2017,135). In December 2022, less than two years before the opening of the Games, the Paris 2024 board of directors approved a new budget with an increase to 4.38 billion EUR (Paris 2024 Organizing Committee, 2022). This represents a 15% increase if calculating from the 2017 figures, or a 22% increase, if using the estimates for inflation. Given that all megaprojects run over budget (Flyvbjerg 2014), this rise is little surprise, particularly in context of the overall tendency for mega-events to suffer from broken budgets, underestimated costs, and overpromised benefits (Flyvbjerg, Budzier, and Lunn 2020; Müller, Gogishvili, and Wolfe 2022). Nevertheless, if going by the official figures alone, Paris 2024 represents important progress, given that their stated price tag significantly defies recent trends and returns the Games to costs resembling those of Sydney 2000. If these figures hold, then Paris 2024 will score well in terms of economic sustainability, particularly in context with the last twenty years of spectacular budgets.

Further, Paris 2024 seems to rate well in terms of public share of funding where, despite government funding guarantees, organizers have so far maintained a majority of private funding (Louis and Cooke 2021). To be sure, this is not yet possible to verify, and there is always a danger that last-minute pressures will force the state to step in with financial guarantees. But so far, the organization of Paris 2024 seems to display a welcome move towards more fiscal responsibility.

Finally, the potential after-use of venues represents a significant boost to the economic scores. Partly this is due to the natural advantages enjoyed by Paris as the sporting and cultural capital of a major nation, so there already exist a wealth of venues with histories of stable use. While nothing can be stated with certainty, particularly in this era of public health and geopolitical instability, it would nevertheless be surprising to see the Paris 2024 venues fall into white elephant disuse after the Olympics. To be sure, not every potential host has already-existing sporting and cultural infrastructure at the level of Paris or Los Angeles, so it is likely that Olympic reforms will force future Games to be hosted more often in this type of city with global profiles.

Socially, Paris 2024 benefits from a generally high approval among the public, with clear majorities supporting the Games in France (Fortune 2021; Lefèvre 2019). This support appears consistent over time, though the polling methodology employed is not always transparent. Public support is also likely due to France's longstanding Olympic tradition (Paris hosted the Summer Games in 1900 and 1924), as well as the fact that the founder of the modern Olympics, Pierre de Coubertin, was himself French and born in Paris (MacAloon 2009). This tradition of Olympic support has interesting political ramifications, in that French Socialist and even Communist parties – who traditionally oppose mega-event gigantism in other political-economic contexts – are generally in favor of Paris 2024. This is not to say that everyone is united behind the Olympic project, however. The high scores generated by popular support are leavened by a spate of Olympic laws that stifle dissent, speed controversial urban development projects, and even allow for advertising on the usually-protected facades and monuments of Paris (Lasserre 2022; Le Monde 2017). The state of exception created by these Olympic laws has been justified as a necessary cost of hosting, and proponents maintain that France's protections for human rights will be maintained (Dion 2018). Yet critics remain unconvinced, both because of the well-documented problems with mega-event-led legal exceptions worldwide (Gogishvili 2022; Sánchez and Broudehoux 2013), and because of some negative impacts already visible on the ground in Paris.

The range of negative impacts include direct and indirect expulsions of vulnerable populations, the seizure of public gardens in order to construct Olympic and associated infrastructures, and the mistreatment of migrant workers (Hocquet 2022; H24 2022; Kontos

2022). Here, the problems of accurate attribution come into play. The preparations for the Paris 2024 Olympics are framed as part of the developments for Grand Paris (Le Grand Paris 2021), and it is not possible to identify with certainty that a given infrastructural development would or would not have happened due to hosting. Because of this uncertainty, some developments that are clearly linked to the Olympics – such as transit infrastructure – can be plausibly attributed to Grand Paris instead, and therefore appear to lower the costs of hosting (Faure 2021).

The problems of attribution concern social sustainability as well, and there are fears that Grand Paris / Paris 2024 will exacerbate the city's problems with homelessness, while certain spaces are reshaped by the pressures of gentrification. Notably, many development processes are sited in the region's poorer departments, where residents tend to have more minority and migrant backgrounds. For instance, the department of Seine-Saint-Denis is where many Olympic and Grand Paris projects are concentrated. It is also one of the poorest in France, with 28% of the population below the poverty line (INSEE 2022). A clear example of the spatial inequalities in mixed-attribution urban development projects can be seen in Pleyel, part of the Seine Saint-Denis department. There, authorities are constructing a new highway interchange project that will abut a local school, exposing children to dangerous and illegal levels of air pollution (Snaije 2022). Despite some token moves by authorities to address the problem, the majority-minority population still remains at risk, and local activists complain that residents do not have sufficient voice in deciding the direction of developments that affect them directly (Wolfe, 2023). Activists claim that this sentiment holds true for many other affected areas in Seine-Saint-Denis (Saccage 2024 2022).

Ecologically, Paris 2024 benefits from the capital's high share of already-existing venues and infrastructures. In the candidature files, organizers promised that 95% of venues will be existing or temporary (Paris 2024 Bid Committee 2017, 45). This turns out to be an exaggeration, but nevertheless the scores for the share of newly-built venues are impressive, particularly in context with previous Games. At the time of writing, it appears that 79% of venues for Paris 2024 are already-existing. While this is not what organizers promised, it still represents a significant step towards overall ecological sustainability. This progress is mitigated, however, by the provisional signs of continued Olympic gigantism in regards to

attendance. Paris 2024 is projected to sell 9.7 million tickets while hosting 10,500 athletes, not counting associated support staff, media personnel, and other accredited figures (Paris 2024 Organizing Committee 2019). If these projections hold, this will break all previous records for attendance and participation (Müller, Wolfe, Gaffney et al. 2021), and thus will continue the trend of Olympic unsustainability. It appears that this predilection for gigantism will counteract some of the ecological benefits of using existing infrastructures.

Overall, Paris 2024 appears to break the trend of decreasing sustainability in Olympic Games, while still falling short of its potential for maximally sustainable outcomes. These Games benefit from many advantages specific to Paris (and, to be fair, a number of other global cities). Chief among these are the existence of a wide range of existing venues and infrastructures with already-established sporting and cultural uses; a longstanding tradition of pro-Olympic attitudes among the population; and a responsible spending plan that controls costs and largely eschews government sources.

Los Angeles 2028

Unlike Paris, at the time of writing it is currently too far in the future to populate much of the sustainability model for Los Angeles 2028. Much can change in the coming years that could upend concrete predictions but, at the same time, there are a number of developments already visible in the city that can help approximate what the sustainability situation will be in 2028.

Chief among developments with the potential to improve sustainability is the usage of existing infrastructures, which – similar to Paris – can reduce event-led construction, costs, and overall impacts. As a former Olympic host and a global destination for sport and cultural events, Los Angeles already possesses the necessary infrastructures to host the 2028 Games without undue interventions. Thus, Los Angeles organizers claim that a full 100% of Olympic venues are already-existing or will be temporary overlays (LA24 Bid Committee 2017a, 11; LA28 2022). In accordance with the Olympic reforms, the IOC Evaluation Commission rated the Los Angeles bid highly on its usage of existing venues, noting that 97% were existing or temporary, and only one venue – the so-called “LA Stadium at Hollywood park,” for 3% of

the total – would be constructed, though organizers claimed this was already planned regardless of whether or not Los Angeles would host (IOC 2017, 20).

Theoretically, this dedication to existing venues and infrastructures represents substantial progress in terms of ecological and economic sustainability, though in line with Paris, there are numerous ways in which the ultimate scores for the event could fall. Notably, if Olympic audience attendance and accreditation figures continue growing (Müller et al. forthcoming), then this trend of gigantism will counterbalance the sustainability gains made by the usage of existing infrastructures. More crucially, however, marrying the Olympic project with existing developments in Los Angeles blurs the boundaries between event and city, complicating efforts at accurate attribution. For instance, the aforementioned LA Stadium at Hollywood Park discussed and dismissed by the IOC Evaluation Commission, is in reality a more complicated affair. Now completed, the venue is known as SoFi Stadium, and it sits at the heart of a 300-acre sports and entertainment complex. Costing over \$5 billion USD to construct, it is the most expensive stadium in the world (Paris 2020). Since the stadium was financed independently, and because it is not officially associated with hosting, this eye-watering sum cannot be attributed to Olympic costs. It is engendering other impacts, however, and these are not so simple to dismiss.

The SoFi complex is sited a few miles from LAX airport in Inglewood, Los Angeles County, a majority Black and Hispanic city that is consistently poorer than the rest of Los Angeles and California as a whole. For the years 2016 – 2020, median household income in Inglewood was \$58,536 USD per year, as compared to \$71,358 USD for Los Angeles County, and \$78,672 for California (United States Census Bureau 2022). Though SoFi stadium was built by private funds, the complex will nevertheless benefit from at least \$100 million USD in state tax breaks, while public services in Inglewood remain underfunded and languishing (Togoh 2020). Many local activists, such as those affiliated with the Lennox Inglewood Tenants Union, see the stadium as the vanguard of gentrification, driving rent increases and illegal evictions across the city (LITU 2022).

As one of the world's most opulent venues, SoFi stadium could not be ignored for the Games, and in fact is inextricably tied to Los Angeles 2028. Alongside or in parallel with the

historic Memorial Coliseum, it is slated to host the opening and closing ceremonies, as well as several sporting events (LA28 2022). Yet the stadium was planned years before Los Angeles won the rights to host the Olympics (Wagoner 2014), and cannot reasonably be tied to Olympic development. At the same time, SoFi stadium engenders and exacerbates a range of socio-spatial inequalities on Inglewood and beyond, and the Olympics are undeniably a part of these processes. This suggests that issues of attribution – already a complicated issue – may no longer be feasible to unpack after the Olympic reforms. Instead, it may be more productive to examine the impacts associated with these developments, in which the Olympics play a part.

So far, then, ecological sustainability for LA28 rates highly, based on the usage of existing infrastructures and despite the challenges of attribution. Similarly, economic sustainability shows positive results due to the predicted after-use of the already-existing venues. As with Paris, not every potential host city has the same advantages as Los Angeles in terms of size, wealth, and existing facilities for large-scale sporting and cultural entertainment. But if the Olympic reforms are intended to minimize the negative impacts associated with costly, oversized, and underused infrastructures, then the move towards cities that already have sufficient facilities – and the capacity to support them – can indeed be regarded as a positive step. Conversely, and in the same vein as the potential drawbacks to a favorable rating for ecological sustainability, there are some risks to the economic fortunes of LA28. Every Olympics runs over budget (Flyvbjerg, Budzier, and Lunn 2020) and the Los Angeles Games are no exception. At the time of writing (six years before the event), the budget for LA28 has already grown from \$5.3 billion USD (LA24 Bid Committee 2017c, 95) to an estimated \$6.9 billion USD so far (CBS 2021). Further, both the city of Los Angeles and the State of California – that is, the taxpayers – are responsible for covering any potential shortfalls. First the city must cover \$250 million USD, after which the State guarantees kick in for another \$250 million USD. Anything over that must be covered again by the city (Legislative Analyst's Office 2017). While city authorities did well in rejecting an initial proposal to build a new Olympic Village for at least \$1 billion USD (Legislative Analyst's Office 2016), it is clear that financial risks remain, and the difficulty in determining whether or not developments are associated with the Olympics means that some costs may appear less than they actually are.

The social dimension of sustainability for LA28 is particularly challenging to unpack before the event, but there are already indications of some serious risks and problems here as well. Host City Contracts between the IOC and local authorities are notorious for ceding local autonomy (Horne and Whannel 2016), while mega-events in general are known for creating states of legal exception that allow controversial laws and plans to bypass ordinary procedures and offer breathtaking guarantees to the IOC (Gogishvili and Harris-Brandts 2020; Müller 2015). LA28 appears to maintain this trend, with both the Host City Contract and a separate Games Agreement addressing a variety of issues ranging from financing guarantees to police requirements, traffic management, and the city's homeless residents. Notably, however, these were delineated in vague terms and lacked the specifics necessary for contracts of such widespread importance (Wharton and Smith 2021). Critics and opponents noted that the contracts expose the public to serious financial risks, while simultaneously ignoring the city's critical problems (NOlympics LA 2021). Despite these vulnerabilities, the contracts were approved by the city council, first in 2017 with a unanimous vote for the bid, and then later with an 11-2 vote for the Games Agreement (CBS 2021). It is not yet possible to give accurate ratings, since the contractual specifics of the Games Agreement remain undefined. As a rule, however, the creation of exceptional legislation brings down the scores for social sustainability.

Another problem with social sustainability in LA28 is related to the reactions of the host population. The bid book claimed 88.3% of LA county supported the Games in 2017 (LA24 Bid Committee 2017b, 14) while, in the same year, the IOC ran their own poll and found 72% support in Los Angeles, 72% support in California, and 64% support in the United States (IOC 2017, 48). Similarly, a Los Angeles Times poll in 2022 claimed 76% support across the county (Sheets and Campa 2022). There are problems with these figures, however. None of the organizations involved were wholly transparent about their methodology, while the Olympic support quoted by the LA Times appears to be entirely fabricated from another poll involving the 2022 Super Bowl (the journalists involved did not respond to questions regarding this apparent falsification). Conversely, the NOlympics LA opposition group commissioned their own survey, which found only 26% support for hosting (NOlympics LA 2018). To some degree these results are unsurprising: a protest group finds weak support, just as boosters find strong support. A crucial difference is that NOlympics was transparent

about their methodology, specific questions, and survey limitations – all vital details that were absent in the other polls. Ultimately, the contradictory popular support figures demonstrate the need for independent and transparent surveys, ideally conducted over time, in order to understand the attitudes of local residents and source a legible score for social sustainability.

The final controversy regarding social sustainability is the issue of population displacement, whereby hosting mega-events causes both direct expulsions and indirect displacements of local communities (Rocha and Xiao 2022). Problematically, these deleterious impacts tend to affect the already-vulnerable (Kennelly and Watt 2011; Silvestre and de Oliveira 2012) – a particular challenge for Los Angeles, given its well-documented homelessness problems. In 2021, the official count of people in homeless shelters was 12,503 for the city of Los Angeles and 17,225 for LA county (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority 2022a; 2022b). While staggering, this figure paints only a partial picture of the crisis, as it ignores the sizable unhoused population living on the street, in tents, or in other encampments. UCLA researchers documented an estimated 58,936 unhoused individuals in LA county in 2019, with the majority not in shelters (Kuhn et al. 2020). Given the city's legacy of aggressive policing and homeless sweeps in preparation for the 1984 Olympics (Chandler 2018), it is expected that LA28 will result in more harm to this vulnerable population. Furthermore, the issue of homelessness does not touch on the problems of people in precarious housing. Subject to the pressures of intense gentrification and targeted by predatory landlords and voracious real estate conglomerates, the precariously housed are also expected to lose from Olympic-led development, particularly near the venue sites (Coleman 2020).

Thus, while it is not possible to estimate sustainability scores for LA28, it is already clear that Los Angeles suffers from a number of critical problems that threaten to derail claims to Olympic sustainability. Despite the pre-existence of venues and the likelihood of good after-use, overall sustainability will likely be hampered by the overwhelming numbers of homeless and other vulnerable people, as well as by the city and state financial guarantees.

Conclusion: Qualified progress, persistent problems

So far, the Olympic reforms have produced mixed results on the ground for Paris 2024 and Los Angeles 2028. Most significantly, siting the Olympics in host cities that have sufficient existing infrastructure, alongside an established capacity for after-use, foretells a reduction or elimination of many problems associated with high venue costs and white elephants. This is an important step towards real sustainability. In both Paris and Los Angeles, however, this progress appears to be hampered by a range of persistent problems. These include: the relentless growth of the Olympics, attracting ever more athletes and spectators and thereby generating ever larger footprints; the tendency for busted budgets, alongside financial guarantees that expose the public purse; the states of legal exception that allow the passage of controversial development plans; and the myriad ways in which mega-event preparations continue to harm the most vulnerable, in particularly minority populations, the homeless, and the precariously housed. In this light, it is clear that while Olympic reform has made significant progress in many important respects, Paris 2024 and LA28 demonstrate that more work remains in order to reduce the damages too often associated with hosting.

Notably, the Games still suffer from the addiction to Olympic gigantism, with projections for record-breaking spectator and athlete attendance. This leads to increased impacts for host cities and societies, as ever-larger audiences leave larger footprints. This is unlikely to change, however, without substantially rethinking the financial motivations of the Games. Given the power of the profit motive and the astounding sums at play, this degree of restructuring is extremely unlikely to occur. At the same time, in order to make the spectacle palatable for sponsors and global audiences, host city authorities continue to pass controversial laws and urban development agendas that harm already-marginalized populations, particularly in poorer regions. .

Nevertheless, the general idea of linking the Olympics to existing urban development agendas is a good idea, meant to eliminate the problem by which the event's priorities overwhelm the city's own needs. Yet this linkage introduces surprising challenges for analysis, of which the most troublesome is the difficulty in assigning attribution. As demonstrated by the preparations in Paris and Los Angeles, the lack of clear attribution complicates the sustainability model used by Müller, Wolfe, Gaffney et al. (2021). Indeed,

this chapter has shown that the variables for newly-built venues (ecological sustainability), population displacement (social sustainability), and after-use of venues (economic sustainability), have all been challenged by the post-reform attribution problem. If the reforms result in continued overlap between the Olympics and the host city's own agenda – and if deleterious outcomes nevertheless persist – then scholars will need updated methodologies to explore the actual costs and impacts of hosting mega-events. This will require nuanced, grounded fieldwork that puts Olympic hosting in context with local developments, while still keeping global processes in mind.

Ultimately, what matters most is not academic models or frameworks, however specifically defined. Instead, what should remain in center stage is the impacts on the people and places that host. So long as damaging outcomes continue on the ground, then these must be identified, understood, and – most importantly – addressed. Without these concerns, we will be engaged in nothing more than obfuscation.

It is important to remember that Paris 2024 and LA28 have made substantial progress in reducing some of the deleterious impacts of hosting, and these should be duly noted, celebrated, learned from, and refined. At the same time, it is also clear that mega-events continue to damage host cities and societies, and the selected successes of reform should not distract from the problems that remain. They are unsustainable in every sense, and more work remains to be done.

Literature

- Allsup, Maeve. 2021. "Los Angeles Olympics Contract Sought by Labor Union in Lawsuit." October 23, 2021. <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/us-law-week/los-angeles-olympics-contract-sought-by-labor-union-in-lawsuit>.
- Baade, Robert, and Victor Matheson. 2016. "Going for the Gold: The Economics of the Olympics." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 30 (2): 201–18. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.30.2.201>.
- Barre, Jorge de La. 2016. "Future Shock: Mega-Events in Rio de Janeiro." *Leisure Studies* 35 (3): 352–68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2014.994551>.
- Boykoff, Jules, and Christopher Gaffney. 2020. "The Tokyo 2020 Games and the End of Olympic History." *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 31 (2): 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10455752.2020.1738053>.

- Boykoff, Jules, and Gilmar Mascarenhas. 2016. "The Olympics, Sustainability, and Greenwashing: The Rio 2016 Summer Games." *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 27 (2): 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10455752.2016.1179473>.
- CBS. 2021. "LA City Council Approves Games Agreement Ahead Of 2028 Olympics." December 3, 2021. <https://www.cbsnews.com/losangeles/news/la-city-council-approves-games-agreement-ahead-of-2028-olympics/>.
- Chandler, Jenna. 2018. "How Will LA Treat the Homeless When It Hosts the Olympics in 2028?" *Curbed LA*. July 12, 2018. <https://la.curbed.com/2018/7/12/17454676/los-angeles-olympics-homeless-police-militarization-security>.
- Coleman, Jonny. 2020. "The Struggle Against A Stadium's Construction Became A Battle for the Soul Of Los Angeles." *The Appeal*. September 10, 2020. <https://theappeal.org/sofi-stadium-gentrification-displacement-lennox-inglewood-tenants-union/>.
- Dion, Sophie. 2018. "Le droit à l'épreuve des JO 2024 [Testing the law for the 2024 Olympics]." *Les Echos*. February 9, 2018. <https://www.lesechos.fr/idees-debats/cercle/le-droit-a-lepreuve-des-jo-2024-130562>.
- Faure, Alexandre. "The Impact of Paris 2024 on the Construction of the Grand Paris Express: A Hidden Extra Cost of the Olympic." June 8, 2021. <https://hal.science/hal-03253557>.
- Flyvbjerg, Bent. "What You Should Know About Megaprojects and Why: An Overview." *Project Management Journal* 45, no. 2 (2014): 6–19. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pmj.21409>.
- Flyvbjerg, Bent, Alexander Budzier, and Daniel Lunn. 2020. "Regression to the Tail: Why the Olympics Blow Up." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, September, 0308518X20958724. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X20958724>.
- Fortune, Gregory. 2021. "Paris 2024 : 79% des Français regrettent la suppression du karaté du programme des JO [Paris 2024: 79% of French people regret the elimination of karate from the Olympic Games]." *www.rtl.fr*. September 5, 2021. <https://www.rtl.fr/sport/autres-sports/paris-2024-79-des-francais-regrettent-la-suppression-du-karate-du-programme-des-jo-7900067944>.
- Gaffney, Christopher, Sven Daniel Wolfe, and Martin Müller. "Scrutinizing Global Mega-Events." In *Doing Global Urban Research*, edited by John Harrison and Michael Hoyler, 125–37. London ; Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2018.
- Gogishvili, David. 2022. "Urban Infrastructure in the Framework of Mega-Event Exceptionalism: Glasgow and the 2014 Commonwealth Games." *Urban Geography* 43 (4): 589–612. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2021.1880696>.
- Gogishvili, David, and Suzanne Harris-Brandts. 2020. "Coinciding Practices of Exception in Urban Development: Mega-Events and Special Economic Zones in Tbilisi, Georgia." *European Planning Studies* 28 (10): 1999–2019. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2019.1701995>.
- H24. 2022. "JO-2024: des travailleurs migrants victimes collatérales des travaux du village olympique [Olympic Games 2024: Migrant workers as collateral damage from construction on the Olympic Village]." <https://www.h24info.ma/> (blog). July 22, 2022. <https://www.h24info.ma/monde/jo-2024-des-travailleurs-migrants-victimes-collaterales-des-travaux-du-village-olympique/>.
- Hayes, Graeme, and John Karamichas. 2011. *Olympic Games, Mega-Events and Civil Societies: Globalization, Environment, Resistance*. New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

- Hocquet, Romane. 2022. "Que sont devenus les migrants évacués du camp de la porte de la Chapelle en novembre dernier ?" *Europe 1*. January 28, 2022. <https://www.europe1.fr/societe/que-sont-devenus-les-migrants-evacues-du-camp-de-la-porte-de-la-chapelle-en-novembre-dernier-3945961>.
- Horne, John, and Garry Whannel. 2016. *Understanding the Olympics*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge.
- INSEE. "Revenus et Pauvreté Des Ménages En 2019 – Département de La Seine-Saint-Denis (93) [Household Income and Poverty in 2019 - Department of Seine-Saint-Denis (93)]," May 23, 2022. https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/6037462/?geo=DEP-93#tableau-REV_G1.
- International Olympic Committee. 2014. "Olympic Agenda 2020: 20+20 Recommendations." International Olympic Committee, Lausanne. <https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/Documents/Olympic-Agenda-2020/Olympic-Agenda-2020-20-20-Recommendations.pdf>.
- . 2015. "Olympic Games Framework. Produced for the 2024 Olympic Games." International Olympic Committee, Lausanne. https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/IOC/Olympic_Games/Olympic_Games_Candidature_Process/Olympic_Games_Candidatures_Beyond_2024/Beyond_2024/EN_IOC_Olympic_Games_Framework.pdf.
- . 2017. "Report of the IOC 2024 Evaluation Commission." International Olympic Committee, Lausanne. <https://stillmedab.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/Documents/Host-City-Elections/XXXIII-Olympiad-2024/Report-IOC-Evaluation-Commission-2024-low-resolution.pdf>.
- . 2018. "Olympic Agenda 2020. Olympic Games: The New Norm. Report by the Executive Steering Committee for Olympic Games Delivery." International Olympic Committee, Lausanne. https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/News/2018/02/2018-02-06-Olympic-Games-the-New-Norm-Report.pdf#_ga=2.91939987.822564896.1534495451-1382914788.1518533455.
- . 2021. "Olympic Agenda 2020+5: 15 Recommendations." International Olympic Committee, Lausanne. <https://stillmedab.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/IOC/What-We-Do/Olympic-agenda/Olympic-Agenda-2020-5-15-recommendations.pdf>.
- Karbainov, Nikolay. 2013. "Kak Izymayut Sobstvennost v Olympiiskikh Stolitsakh: Olimpiada v Sochi v Sravnitel'noy Perspective [How Property Is Seized in Olympic Capitals: The Sochi Olympics in Comparative Perspective]." *Mir Rossii*, no. 1: 106–29.
- Kennelly, Jacqueline. 2015. "'You're Making Our City Look Bad': Olympic Security, Neoliberal Urbanization, and Homeless Youth." *Ethnography* 16 (1): 3–24. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138113513526>.
- Kennelly, Jacqueline, and Paul Watt. 2011. "Sanitizing Public Space in Olympic Host Cities: The Spatial Experiences of Marginalized Youth in 2010 Vancouver and 2012 London." *Sociology* 45 (5): 765–81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038511413425>.
- Kim, Hyung-Min, and Jonathan Grix. 2021. "Implementing a Sustainability Legacy Strategy: A Case Study of PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympic Games." *Sustainability* 13 (9): 5141. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13095141>.

- Kontos, Marianna. 2022. "Time, Democracy, Social and Environmental Justice in the Urban Fabrication of the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games: What the Mobilization of the Inhabitants of Seine-Saint-Denis Reveals." In *Mega Events, Urban Transformations and Social Citizenship: A Multi-Disciplinary Analysis for An Epistemological Foresight*, edited by Naomi C. Hanakata, Filippo Bignami, and Niccolò Cuppini, 172–83. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Kuhn, Randall, Jessica Richards, Sarah Roth, and Kimberly Clair. 2020. "Homelessness and Public Health in Los Angeles." UCLA Fielding School of Public Health. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2gn3x56s>.
- LA24 Bid Committee. 2017a. "Los Angeles Candidate City Olympic Games 2024. Volume 1." Los Angeles Candidate City Olympic Games 2024.
- . 2017b. "Los Angeles Candidate City Olympic Games 2024. Volume 2." Los Angeles Candidate City Olympic Games 2024.
- . 2017c. "Los Angeles Candidate City Olympic Games 2024. Volume 3." Los Angeles Candidate City Olympic Games 2024.
- LA28. 2022. "Games Plan." 2022. <https://la28.org/en/games-plan.html>.
- Lasserre, Matthieu. 2022. "JO de Paris : que sont les « lois d'exception » auxquelles Emmanuel Macron propose de recourir ? [Paris Olympics: what are the 'exceptional laws' that Emmanuel Macron proposes to use?]." *La Croix*, March 18, 2022. <https://www.la-croix.com/France/JO-Paris-sont-lois-dexception-auxquelles-Emmanuel-Macron-propose-recourir-2022-03-18-1201205726>.
- Lauermann, John. 2022. "The Declining Appeal of Mega-Events in Entrepreneurial Cities: From Los Angeles 1984 to Los Angeles 2028." *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, February, 23996544211066100. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23996544211066101>.
- Le Grand Paris. 2021. "Grand Paris Project Overview." 2021. <http://www.grand-paris.jll.fr/en/grand-paris-project/overview/>.
- Le Monde. 2017. "L'Assemblée approuve le projet de loi olympique [Assembly approves Olympic bill]." *Le Monde.fr*, December 21, 2017. https://www.lemonde.fr/sport-et-societe/article/2017/12/21/l-assemblee-approuve-le-projet-de-loi-olympique_5232603_1616888.html.
- Lefèvre, Sandrine. 2019. "Paris 2024 : 73 % des Français fiers d'accueillir les Jeux olympiques [Paris 2024: 73% of French are proud of hosting the Olympic Games]." *leparisien.fr*. September 5, 2019. <https://www.leparisien.fr/sports/JO/paris-2024/paris-2024-73-des-francais-fiers-d-accueillir-les-jeux-olympiques-05-09-2019-8146044.php>.
- Legislative Analyst's Office. 2016. "Los Angeles' Bid for the 2024 Olympics and Paralympics." Los Angeles Candidate City Olympic Games 2024. www.lao.ca.gov.
- . 2017. "Update on Los Angeles' Bid for the 2024 Olympics." Los Angeles Candidate City Olympic Games 2024. www.lao.ca.gov.
- LITU. 2022. "Lennox Inglewood Tenants Union: Our Story." Lennox Inglewood Tenants Union. 2022. <https://www.litunion.org/our-story>.
- Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. 2022a. "2021 HIC And Shelter Count City Of LA." 2022. <https://www.lahsa.org/documents?id=5485-2021-hic-and-shelter-count-city-of-la>.
- . 2022b. "2021 HIC And Shelter Count LA COC." 2022. <https://www.lahsa.org/documents?id=5487-2021-hic-and-shelter-count-la-coc>.

- Louis, Paul, and Virginie Cooke. 2021. "7,3 milliards d'euros: comment est financé le budget des Jeux olympiques de Paris 2024 [7.3 billion Euros: How the Paris 2024 Olympic budget is financed]." BFM BUSINESS. August 9, 2021. https://www.bfmtv.com/economie/economie-social/france/7-3-milliards-d-euros-comment-est-finance-le-budget-des-jeux-olympiques-de-paris-2024_AV-202108090225.html.
- MacAloon, John J. 2009. *This Great Symbol: Pierre de Coubertin and the Origins of the Modern Olympic Games*. 25th anniversary edition. Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge.
- . 2016. "Agenda 2020 and the Olympic Movement." *Sport in Society* 19 (6): 767–85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2015.1119960>.
- Müller, Martin. 2015. "The Mega-Event Syndrome: Why So Much Goes Wrong in Mega-Event Planning and What to Do About It." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 81 (1): 6–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2015.1038292>.
- Müller, Martin, and Christopher Gaffney. 2018. "Comparing the Urban Impacts of the FIFA World Cup and Olympic Games From 2010 to 2016." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 42 (4): 247–69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723518771830>.
- Müller, Martin, Sven Daniel Wolfe, Christopher Gaffney, David Gogishvili, Miriam Hug, and Annick Leick. 2021. "An Evaluation of the Sustainability of the Olympic Games." *Nature Sustainability* 4 (4): 340–48. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-021-00696-5>.
- Müller, Martin, Sven Daniel Wolfe, David Gogishvili, Christopher Gaffney, Miriam Hug, and Annick Leick. 2022. "The Mega-Events Database: Systematising the Evidence on Mega-Event Outcomes." *Leisure Studies* 41 (3): 437–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2021.1998835>.
- Müller, Martin, David Gogishvili, and Sven Daniel Wolfe. "The Structural Deficit of the Olympics and the World Cup: Comparing Costs against Revenues over Time." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 0, no. 0 (May 31, 2022): 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X221098741>.
- NOlympics LA. 2018. "NOlympics LA Survey Results and Analysis." *NOlympics LA* (blog). October 9, 2018. <https://nolympicsla.com/2018/10/09/survey-results-and-analysis/>.
- . 2021. "The LA28 Olympic Games Agreement." *NOlympics LA* (blog). October 4, 2021. <https://nolympicsla.com/2021/10/04/the-la28-olympic-games-agreement/>.
- Paris 2024 Bid Committee. 2017. "Paris Candidate City Olympic Games 2024. Volume 3." Paris Candidate City Olympic Games 2024.
- Paris 2024 Organizing Committee. 2019. "Dates des Jeux Olympiques de Paris 2024 [Dates for the Paris 2024 Olympics]." Paris 2024. September 5, 2019. <https://www.paris2024.org/fr/dates-jeux-olympiques-paris-2024/>.
- Paris 2024 Organizing Committee. "Paris 2024 Board of Directors Approves Balanced Budget with Less than Two Year..." December 12, 2022. <https://press.paris2024.org/news/paris-2024-board-of-directors-approves-balanced-budget-with-less-than-two-years-to-go-until-the-games-begin-c710-7578a.html>.
- Paris, Jay. 2020. "Costly SoFi Stadium Gets A Financial Handout From NFL." *Forbes*. May 20, 2020. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jayparis/2020/05/20/costly-sofi-stadium-gets-a-financial-handout-from-nfl/>.
- Rocha, Claudio M., and Zixuan Xiao. 2022. "Sport Mega-Events and Displacement of Host Community Residents: A Systematic Review." *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living* 3 (January): 805567. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2021.805567>.

- Saccage 2024. 2022. "Notre lutte | Non au Saccage 2024 ! [Our battle | No to Saccage ('Looting', 'Sacking') 2024]." 2022. <https://saccage2024.noblogs.org/a-propos>.
- Sánchez, Fernanda, and Anne-Marie Broudehoux. 2013. "Mega-Events and Urban Regeneration in Rio de Janeiro: Planning in a State of Emergency." *International Journal of Urban Sustainable Development* 5 (2): 132–53. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19463138.2013.839450>.
- Sheets, Connor, and Andrew J Campa. 2022. "L.A. Gives the Super Bowl, 2028 Olympics High Marks but Questions Economic Benefits." *Los Angeles Times*. February 10, 2022. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-02-10/angelenos-give-the-2028-olympics-high-marks-sofi-stadium-not-so-much>.
- Silvestre, Gabriel. 2017. "Rio de Janeiro 2016." In *Olympic Cities: City Agendas, Planning and the World's Games, 1896-2020*, edited by John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold, Third edition, 400–423. Planning, History and Environment Series. London ; New York, NY: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Silvestre, Gabriel, and Nelma Gusmão de Oliveira. 2012. "The Revanchist Logic of Mega-Events: Community Displacement in Rio de Janeiro's West End." *Visual Studies* 27 (2): 204–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1472586X.2012.677506>.
- Smith, Andrew. 2017. "Urban Regeneration." In *Olympic Cities: City Agendas, Planning, and the World's Games, 1896 – 2020*, edited by John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold, 3rd edition, 217–29. London ; New York: Routledge.
- Snaije, Lucas. 2022. "The 'Olympic Legacy' in Cities and the Right of Parisians to Irreverence." *The Urban Activist*. August 23, 2022. <https://theurbanactivist.com/idea/the-olympic-legacy-in-cities-and-the-right-of-parisians-to-irreverence/>.
- Togoh, Isabel. 2020. "LA Rams' New \$5 Billion Stadium Triggers Complaints Of Gentrification In Inglewood." *Forbes*. July 30, 2020. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/isabeltogoh/2020/07/30/sofi-stadiums-developers-accused-of-gentrification-through-5-billion-inglewood-sports-venue/>.
- Trendafilova, Sylvia, Walker J. Ross, Stavros Triantafyllidis, and Jamee Pelcher. 2022. "Tokyo 2020 Olympics Sustainability: An Elusive Concept or Reality?" *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, July, 10126902221110156. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10126902221110157>.
- United States Census Bureau. 2022. "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Inglewood City, California; California." 2022. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/losangelescountycalifornia,inglewoodcitycalifornia,CA/PST045221>.
- Vanwynsberghe, Robert. 2015. "The Olympic Games Impact (OGI) Study for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games: Strategies for Evaluating Sport Mega-Events' Contribution to Sustainability." *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* 7 (1): 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2013.852124>.
- Vuillez, William. 2022. "JO 2024 : athlètes, budget, billets... 5 chiffres impressionnants [2024 Olympic Games: Athletes, budget, tickets... 5 impressive figures]." *www.rtl.fr*. July 26, 2022. <https://www.rtl.fr/sport/autres-sports/jo-2024-athletes-budget-billets-5-chiffres-impressionnants-7900173335>.
- Wagoner, Nick. 2014. "Rams Owner Kroenke Buys 60 Acres in L.A." *ESPN.Com*. January 31, 2014. https://www.espn.com/nfl/story/_/id/10380150/st-louis-rams-owner-stan-kroenke-buys-60-acres-land-los-angeles.

- Watt, Paul. 2013. "It's Not for Us." *City* 17 (1): 99–118.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2012.754190>.
- Wharton, David, and Dakota Smith. 2021. "2028 L.A. Olympics: Agreement Outlines Key Issues but Final Price Tag Remains Unclear." *Los Angeles Times*. November 17, 2021.
<https://www.latimes.com/sports/olympics/story/2021-11-17/la-2028-olympics-contract>.
- Wolfe, Sven Daniel. 2020. "A New Road and Rail Link from the Mountains to the Coast: The Mixed Legacy of Sochi's Most Expensive Project." In *Mega-Events: Placemaking, Regeneration and City-Regional Development*, edited by Evans, Graeme, 106–23. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge.
- Wolfe, Sven Daniel. "Building a Better Host City? Reforming and Contesting the Olympics in Paris 2024." *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 41, no. 2 (March 1, 2023): 257–73. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23996544221129409>.