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## JCET special issue: *International mega-events, urban changes and tourism*

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INTRODUCTION



## JCET special issue: *International mega-events, urban changes and tourism*

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### KEYWORDS

Benefits; mega-event;  
tourism attractiveness  
urban development

### Special issue overview

In a context of increasing competition between cities to attract and retain tourists, new inhabitants and/or companies, a fast-growing trend has become the effort to stage events (Getz & Page, 2016). These may be trade fairs, exhibitions, festivals, or events in the sporting, cultural or corporate spheres. Moreover, depending on the strength of their links with tourism, events can vary in size (Getz & Page, 2016): occasional mega-events; regular symbolic events; regional and local events. While these events are by definition time-limited, some (especially mega-events and other large events) can be very long-term projects. According to Chappelet (2018), the process of organizing the Olympic Games and establishing their legacy extends over a period of nearly 12 years, including the bidding phase (around 3 years), the planning phase (around 7 years), the staging of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (2 months), the closing ceremony, and the post-event infrastructure rearrangements (2 years).

Cities exploit these events for long-term urban transformation projects (Gold and Gold, 2008; Gravari-Barbas & Jacquot, 2007; Gravari-Barbas, 2009; METROPOLIS, 2002; Pradel, 2010). Bidding to host events, in particular mega-events, is increasingly an instrument for formalizing urban development strategies (Lauermaun, 2019). Because they require infrastructures of different kinds (big luxury hotels, convention centers, large sports and/or cultural facilities, transport infrastructures, etc.), they contribute to urban development. For example, Barcelona used the 1984 Olympic Games to redesign its waterfront (Pinto & Lopes dos Santos, 2022). Beijing took advantage of the 2008 Games to replace the old *hutongs* with buildings that symbolize modernity (Price & Dayan, 2008). The 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games provided an opportunity for the city to change its image by razing its *favelas* (Magalhães, 2016) and building new transport

infrastructure (Kassens-Noor, Gaffney, Messina, & Phillips, 2016). Similarly, Paris is making the 2024 Games part of a long-term urban renewal project for Seine Saint-Denis through the creation of major infrastructures (Olympic village, aquatic center, media village, etc.) with the longer-term aim of making the Olympic Village a prototype for the city of 2050.

Beyond their infrastructural legacies, these events can also create legacies of an intangible nature and in particular enhance the image of their cities. They are an opportunity to acquire what Bourdieu (1984, in Essex & Chalkley, 1998) called symbolic capital, that is to say a set of physical attributes that convey an image of taste and distinction (Essex & Chalkley, 1998) for cities and even entire countries, as was anticipated with Japan (Duignan, 2021). The 2024 Paris Olympic Games are thus an opportunity to transform the image of Seine Saint-Denis both for its inhabitants and for tourists (Delaplace, 2020; Gignon, Delaplace, & Pimenta, 2022; Gignon & Delaplace, 2021). Conversely, the local outcomes of the Olympic Games can sometimes be negative, triggering processes such as gentrification and exclusion (Gaffney, 2016; Pappalepore & Duignan, 2016; Duignan et al., 2019).

### **Content of the special issue (5 articles)**

The articles in this special issue have been chosen from the 60 papers presented at the Tenth AsTRES—Third ORME conference on “City, Events, Mega-Events and Tourism”, which took place at Gustave Eiffel University from 25 to 27 May 2021. Revised after the conference, they were again selected for publication through a refereed double-blind process. They adopt different disciplinary standpoints (geography, history, urban planning and transport) and cover two types of events, four being about the Olympic Games and one about conventions, but all have as their subject events that require a process of city selection. They also differ methodologically. The article on conventions applies an international comparative statistical analysis of convention cities over a 24-year period. The four articles centered on the Olympics consider different Games but also adopt different perspectives. Three cover past Olympic Games (one Winter Games in St Moritz in France in 1928, one Summer Games in Athens in 2004 and the other the Tokyo Summer Games of 2021), and one focuses on a city that bid unsuccessfully to host the Games but used the bid to improve the city’s attractiveness to tourists (Istanbul).

From a geographical standpoint, the first article—entitled “International event tourism and urban changes: Trajectories of global convention cities (1998–2020)” —sought to identify and explain the interactions between the dynamics of hosting international conferences and the orientations of urban policy. Employing CFA and hierarchical ascendant classification, Sylvie Christofle and Carine Fournier show that urban changes are drivers

of development in convention hosting facilities, and therefore impact the ranking of cities in the global hierarchy of convention cities. The authors also explore the effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic on the trajectories of these cities.

In the second article—“When Hoteliers Were Organizing the Olympic Games, Engaging Socio-historical Analysis Beyond the Local Organization of the Olympic Games in St. Moritz in 1928”—Grégory Quin undertakes an historical analysis of the municipal archives (political authorities, tourist office, hotel infrastructures, ski club) of St. Moritz (Switzerland) to show how the private sector, and in particular the hoteliers, were important players in the tourism sector in that era. They set strategies to redevelop tourism and their businesses after the First World War and were significant stakeholders in the organization of the St. Moritz Winter Games in 1928.

The third article, “Can post-Olympic Games urban regeneration be spontaneous and unplanned? The case of Athens Olympic Games (2004),” also looks at a past Olympic Games. Adopting an urban planning perspective, Geneviève Zembri-Mary shows that urban regeneration in central Athens (Greece) after the Olympic Games took place without overall planning. She reveals how, in the case of Athens, pre-Olympic and post-Olympic urban regeneration was conducted informally by a handful of private family entrepreneurs and without strategic planning on the part of the public authorities. As might be expected, the cultural dimension is critical in understanding the process by which Olympics-related urban regeneration can emerge and develop.

The fourth article of this special issue concerns an unsuccessful bid to stage the Olympic and Paralympic Games (OPGs) in the city of Istanbul (Turkey). Focusing in their methodology on transportation and urban planning, Ahmet Bas and Marie Delaplace show that bidding for the Games has been associated with investments in transportation and changes in tourist infrastructures in Istanbul. They demonstrate how bidding for the Olympic Games has enabled the city to develop its economic, social, cultural and transportation assets, and to improve its global reputation and appeal to tourists. However, this case also shows the importance of political stability for tourism.

The title of the last article in this special issue is “The preparation of the Tokyo 2020 Games: completing the 1987 Waterfront Subcenter Plan”. Alexandre Faure adopts an historical and geographical approach to show how the bids for both the 2016 and 2020 Games affected the development of Tokyo’s waterfront landfills. He reveals how these bids were anchored in local and national strategies aiming to make Tokyo a global city dedicated to events, tourism, leisure and shopping. At the same time, he shows how, in the case of Tokyo, the Games have also been used as a tool to improve and reinforce existing urban plans.

## Conclusion

At a time when the Olympic Games are increasingly the target of critiques on economic, social and environmental grounds (Hiller, 2020), and growing opposition has led to a fall in the number of bids and perhaps to the emergence of a new hosting and bidding model (Müller et al., 2023), the legacy aspect of the Olympic Games would appear to be becoming a more and more central issue. Creating a legacy—especially an urban legacy—has become crucial both for the IOC and for the host cities and their populations. This special issue shows how the urban changes associated with the staging of events can form part of such a legacy. It also demonstrates the specificity of each case. Following on from the work of Barca, McCann, and Rodríguez-Pose (2012), a place-based analysis of the interactions between events and urban change, as suggested by Delaplace (2020) to analyzing the interactions between events and tourism, could have a heuristic value.

## Author's contribution

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## Notes on contributor

Marie Delaplace received a PhD (1994) and an “Habilitation à diriger les recherches” (2009) in Economics. Since 2011, she has been Professor in urban planning and regional development in the Gustave Eiffel University (Parisian School of Urban Planning; Lab'Urba, (EUP, Lab'urba). She has published approximately 90 papers in academic journals and books on High-Speed Rail, Tourism, Event and Mega-Event. In 2018, she co-founded the Observatory for Research on Mega-events (ORME). She has co-managed the Research Group City, tourism, Transport and territory of the LabEX (Excellence Laboratory) Urban Futures during the last ten years. She also represented the President of Gustave Eiffel University, President of the French Tourism University (AsTRES) during six years.

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