Urban regeneration for the London Olympics 2012 and its social impact on the local residents

Master Thesis
Master in Urban Management and Valuation

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This research focuses on the recent urban regeneration that took place due to the London Olympics 2012. The main aim of this study is to investigate its social impact on the local low-income residents of Newham borough.

The urban regeneration of East London and its legacy were the main reasons for the UK to win to host the Olympics 2012, nine years ago. Officials stated that the beneficial legacy of this urban regeneration would be long lasting and advantageous to the local communities of the East End, which was among the poorest of London and even England. Given extremely ambitious goals, the large scale, high spending, the promise that the Olympics would enhance the life of the local community, and eradicate their poverty, has been seen as a tenuous promise.
_hypothesis

Despite the Government’s efforts to promote socially mixed communities and its promise of an improvement that will mainly benefit local residents, the urban regeneration project and the Olympics 2012 social legacy won’t benefit low-income residents of Newham borough but residents that are more affluent. In other words, it will cause exactly the opposite effect of what have been promised by local government, as local residents will suffer rough social and economic consequences.

Source: http://www.redpepper.org.uk/

Homeless mothers who squatted flats of an empty housing estate in Newham. 9/10/2014.
Objectives

- To review the literature in order to study the urban regeneration and social sustainability in urban areas as a general concept;
- To examine social issues related to this project;
- To analyse how social issues integrated with the Olympic Games 2012 project;
- To analyse how the Olympic project addresses local community necessities;
- To identify to what extent this project socially (social-economic) affected the residents of Newham borough.

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Source: http://www.redpepper.org.uk/
The analysis of social impact of the urban regeneration was based on a mixed methodological approach (qualitative-first): both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect and analyse the data.

Qualitative:
- In-depth in person interviews
- Documentation analysis
- Fieldwork- observations

Quantitative:
- Survey- structural questionnaires
Literature Review

Contemporary Vision of Urban Regeneration in the UK
“...a 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” (Roberts and Sykes, 2000: 17).

Social Sustainability in Context of Urban Development
Social sustainability can be broadly defined as the maintenance and improvement of well-being of current and future generations (Chiu, 2003). According to McKenzie, (2004) the condition incorporated equity of access to key services (including health, education, transport housing and recreation) (Cited in Mak and Peacock, 2011: £).

Event-Led Urban Regeneration and Its Complications
Mega events, such as the Olympics, are considered to be great catalyst for urban changes. They offer an exclusive opportunity, to the host city, to boost the economic advancement (achieved through tourist and employment increase), infrastructure improvements, and urban development (Lei and Spaans, 2009).

However, given its large scale, budget, short time, and often high ambitions that are being promised, event-led regeneration has been highly criticized for numerous complications. The main issue related to mega events are residents displacement, and other various socio-economic disadvantages that might impact local, specifically low-income, residents (Watt 2013; Porter et al. 2009).
Socio economic profile of Newham

- **INCOME (IMD 3 in 2007)** In 2013, gross annual salary in Newham was £28,283 while in Inner London was £34,524 and £32,800 in Grater London.

- The **UNEMPLOYMENT (IMD 55 in 2007)** in Newham is 13.7%, while in London is 8.9% and in England 7.9%.

- **Relatively low levels of SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS (IMD 159 in 2007)** compared to the city as a whole.

- **HOUSING (IMD 2 in 2007)**: In 2009, 15% private houses were designated unfit, compared to 6% in London. 50% of social housing stock in Newham was below Decent Homes Standard.

- Relatively high levels of **CRIME (IMD 17 in 2007)** and perceptions of crime within the resident population (Drugs, Violence, Robbery etc.).

- An expanding black and minority ethnic community (high ethnic segregation);

- **HEALTH (IMD 25 in 2007)**: Newham residents have lower life expectancy and higher rates of premature mortality than other Boroughs in London and the average for England as whole.
the Olympic legacy

- Costing £9.3 bn;
- 2.5 square km;
- Completely transformed vast area of industrial and brownfield land;
- Around 200 buildings were demolished; entirely new infrastructure was developed (new utilities network to provide power, water and sanitation to the site);
- Around 100 hectares was allocated to the green space.
_the Olympic legacy

HOUSING LEGACY
build over 9,000 new homes, a large proportion of which to be affordable.

EMPLOYMENT LEGACY
create 12,000 job opportunities in the area of the Park post-Games.

SERVICES AND AMENITIES
provide new sport, leisure, education and health facilities that meet the needs of residents, business and elite sport.

SOCIAL WELLBEING
- Socially-mixed community; residents participation, pride, sense of community etc.

HEALTH
100ha of new green area; sport venues, North Park and South Plaza.
“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”
London Bid Book 2005
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social issues</th>
<th>Socio-economic Olympic legacy/promise</th>
<th>The facts, two years afterwards (survey, interviews, observations, facts and figures)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing shortage and unaffordability</td>
<td>1,379 affordable new housing units. -356 intermediate rent, -348 shared ownership, and -675 social</td>
<td>• 32% can’t afford 44% or residents can’t afford 2, 65% 3 bedroom property at Affordable rent, • 65% believes that rent increase as a result of the Olympics; Interviews shows displacement • 37.5%, privately renting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>10,000 new jobs, 2,000 jobs for unemployed local residents.</td>
<td>• Low paid jobs (retail and hospitality); • increases in unemployment between 2007-09 and 2010-12; • 208 jobs were dislocated, • 25 businesses employing 65 staff closed down.</td>
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<td>Social segregation, Sense of community and participation</td>
<td>Provide socially mixed communities. Improve the cohesion in the area.</td>
<td>• 90% of respondents calmed that they haven't been involved in the planning process. • 74.2% doesn’t think that planning authorities didn’t successfully addressed local community's necessities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health and lack of activates</td>
<td>North Park and South Plaza</td>
<td>• 75% don’t use the park because of the lack of information, it is not considered local, difficult to reach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrier to the services</td>
<td>provide new sport, leisure, facilities that meet the needs of residents, business and elite sport</td>
<td>• 80% of residents don’t use new facilities the main reason is lack of resources or no information;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stigmatization</td>
<td>“re-brand” the community, turn area into new cities hallmark</td>
<td>• 70.8% think that this will improve the image of Newham, 57% feel proud that Newham hosted the event. Thought, the improvements are not for them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
conclusion

• The first signal of a contradictory outcome was the residents’ displacement that took place during the early stages of the regeneration process. Moreover, displacement was not only specific to the resident who lived on the Olympic site but also it was extended to nearby areas due to the increase of the rent price.

• Overall, all data indicates that the local low-income residents won’t socially benefit of this projects.

• Giving the fact that the Olympic legacy is designed to be fully deliver in next 15-20 years, this study underlines only some insights toward the real outcome of the whole social outcome. Therefore, it is essential to carry on the future studies and under assessments and all promises and their development.


Thank you for your attention.