



**MEGA EVENT PLANNING**

SERIES EDITORS: STEFANO DI VITA · JOHN LAUERMANN

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# Planning the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games

*Edited by*

Marie Delaplace · Pierre-Olaf Schut

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# Mega Event Planning

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The Mega Event Planning Pivot series provides a global and cross-disciplinary view into the planning for the world's largest sporting, religious, cultural, and other transformative mega events. Examples include the Olympic Games, Soccer World Cups, Rugby championships, the Commonwealth Games, the Hajj, the World Youth Day, World Expositions, and parades. This series critically discusses, analyzes, and challenges the planning for these events in light of their legacies including the built environment, political structures, socio-economic systems, societal values, personal attitudes, and cultures.

Marie Delaplace • Pierre-Olaf Schut  
Editors

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ISSN 2633-5859

ISSN 2633-5867 (electronic)

Mega Event Planning

ISBN 978-981-97-3724-6

ISBN 978-981-97-3725-3 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-3725-3>

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The registered company address is: 152 Beach Road, #21-01/04 Gateway East, Singapore 189721, Singapore

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# Introduction

*Marie Delaplace and Pierre-Olaf Schut*

In their seminal work on Olympic cities, Gold and Gold (2011) identify eight stages in the development of the relationship between the city and the Games. While we cannot go into detail in this book, we must note that the relationship between the city and the Games has changed even though there are some similar characteristics and constraints for the planning of the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

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The authors would like to thank the LabEX “Urban Future” and the I-Site “Future” at the Gustave Eiffel University for funding many of these researches on Olympic Games.

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Singapore Pte Ltd. 2024

M. Delaplace, P.-O. Schut (eds.), *Planning the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games*, Mega Event Planning,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-3725-3\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-3725-3_1)



## PLANNING A MEGA-EVENT: MAIN CHARACTERISTICS

First, the Summer Olympic Games are the only sporting mega-events because their organisation exceeds all the indicators he has established: spectator appeal (>3 million tickets sold), media coverage (TV rights > USD 2 billion), costs (> USD 10 billion) and transformative capacity (capital investment > USD 10 billion) (Müller, 2015). Hosting the Games is a huge challenge and places a great deal of pressure on the organisers at various levels:

- It is a long-term project (around 10 years from the start of the bid to the staging of the event. Chappelet (2019) distinguishes the Bidding Phase (~ 3 years), the Planning Phase (~ 7 years), the Olympic and Paralympic Games themselves (~ 2 months) and the Closing Phase (~ 2 years). This long time exposes the hosts to major unforeseeable events (COVID-19 pandemic, political conflicts, accelerating inflation).
- It is a complex project requiring effective governance, despite the large number of stakeholders involved at different scales (IOC, the Organising Committee, the local authorities in the host territories), and in the case of Paris 2024 with very different characteristics (cf. also Chappelet, 2021)
- It is very much a multi-scalar project that has to reconcile local consultations on construction with the international geopolitical stakes involved in hosting the various nations.
- And it is a high-stakes project, both financially and politically, since the national government involved is making a financial commitment that is not always legitimate in the eyes of taxpayers, and is followed with great attention by the media. In the current context, there is an additional major concern in terms of security due to the previous acts of terrorism in France.

The planning of the Olympic and Paralympic Games is therefore a model of its kind, as the event cannot be delayed and must be held on schedule.

Second, Olympic project is often the subject of extreme tensions that can completely change the way it is perceived. The 2008 Games in Beijing have been considered as “a new yardstick for the Olympic movement; leaving behind a hard legacy of magnificent facilities and memories of spectacular ceremonies that might never be equalled” (Gold & Gold,

2011). But, at the same time, they have also been characterized as the Games of exclusion and displacement.

The 2016 Games in Rio were enthusiastically welcomed by Brazilians, who had enjoyed sustained economic growth in the period 2003–2013. The economic crisis that hit the country in 2014 and led to a 3.6% recession in 2016 exposed the Olympic project to the anger of a population that does not understand the sense of extraordinary spending when some can no longer meet their needs.

The popular celebration in Tokyo was also compromised. After being postponed for a year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Games were finally held in the Japanese capital behind closed doors.

Third, over time, the Games have acquired a transformative dimension that goes beyond sporting competition alone. It is often considered as a catalyst for initiation of major infrastructural works. It involves both urban and social transformation, through the deployment of the Olympic doctrine for educational purposes. There are therefore three concurrent dimensions: (1) the transformation of the territory, notably through the material legacy of the buildings and facilities but also, sometimes through an intangible legacy in terms of image of the host territories (2) the organisation of the Games themselves (3). educational and social policies in the broadest sense. That's why, even though the London Games date back to 2012, French organizers very often turn to their neighbours across the Channel, as the English and French context and stakes are similar in many ways. The successes of the London Games must be repeated in Paris (national pride, urban regeneration) and the pitfalls avoided (gentrification, short-term legacies).

Of course, each edition is also an opportunity to develop the Olympic model and make the host country shine.

## PLANNING THE PARIS 2024 OLYMPIC GAMES: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Paris 2024 aimed to “establish a new model for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, pledging to deliver an ambitious, spectacular, universal event that is more responsible, more sustainable, more united and more inclusive.” (Website of Paris 2024).

The inclusiveness is also a spatial one, with competitions not only in Paris but also in Ile-de-France region, in France and overseas (Fig. 1.1).