

## PERSPECTIVES ON THE VOLUNTEERING LEGACY OF THE LONDON 2012 OLYMPIC GAMES: THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EVENT LEGACY STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT MATRIX

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Using a sustainable event legacy timeline, this article examines the extent to which the existing volunteering infrastructure supporting volunteer management in the host city were engaged before, during, and after the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, to generate a legacy for volunteering. This infrastructure includes volunteering peak bodies, volunteer resource centers, national sport governing bodies, community organizations and local government. A case study of the London 2012 Games was employed involving extensive documentary evidence and interviews with senior level informants. The findings revealed limitations with official legacy planning and a failure to engage with the voluntary sector in the host city. The event legacy timeline is combined with four key themes to emerge from the data to conceptualize an event legacy stakeholder engagement matrix. This identifies recommendations to enable future host cities to optimize opportunities from Olympic Games volunteer programs to generate wider community benefits.

**Key words: London 2012 Olympics; Event legacy; Volunteering; Voluntary sector; Stakeholders**

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### Introduction

Volunteers are lauded as an essential element of the modern Olympics, where they make an integral contribution to the ultimate success of the Games

(Carnicelli-Filho, 2014). Similarly, innovative initiatives aimed at increasing sports and volunteer participation feature prominently in the bid books of prospective host cities (International Olympic Committee [IOC], 2012). The call for Games

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time volunteers is a major milestone in pre-Games planning, with the volunteer program often significantly oversubscribed (Holmes & Smith, 2009; Lockstone & Baum, 2009). Postevent, volunteers are also publicly acknowledged for their contribution and encouraged to continue their volunteering efforts locally as a social legacy of the Games (IOC, 2012).

This case study examines the impacts of the 2012 Games upon volunteer management within the host city, London. It seeks to identify the extent to which Olympic volunteer programs, both those of the London Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) and associated programs, led to postevent volunteer legacies. In particular, the study explores the extent to which there was engagement with the established volunteering infrastructure in the host city to achieve positive legacy outcomes. For the purpose of the study, the volunteering infrastructure represent the organizations and programs in place to promote, support, and manage volunteering; including volunteering peak bodies, volunteer resource centers, national governing bodies of sport, community organizations, and local government. Individually and collectively these organizations have networks and expertise in volunteerism, and much of this volunteering infrastructure existed before the 2012 Games and continues to the present.

The overarching objectives of the article are a) to examine how far the London 2012 Olympic Games volunteer program led to a sustained positive legacy of longer-term volunteer participation in the host city, and b) to evaluate how the relationship between the 2012 volunteer program and London's volunteer infrastructure facilitated realization of this desired mega-event legacy.

This study contributes knowledge in the domain of mega-event volunteer legacy studies as the first to critique the management of a volunteering legacy, and in particular how various stakeholders are involved as actors in the process. This contribution is underpinned by data gathered through unprecedented access to insider perspectives of mega-event volunteering stakeholders. These include senior board members of LOCOG, senior representation from the volunteering peak body for the UK, senior representation from legacy bodies, volunteer resource center managers, senior management

at national governing bodies of sport, community volunteering organizations, and policymakers and government representatives at both national and local government level.

Embedded in the Olympic context, this study is important as it contributes to the broader mega-event volunteer legacy literature, which Dickson, Benson, and Blackman (2011) noted is dominated by the use of secondary sources, with there being "a paucity of substantive empirical research in respect of pre, during and, in particular, post-event research" (p. 292). The study augments this extant literature using the sustainable event legacy timeline (Holmes, Hughes, Mair, & Carlsen, 2015) as a theoretical framework to highlight the extent to which LOCOG engaged with the existing volunteering infrastructure in London across the bid, event planning, event delivery, transition, and legacy phases. According to Pearce (2012), theoretical research frameworks serve two key purposes. Firstly, they help researchers formulate the research problem by focusing attention on the relevant and important issues and relationships. Secondly, they provide a basis for interpreting the empirical findings that result from the study. The sustainable event legacy timeline is an appropriate multidisciplinary lens with which to critique Olympic legacies, as the timeline provides a benchmarking theoretical framework with which to compare and assess volunteer management legacy outcomes, over an extended timeframe. This is particularly important given that the 2012 Games were the first to include detailed legacy plans as an integral part of their bid documentation (IOC, 2012; Scott, 2014), which had implications for communities and social inclusion agendas within the host city (Shipway, 2007).

Informed by both Holmes et al.'s (2015) sustainable event legacy timeline and the four key interpretive themes to emerge from the case study data, an event legacy stakeholder engagement matrix is developed in order to identify recommendations to enable future host cities to optimize legacy outcomes from Olympic Games volunteer programs.

#### Uncovering the Mega-Event Social Legacy

The Olympic Games are substantial undertakings for any host city. Mega-event planning frequently involves accelerated redevelopment of the host city

including new infrastructure, event venues, residential and commercial developments, and landscaping (Nitsch & Wendland, 2016; Smith, 2012). Muller (2017) contends such mega-events are paradoxical, at once drawing a focus on the immediacy of event delivery in tandem with future considerations of legacy. The economic benefits of regeneration, new jobs, and increased tourism are put forward as the rationale for this investment (Brown, Smith, & Assaker, 2016; Fourie & Santana-Gallego, 2011; Kennelly, 2016). However, more recent attention has turned to the softer or social legacy from such events (Minnaert, 2012). The social legacy can include improved physical and mental health from increased sport participation (Chalip, Green, Taks, & Misener, 2017); capacity building within national voluntary sports organizations (Girginov, Peshin, & Belousov, 2017); increased community cohesion and social capital resulting from people living in the host city building new relationships, often through volunteering at the event (Zhou & Ap, 2009); the impacts of mega-event cultural programs in delivering Olympic legacies for local creative industries (Pappalepore & Duignan, 2016); new skills, improving local residents employability postevent (Kennelly, 2016; Minnaert, 2014); the positive impact on residents' perception of their city as a result of media coverage (Kim, Gursoy, & Lee, 2006; Prayag, Hosany, Nunkoo, & Alders, 2013), or less positively, exclusion and communal resistance (Duignan, Pappalepore, & Everett, 2019).

Research interest relating to volunteer legacies most notably began with studies examining how to encourage repeat volunteering at the same event (Coyne & Coyne, 2001; Elstad, 1996). Studies then progressed to examining how an event volunteer program can lead on to future volunteering in the host city as part of a community or social legacy (Auld, Cuskelly, & Harrington, 2009; Doherty, 2009). However, social legacies, including volunteering participation, have received less attention compared to more tangible legacy elements such as infrastructure development (Minnaert, 2012; Preuss, 2015) and there have been fewer long-term postevent legacy studies (Dickson et al., 2011). In non-Olympic contexts, volunteering at a major sporting event can result in a strong intention to volunteer at another event and within the community more generally (Doherty, 2009; Nichols & Ralston,

2011, 2012; Tomazos & Luke, 2015). Although these studies have some limitations, not least their measurement of intended rather than actual volunteering behavior, they suggest that good volunteering experiences at sports events may enhance positive legacy outcomes for host communities.

The aforementioned studies focus on official Olympic or other event volunteer programs and are largely silent on the relationships between the event organizers, often with a highly temporal remit to deliver the Games, and the wider volunteering infrastructure existing in the host location. This exposes two gaps in knowledge. First, it fails to address the importance of host cities, in this case London, having the necessary volunteering infrastructure in place to facilitate a viable legacy for ongoing volunteering postevent, after the Games have run and the Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (OCOG) has disbanded (Nichols & Ralston, 2012). Understanding the relationships between the OCOG and host city community groups could contribute to enhanced legacy outcomes. Benson, Dickson, Terwiel, and Blackman (2014) suggested this to be the case in their study of the legacy of volunteer training associated with the Vancouver 2010 Games. Second, focusing on those involved in the London 2012 Games volunteer program and their subsequent volunteering, or at least volunteering intentions, fails to capture the more ambitious legacy goals regarding enhanced volunteer participation and broader social inclusion agendas across society more generally.

The IOC acknowledges the importance of planning and partnership development noting that "delivering legacy also requires strong partnerships between city leaders, the Games organizers, regional and national authorities, local communities" (IOC, 2012, p. 58). There is tentative evidence that this level of stakeholder engagement does not always occur (Minnaert, 2012) and there have been calls for urgent research to "explore the stakeholders involved in the legacy governance process" (Leopkey & Parent, 2017, p. 449). In spite of the discourse of the IOC and host cities in championing Olympic legacies (Leopkey & Parent, 2012), host cities have often failed to optimize longer-term benefits (Chalip, 2006; Girginov et al., 2017; Kennelly, 2016), with Nitsch and Wendland (2017) concluding that hosting of the summer Olympic

Games has had a negative effect on host cities. This failure to achieve sustainable benefits from the event has been attributed to the lack of connection between the different phases of the event life cycle, with different bodies involved in the bid, delivery, and legacy phases (Preuss, 2007). Legacy claims made during the bid phase are then taken over by the event delivery organization (Stewart & Rayner, 2016), whose primary focus is on the event itself. Rarely are any plans or funding allocated for a legacy body (Nichols & Ralston, 2012) and immediately after a mega-event there is often a period of hiatus before legacy plans are put into practice—or indeed formulated if none existed beforehand (Cashman, 2006).

Through in-depth engagement with senior Olympic volunteering stakeholders this article seeks to advance understanding of the volunteering infrastructure and programs involved in facilitating a post-Games legacy. In doing so, Holmes et al.'s (2015) sustainable event legacy timeline is used as the theoretical framework for analyzing activities at five designated event phases: bid, event planning, event delivery, transition, and legacy. The bid phase is when the legacy vision and postevent plans for the event infrastructure and venues are developed. The event planning phase is when specific legacy planning takes place and legacy funds are committed. During the event delivery phase, the focus is on the event itself and legacy plans are put on hold. Immediately following the event, the transition from event delivery to legacy delivery takes place, with the relevant authorities taking over responsibility for the legacy phase. The legacy phase is when the legacy plans are actioned, and the legacy outcomes monitored and evaluated over time.

The theoretical framework was developed from the event legacy literature drawn from multiple disciplinary backgrounds including economics, geography, and sociology (Minneart, 2012; Preuss, 2007). Leopkey and Parent's (2017) study of Olympic legacy governance proposed a similar model of four legacy phases: legacy conceptualization, legacy planning, legacy transfer/transformation, and post-Games governance distinct from three phases of event organization: bid, planning and implementation, and wrap-up. We consider the Holmes et al. (2015) framework to be more parsimonious, encapsulating the key organization and legacy planning

phases in the one model. Additionally, it extends Preuss's (2007) temporal model of event legacies, which does not take into account the challenge of moving from the event phase to the legacy phase, which is rarely straightforward as organizing bodies close down and legacy bodies take over. This "transition" phase is a critical and underresearched part of legacy creation. Holmes et al.'s (2015) timeline includes all phases from planning through to legacy, including transition and as such provides a relevant theoretical framework for this study. Following the case study findings, the timeline will be integrated with the emergent themes from the data to propose an event legacy stakeholder engagement matrix.

## Research Method

### *Case Study Design*

As a research strategy, case study design has been used in numerous event and festival settings to contribute towards our understanding of groups, individuals, and organizations (Shipway, Jago, & Deery, 2011). This has invariably arisen from a desire to better understand complex social phenomena. The case study method allows researchers to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010). In this case it is an exploration of the organizational and managerial processes associated with volunteering at the 2012 Games. In adopting a case study research design for the London Games, the study was guided by the pragmatist paradigm, where the primary importance for the researcher is the purpose and nature of the research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) and the positivist–interpretivist dichotomy is rejected. As pragmatists are concerned with investigating complex, real-world problems using multiple forms of data, the case study design employed a mixture of data sources and data types to provide a complete picture of the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2014). A comprehensive desk review of secondary data was firstly conducted to underpin the background of the case. This included academic research, policy documents, media reports, and other material produced by relevant organizations. Following this, semistructured interviews were conducted with a diverse range of key stakeholders including senior representatives from LOCOG;

sport governing bodies, community organizations; government and official legacy bodies; key staff at peak bodies for the voluntary sector and volunteer resource centers; and other stakeholders.

Interview participants were recruited purposively (Cresswell, 2013) and were identified initially through the desk research and in discussion with the volunteering peak body in the UK. Initial participants were asked to provide recommendations for further interviewees using the snowballing approach (Noy, 2008). Participants were asked questions designed to reveal to what extent stakeholders were involved in the planning and delivery of the 2012 Games volunteer program; to what extent were stakeholders involved in the planning and delivery of the volunteer legacy; what steps were taken to ensure a post-Games volunteer legacy by LOCOG and the other stakeholders; and what, if any, volunteer management legacy had the 2012 Games contributed to the host city, London.

Sixteen interviews were conducted over a 5-month period from November 2015 to March 2016. The timing of the data collection, which took place 4 years after the completion of the Olympic Games, represented the passing of an appropriate period of time with which to assess the targeted legacy objectives of London 2012 given its legacy story was still unfolding and the “effect of a legacy may only be felt long after the event” (Preuss, 2015, p. 655). As the UK government suggested, “a lasting legacy

from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games has always been a long-term goal, and just as the Games took 10 years to win, plan and deliver, so legacy must be seen as a ten-year project to realize lasting change” (HM Government, 2014, p. 4).

Table 1 details the anonymized profile of the respondents (R1–R16), with key target stakeholder groups for the research well-represented. In addition, the consistency of their responses enabled a significant movement towards theoretical saturation to be reached (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), whereby minimal new insights were likely to emerge from the conduct of additional interviews.

The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed thematically using qualitative template analysis (King, 2004). This form of analysis involves the use of an initial coding template made up of key themes from a sample of the interviews, which is further expanded and refined in an iterative coding process involving the full set of interviews (Brooks, McCluskey, Turley, & King, 2015). The initial coding template was created using a preliminary list of themes extracted from the research questions and interviewers’ notes. A strength of this study was both the privileged and unhindered access to key Olympic volunteering stakeholders and the subsequent opportunity to then juxtapose their contrasting views.

Following the guidelines of King (2012), this initial structure was further populated using the first five interview transcripts. Specific themes were

Table 1  
London 2012 Interviewees

Stakeholder/Organization	Role in Relation to London 2012 Olympic Games and/or Legacy Period
Organizing Committee (role not listed for confidentiality) Policy-makers, government representatives, & official legacy bodies	R13: LOCOG senior management R2: Legacy body R3: Legacy body R9: Government legacy unit R10: Local government legacy body R11: Local government legacy body R15: Legacy body
Sport governing bodies & community organizations	R1: National sports organization R14: National sports organization R16: National sports organization
Peak volunteering bodies & volunteer resource centers	R4: Volunteer resource center R5: Volunteer resource center R6: Peak Volunteering body R7: Volunteer resource center
Others (e.g., volunteers, researchers)	R8: Researcher R12: University engagement manager

developed under overarching ones to build a hierarchical structure of themes emanating from the data. This structure formed the basis for the preliminary coding template that was used for the remainder of the analysis. In analyzing the full set of data, quotes that were relevant to existing themes were coded against them. For data that did not fit the existing themes, additional themes were created to enhance the richness of the analysis. New themes were created until the majority of data could be meaningfully coded against one or more themes in the hierarchical structure. The coded data, represented by the hierarchy of themes, was distributed to the research team for comments over several iterations until the final template of hierarchical themes was determined.

This hierarchy of themes was broadly segregated into two categories: descriptive and interpretive. Descriptive themes represented the opinions of interviewees in key areas relating to the general impacts of the London Games volunteer program(s), engagement with the voluntary sector, as well as perspectives on volunteer legacies post-Games. Interpretive themes were then created and categorized under the four principal headings of *Resources, Structures and Delivery Mechanisms, Strategy, and Knowledge Transfer*. Quotations are used in the reporting of these themes to provide rich, thick description of the phenomenon under investigation. The 16 interviewees identified a range of lessons for future Olympic host cities in relation to these four key interpretive themes. The article will now present the descriptive findings and interpretive themes to emerge from the informant interviews at each stage of the Holmes et al.'s (2015) event legacy timeline.

### Results

The findings collectively suggest missed opportunities for LOCOG to engage with grassroots volunteer organizations and the third sector, to plan for and generate a sustained positive legacy of volunteering participation in the host city of London.

#### *Bid Phase*

Volunteering was not explicitly referred to in the legacy plans of London's candidature file when bidding for the 2012 Games (London 2012

Ltd, 2004). Specific references to volunteering emerged later with pre-Games policy documents and commissioned reports highlighting the importance of "harnessing the volunteer program alongside employment initiatives to enable local people (particularly hard to reach groups) to get involved in the Games, with a view to creating sustainable skills and employment in the long term" (Experian, 2006, p. 3).

Given that London 2012 was promoted as the first Games of the legacy era, a number of respondents recommended that legacy should first and foremost be planned from the bidding stage and supported with clearly articulated *strategic plans* for volunteer legacies. One legacy body interviewee was adamant that there was a need for:

A specific plan that when the government and the OCOG are signing up to, they commit to it. I would specifically ask them to tell you how much money they're putting in, so there's a structure and there's funding that ensures that it's delivered over time. [R3]

There was also commentary from interviewees on the importance of effectively *resourcing* legacy efforts. Despite this recognition, several respondents noted the lack of dedicated budget for 2012 legacy efforts and the difficulties of sourcing funding, particularly recurrent funding, postevent. This was clearly an issue more generally, not just for the volunteer legacy. One respondent involved in legacy planning at a high level noted that:

I think the one regret, or the benefit of hindsight [of the Government's Legacy Committee] was it didn't actually have a dedicated budget for legacy. So, we had lots of good ideas, lots of things we could do, but actually we ended up trying to scabble around to do it rather than build it in. [R3]

#### *Planning Phase*

The interview data yielded mixed evidence for the engagement of the existing volunteer sector and other interested stakeholders with LOCOG in respect of volunteering program and legacy planning prior to the London Games. One legacy body respondent [R10] acknowledged LOCOG's attempts to build relationships with the voluntary sector and their desire to facilitate a volunteer

legacy, commenting “LOCOG were very engaged in not just wanting it to be delivering the show and then going.” However, another legacy body interviewee (who had also been involved in LOCOG) presented a different perspective on how LOCOG engaged with the sector, suggestive of active disengagement, noting “we communicate in quite a different way, we’re not . . . with respect, the clammy hand of the third sector.” This suggested that within LOCOG there was a negative perception of the existing voluntary sector. One interviewee [R6] reflected on how various volunteering bodies and organizations acted as intermediaries between LOCOG and the wider sector as LOCOG “didn’t really have that many roots into the sector themselves.” However, they continued by commenting “rather than walking away we felt it was far too important an opportunity for volunteering not to be part of those conversations, so we enthusiastically continued to get involved.”

Respondents were cognizant of the distinction between LOCOG’s remit to deliver the Games rather than actual legacies, and in relation to *structures and delivery mechanisms*, there were several strong arguments that a separate body responsible for legacy should be instituted. This broader remit had specific implications for management of the volunteering legacy. As the LOCOG respondent recognized:

Inevitably as the deadline for delivery got closer, the tension between balancing the needs of the Games at the time and the fulfilment of legacy promises became fraught. The very nature of any OCOG is to successfully deliver their event. With the benefit of hindsight, it would have been good to have an operational team of people working alongside the delivery team, extracting what was necessary to build a more robust and pervasive legacy across all areas. [R13]

#### *Delivery Phase*

The official commemorative book records that 70,000 volunteers—named *Games Makers*—volunteered across the Olympic and Paralympic Games; these were selected from 250,000 applicants (LOCOG, 2012). In addition to the *Games Makers*, there were various associated volunteering programs, with the largest being the *Team London*

*Ambassadors* program established by the Mayor of London, which had approximately 8,000 volunteers in visitor information roles in and around London (Harris, 2012).

Dependent on stakeholder perspectives, the data indicated a range of impacts were associated with the London 2012 volunteer program. There were favorable views about the *Games Maker* and associated volunteering programs such as *Team London*, in terms of their raising awareness of volunteering in society, including in organizations already involving volunteers. As highlighted by one informant “having worked in the volunteering space for the best part of 25 years I don’t think we’d ever seen volunteering so talked about” [R6], while another noted “It’s incredibly hard to get positive stories about volunteering in the press . . . and so it really brought a new momentum” [R10]. These perceived positive impacts were further clarified by a senior LOCOG representative who observed:

The importance of volunteers to all organizations has gone up on the agenda [*of organizations’ boards*]. So there is a legacy there, and this is something that’s quite tangible. . . . There are areas in the UK who now perceive volunteers in a very different way. [R13]

The different volunteering experience of the 2012 Games was also used to recruit volunteers, and particularly attract new people into volunteering; for example, it was noted “we wanted to very consciously recruit people who hadn’t been volunteers, because we felt that that was our legacy to the third sector” [R3].

The increased awareness of volunteering was driven by unprecedented media coverage, as noted by a representative of one peak volunteering body:

There was a constant stream of good news stories about volunteering and the role it was playing, both in terms of delivery at the Games but also in terms of the feel good factor, and really feeling that volunteering was adding something different. [R6]

Volunteer resource center representatives had criticisms that only a narrow range of volunteering was profiled in relation to the London Games, namely, events and sports volunteering, and “sports clubs actually need people coming in and helping

them with coaching and those kind of things” [R4]. As another volunteer center interviewee pointed out:

If you want to create a legacy, 70,000 people cannot stand outside somewhere with a foam finger on, pointing. They need to take food to people who are stuck at home because they’re housebound, they need to need to go into schools, they need to do environmental challenges in their community. [R7]

There were also concerns other volunteering experiences post-Games could not live up to the hype of Olympic volunteering. One legacy body representative [R15] recognized this and noted that sport mega-event volunteering could be seen as “glamour volunteering.” Criticism was raised as to the reach of the *Games Maker* program and its representativeness beyond the host city; however, LOCOG detailed how they attempted to engage people across the host nation:

We actively sought volunteers from all over the UK and the same experience was provided wherever people were interviewed. It was agreed that proportional representation would exist so that the final number of volunteers selected would reflect the UK as a whole. [R13]

#### *Transition Phase*

In respect of legacy management, various respondents highlighted a lack of mechanisms for facilitating a volunteer legacy after London 2012 and a break in the momentum created by the Games. A volunteer resource center interviewee [R5] discussed how they had a “core group of people [*Games Makers*] trained and inspired to do more, but there was a flat period after the Games where nothing was in place and no structured method of them continuing.”

In terms of *structure and delivery mechanisms*, issues relating to the 2012 Games volunteer database were regularly highlighted, notably with respect of the delay of handover of this data for subsequent purposes. The Government interviewee recognized:

There was concern as there was a hiatus immediately after the Games so there was lots of to-ing and fro-ing about what became known as the LOCOG database. It took six months after the

Games to decide where the database was going to go in the end. [R9]

Representatives from within the London voluntary sector were more critical, with one volunteer resource center interviewee reflecting:

There were tens of thousands of people who were held on a database that no-one had access to, and our experience would suggest that if someone is interested and motivated, we need to capture that right there and do something with it. [R7]

#### *Legacy Phase*

Postevent, the volunteer program was celebrated as a key success of the Games, and volunteering featured prominently in discussions of legacy (House of Lords Select Committee on Olympic and Paralympic Legacy, 2013; LOCOG, 2013). Initiatives included the *Join In* program, which was launched as a stand-alone organization in May 2012. *Team London*’s programs also continued, supported by the territorial council, the Greater London Authority, as a volunteer legacy of the 2012 Games.

Commentary about the planned volunteer legacies by LOCOG, government, and other organizations primarily focused on the official 2012 legacy initiative *Join In*. Several views suggested that the legacy planning for *Join In* and other initiatives were not clearly articulated from the outset. A volunteer resource center interviewee [R4] raised questions suggesting “there never seemed to be clear thoughts on what the legacy was for volunteering or the evaluation process afterwards, and it all seemed very vague.”

A legacy body interviewee [R15] also suggested legacy “is often a reaction to the actual event that is good, bad, unexpected.” The government representative [R9] used the example of *Join In* to illustrate the late legacy planning, commenting “It certainly came very late. It was very much a feeling of, ‘oh \*\*\*\* it,’ we’d better think about this now, and we’d better have something.” As such, there was mixed support for *Join In*. The peak volunteering body interviewee highlighted its importance as an explicitly planned volunteer legacy:

It was the first such . . . volunteering legacy organization that’s been set up after the Games and that



was symptomatic of that renewed interest, or growing interest in the volunteering legacy, which perhaps sets 2012 apart from previous Games. [R6]

More critical commentary of *Join In* focused again on the narrowing of focus to sports and events volunteering, while acknowledging reasons for this specialization. The government representative indicated that *Join In*'s "original aspiration was probably to start with sport volunteering and then maybe to move into other stuff" [R9]. They noted that its subsequent focus on just sport volunteering was probably wise. Despite this explicit sports focus, even national sporting organizations found challenges working with *Join In*, with one [R16] commenting "I'm not convinced they had as much of an impact as they hoped to across governing bodies and across grassroots sports."

Much of the discussion also focused on *Team London Ambassadors*. There was a view that *Team London* had made greater efforts to utilize the existing volunteering infrastructure in its planning and ongoing legacy than LOGOC and government efforts. Overall, most comments relating to *Team London* were positive, and the Mayoral support for the Ambassador program was praised by all interviewees. It "had a number of different elements to it that were all relative to the host city volunteer program as distinct from [the] LOCOG program" [R11]. A volunteer resource center respondent [R7] reflected that, in comparison with *Join In*'s legacy activities "the Mayor's Office has been more open to engaging with us about how they developed that program. They recognized the volunteer centers have a quite a good reach into marginalized communities."

Respondents questioned the legacy effect on volunteering postevent. Some felt there had been a greater focus on other legacies compared to one for volunteering; for example, the government interviewee [R9] acknowledged "the physical regeneration legacy was probably the most planned." Volunteer resource center and national sporting organization interviewees noted limited influence were being seen in terms of volunteer numbers, with [R16] observing "There's only 23% of clubs in our sport that said that new volunteers joined after the Olympics," while one volunteer resource center interviewee [R4] commented "I think as a

volunteer center I've not seen any kind of impact or major increase in numbers coming to us." The peak volunteering body interviewee reflected that the effect on volunteering numbers had been mixed:

We all had really high hopes that . . . because volunteering was so high profile during the Games that we would be able to capture that legacy afterwards, but I think the sense is that it's tailed off a bit since and I don't think we've managed to fully capture the legacy. [R6]

The interviewee representing the peak volunteering body felt that LOCOG hadn't been open about how much it cost to deliver the Games program, and this limited the sector's ability to lobby for legacy funding. They observed "if they [LOCOG] had been more upfront with that [the costs], I think we could've used those figures and used that argument to take into the legacy period" [R6]. Some of the potential funding sources for legacy mentioned by the respondents were allocations from the OCOG's budget, the government's budget, sponsors contributions, and proceeds from the sale of Olympic assets.

The peak volunteering body interviewee [R6] also recognized tensions involved in *structure and delivery mechanisms* for a volunteering legacy and argued that "upon reflection, if we're serious about legacy we've got to have an organization or a body of people that are primarily or exclusively focused on legacy rather than worrying about delivery issues."

There were calls for legacy structures to greater involve the existing volunteering infrastructure in host cities with a view to facilitating long-term relationships. The bottom-up approach of *Team London Ambassadors*, run by the Greater London Authority, was frequently noted. By engaging with local volunteer centers across the host city, the Ambassador program was seen to have "much greater buy-in and much greater connection to the existing volunteering institutions that then helped to spread the good word and sense of enthusiasm" [R6].

With regard to social legacies and *strategic planning*, another legacy body representative suggested there were clear strategic roles for host cities, government, the IOC, and Olympic sponsors, stating:

The caravan shouldn't just move on, because you'll never get another chance, and there'll come

a time when cities say we can't afford to do this, and you won't be able to point to sustainable benefits. No one ever can. I've spoken to various IOC conferences, and no one can ever point to sustainable benefits, because no one's ever there to see them through. [R15]

Several respondents indicated they felt the mechanisms for *knowledge transfer* were not clear and transparent, particularly in terms of the transfer of knowledge between volunteer stakeholder groups beyond the OCOG. [R10] identified that "OCOG to OCOG material is not always particularly user-friendly . . . but at least it's there," and to emphasize the importance of knowledge transfer programs, the peak volunteering body representative recognized:

There's a need for a real clear statement and description and narrative about the steps that were taken and the way programs were developed and implemented with full costings. I think that would be hugely powerful for future Games organizers, but also for future legacy discussions. [R6]

Some respondents acknowledged the importance of contextualizing lessons learned from previous

Games in relation to the unique conditions of each new host city, and the contrasting conditions that exist within different cities and regions. One legacy body respondent reinforced this point, commenting:

It's a bit like if I went to Japan and unpacked the (*name removed*) Program and said to them, "It's brilliant. Just do it all." That is misguided and arrogant. I think you have to start with host city objectives and assess what they are trying to do through the Games and post Games? [R11]

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how far the 2012 Games volunteer program led to a sustained positive legacy of longer-term volunteer participation, and to then evaluate how the relationship between the 2012 volunteer program and London's volunteer infrastructure facilitated realization of this desired mega-event legacy. Examining the findings in relation to Holmes et al.'s (2015) sustainable event legacy timeline (see Table 2), during stage one, the bid phase, there

Table 2  
London 2012 Event Volunteer Legacy Timeline

Event Phase	Timeline-Related Findings
Bid	No explicit focus on volunteer legacy.
Event planning	Volunteer organizations felt left out of the LOCOG planning process, but more involved in the non-LOCOG Olympic-related programs. No organization given responsibility for managing volunteer legacy in the host city. Legacy activities focused on planning the asset legacy rather than other legacies, including volunteering. Need for clear and measurable plans for the volunteer legacy program identified Need to allocate ongoing funding to implement a volunteer legacy identified Quantifying the value of volunteer work at the Games highlighted as strengthening the case for funding.
Event delivery	Program operation was the focus rather than legacy. Volunteers were a crucial element in the delivery of 2012 Games, and subsequent impact on the host city. Volunteers experienced enormous pride and enthusiasm.
Transition	Great enthusiasm for volunteering after the 2012 Games, but London was unable to capitalize on this adequately. Ownership of the volunteer database and contact information was problematic Knowledge transfer processes between OCOGs and host cities seen as important but unclear Knowledge transfer needs to take into account the volunteering culture of the host city and nation
Legacy	The 2012 Games raised the profile of volunteering and volunteer roles Involving existing volunteer organizations seen as important for delivering volunteer legacies but not effectively used in London 2012 There was little increase in Post-Games volunteering in London There was a lack of clarity of legacy directives, with <i>Join In</i> as the main official legacy organization, but ability to manage legacy questioned. Legacy often led by non-LOCOG bodies (Team London, sports organizations, volunteers or local volunteer organizations).

were no significant social legacies articulated for volunteering. Although legacy was integral to the bid (London 2012 Ltd, 2004), volunteering was not explicitly mentioned in the bid documents. It was also apparent that the existing volunteer organizations throughout the host city and surrounding regions felt left out of the planning process, particularly in relation to LOCOG's lack of engagement. Non-LOCOG Olympic-related programs such as *Team London Ambassadors* were perceived as more receptive towards the involvement of existing volunteer organizations (Harris, 2012).

During the planning phase for the 2012 Games, several problematic issues were noted. Firstly, no organization was given responsibility for management of the volunteer legacy, indicating the lack of connection between the different event phases (Stewart & Rayner, 2016). Secondly, legacy activities appeared to focus more on planning the asset legacy rather than the "softer," community-based volunteering legacy, a limitation commonly associated with mega-events (Minnaert, 2012). Thirdly, clear and measurable plans for the volunteer legacy program needed to be in place. Fourthly, several interviewees indicated that ongoing funding to implement a volunteer legacy program was not allocated—again a frequent problem with broader mega-event legacy planning (Nichols & Ralston, 2012). Fifthly, it was suggested that quantifying the costs and value of volunteer work at the London Games could have strengthened the case for legacy funding, which interviewees felt would have been easier to secure at the planning stage of the Holmes et al. (2015) timeline, rather than after the conclusion of the 2012 Games.

In the delivery phase, the focus was on operating the volunteer program in the host city rather than on legacy (Holmes et al., 2015; Leopkey & Parent, 2012, 2017), and volunteers were acknowledged as a crucial element to the success of the Games.

In the transition phase in the immediate aftermath of the 2012 Games there was great enthusiasm for volunteering within host communities, but the interviewees felt this was not capitalized upon adequately, reflecting the postevent hiatus found with other mega-events (Cashman, 2006). As highlighted previously, the results indicate that knowledge transfer was a key challenge, including restrictions regarding the ownership of the volunteer database

and contact information. Knowledge transfer was seen as important, but the transfer process was not clear to all respondents or inclusive of all London 2012 stakeholder groups. It was also recognized that knowledge transfer needs to take into account the volunteering culture of the host city and nation.

In relation to the fifth and final stage of the sustainable event timeline (Holmes et al., 2015), the legacy phase, the 2012 Games clearly raised the profile of volunteering and broadened people's view of what constituted volunteer activities and roles. However, it was apparent that in the case of London, the legacies were less sector driven (bottom-up approach) but instituted by more formal bodies (top down approach), and as such, in London the volunteering legacy was unclear. This empirical finding supports Leopkey and Parent's (2017) suggestion of the greater involvement of localized stakeholders to "ensure legacy governance occurs from the ground up rather than town down" (p. 449). Although *Join In* was designated as the key official 2012 volunteering legacy body, its ability to manage that legacy was questioned by several interviewees. Supporting Nichols, Ralston, and Holmes's (2017) findings, it was apparent that the development of a corporate structure and plans for the 2012 Games resulted in the loss of local autonomy and influence. These structures resulted in a disengagement from and disempowerment of the existing "localized" volunteering organizations, counter to Leopkey and Parent's (2017) view.

Against the backdrop of Holmes et al.'s (2015) event timeline, the four key interpretive themes to emerge from the study are superimposed giving rise to an event legacy stakeholder engagement matrix to optimize legacy outcomes from Olympic Games volunteer programs (see Fig. 1).

The model as presented is an exemplar of legacy management across the event phases—contextualized here to apply to volunteering legacies—although we contend it may have relevance for the planning of other hard and soft legacies. The case study data highlighted that *Resources, Structure, and Delivery Mechanisms, Strategy, and Knowledge Transfer* were the critical elements for ensuring that legacies involving stakeholder engagement were effectively planned for from the outset. This in reality did not occur in the case of the London 2012 Games.

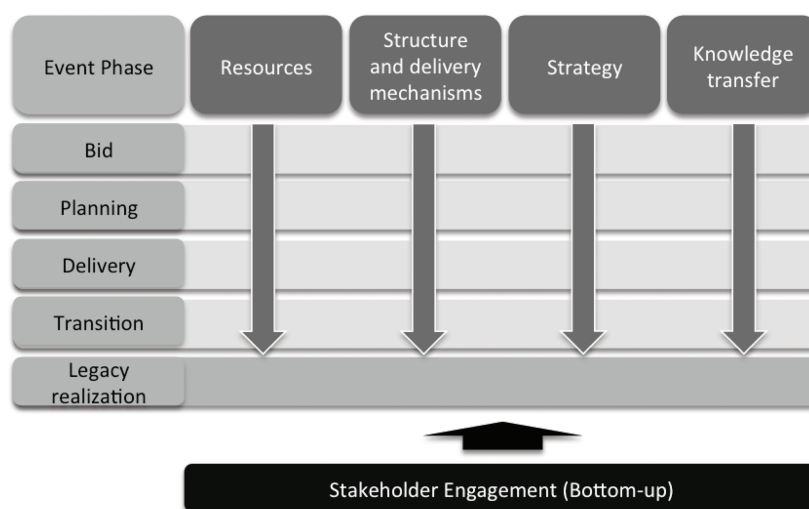


Figure 1. Event legacy stakeholder engagement matrix.

We adapt the wording of the final phase of Holmes et al.'s (2015) timeline from "legacy" to "legacy realization." This subtle yet important change highlights that the bulk of legacy planning focused on *Resources*, *Structure*, and *Delivery Mechanisms*, *Strategy*, and *Knowledge Transfer*; in fact, needs to be implemented prior to the postevent legacy phase. The evidence from London 2012 suggests that bringing forward volunteer legacy planning would have facilitated readiness for postevent social legacy initiatives to be launched immediately post-Games. In the legacy phase, existing plans should be rolled out and monitored, not conceived of at this late stage.

#### Managerial Implications, Limitations, and Conclusions

Volunteers are increasingly heralded as key to the success of Olympic Games. OCOGs, primarily as the delivery mechanism of the Games, must increasingly work with local stakeholders to leave a lasting legacy (IOC, 2013) in recognition of the finite nature of these bodies. The underpinning notion of this study was that organizations already managing volunteers in host cities, the volunteering infrastructure, are best placed to manage such legacies given their existing networks and expertise. Currently, there is limited evidence as to the extent to which OCOGs engage with key stakeholders to drive legacy outcomes (Leopkey & Parent, 2012, 2017).

This article makes key contributions to both theory and practice. Our study extends the existing literature by first filling the void of research that enhances our understanding of volunteer management legacies at mega-events (Wicker, 2017), and secondly, by adhering to the parsimony principle of research. This principle suggests that the scientific explanation of assessing mega-event legacies is often the simplest, and in the case of this study, it is the one that fits the empirically based evidence, and that requires the fewest evolutionary changes. Although legacies generated from mega-events may often appear obvious, empirical testing of this effect, in the volunteering context, over an extended period postevent has not been previously undertaken. Expanding upon the preliminary evidence of Benson et al. (2014), this article sought to specifically explore how the 2012 Olympic volunteer programs can lead to post-Games volunteer legacies for the host city through engagement with the established volunteer infrastructure in London. As such, for the first time, the study makes a contribution towards understanding the realities of volunteer legacy management within an Olympic context, supported by the unhindered access to the perspectives of key London 2012 Olympic volunteering stakeholders. Access to senior stakeholders meant the researchers explored the extent to which there was engagement with the established volunteering infrastructure of the host city, London, along with

identifying the challenges and barriers they faced in attempting to achieve positive legacy outcomes. The findings suggest limited evidence of engagement and coproduction between the OCOG and the existing voluntary sector, raising significant questions as to whether the programs and initiatives that appeared to work for the OCOG were actually of any significant benefit to London boroughs, communities, and grassroots voluntary organizations.

Collectively, the implications of these findings suggest that OCOGs must engage with key stakeholders to engender volunteering (and other) legacies for host cities—these temporal, delivery-focused organizations cannot deliver effective legacies alone. Volunteering legacy efforts must be planned from the outset, key stakeholders engaged with in a meaningful fashion, rather than top-down approaches employed that pay lip service to the volunteer sector, and, finally, explicit funding mechanisms be secured, and structures instituted that deliver sustainable volunteering legacies for host cities in an accountable way.

The limitations of the study must be acknowledged. First, although the 2012 Games may have had an impact beyond the physical boundaries of the host city, the fieldwork was limited to London as this is where any impact would have been the greatest. Second, the nature of the study as a qualitative investigation means the findings cannot be generalized beyond London; however, lessons can be learned for future Games. Certainly, informants recognized that their experiences may not easily be translated to other host cities with their own unique social conditions, particularly those without existing volunteering cultures. Third, with the focus on volunteering infrastructure organizations, we did not fully account for the perspectives of volunteers themselves (Fairley, Gardiner, & Filo, 2016). Fourth, given the support of the national peak volunteering body in facilitating access to respondents and more generally, the senior profile of interviewees, some of the respondents could potentially be viewed as “establishment figures” (Cho & Bairner, 2012). There were also instances when respondents appeared reluctant to comment on negative aspects of volunteering legacies.

In revisiting the study objectives, in relation to the first research objective, there is some, albeit limited, evidence to support the contention that an

Olympic volunteer program can lead to a sustained and positive legacy of volunteering participation in the host city. However, the findings question the extent to which the OCOG was able to gain the confidence of voluntary organizations, so they felt empowered to make community-based regeneration an achievable and sustainable mega-event legacy within the host city. We acknowledge that in London, this legacy story continues to unfold (HM Government, 2014). In supplementing the limited studies examining longer-term event legacies (Dickson et al., 2011), through the application of the sustainable event legacy timeline (Holmes et al., 2015), the current investigation provides an in-depth perspective as to how London’s volunteering management legacy has evolved from planning through to the postevent legacy phase. However, if the UK Government is serious about its extended legacy focus, then similar future assessments should be conducted.

Addressing the second research objective of this article in evaluating the extent of LOCOG’s engagement with London’s volunteering infrastructure to drive volunteering legacy outcomes, findings indicate that a top-down approach was evident. It was not clear whose responsibility it was to drive the legacy, and respondents considered that “legacy” initiatives came too late in the process and were too focused on sports and events, and hence disengaged from and disempowered existing “localized” volunteering organizations, reinforcing perspectives previously advocated by Nichols et al. (2017). There was limited evidence that LOCOG worked with existing voluntary organizations across the host city to assist with wider social issues such as empowering disadvantaged groups, developing collective identities within the voluntary sector, or increasing social integration and cooperation. LOCOG would perhaps suggest it was not their remit to do so given their explicit focus on delivering a successful Games. On LOCOG’s part, in seeking to engage with key stakeholders to leave a lasting volunteer legacy, there was some evidence of deliberate disengagement with the voluntary sector as a strategy to recruit people new to volunteering. The success of this strategy may be questioned in light of the significant period between the disbanding of LOCOG and the commencement of *Join In*, the official volunteering legacy organization, when

the existing host city volunteering infrastructure was in place but not effectively engaged to manage the post-Games volunteering legacy.

Our conclusions tentatively propose that greater engagement between OCOGs and the host cities' volunteering infrastructure could better facilitate the realization of volunteer legacies, and that the sustainable event legacy timeline (Holmes et al., 2015) provides a useful theoretical framework for examining volunteering legacies in host cities across an extended time period. Acknowledging this, the article integrates the phases of the event legacy timeline with the emergent themes from the case study to propose an event legacy stakeholder engagement matrix to optimize legacy outcomes from Olympic Games volunteer programs. The implementation and evaluation of this matrix at some future iteration of the Games would be valuable for further distilling the key elements associated with successful legacy planning and management. If contextualized to volunteering, this work might take place in non-Westernized settings given that the UK is considered to be a democracy with a strong volunteering culture. Tokyo in 2020 and Beijing in 2022 would seem ideal cases for such a research agenda. Additionally, assessing the merit of the engagement matrix applied in relation to other soft and hard legacies would also be a worthwhile endeavor for further advancing the extant event legacy literature.

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