

Sport and economic regeneration: a winning combination?

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been a favourable shift in UK urban policy towards the use of sport as a tool for regenerating declining areas. Sporting infrastructure has been constructed in various British cities with a view to addressing the dual aims of sporting need and urban regeneration. However, evidence to support the notion that sport can underpin regeneration goals is highly variable. This paper will explore the growth of sport-related regeneration in the UK and examine the evidence base for this. In particular, it will focus on the economic literature and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of emerging evidence. It will suggest that with investment in sport likely to increase as a consequence of the 2012 Olympic Games, there is a need to develop a greater understanding of the role of sport in the regeneration process, to maximise the potential benefits and to justify public expenditure on sport in the future.

Sport and economic regeneration: A winning combination?

Larissa E. Davies

Introduction

The use of sport as a tool for regenerating British cities has become increasingly widespread in recent years. Initially used in Sheffield in the early 1990s (World Student Games, 1991), the use of sporting strategies for urban regeneration has grown in popularity throughout the UK, with Manchester (Commonwealth Games, 2002) and London (Olympic Games, 2012) being more recent high profile examples of cities adopting such strategies. Over this period, it has become increasingly recognised by policy makers that sport can be used to address a wide range of issues relating to urban policy and specifically urban regeneration, including economic development, neighbourhood renewal and social cohesion.

Sport has been a feature of British cities for a significant period of time. Historically urban areas have provided opportunities for participation in a wide range of sporting activities and served as hosts to sporting events of varying magnitudes. Nevertheless, over the last two decades there has been a shifting emphasis in investment, from investment in sport for sports sake, to investment in sport for good.¹ The use of sport to address regeneration objectives has largely stemmed from the belief of government and other sporting and non-sporting organisations, that it can confer a wide range of economic and social benefits to individuals and communities beyond those of a purely physical

sporting nature, and can contribute positively to the revitalisation of declining urban areas.² Indeed, much of the increased investment in sport that has been seen from the Lottery and other sources has been advocated on this basis. However, despite the growth of regeneration through sport in British cities, evidence to support the notion that sport can generate benefits in areas and neighbourhoods that have been subject to urban decline is limited, and although anecdotal support for regeneration through sport is growing, there remains a need for further robust evidence to support claims of regeneration made by city authorities and sporting organisations, especially those involved in bidding for public funding for sport-related infrastructure and associated initiatives.

This paper will review the evidence for sport and regeneration, focusing primarily on the UK-based literature. It is beyond the scope of the paper to comprehensively review all dimensions of sport and regeneration; therefore it will primarily consider the economic literature, with a view to establishing the current baseline level of knowledge and understanding in this area. The paper will firstly explore the growth of sport-related regeneration in the UK by examining the different models of regeneration through sport that are emerging in British cities and by outlining the policy context of this growth. It will then go on to examine the strengths and weaknesses of emerging economic themes of evidence and discuss the relevance of the research to policy makers concerned with sport-related regeneration. Finally, it will conclude by suggesting the need to move towards evidence-based decision making and propose an agenda of research

priorities that need to be addressed. It will argue that with investment in sport-related initiatives likely to increase significantly in the period leading up to the London 2012 Olympic Games and beyond, there is a need to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the role of sport in the regeneration process to maximise the potential benefits offered by sport-related developments and to justify and sustain public expenditure on sport in the future.

Sport-related regeneration in the UK

Defining 'sport-related' regeneration

'Sports-led regeneration', 'sports regeneration' and 'sport and regeneration' are terms that are becoming more widely used in both academic literature and policy-related documentation. However, these terms are used very broadly to cover a wide range of activities. Prior to exploring the growth of sport-related regeneration in the UK, it is therefore necessary to establish a working definition of this term.

To understand sport-related regeneration, it is firstly essential to consider the meaning of regeneration, which itself is contested. Percy argues that:

Traditionally, it has been thought of mainly in economic and environmental terms, but recently more emphasis has been placed on the social and community aspects of regeneration.³

A holistic and all encompassing definition is provided by Roberts, who defines urban regeneration as:

...comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject to change.⁴

It therefore follows that sport-related regeneration refers to the way that sport can be used to revitalise an area economically, socially, environmentally and physically, with sport being taken from The European Sports Charter⁵ as:

...all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels.⁶

This broad definition, which is also acknowledged by Sport England, thus extends far beyond traditional team games to incorporate individual sports and fitness-related activities including walking, cycling, dance activities and aerobics. Furthermore, it extends from casual and informal participation through to serious organised club sport and elite level activity.⁷

A comprehensive definition of sport-related regeneration should encompass both the immediate short term impacts generated from sport-related activities, together with the lasting medium and longer term legacy impacts on the surrounding environment.

Models of sport-related regeneration

While the use of sport as a catalyst for the regeneration of British cities has grown in recent years, as with culture-related regeneration, this has taken many forms. Sport has developed from being a dimension of cultural and other regeneration programmes, to being a catalyst for regeneration in its own right. Using the work of Evans,⁸ it is possible to identify three broad models through which sport has been incorporated into the regeneration process in the UK over the last two decades. The models are summarised in Figure 1.

(Figure 1)

In the first model, *Sports-Led Regeneration*, the sports activity (e.g. an event) or development (e.g. a sports stadium) is seen as the catalyst or key player within the process of urban regeneration. It may take the form of a flagship project or development and is likely to have a high profile. These developments or activities tend to be unique, distinctive and raise awareness or excitement in regeneration schemes as a whole. Wembley Stadium is an example of this type of development. It is a flagship iconic development for London and the stadium is being used as a catalyst for the regeneration of the surrounding area and the Borough of Brent. Similarly, the 2012 Olympic Games is an example of a sporting event being used as a flagship project to drive the redevelopment of East London. In both examples, sport is cited as the symbol of regeneration and used to propel real estate and other developments.

In the second model, *Sports Regeneration*, the sports activity or development is integrated more fully into an area-based strategy alongside other activities. In this model, the activity or development is likely to be integrated into mainstream policy and planning at an early stage. An example of this model would be the redevelopment of East Manchester through the 2002 Commonwealth Games. In East Manchester, sport has very much been a key aspect of the area-based initiatives and used to link together various regeneration initiatives in the east of the city.

Finally the third model, *Sport and Regeneration*, is probably the most common type of regeneration through sport in the UK, and is defined by Evans⁹ as the 'model by default'. In this sporting model, activities and developments are not fully integrated into the strategic development of an area. Rather, interventions are often small and in many cases with no planned provision. Such interventions are often added as a component of a regeneration strategy at a later stage and may not form a particularly large part of the mainstream regeneration strategy. Nevertheless, these activities and developments can often enhance existing or planned services and facilities. Examples of this model are numerous and include smaller scale community sports facilities and activity programmes, for example as illustrated by the activities of the Beacon Councils or Sport Action Zones.¹⁰

The models outlined above are quite generalised, and are intended to give a sense of order to the different levels of sporting involvement in regeneration schemes rather than rigid categorisation. However, as Evans¹¹ notes with regard to culture, the models of sport-related regeneration are not necessarily mutually exclusive, especially over time.

The policy context

The transition of sport from primarily being a physical activity, to playing an increasing role in society, has seen its emergence within a number of public policy agendas in the UK. The following discussion will briefly outline how sport has become a growing part of modern urban policy initiatives but also how sport policy has developed to incorporate regeneration issues within its agenda.

The health benefits of sport to society have been acknowledged for many years.¹² However, the notion that sport and leisure may be contributors to the process of urban regeneration more generally only began to emerge in the early 1980s. One of the earliest examples of urban funds being used to support sporting initiatives was The Urban Programme, which was initially launched by the Home Office in 1968 and later transferred together with responsibility for urban policy, to the Department for the Environment. Although in the 1980s, sport in society was still very much regarded as part of the product of affluence, rather than its producer, by 1986/7, The Urban Programme was providing

significant funds to sporting projects, contributing £33.7 million to some 1200 separate projects.¹³

Since the 1980s, there has been a growing recognition that sport can contribute to the urban policy agenda and funds have been leveraged from a range of more recent initiatives including the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), which was a major form of support for regeneration in the UK until 2000; the New Deal for Communities (NDC), which is currently a key programme in the governments strategy to tackle multiple deprivation in the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF), made available to the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country to improve services.

In parallel to the growing use of sport in urban policy, there has been a re-orientation of sports policy to address the broader issues of urban regeneration. Traditionally concerned with the issues of raising sports performance and increasing participation, sports policy under the New Labour government in the UK since 1997 has become increasingly concerned with the wider economic, social and physical impacts of sport on society.¹⁴ There has been a greater emphasis placed on developing a strategic agenda for sport, with national policy documents relating to the delivery of sport, such as Game Plan¹⁵ and the Framework for Sport in England¹⁶ highlighting the potential benefits of sport to

various public policy agendas including health, crime prevention, education, neighbourhood renewal and social inclusion.

As a consequence of growing synergies between urban policy and sports policy, there are emerging examples of government and sporting agencies working together on a growing number of sport-related regeneration initiatives in the UK. For example, Sport England has set up a Strategic Alliance Team to work with various government departments on a number of urban-related initiatives, with representatives currently working with the Community Cohesion Unit (Home Office), the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (Department for Communities and Local Government), the Department for Health and the Department for Education and Schools to promote and deliver the wider benefits of sport.¹⁷

Monitoring and evaluating sport-related regeneration

With increasing public and private investment in sport, together with a growth in the use of sport across various policy agendas, there is a greater than ever need to measure and evaluate the benefits of sport. Sport England argues that:

The benefits sport brings to individuals and communities may be obvious to many. In the competition for scarce resources, however, sport must face up to the challenge of justifying in more tangible ways why public money should be invested in it.¹⁸

At present, the evidence base for sport-related regeneration is highly variable. For example, the Sport England Value of Sport Monitor,¹⁹ suggests that the strongest evidence regarding social issues is in relation to health outcomes, with evidence in other areas of social policy such as crime reduction, drug use and education, less convincing.²⁰ This variability is commented upon by others in relation to economic objectives.²¹ As noted earlier, it is beyond the scope of a single article to comprehensively examine evidence across the broad spectrum of regeneration, therefore the discussion will focus on the economic literature. Within this section, the paper will examine the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence base, together with the main methodological issues and problems of monitoring and evaluating the contribution of sport to economic regeneration. It will also consider the relevance of the evidence base to policy makers.

Evaluating the economic contribution of sport to regeneration

Evidence on the economic contribution of sport to regeneration is wide-ranging and published in a variety of forms, including peer-reviewed journals, government reports and sponsored impact evaluations. It includes examples of both macro and micro economic studies. Nevertheless, despite the growing emphasis on sport to deliver economic returns, the evidence base remains fragmented, with limited cohesion between the various research themes. In recent years there have been attempts by Sport England and UK Sport to provide some strategic direction to the research through the commissioning of various studies yet the

evidence available to policy makers, particularly at the local level remains somewhat variable.

Within the UK literature, there are two key themes of research evidence emerging. Firstly, macro-economic impact studies of sport and the economy, focusing on the contribution of sport to output and employment and secondly, economic impact studies of major events. A further theme, which has received less attention in the UK but is evident from the US literature, is around professional teams and sports stadia. Each of these themes will now be examined in detail.

Sport and the economy

Until the early 1980s, very little work was published on the economic impact and importance of the sports industry in the UK or elsewhere, despite its increasing prominence in the international economy as a large growth area for output and employment.²² However, since this time, a significant body of literature has emerged in the area. In the UK, the research is largely based on using macro-economic analysis to measure the importance of sport and sport-related expenditure at the national and regional level, with the Henley Centre for Forecasting, Cambridge Econometrics and the Sport Industries Research Centre (formerly the Leisure Industries Research Centre) leading the research in the area.

The earliest macro-economic study of sport in the UK was undertaken in the mid-1980s²³ and it formed part of a European report on the impact of sport in various member states.²⁴ The principal aim of this study was to provide a snapshot of the role of sport in the economy and thereby to raise general awareness of that role. A subsequent number of similar studies have since been commissioned by various organisations as illustrated in Table 1. The majority of these studies have been carried out at the national or regional level and have used the National Income Accounting Framework to estimate consumer expenditure on sport, (gross) value-added by sport and sport-related employment.

(Table 1)

The UK studies throughout the 1990s were relatively successful in raising the profile of sport as an industrial sector within the academic environment, although their policy relevance remained limited due to the irregular and snapshot nature of the estimates produced. With an increasing need to justify spending on sport, since 2000, macro-economic impact studies have been commissioned on an increasingly regular basis, reflecting the strategic decision by sporting bodies such as Sport England and other Sports Councils in the UK, to build an evidence base around the economic importance of sport. Moreover, as a consequence of various factors, including the movement towards greater regional determination of policy in the 1990s, there has also been an enhanced

focus on the (English) regions, with additional studies being commissioned on a regular basis at this spatial level. As a result of these developments, there is now a growing evidence base for the contribution of sport to the UK, home countries and regional level in England, allowing policy makers to identify a much fuller and clearer picture of the parts of the sports economy generating wealth and employment over a longer period of time.

While the generation of longitudinal data on the economic contribution of the sports economy is a positive development in the literature, there are ongoing issues relating to the quality of data used within these reports. At the national level, although much data is derived from published sources, there are some measures of sport-related economic activity that are not recorded and assumptions and estimates are inferred from the wider economic context.²⁵ Moreover, this is a greater issue for data reliability and validity at the regional level, where not only are the models essentially replicated and downsized from the national models without fully considering the changing nature and inter-related functions of the regional economy, but because fewer published statistics exist at this level, there is a greater need to extract the relative statistics from the UK figures using regional proportions and further assumptions, which are sometimes but not always based on credible evidence.

Since the 1980s, there have undoubtedly been improvements in the quality, consistency and transparency of data used to produce the estimates of

sport in the economy. As studies have developed, there has been greater use of reliable published data sources and estimates have been adjusted where it has become apparent that data was previously incorrectly approximated, for example in relation to the overvaluing of consumer spending on sports gambling.²⁶ Furthermore in the latest series of studies, for the first time there are attempts to use sources such as the Annual Business Inquiry (ABI) to provide a measure of validity, independent of the methodology employed in the reports themselves.²⁷ However, there are some outstanding issues relating to the reliability and validity of data in the models that remain unresolved. For example Davies²⁸ notes how the voluntary sector is the weakest part of macro-economic impact assessments. Data for the voluntary sector is simply not available in published form, therefore all of the pre-1995 studies, with the exception of the first UK study, carried out primary data collection in the form of bespoke questionnaires. The results of which have been highly variable in terms of sampling, response rates and aggregation. Nevertheless, more recent studies have done little to address the issue of data reliability and validity in the voluntary sector and have not modified or challenged the assumptions made in previous work:

No data exist to adequately describe the Voluntary sector; for this reason we use relationships that arise from previous studies and surveys to relate the Voluntary sector to the sport economy²⁹.

However, one of the greatest limitations of the literature on sport and the economy is not regarding the research that has been carried out at the national and regional level but relating to the lack of research at the sub-regional and local level. Several studies have been carried out at this scale³⁰ but they tend to

be one-off snapshot studies undertaken to identify the size of the sports industry at a specific point in time and as such provide only limited baseline information. Furthermore, there is a lack of research relating to the economic importance of sport in urban areas, which is where much sport-related expenditure for regeneration purposes is invested. A major obstacle facing studies at this level, and a possible explanation for the limited research undertaken, is the lack of published data available. Nevertheless, it is at the local level that policy makers require information to implement urban regeneration policies. Thus a lack of information on sport and the economy at this level is a severe limitation of the evidence base for policy makers and a research priority that needs to be addressed in the near future.

Sports events

Research on the economic importance of sporting events remains the most systematically researched area of the three themes identified. Such has been the development of literature in this area that there is now a strong and growing evidence base for the impact of major events within the UK and elsewhere in the world. Unlike the literature on sport and the economy, the event literature is largely at the local level.

The literature on major events similarly developed from the mid-1980s onwards. Gratton *et al*³¹ provide a useful overview of this development, noting that one of the earliest studies undertaken was on the Adelaide Formula 1 Grand

Prix.³² Since this time, a plethora of *ex-ante* and *ex-post* impact studies have been undertaken on a wide range of major events throughout the world from those staged as part of annual professional team competition to less regular European and World championships. These studies have been undertaken by a wide range of individuals and organisations, including academics but also consultancy firms and event organisers. Although much of the literature on major events is concerned with analysing the economic impacts, it also covers a wide range of broader issues including sports participation and development, social impact, legacies, tourism and urban regeneration.³³

Multiplier Analysis has been widely used as a method for evaluating the overall economic impact of sporting events. It has also been used for assessing the impact of other leisure industries such as the arts and tourism. Multiplier Analysis is used to calculate the direct (initial) impact of additional money spent by visitors in an area, together with the indirect and the induced impacts (subsequent rounds of related spending after leakages) that the additional expenditure generates. There are various types of multiplier in common use including employment, income, output and sales or transactions multipliers.³⁴ Multiplier Analysis is a credible method for analysing economic impact at the regional and local level. However, its application in sport has been widely criticised. UK Sport³⁵ argue that rarely is the information required available to carry out a comprehensive evaluation and to acquire this information is often costly and complex, with the result that multipliers are regularly borrowed from

other sectors of the economy or other studies leading to inaccurate estimates. Crompton³⁶ summarises eleven major contributors to the inaccuracies commonly cited including: using sales instead of income multipliers; misrepresenting employment multipliers; failing to define the impacted area; including local spectators; omitting opportunity costs and claiming total instead of marginal economic benefits. Nevertheless, despite these inaccuracies he argues that if implemented knowledgeably and with integrity Multiplier Analysis does have value. However, therein lies the problem; economic impact studies are often not impartial or objective. Frequently the motives of those commissioning studies leads to the generation of economic impact numbers that are supportive of their position,³⁷ particularly *ex-ante* economic impact assessments, which forecast rather than retrospectively analyse the impact of the event.³⁸

UK Sport is the organisation responsible for coordinating and supporting the UK's efforts to bid for and stage major sporting events. Since 1997, it has played a key role in the development of research relating to the economic impact of major events in the UK, commissioning several reports to understand the impacts generated by sporting events and to provide an appraisal of lottery funding investment.³⁹ The methodology adopted in the UK Sport research, attempts to establish economic impact by calculating only the total amount of additional expenditure generated within a host city or area, which is directly attributable to the staging of a particular event, rather than the more conventional Multiplier Analysis approach used in many studies and discussed above, which

attempts to measure direct, indirect and induced impacts. While conventional Multiplier Analysis is arguably a more comprehensive measure of economic impact, by only measuring the first round of spending, the UK Sport research avoids the complex and often inaccurate calculation of the multiplier discussed above, together with some of the inaccuracies identified by Crompton.⁴⁰ Furthermore, it avoids the exaggeration of any errors in the direct effect that are often compounded when estimating the indirect and induced effects,⁴¹ while at the same time providing a consistent and relatively simple methodology for estimating and comparing the economic impact of a sporting event, albeit a conservative one.

While the economic literature on events has become more comprehensive in recent years, with it now covering a fairly wide range of events, the evidence relates largely to the short term immediate impacts. There remains a lack of evidence on the longer term impacts that events can potentially deliver, despite the fact that hosting an event is often justified on the legacy benefits generated. This is an issue that has been raised previously in the literature,⁴² but has so far not been addressed. Even within the broader Olympic research, although there is extensive discussion of regeneration legacy benefits, to date there has never been any longitudinal economic impact study of a Games undertaken. While the International Olympic Committee are attempting to address this by means of the Olympic Games Global Impact (OGGI) study, which was launched in 2000 in an attempt to measure the global impact of the Games, create a comparable

benchmark across all future Games, and to help bidding cities and future organisers identify potential legacies⁴³ there are doubts over whether methodologically this is sound.⁴⁴ Moreover, whether it will actually produce evidence of regeneration legacies is debateable as despite each study spanning a period of 11 years, from the bidding process through to post-games evaluation, it will still end two years after the Games are held, thus failing to capture any longer term impacts. In summary then, while the literature on the short term economic impacts of events has become more comprehensive and there is an increased awareness of the limitations of these studies, the evidence for the wider and longer term economic impacts of events remains less convincing.

Professional sports teams and stadia

The third and final area of literature linked to the economic regeneration agenda is the body of literature relating to professional sports teams and stadia. The use of sports stadia for the purpose of regeneration is a fairly recent phenomenon in the UK, and as such the scope and breadth of literature in this field is relatively limited. In contrast, sports stadia have been used in tackling urban decline in US cities for many years, therefore much of the evidence for stadia and economic development is based on this experience.

In terms of the North American literature, a detailed and comprehensive economic analysis of sports stadia and professional sports teams has been developed.⁴⁵ Within the vast literature on professional sports in North America,

although there remains considerable debate between proponents and critics, there exists a considerable body of work on the economic benefits of major and minor league sports to communities⁴⁶ and the relative merits of public development and subsidisation of sports stadia.⁴⁷

While the North American literature provides an interesting context for discussions of sports stadia, professional teams and regeneration in the UK, there are fundamental differences underpinning the funding and development of stadia in the UK and North America, which limits the use of the evidence by UK policy makers. In the UK, there are essentially two types of stadia developments. Those primarily seen as serving a 'national need', often built to host major flagship events,⁴⁸ and the second more common type are those built for professional sports teams (mainly football). Thornley⁴⁹ observes how in the US, cities compete with each other for inward investment and the sports industry. Local states develop stadia to attract professional sports teams and franchises from other cities, and devote considerable public funds from local taxpayers' money to these projects. However, in the UK this process rarely occurs. Stadia developed for professional teams tend to be privately owned and operated and generally do not receive public funding. Moreover, cities do not have the power to determine the use of tax revenues or to propose local tax increases in order to subsidise stadium construction. Additionally, the geographical movement of teams is unlikely thus the need to retain or lure professional teams does not exist.⁵⁰ As a result, much of the literature relating to the threat of franchise flight

and the loss of perceived economic benefits associated with professional teams, together with the merits of subsidising stadia using public funding, is not of relevance to the UK, whose cities will retain their professional club regardless of whether a new stadium is developed. The US literature may have more relevance to the development of 'national stadia' in the UK, as these stadia tend to be funded by national public funding or public-private partnerships, but even then, the impacts are likely to be dependent upon the long term use of the venue, which may or may not include the tenancy of a professional team.

In terms of the UK evidence, little has been written or researched about the link between sports stadia, professional sports teams and urban regeneration. Unlike the previous research themes discussed, where there has been strategic direction from organisations such as UK Sport and various Sports Councils, there has been no such programme of research commissioned in this area. The evidence base for stadia and regeneration therefore comprises largely of one-off studies of a relatively small scale. These have also tended to focus on 'national' stadia rather than those constructed for professional teams. For example, Jones⁵¹ has examined evidence concerning the impacts of stadia on economic and urban development, primarily using the Millennium Stadium as a case study, and while these papers provide informative accounts of the Cardiff case study and issues arising from the development, they provide little in the way of quantifiable robust evidence that can be used by policy makers in other cities. Similarly, Davies⁵² has provided an account of the impacts of stadia development

on property, nevertheless concludes that before the findings can be utilised by policy makers, there is a need for further investigation to build an evidence base for the arguments presented, which are largely based on small scale exploratory research.

A likely explanation for this theme of research having received little attention in the literature is because as noted previously, stadia built for professional teams in the UK are generally constructed for and operated by the private sector. Although new stadia comply with the planning process, they are rarely integrated fully into the strategic regeneration and development of an area, therefore any regeneration tends to be *ad hoc*. However, even national stadia with considerable public subsidy have only been subject to minimal investigation, with limited analysis of how they contribute to the regeneration process. Clearly if stadia and other major infrastructure developments for sport are to be justified on the basis of the wider regeneration they bring to an area, there is a need to address this omission in the literature.

Utilising the evidence base for policy making in sport

There is certainly more information available currently for policy makers about sport and economic regeneration, than there was when Policy Action Team 10 was established in 1998, to look at the contribution sport and the arts could potentially make towards neighbourhood renewal.⁵³ There is now growing evidence of the regional and national importance of sport to the overall economy

and fairly comprehensive information available for policy makers on the short term economic impacts of sports events and how to measure them. However, it is clear from the preceding discussion that omissions and key weaknesses in the evidence base exist. There are still aspects of sport-related regeneration that have received little attention, and whether current research provides urban policy makers with the relevant evidence they require to justify sport-related initiatives from an economic regeneration perspective is debatable.

While there is increasing evidence of the direct and more observable economic impacts generated by sport-related investment, there is less comprehensive information about the broader economic regeneration issues across the three themes identified. As suggested in Figure 2, the current evidence base tends to focus on the narrower, more discernible economic ‘impacts’ of sport such as employment, wealth creation and tourism, but it is far less comprehensive in its consideration of broader economic ‘regeneration’ issues such as how investment in the sports industry impacts on business development and inward investment, job quality, workforce development, innovation and knowledge. Each of these wider economic issues are of considerable importance to urban policy makers yet are seldom evidenced in the sport-related research. In essence, the broad foundation of the pyramid outlined in Figure 2, is missing.

(Figure 2)

In part, the deficit of evidence relating to the aforementioned economic issues can be explained by the lack of in-depth research undertaken at the local level. As a consequence of limited published data at this scale, it is difficult methodologically to carry out both macro-economic and detailed micro-economic impact studies without the collection of extensive primary data, which is both time consuming and expensive, but also difficult to repeat with reliability. Nevertheless, it is at the local level that the detailed economic issues such as those outlined in the base of the pyramid need to be investigated. Therefore this methodological issue must be addressed if the evidence is to become more relevant to policy making.

There are other empirical reasons why the evidence base does not necessarily produce the information required by policy makers. Measuring the impact of investment in sport-related regeneration is not an easy task. As with culture-led regeneration, measuring the social, economic and environmental impacts attributed to an event or a development is problematic and fraught with methodological difficulty.⁵⁴ Isolating the impact of sport-related investments such as stadia, from other investment initiatives, is a key methodological issue that needs to be resolved. Furthermore, estimating the opportunity costs of sport-related developments and evaluating whether regeneration would have occurred irrespective of sport-related investment also presents methodological challenges for researchers and policy makers alike. The latter in particular is a key question

in relation to London 2012, given that the redevelopment of the Stratford area, where the Olympic Park will be situated, was already underway prior to the awarding of the 2012 Games to London in 2005. However, the methodological issues identified will again need to be tackled if the evidence base is to become more fully utilised by urban policy makers.

The evidence base for sport-related regeneration is undoubtedly growing; nevertheless there clearly remains gap between the information that currently exists and the information required by policy makers to justify sport-related investments. While some of the pragmatic and methodological reasons for this disparity have been suggested, the final section will now discuss how future research should be developed to address these and other issues raised within the paper.

Towards London 2012 and evidence-based decision making for sport-related regeneration

The London 2012 Olympic Games is the largest sport-related regeneration project the UK has ever seen. From the outset, a significant element of the London bid was based around the regeneration legacy that the Games would create for the Lower Lea Valley in East London:

By staging the Games in this part of the city, the most enduring legacy of the Olympics will be the regeneration of an entire community for the direct benefit of everyone who lives there.⁵⁵

Arguably, no previous Games have ever focused so heavily on regeneration. However, it is clear from the literature reviewed within this paper that the economic regeneration benefits claimed were not based on substantial and rigorous academic evidence. Nevertheless, the decision to host a major event without significant evidence to support the case is not a new phenomenon as Hall argued nearly twenty years ago:

Hallmark events are not the result of a rational decision-making process. Decisions affecting the hosting and the nature of hallmark events grow out of a political process.⁵⁶

While there is no doubt that the London Olympics will generate impacts for the economy of East London, whether these will be long lasting and benefit the local area and well being of local residents remains to be seen. Kasimati argues that:

Although economic analyses prepared on behalf of Olympic advocates have demonstrated economic advantages from hosting the Games, potential host communities pose the question of whether, in fact, the economic benefits of the Olympics are pragmatic...⁵⁷

He goes on to suggest that although all the *ex-ante* economic impact studies between 1984 and 2012 indicate the significant role of the Summer Olympic Games in the promotion of the host economy, he shows that *ex-ante* models and forecasts are seldom confirmed by *ex-post* analyses.⁵⁸ Horne similarly suggests:

The arguments for hosting sports-mega events are usually articulated in terms of sportive as well as economic and social benefits for the hosting nation...Yet research has pointed out significant gaps between forecast and actual outcomes, between economic and non-economic rewards, between the experience of mega-events in advanced and in developing societies...⁵⁹

Although the Olympic-related literature does emphasise the long term consequences for the host city,⁶⁰ as noted earlier, no comprehensive longitudinal post-event study has ever been undertaken on the economic regeneration impacts of the Olympic Games. Given these comments, the challenge for London 2012 will be how to deliver high impact sustainable regeneration to the local area and indeed how to evidence this to justify the £9.325 billion pounds being spent on delivering the Games.⁶¹

It is probably too late to provide an evidence-based resource for those policy makers involved in planning the regeneration strategy for London 2012. However, it is not too late to put in place an evaluative framework for future sport-related regeneration projects that are likely to be spurred as a result of the 2012 Olympic Games in the UK. Research around sport-related regeneration must now focus on evaluating current projects with a view to not only justifying public expenditure on sport, but more importantly, establishing a baseline of information for policy makers to use. This is fundamental for underpinning future policies and guiding future interventions in sport.

Consequently in terms of a research agenda for sport-related regeneration, a priority must be the robust testing of existing policy interventions, particularly at the local level. Projects utilising public funding, whether they are stadia or smaller community facilities or initiatives, must be subject to rigorous evaluation. In particular, there needs to be transparent evidence of what works

and what does not work, and perhaps more controversially, an appraisal of what provides value for money. Evaluation at the local level could take the form of macro-economic evaluations, although the issues of data availability are not easily addressed. Moreover, as discussed, macro-economic analysis does not provide information on the broader success of regeneration strategies and the level of detail required by policy makers. Evaluations at the local level therefore need to be designed to incorporate broader measures than just value-added and employment, and attempt to evaluate the tangible and intangible economic regeneration impacts, using both quantitative and qualitative measures. By evaluating local sport-related regeneration initiatives more comprehensively, knowledge and understanding of sport at the local level will be enhanced, which will address a fundamental weakness in the current evidence base.

As a further priority, there needs to be the generation of evidence relating to the medium and longer term impacts of sport, which at present is lacking. Macro-economic studies at the regional and national level are beginning to generate useful longitudinal data on sport and the economy and should continue, although there needs to be consideration of how broader measures of economic regeneration could be incorporated into these and how data reliability, particularly at the sub-national level could be improved. At the local level, research into the medium and longer term impact of events, beyond the duration of the event itself would be useful in helping policy makers identify and maximise the legacy

benefits of investment, as would the development of local case study policy evaluations that extend beyond the completion of a sporting development or sporting initiative.

Many parallels can be drawn between the development of culture-related regeneration ten years ago in the UK and sport-related regeneration today. The challenges facing culture-related regeneration to justify itself and provide more longitudinal research and an improved evidence base are now similarly presenting themselves to sport-related regeneration. Sport should look towards the example of culture to explore how it has tackled the challenge of providing evidence for policy makers and how it has resolved methodological issues around isolating and measuring the impact culture from other activities. Culture by no means has all the answers, but is significantly further developed in the evidence-based decision making process than sport.

The current evidence base for sport-related regeneration is not without merit. As discussed within the paper, there are elements of it that provide value. However, it remains relatively fragmented, with little synthesis between themes identified. Closer integration of the research themes in the future would strengthen the evidence base, for example synthesising the knowledge gained from event studies to enhance studies on sport and the economy. Fundamentally though as a priority, future research must be to address the needs of policy makers and facilitate a closer relationship between the evidence

base and policy making. As it stands, the evidence base for sport-related regeneration is in its infancy but if as suggested, more research is undertaken at the local level and evaluations are undertaken over a longer period of time, it may be possible to begin to build an evidence base around the different models of sport-related regeneration identified in Figure 1. This in turn would facilitate a greater understanding conceptually and empirically of how and why different sporting policy interventions impact on the regeneration process.

This paper has focused primarily on the economic aspects of sport-related regeneration and the recommendations for further research are largely targeted at improving the quality of data and information in this area. While this is clearly important for justifying investment in sport, there needs to be consideration of whether the improvement of data relating solely to economic regeneration will significantly enhance the decision making process for policy makers involved in sport and urban regeneration or whether there needs to be a more holistic approach to improving the evidence base. Maybe it is not possible or even desirable to separate out the economic impacts from the social and physical impacts, given regeneration as defined earlier in the paper is clearly a much broader phenomenon. Notwithstanding these comments, whether sport-related economic regeneration is researched alongside multiple regeneration outcomes or in isolation, if the UK government is serious about utilising sport as a tool for regeneration, then funding must be forthcoming to evaluate this. Politicians, senior administrators in sport and urban policy makers in the UK are often too

quick to support sport-related regeneration initiatives without fully understanding the consequences of investment and this is demonstrated nowhere more clearly than in relation to the decision to host the 2012 Olympic Games in London. However, the 2012 Games has provided London and the UK with a fantastic regeneration opportunity and the lessons learned from this and other sporting initiatives must be evidenced and utilised to maximise the potential benefits of future sport-related regeneration investments in the UK.

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Notes

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³Percy, *Planning Bulletin, Issue ten*.

⁴Roberts, *Evolution, Definition and Purpose of Urban Regeneration*, 17.

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⁶Council of Europe, *The European Sports Charter*.

⁷BURA, *Best Practice in Sport and Regeneration*.

⁸Evans, *Measure for Measure*.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Percy, *Planning Bulletin, Issue ten*.

¹¹Evans, *Measure for Measure*.

¹²Sport England, *Driving Up Participation*.

¹³Department of the Environment, *Developing Sport and Leisure*.

¹⁴E.g. DCMS, *Policy Action Team 10*.

¹⁵DCMS/Strategy Unit, *Game Plan*.

¹⁶Sport England, *Framework for Sport in England*.

¹⁷Sport England, *News and Media*.

¹⁸Sport England, *The Value of Sport*.

¹⁹*Ibid.* The Value of Sport is an online monitoring service set up by Sport England detailing research evidence on the contribution of sport to a range of broader social issues.

²⁰Sport England, *The Value of Sport*.

²¹Davies, *Sport in the City; Sporting a New Role*; Gratton et al, *Sport and Economic Regeneration in Cities*.

²²Collins, *Economics of Sport*.

²³Henley Centre for Forecasting, *Economic Impact of Sport in the UK - 1985*.

²⁴Jones, *Economic Impact and Importance of Sport: European Study*.

²⁵SIRC, *Economic Importance of Sport in England, 1985-2005*.

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²⁷SIRC, 2007j-s.

²⁸Davies, *Valuing the Voluntary Sector*.

²⁹SIRC, *Economic Importance of Sport in England, 1985-2005*, 44.

³⁰E.g. Davies, *Sport in the City*; Gratton et al, *Sport Industry in South Yorkshire*; Henley Centre for Forecasting, *Economic Impact of Sport in Two Local Areas*; SIRC, *Sport Economy in Rural Cornwall*.

³¹Gratton et al, *Sport and Economic Regeneration in Cities*.

³²Burns et al, *Adelaide Grand Prix*.

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- ³³E.g. Brown and Massey, *Literature Review*; Carlsen and Taylor, *Mega Events and Urban Renewal*; Smith, *After the Circus Leaves Town*; Smith and Fox, *'Event-led' to 'Event-themed' Regeneration*; Waitt, *Social Impacts of Sydney Olympics*.
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- ³⁵UK Sport, *Measuring Success 3*.
- ³⁶Crompton, *Economic Impact Analysis of Sports Facilities and Events*.
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- ³⁸Kasimati, *Economic Aspects and the Summer Olympics*.
- ³⁹UK Sport, *Measuring Success*; *Measuring Success 2* *Measuring Success 3*.
- ⁴⁰Crompton, *Economic Impact Analysis of Sports Facilities and Events*.
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- ⁴⁷Baade, *Evaluating Subsidies for Professional Sports*; Baade and Dye, *Analysis of the Economic Rationale for Public Subsidization of Sports Stadiums*; *Sports Stadiums and Area Development*; *Impacts of Stadiums and Professional Sports*; Chema, *When Professional Sports Justify the Subsidy*; Coates, *Stadiums and Arenas*; Crompton, *Public Subsidies to Professional Team Sport Facilities*; Rosentraub, *Does the Emperor Have New Clothes?*; *Major League Losers*; Shropshire, *The Sports Franchise Game*; Swindell and Rosentraub, *Who Benefits from the Presence of Professional Sports Teams?*.
- ⁴⁸Jones, *Public Cost for Private Gain?*.
- ⁴⁹Thornley, *Guest Editorial*.
- ⁵⁰Jones, *Public Cost for Private Gain?*.
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- ⁵²Davies, *Not in my Back Yard!*; *Sporting a New Role?*; *Sport and the Local Economy*.
- ⁵³DCMS, *Policy Action Team 10*.

⁵⁴Evans, *Measure for Measure*.

⁵⁵London2012, *Candidate File*, 19.

⁵⁶Hall, *The Politics of Hallmark Events*, 219.

⁵⁷Kasimati, *Economic Aspects and the Summer Olympics*, 433.

⁵⁸Kasimati, *Economic Aspects and the Summer Olympics*.

⁵⁹Horne, *The Four 'Knowns' of Sports Mega-Events*, 85.

⁶⁰Essex and Chalkley, *Urban Development through Hosting International Events*; French and Disher, *Atlanta and the Olympics*; Roche, *Mega-events and Urban Policy*; Preuss, *Economics of Staging the Olympics*.

⁶¹DCMS, *Ministerial Statement*.