

London's local Olympic legacy: Small business displacement, 'clone town' effect and the production of 'urban landscapes'

Abstract

Purpose: London's Candidature bid projected an irresistible legacy of lasting benefits for host communities and small businesses. Yet, local post-Games perspectives paint a contrasted picture – one of becoming displaced. This article draws on event 'legacy', specifically in relation to rising rents, threats to small business sustainability and impact on place development by empirically examining London's local '*embryonic legacies*' forming across one ex-hosting Olympic community: Central Greenwich.

Design/methodology/approach: 43 interviews with local businesses (specifically, small retailers and hospitality businesses), local authorities, London-centric and national project actors and policy makers underpin analysis, supported by official London 2012 archival, documentary, and media reports to add texture and triangulate primary and secondary data sources.

Findings: Juxtaposing ex-ante projections vs. emerging ex-post realities, this article reveals a local legacy of small business failure fuelled by rising commercial rents and a wider indifference for protecting diverse urban high streets. Embroiled in a struggle to survive, and barely recognised as a key stakeholder and contributor to legacy, small businesses have and continue to become succeeded by a new business demographic in town: monochromatic global and national chains. Typifying the pervasive shift toward 'clone town' spaces, this article argues that corporate colonisation displaces independent businesses, serves to homogenise town centres, dilute place-based cultural offer and simultaneously stunts access to a positive local development legacy. This paper argues that such processes lead to the production of 'urban landscapes' that may hamper destination competitiveness.

Originality/value: Examining event legacy, specifically local legacies forming across ex-host Olympic communities is a latent, under-researched but vital and critical aspect of scholarship. Most event legacy analysis focuses on longer-term issues for residents, yet little research focuses on both local place-based development challenges and small business sustainability and survival post-Games. More specifically, little research examines the potential relationship between event-led gentrification, associated rising rents and aforementioned clone town problematic. Revealing and amplifying the idiosyncratic local challenges generated through an in-depth empirically driven triangulation of key local business, policy, governmental and non-governmental perspectives, is a central contribution of this article missing from extant literatures. This article considers different ways those responsible for event legacy, place managers and developers can combat such aforementioned post-Games challenges.

Keywords: Legacy, Small business sustainability, Place development, Landscapes, Rising rents, Clone town, Sports mega-events, London 2012, Host community.

Problematising London's Olympic legacy

Lord Coe, Chief Ambassador of the London 2012 Games heralded that 'legacy is absolutely epicentral to the plans for 2012. Legacy is probably nine-tenths of what this process is about, not just 16 days of sport' (The Guardian, 2006).

Host communities – existing local residents and small businesses – sat at the heart of London’s ‘technically polished’ legacy vision (MacRury and Poynter, 2009). This was reflected in the House of Lords (2013) legacy inquiry ‘it is the local people who should stand to gain most from the Games (...) a major plank in the promised legacy’ (2013), by bringing ‘people, businesses, other institutions and the city together to focus on long-term development of the city’ (Work Foundation, 2010: 45). Raco and Tunney (2010) noted that ‘from the outset, one of its [London 2012] key stated objectives were the creation of ‘development legacies’ (...) and the ‘establishment of lasting benefits for local communities’ (2010: 2074). Indeed, London’s emphasis on legacy closely aligned with the International Olympic Committee’s (IOC) strategic aims and objectives outlined in the ‘Olympic 2020 Agenda’ and Olympic Charter (IOC, 2018) stating that candidates must ‘promote a positive legacy from the Olympic Games to host cities and host countries’ (2018). Therefore, legacy narratives have become an ‘increasingly prominent part of the dossiers of cities bidding to host them since the 1990s’ (House of Lords, 2013: 21) and ‘an integral part of the Games preparation from the very start’ (Jacques Rogge, President of the IOC cited in DCMS, 2012: 7). Whereas legacy sits at the forefront of Olympic rhetoric, Hiller (2002) notes that ‘Olympic planning must now be viewed as almost synonymous with urban planning’ (2002: 102) - an increasingly central, rather than peripheral, element of urban modernity (Vigor et al, 2004) – and so closely intertwined that Bourdieu and Wacquant (2001) claim that legacy ‘seems to have sprung out of nowhere [but] is now on everyone’s lips’ (2001: 2). Yet, although serving as an ideal(istic) ‘catch-all’ term for (mainly positive) social and economic outcomes of events, achieving such virtuous outcomes is no easy feat. Fraught with ambiguity, contestation and potentially negative place and local development challenges for those residing in ex-Olympic communities (Duignan, Pappalepore and Everett, 2019) – this paper reveals the very real implications of a local legacy on one specific place: Central Greenwich.

Helping to justify significant public expenditure, legacy demands that cities can no longer be solely concerned with delivering a ‘well-executed’ event (Coaffee, 2011) - and must, as a simultaneous objective, focus on the longer-term welfare of host communities. Yet, all being said, the House of Lords (2013) claims that gentrification poses a genuine risk to the survival of existing small business communities and claims that there is a wider ‘perception of insufficient long-term benefits, or even adverse long-term consequences for cities and countries having hosted the Games’ (2013: 21). As opposed to development for and with local incumbents, the report argues longer-term implications may result in gentrification on ex-host communities - colloquially described as the ‘Olympic effect’ (House of Lords, 2012). Although significant analysis, both academic and policy analysis has examined a range of social, economic and environmental legacies (i.e. grassroots sports participation, right through to residential gentrification and increasing house prices) – little emphasis focuses on small business impact and sustainability, and place-based management and development challenges that specifically occur within impacted urban areas in the longer-term, post-Games.

Indeed, it is important to recognise that legacy, in its broadest sense, goes beyond just ‘place’ and ‘community’ development effects to involve a whole plethora of different longer-term impacts, including: social, economic, environmental, educational, sporting, technological et cetera (DCMS, 2012). Yet, whilst being the case, the purpose and contribution of this article is to provide an in-depth analysis of one ex-Olympic place and small business community grappling with the very real implications of such effects, problematising legacy by unravelling the inherent inconsistencies, contradictions and tensions between a legacy rhetoric of inclusion vs. realities of exclusion – an under-researched (qualitative) aspect of event impact analysis. As detailed across the Analysis section, this article reveals that for locals, London’s legacy represents an invisible, cancerous inhabitant - a *fait accompli* with little to no panacea to

resist what is perceived to be inevitable displacement of small independent businesses, and the on-going corporatisation and homogenisation of local place and diversity of the high street offer that follows. Throughout, this paper argues that sports mega-events (SME) (legacies) often fail to recognise the critical role local communities play in collectively contributing to local identity and strengthening the cultural offer (Hawkins and Ryan, 2013; Duignan et al, 2017; Maheshwari et al., 2011). And although events and the portfolio of activities that derive from such event-led urban policy often (ideally) play a part in constructing a more holistic destination development (Richards, 2017), through both a mixture of bottom-up community and top-down cultural programming (e.g. Christou, 2017) – findings from this article contrast such view.

Whilst typified as a ‘long-term’ and ‘10 year project’ (e.g. House of Lords, 2013), it is important to note that London’s (local) legacy still remains in its infancy. As such, this article draws on ‘*embryonic legacies*’ – defined as the ‘rudimentary and immediate emergent forms of [post-Games] impacts bequeathed with the potential for further development’ (Duignan et al, 2018: 4). Six years on, re-visiting London’s ex-ante projections vs. ex-post realities emerges critical as ever. Yet, such analyses remain latent in extant literatures (both at an academic, policy and practitioner level), with little place-based in-depth empirical investigation driving theoretical development and practical implications of legacy at the local ex-host community level. As a result, this has led to what the authors believe to be a somewhat superficial understanding of localised legacies. Generating qualitative insights and examining local idiosyncrasy emerges a critical factor in the analysis of event impact and legacy as complex local effects can be often overlook and evaluation becomes decontextualized according to Pappalepore and Duignan (2016). This article contributes by unpacking such localised embryonic legacies emerging from a single, in-depth qualitative case study.

In response to aforementioned challenges, and arguments throughout this article, the study was guided by the following research questions:

Research question 1: How do London’s ex-ante projections, and ex-post developmental realities arising in the context of post-Games Olympic legacy differ from one another?

Research question 2: Can we identify any emergent embryonic legacies forming at the local level, and what are the potential ramifications of such developments on existing small businesses and their business environment?

Structurally, the article starts by defining and conceptualising the idea of legacy, particularly in the context of SMEs, and illustrates how gentrification and the pervasive concern surrounding ‘clone town’ effects pose a risk to the longer-term diversity, vitality, sustainability and survival of small businesses (specifically those in ex-Olympic communities) on the high street. An overview of the methodology follows, outlining methods and approaches taken and the key theoretical foci under investigation, specifically event legacies and ‘clone town’ developments related to small businesses and place development. In this of such challenges, the article shifts its focus toward the case of London 2012, specifically the empirical examination of Central Greenwich’s ex-Olympic community, and closes with key conclusions and recommendations for policy, practice and future academic study foregrounding implications related to place management and development legacies.

Olympic legacy: Concepts and challenges

SMEs create exceptional and extraordinary conditions to stimulate and mobilise new and existing policy to fast-track urban change at the macro and micro level (Muller, 2017). Widely regarded as the world's most complex of mega-project (Vigor et al, 2004), they amass a complex and eclectic series of stakeholder interests together toward a 'unified' will to re-think and re-engineer the socio-economics of the host city (Chalip, 2017) – creating 'Olympic legacies'. Olympic legacies are an enigmatic and widely contested phenomena largely down to their 'indirect' and 'subtle' nature (Getz, 2007) that make them 'hard to measure accurately or with any confidence' (Preuss, 2007: 207). In an elementary form, they have been described as a 'tangible or intangible thing handed down by a predecessor; a long-lasting effect of an event or process, and the act of bequeathing' (Mangan, 2008: 1869). Critics argue that little examination is placed on evaluating the legacy of SMEs (Duignan, Pappalepore and Everett, 2019) as 'nobody has been prepared to commit the research resources required to carry out scientific study of the net legacy benefits' (Mangan, 2008: 1871) – leading to a superficial assessment and understanding of legacy (Furrer, 2002). Yet, ironically prospective cities continue to bid and project a legacy agenda that remains ill-defined, poorly measured and unpredictable (Preuss, 2015). Zimbalist (2015) states that SMEs constitute an 'economic gamble' – offering an illusion of control – without a guaranteed favourable end.

Understood as a multidimensional construct, the concept and related theoretical attributes of legacy has been examined in significant detail. For the purpose of this article, we draw on Preuss's (2007) Legacy Cube as it has received little empirical analysis yet provides a use conceptual frame to use as a backdrop to case study findings. The cube conceptualises legacy as five inter-related dimensions required to provide the 'holistic evaluation' of event legacies 'necessary to identify all legacies' (Hiller, 1998), including: (1) 'planned vs. unplanned', (2) 'positive vs. negatives', (3) 'tangible vs. intangible', (4) 'short vs. long term', and (5) the 'spaces' affected by these structures (e.g. physical, and mental (e.g. brand enhancement). Preuss (2007) states that 'irrespective of time of production and space, legacy is all planned and unplanned, positive and negative, tangible and intangible structures created for and by a sport event that remain longer than the event itself' (Preuss, 2007:211). This paper argues that an in-depth analysis of legacy is critical going-forward in light of criticisms that event organisers tend to (overly) focus on the more 'planned, positive, tangible' (Cashman, 2006: 15) sub-cubes of impact and legacies, especially during pre-event bid construction and bidding phases. Amongst today's global and elite cities, in order to win a competitive host bid, on one hand voters must be convinced by the scope and ambition of the proposed project, whilst on the other hand, promises made, should idealistically be met: 'constructing messages that resonate with both audiences, and also distinguish it from the other bidding cities' (Vigor et al, 2004: 13). It is therefore concerning that mega-event bid teams tend to overpromise, and propose unrealistic, somewhat overly ambitious plans – including wildly inaccurate costings (Horne and Manzenreiter, 2006), claiming a 'fantasy world of underestimated costs, overestimated revenues, underestimated environmental impacts, and over-valued economic development effects' (2006: 10). Once again, this serves to problematise the notion of event legacy, justify study of this phenomenon by engaging in place-based critical evaluation of longer-term development effects.

Local economic (legacy) challenges

The OECD (2008) argues that if effectively planned, large scale cultural and sporting events like the Olympics and FIFA World Cup can generate significant social and economic regional and local benefits. However, they note that such interventions can frequently produce uneven and inequitable developmental outcomes. Though legacy rhetoric

demands that ‘the Games should leave a host community and the city environment better, rather than worse off’ (Cashman, 2002: 12), previous case study analysis reveals they can have at best neutral if not negative impacts for host communities (Matheson, 2006). McKay and Plumb (2001) and Kavestos (2012) argue that rising rents real-estate costs stemming from the longer-term structural economic effects of the Olympics frequently lead to gentrification and displacement effects. Such effects serve to exacerbate unequal developmental legacies, largely as a result of ‘showcasing’ effects (Faulkner et al, 2001) – and the post-Games valorisation of urban space (Nitsch and Wendland, 2017). Such outcomes are closely linked to the strategic intention of host cities to showcase and promote flattering domestic images of the city via physical, traditional and digital platforms to attract and retain high calibre mobile capital, businesses, people and visitors (Hall, 2006), (re)establish or (re)define host spaces as key tourism destinations (Gratton et al, 2005), and more specifically ‘tourist bubbles’ (Silk and Amis, 2006). Threats of rising rents – both residential and commercial - may lead to the ‘pricing out’ of existing incumbents as argued by the Work Foundation (2010) prior to the hosting of London 2012 as structural economic changes can reduce the competitiveness and displace existing small businesses without the economic capital to participate (OECD, 2008). Historical analysis illustrates the likelihood of such effects. For example, the Centre for Cities (2012) claim how Barcelona’s 1992 legacy of gentrification and displacement ‘changed the social mix’ of ex-host communities as house prices ‘jumped by 250% between 1986 and the start of the Games’, and the Work Foundation (2010) illustrates how Sydney’s prices rose ‘7% above inflation’ (Work Foundation, 2010: 46). Interestingly, although much analysis focuses on gentrification effects on residents, as highlighted in the introduction – little emphasis is placed on small business sustainability and the related local effects on place development legacies.

Unequal developmental outcomes are argued to be an outcome of an Olympic *modus operandi* governed under the (flawed) logic and assumption that by virtue of hosting SMEs opportunities naturally ‘flow back into the community at the end of the Games’ (Cashman, 2006: 15). Furthermore, little to no two-way meaningful dialogue between Games planners and targeted host communities are in part to blame as event managers conceive their role as ‘merely informing people about plans rather than truly seeking input about these plans from the ground up’ (Cashman, 2002: 104). Pappalepore and Duignan (2016) argues this scenario leads to a lack of localism, both in the immediate and longer-term outcome of legacy, and Smith (2008) claims the very communities in need of positive local developmental effects rarely benefit from them. Yet, host community perspectives are encouraged in the earlier phases of project justification to legitimise policy objectives (Foley et al, 2011) – local interests and narratives are frequently marginalised in the lead up, during, and after the live staging of SMEs. Critics suggest that host communities, and their urban spaces are conceived as a blank slate ready for ‘wholesale demolition’ (Shin, 2013: 7) – a canvas that reflect and (re)produce the neoliberal imaginations around how ‘good’ cities should look, feel and function (Davies, 2012). By doing so, Mean et al (2004) stresses that SMEs unify consumption and take a narrow view that ‘fails to be responsive to wider interests and long-term community needs’ (2004: 130-131), undermining pluralism, alternative-local stakeholder interests (Raco and Tunney, 2010). It is therefore of no surprise that numerous authors call for a greater excavation beneath the ‘immediacy’ of the event, a deeper empirical examination of legacy, and of socio-economic relations and contestations that typify post-Games development in ex-host communities (Cashman, 2002, McGillivray and Frew, 2015, Pappalepore and Duignan, 2016).

Clone Towns and the threat of ‘blandscapes’

As detailed in the methodology, small retailers and hospitality businesses form the key stakeholder group and unit of analysis for this study. Yet, pertinent for this study and in light of aforementioned challenges associated with rising rents, Weingaertner and Barber (2010) claim that smaller food and drink businesses are particularly susceptible to increasing land values, rents and rates due to lower operating profit margins. As a result, this has historically (and continues to) lead to a shifting of business demographics in favour of corporate chains (UK Government, 2015). As illustrated across the Analysis section, this is a specific challenge drawn out in the context of London 2012.

The process of replacing of independent businesses, alongside diluting the individuality of place with a ‘monochrome strip of global and national chains’ is referred to as the ‘Clone Town’ effect (NEF, 2010: 6). Here, the basic proposition is that as chains enter, smaller stores (especially those vying for the same market), in many cases, are forced to close – a well evidenced, observed process underway across – and beyond - UK high streets. Duignan et al (2018) argues that the UK (alongside other European and global gentrified cities) is witnessing a physical and cultural shift from ‘slow towns’ (i.e. spaces with a larger % of independent, small businesses) to ‘clone towns’ – a scenario that reflects a wider indifference for the long-term sustainability and survival of small (independent) business communities. Specifically, the placed-based adjective of ‘clone’ (town) refers to homogenisation effects that causes uniformity, reducing diversity across – and vitality of – the high street. NEF (2010) describes how, in the UK, ‘real local shops have been replaced by swathes of identikit chain stores’ (...) ‘making high streets up and down the country virtually indistinguishable from one another’ (...) ‘retail spaces once filled with a thriving mix of independent(s)’ (...) ‘are becoming filled with faceless supermarket retailers, fast-food chains, and global fashion outlets’ (...) [many town centres have] ‘lost their sense of place and the distinctive facades of their high streets’ (2010: 5). As a product of this case and discussed in the latter half of this article, I describe this as the creation – and production of – ‘*urban blandscapes*’. Such processes, inevitably, pose a critical challenge for urban economies. This is particularly so as Raco and Tunney (2010) notes a close-knit, vibrant micro and small business community play a central role in the wider social and economic vitality of urban economies, as well as place identity and competitiveness (Everett, 2016).

Relatedly, as argued by Maheshwari et al (2011) a community driven place marketing and city branding outlook plays a key role in creating sustainable community growth strategies – helping to (re)position and differentiate places between one another. Developing a strong, localised brand identity is central to creating and maintaining destination competitiveness and value propositions, to put a place on the map, and encourage tourists to visit (Bultjens and Cairncross, 2015). As argued by Hawkins and Ryan (2013) fostering a strong local identity and collective grassroots community offer is central to creating an authentic, unique and deeper cultural offer – which, according to London’s 2012 legacy narrative was a central aspect of the role of the city’s SME for London and local host community place development strategies (Mayor of London, 2007). Such view corroborates one of Richard’s (2017) central arguments around the fundamental role events – and an event portfolio of holistic cultural programming – can play in generating a strong local community place and cultural offer as a result of bottom-up community-driven initiatives and top-down cultural programming (Christou, 2017). Yet, as evidenced in the Analysis section, fostering a positive local legacy of community inclusion and promoting a diverse destination offer appears to be under-threat from clone town effects post-Games. Indeed, the shift to clone – potentially supported by post-Games rising rents – represent a darker side of (exclusive) local economic and place development challenges. According to NEF (2010) such effects ‘undermines democracy’ (...) ‘attacks our sense of place and belonging’ (...) pulling apart that ‘which our livelihoods and the

economy depend' (...) where 'clone towns imperil local livelihoods, communities and our culture, by decreasing the resilience of high streets to economic downturns and diminishing consumer choice' (2010). As a result of such urban transformations, specifically in the context of the UK, NEF's (2010) seminal report: '*Clone Town Britain*' suggests that:

...we are reaching a critical juncture: We can choose to take action that will lead to thriving, diverse, resilient local economies across the UK; or, we can do nothing and condemn ourselves to bland identikit towns dominated by a few bloated retail behemoths. The choice is ours (NEF, 2010: 3).

In response to such conceptual and practical challenges, the article shifts from a problem-based approach, to a solutions-based approach to consider practices, policies and future areas of study required to illuminate – and tackle – such challenges in the context of SMEs. It is with this in mind, this article turns its focus toward London's localised Olympic legacies, specifically those present within the event case study of London 2012 and place-based challenges posed for the ex-Olympic community of Central Greenwich.

Methodology

Drawing on the concept of legacy, this paper examines embryonic legacies forming across London, specifically ex-Olympic community of small (retail and hospitality) businesses situated within Central Greenwich. Utilising Preuss's (2007) Legacy Cube as a backdrop for empirical analysis, this article examines issues related to small business sustainability, place development and pervasive place-based challenges associated with the so-called 'clone town' effect.

As identified in the introduction, a key contribution of this case is to provide an in-depth, qualitative case study of event legacy. Indeed, this article provides a detailed analysis of idiosyncratic and localised embryonic legacies, (epistemologically) difficult to access without appropriate methods. Therefore, empirical analysis is underpinned by 43 in-depth interviews across four separate stakeholder groups (SGs) (see Table 1) with local businesses, local authorities, London-centric and national project actors and policy makers. Primary material is supported by official London 2012 archival, documentary, and media reports to add texture and triangulate primary and secondary data sources. Adding to the complexity, the paper argues that legacy can – and perhaps should – be understood, ontologically speaking, as a subjective socially constructed phenomenon accessible via interpretivist-phenomenological study. This article, and researchers studying such phenomenon, must therefore consider – or at least acknowledge – legacy as *verhesten* (to interpretively know) – and '*depending on one's perspective, rather than to be offered as singularity successful for all*' (Hiller, 1998: 50). Such view corroborates, once again, the critical importance of taking a place-based and qualitative approach to offer a detailed examination of legacy in specific localised context and through the eyes of those 'lived experiences' at the heart of such (perceived and actual) legacy outcomes.

All interviewees were chosen either based on geographical positionality (i.e. small businesses positioned directly in the town centre of Central Greenwich), and purposively based on their knowledge of project governance or policy making which was supported by a snowball sampling method. Central Greenwich was chosen for a number of key reasons. First, Central Greenwich formed 1 of 5 key official Olympic boroughs in London chosen to host sporting events. Second, the town centre contains a high density of retail and hospitality businesses – the key unit of analysis for this study. And third, several accounts including the official Federation of Small Business (FSB) (2013) 'Passing the Baton'

report specifically identified small businesses within Central Greenwich as specifically disrupted during and after the Games.

Insert - Table 1 - Stakeholder Group 1 – 4: Interviewees

All textual data was coded using NVivo 10, and theoretical ideas were developed through adopting Attridge-Stirling's (2001) Thematic Networks Analysis (TNA) approach. Key themes were developed that subsequently underpin the following Analysis section: i) lost and forgotten local legacies, ii) legacies of rising commercial rents, small business failure and displacement, iii) shifting business demographics – from slow town to clone town. As outlined earlier and in the following Analysis, this article recognises the inherent complex, localised and subjectivist nature of legacy – and the subsequent deployment of subjectivist philosophical paradigms, and qualitative methods required to generate and amplifying local perspectives within and beyond Central Greenwich. The article specifically intended to collect data 2-3 years after the Games (2014 – 2015) to allow for embryonic legacies to form. It is however important to note this study represents a snapshot in time of (embryonic) legacies that inevitably represents an ambulatory character (Gold and Gold, 2008).

Analysis: London's embryonic legacies

London's local legacy narratives – lost and forgotten?

Across 2005 – 2012, a series of planned, long-term legacy ambitions were published – placing local 'community' and 'inclusivity' at the heart, outlining positive 'community benefits' with economic growth at the centre offering opportunities Londoners, specifically local businesses could leverage (House of Lords, 2013). Legacy narratives were finely crafted at the heart of London's 'technically polished' bid (MacRury and Poynter, 2009) - serving to legitimise the very existence of the project, whilst sustaining – and increasing - the need for public sector funding. Wider national and host city visions closely aligned with those projected by the local authority: the Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG), focusing on achieving 'a lasting legacy for the local economy from hosting the Games' (...) [and] 'increasing the competitiveness of local businesses' (RBG, 2012). Yet, local (negative) perspectives, as highlighted across the article and below, juxtapose positive legacy narratives – highlighting how, on the contrary, post-Games small business sustainability at the local level appears to be under threat.

In the lead up, during, and following the Olympics, questions over London's legacy were raised. Firstly, concerns over limited legacy oversight, incoherent governance and strategy. A Senior Manager at the London Assembly remarked that 'well, one of my criticisms of the Olympics is that we haven't really given enough thought about legacy stuff' (#8 (SG4)), emphasised by a member of the House of Lords claiming that those responsible for overseeing legacy had 'taken their eye off the ball' (...) 'I think the planning of SMEs is very much focused on the event itself (...) my worry [as also expressed in the House of Lords (2013) inquiry] is that they drop the ball and that there's nobody with a clear ownership of it' (#1 (SG4)). Findings illustrate a conflict between the planned vs. unplanned nature of legacy (Preuss, 2007). Concerns around a lack of planning and resources required to effectively deliver on legacy were raised on numerous occasions, firstly by a Senior Manager at the British Olympic Association (BOA):

I don't believe a mayor ever has enough money to do it properly, and so the problem is that what it becomes, if we're not very careful, is a whole range of disparate ideas where private finance is put in (...) the mayor has to have a role here, but the government need to stay involved, and because it actually does need investment by the government (#6 (SG4)).

And by a member of the House of Lords:

I mean as far as the Mayor's Office is concerned, yes, they still talk the legacy talk, but the reality is that the Mayor's mind has moved on to other things – to Westminster and so on (...) [and that] DCMS perceive a legacy responsibility in terms of sport but there's no overarching responsibility for the regeneration of East London (#1 (SG4)).

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and the London Chamber of Commerce corroborated this view – claiming little to no funding to assess a small business legacy, and indicated passive, laissez-faire approach to the scrutiny of legacy. A Senior Manager at the London Assembly even described Games planning, and the UK political-economic environment as 'a bit too neo-liberal at the moment' (#9 (SG4)). Analysis illustrates a public project ready to install legal and financial structures to create exceptional and ideal conditions to host a global sporting and commercial event and emphasise legacy benefits to justify the intervention, but rather ironically not fully prepared and committed to execute, examine, and evaluate the efficacy of said legacy promises. An underfunded and under examined legacy focus contradicts widespread view of legacy as a 'long-term' and '10 year project' (House of Lords, 2013), and the Royal Borough of Greenwich (2012) view that such local legacies can 'only be judged fully over time for the local economy' (2015: 25). Indeed, in light of this, and the critical challenges outlined across this case, this article argues that continual scrutiny and examination of embryonic legacies forming at the local level is fundamental if the project is to be held accountable to its virtuous legacy ambitions.

Interviewees claimed a lack of government intervention is giving rise to a legacy of private interests, and a focus on international development in the area. A Senior Manager at RGB expressed this as a hoped-for outcome of London 2012 stating that '...it has bought confidence to developers and investments. Enquiries from hotel developers, office developers are going up, and people are investing in major chains' (#19 (SG2)). Small businesses highlighted that external companies were starting to see more 'potential in the town' (#26 (SG1)). Although such investment presents developmental opportunity, Raco and Tunney (2010) they can be pursued by local authorities with either limited knowledge – or an indifference for – longer-term implications on existing communities. Echoing this point, interviewees stressed RGB was encouraging big businesses into development of the borough as a result, at the expense of displacing smaller businesses – describing how 'small businesses suffered. That was it. Big time. It was all about big business and nothing about small and medium sized businesses at all' (#35 (SG1)) and that '[the council] is trying to get the big companies in and get all of their money out of them. Most of the borough is horrified about what is happening' (#18 (SG3)). Repeatedly, this position was explicitly raised across all SGs.

The point about the larger corporates is they tend to deliver more potentially than some of the smaller businesses and, unfortunately, that may be, but that is the way it works' (...) yet 'if they don't think about what the impact is going to be on the surrounding areas, it won't work' (#1 (SG4)).

Risks around urban reengineering processes were raised, stated by one Senior Manager at the London Assembly that 'inevitably [Games development] was going to lead to a high degree of creative destruction (...) the Games themselves, I think, was a big risk, really, to be honest' (#2 (SG4)). Locals highlighted feeling neglected and barely recognised as a key stakeholder in the project, as a result of Olympic planning – their interests swiftly superseded by big business.

...the council did not help us at all. They were not for us, they were all for big corporates – we were completely pushed aside and the council made that obvious [during the Games] as well (...) they [the council] are not very good [at supporting small firms] I am afraid – not with local businesses anyway – they prefer the big companies, they are pushing the big companies in here (...) they could have benefited small business who have been keeping Greenwich here for years instead of big corporate companies who come in and gets everything (#34 (SG1)).

Creative destruction, and resultant effects of rising rents and more competitive business environments were described as a certain outcome for small businesses. A Senior Manager at the London Assembly noted that London's legacy focused on 'inject[ing] new life into the economy to try and get more businesses into the area. Actually, if that is going to succeed there is going to be a certain amount of randomness and creative destruction in that a lot of the old businesses will be screened out, their rents will go up and unless they can improve their margins and their business offer some will go to the wall' (#9 (SG4)). Findings indicate a scenario where uncompetitive small businesses become casualties for the greater good of a local legacy.

I'm not sure the business communities will look the same, there may be different communities and businesses (...) that might be private, local economy which is a completely different context from the one in ten years or even five years before, an economy which is sustainable. That would be legacy. What happened to business X? Well, the answer is well they may have disappeared (...) that may be a very different thing to what you've got at the moment... and may be quite unpopular in the short-term (#1 (SG4)).

The view that certain stakeholders emerge more desirable than others rapidly reached saturation. A Senior Manager in Newham Borough, directly responsible to welfare of small businesses drew on Marxist sentiment with respect to the 'haves' and 'have not's' as existing local businesses are...

...all slowly but surely being unfortunately forced out of their locations because land value has started to increase as people... as the "haves" push out the "have not's" (...) residential prices have jumped 100 per cent (...) ultimately what it amounts to is that people are priced out of formally rich areas (...) and I think it is East London's turn (#20 (SG2)).

London's local economic (legacy) challenge: Development-turn-displacement

The House of Lords (2013) claimed 'we heard concerns that the "Olympic effect" would increase house prices still further in surrounding areas, leading to 'convergence' being achieved through gentrification, rather than improved outcomes for current residents' (2013: 68). Here, findings reveal the conflict between positive, planned legacies vs. emerging negative, unplanned legacy (Preuss, 2007). As identified earlier, showcasing effects and the intended outcome

to enhance the desirability of ex-Olympic communities was at the epi-centre and ‘gentrification would be a symptom of that change, so you improve the infrastructure and that makes it a more attractive area, it means rents go up, it means that different people move in’ (#1 (SG4)). Despite associated threats, Chief Executive of the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) claimed that one measure of increasing house prices could be seen as an outcome of successful regeneration’ (House of Lords, 2013: 68). The Work Foundation (2010) illustrated tensions between developments with and for vs. gentrification [forced up] on - existing communities, arguing the challenge for London was ‘capitalising on its strengths as a global knowledge city in order to grow the economy, and managing the risk that some individuals and places in London will be left behind without intervention (2010: 4) (...) [as the games project has the propensity to] displace individuals from communities (2010: 42). Interviewees repeatedly echoed this view claiming that ‘some change to existing communities was always inevitable, and those are the communities which are changing all the time (...) It’s [gentrification] is not necessarily a bad thing in itself (...) if you wanted to see greater economic development, that would probably have led to gentrification’ (#1 (SG4)). Effectively, the over-riding view – and outcome - is that...

...a lot of the old businesses will be screened out, their rents will go up and unless they can improve their margins and their business offer, some will go to the wall (...) we wanted to inject new life in to the economy to try and get some new businesses into the area (...) there is bound to be a re-juggling of the business mix in the area, it’s inevitable! (#9 (SG4)).

Sources claimed that ‘what we are going to find, once the carnival has moved on, is that very few people who live in the area and need housing are going to be able to afford to live in the neighbourhood’ (New York Times, 2012); and that ‘I have no idea how the country is going to deal with that but we are pricing a whole generation of people out of London’ (Local councillor cited in House of Lords, 2013: 68). UK landscape of rising rents and fiscal changes in the business environment relating to local business taxation (i.e. business rates) – compound legacies of gentrification and displacement. Duignan et al (2018) notes that between 2010-2017 rates have risen overall by £654m, and the UK has the highest rates across Europe and more than France and Germany combined (FSB, 2013). Specifically, official Olympic boroughs and venue areas has witnessed the largest uplift in real-estate prices (London Assembly, 2017).

Away from the everyday small high street business, emphasis was placed on high-growth, creative, hi-tech and service industries – as key SMEs to fuel a productive legacy. Aside from local businesses themselves, very little emphasis was raised by SG2, 3, and 4 with respect to the importance of those high street businesses situated at the heart of this case study. There was an overarching positionality around how ‘creative industries and high-tech firms are key for East London growth – the challenge for East London is that existing local businesses are often tired and run down’ (#3 (SG4)), and that ‘the sort of business that would be attractive post-Olympics would be far more service economy end’ (...) ‘which is why we did the Olympics’ (#9 (SG4)). Findings illustrate an indifference for existing small high street businesses – pejoratively seen as a block on economic progress - in favour of a new demographic. Indeed, such sentiment was raised during the Games too as Vlachos (2015) outlined the specific ways small businesses became sidelined and unable to access event visitor economy related benefits, pointing to a poster in a local Greenwich pub window stating: ‘LOCOG [London Olympic Committee for the Olympic Games]: Licence to Kill a Town Centre’ (see Vlachos, 2015: 183 for the specific image).

It's [London 2012] critical for the future of the East End to attract creative and hi-tech firms – these are key for economic prosperity and employment – perhaps more important than dying high street sectors and local retail (...) the introduction of Westfield was a corporate bonanza but although it may overshadow businesses and detract local custom – the place has employed over 2000 Newham residents (...) gentrification is welcomed. Although it is difficult for local people and businesses, it enhances an area, brings significant employment benefit and better for the wider development of an area (#4 (SG4)).

In the next section, the paper assesses the embryonic (legacy) place development fall out of such gentrification and rising rents, namely, the production of what is earlier referred to as the clone town effect and the creation of urban landscapes.

Old spaces, new faces: Clone town legacies and the creation of London's urban landscapes

The post-Games period was a time of growing uncertainty for small businesses, embroiled in a struggle to survive, as gentrification and associated rising rents served to displace existing small businesses. Local perspectives reflect on London's legacy as an invisible, cancerous inhabitant – a *fait accompli* with little to no panacea to resist what appears to be inevitable displacement resulting from aforementioned rising rents. Virtually every interviewee stressed this process posed a threat to longer-term business survival. A Senior Manager at organisation: Business in the Community (BITC) argued 'rising rents and gentrification has had a detrimental effect on the traditional businesses (...) they must be facing increasing pressures for the increased charges they will inevitably face when they sign their tenancy agreements (...) it's a feeling through speaking with people in the area' compounded by 'business rates going sky high' (#17 SG3). Landlords, looking to maximise commercial returns, increasing rents across valorised ex-Olympic spaces are predominantly to blame.

Interviewees claimed that the Olympics transformed the mind-set of landlords with an indifference for the survival of existing, smaller businesses, claiming that 'owners of them [commercial properties] are trying to get much higher value as a consequence of the Games. That's the danger of the Games, of course, and even more so because of what's happened since – which is the property prices go up! That remains a real danger, that people get priced out (#6 (SG4)), and that 'you have the landlords that know the site will be developed, and you will find gentrification and they will put up their rent as the market price and land values are increasing (...) and the type of appliance that they can attract for their sites will change and that will have an impact on the high street' (#19 (SG2)).

Findings reveal that the Olympics helped create a permanent exception of unaffordable high rents out of reach for existing, smaller businesses, stating that 'they [Greenwich Hospital] are putting the rent up - renting out for Costa, two double shops to Costa, for like 90,000 a year - which is a ridiculous amount of money. And no independent can afford to pay that. So they are going to come back and say well we can get this for the shop, so... (#25 (SG1)); and 'rates and rents [have been put] up for many of the local businesses. And since Jamie Oliver's restaurant has popped up they won't lower them' (#34 (SG1)). This was seen as a direct cause of small business displacement and encouraging big business into commercial spaces they once occupied. Repeatedly, the theme of winners, losers, and the inevitability of casualties were noted as 'prices around Olympic areas will (!) rise, have to rise, and yes this poses problems, but this is the changing face of the high street. But again, legacy is a longer-term concern and there have to be winners and

losers in this game (#4 (SG4)). Although qualifiers over whether this is a direct impact of the Games was raised here, with another arguing that 'I do not know whether that [gentrification and emerging corporatisation of the high street] is because of the Olympics or whether just general policy and town centres changing' (#35 (SG1)). Our findings reveal that although gentrification effects and subsequent small business displacement is an existing concern, the Olympics serves to catalyse such economic processes as perhaps both an intended and unintended legacy outcome (Preuss, 2007).

To what extent to which this [local economic changes] provides an opportunity for local players or the extent to which it is a colonial exercise which outside bodies tend to muscle in is the major question (...) so do I think the community businesses the area were meant to benefit from the games? Well, it's some of the existing ones had to go, others were potentially going to get the opportunities (#9 (SG4)).

At the intersect of showcasing (Faulkner et al, 2001), resultant gentrification, displacement and changing business environments, several interviewees stated that 'people think that it's a desirable place to be in East London, so they want to start a business here and start living, so it pushes rental values up, which means that only big business can afford them' (#21 (SG2)); resulting in 'a change in the business base in the area' (#2 (SG4)). This view was emphasised repeatedly:

...they [Greenwich hospitality trust, the landlord] have quadrupled the rents, they put the rents up by four fold – driving all the small businesses out (...) I expect the rents to increase further (...) they are driving them [existing businesses] all out, turning them into flats to rent them out (...) Café Sol had the business for 40 years and he was paying so much they obtained his building and put rent up four-fold (#34 (SG1)).

Realities of gentrification and business displacement emerge largely determined by how close individual businesses were to contractual renewal. For those close to renewal, exclusionary realities started to reveal – a sensitive and emotional topic for those on the brink of business failure. Exclaimed by one small retailer, '*well, my days are numbered ultimately. I am on borrowed time (...) they [Greenwich Hospital Trust, the local landlord] are going to put my rent up (...) sooner or later they will get us*' - #25 (SG1)) – a local voice that reveals and represents the plight of one small business, and reflects the wider sentiment felt by the entire community. The idea of legacy as a ticking timebomb of inevitable displacement was echoed throughout the data, illustrated by another local trader below who claimed:

We are lucky we are tied into a long-term lease but this is due to renewal soon, and the effect is yet to hit us. However, we know that some rents here have gone up 300% - some rents in Central Greenwich were £10000, and now are looking at £30000. That is pretty much central London [prices]! (#38 (SG1)).

Resultant effects indicate, what the article discusses earlier, as the shift from 'slow towns' to 'clone towns' – and the production of urban landscapes. Locals argued that 'with rent going up there are many restaurant chains coming [into Central Greenwich] (...) more chain of restaurants are coming to the area' (#39 (SG1)), and when 'Greenwich Hospital put the rents up (...) it [the Olympics] did a lot of damage in the process, and took a lot of the community. They've taken away a lot of our shops and, as I say, some have closed. It's [the community] is incredibly socially divided' (#29 (SG1)). Others described Central Greenwich as 'sadder. It's sadder, because it's so - some people closed

(...) when I first came here they were thriving, and it was more bustling and they [small firms] had a lot of character' (...) we mourn all the shops that had to go' (#29 (SG1)). Albeit only briefly touched upon, sentiments were shared across Vlachos's (2015) assessment of the immediate impact of London 2012 on small Greenwich based businesses, with one business stating: 'I don't want anything to do with the Olympics, it's put me out of business, it's destroyed this town, it's shit' (Vlachos, 2015: 186). Repeatedly, qualitative evidence across this study illustrated these local perceptions, of whom frequently pointed to objective-physical evidence on the high street to qualify their point.

Those businesses in Greenwich where it was really tough and for some went to the wall after the games itself and whether as a result of the games was the final nail in the coffin (#12 (SG3)).

As remarked by the study's key, local gatekeeper:

A lot of the shops in the town - a lot more shops have closed since the games because they couldn't stomach the impact (...) for them having their business decimated for a period of time, they couldn't even hang on by their fingernails (...) so a lot of closures happened in the town centre and if you wander down into the town centre, you'll probably see that there's still quite a few that are empty now. This is prime town centre kind of tourist-ville but they couldn't hang on (#15 (SG3)).

Now, locals describe London's legacy as 'corporate', 'horrific' and a major 'bugbear of a lot of residents' that represent the 'destruction of artisan culture' (#24 (SG1)). Others claimed 'in another 10 years [Central Greenwich] will be unrecognisable' (#15 (SG3)), case of 'Greenwich Council slowly but surely destroying the old artisan culture' (#18 (SG3)) as a result of a corporate colonisation dominated by national 'American chains'. Chains now rival independents, noted by a local café owner: 'Greenwich Hospital have just let Costa Coffee onto the island which is a shame not just because we are a coffee shop, just because it is the first chain on the island (#25 (SG1)) – a point repeatedly corroborated. Locals describe 'it is much worse (...) it's more corporate, we have more corporates now than we did before (#32 (SG1)), and that 'the competition has become slightly bigger, slightly better (...) in years to come individual businesses will succumb to bigger franchises' (#30 (SG1)). Replaced by a monochromatic landscape of chains and the shift toward an urban blandscape across Central Greenwich, many interviewed for this study have now been displaced.

...yes we really have been [taken over by corporations]. You got your Nandos, Zizzi and Jamie Oliver – bigger companies are starting to come in you know (...) independents are beginning to be pushed out' (#35 (SG1)), [as a result] 'it's just going to be corporates now, before we didn't have any, we've now got Nando's, Zizzi's, Starbucks, Costa's, we even have a McDonald's (...) It is just corporates that can afford everything now' (#34 (SG1)).

What appears to be left is a legacy of resentment, of local loss, and of a project that afforded this to happen. 'We didn't get anything from the Olympics (...) they have not left any [positive] legacy here' (#35 (SG1)) - a statement echoing the sentiment of an embattled small business community – of whom now deride their local post-Games urban environment as 'quiet and dull' (#34 (SG1)) – helping to metaphorically and practically illustrate and justify the resultant

urban landscapes forming over the colourful, characterful artisanal place image and destination offer of Central Greenwich.

The sports were great – but everything around it just fell apart. (...) How many lifestyles did they corrupt and bend there. (...) it was great for all the sportsmen and women who were part of it – but for anyone outside of it – suffered (...) they suck off every individual community they land on (#37 (SG1)).

Conclusions: London’s embryonic legacy of small business (un)sustainability, clone town effects and urban landscapes

This article has illustrated, empirically, the link between Olympic event-led urban gentrification, rising rents and so-called embryonic legacies forming across Central Greenwich concerning clone town effects and the production of urban landscapes. Evidence generated across London, and specifically within Central Greenwich corroborates NEF’s (2010) wider argument that processes associated with the production of clone town, monochrome spaces serves to potentially undermine diverse and vibrant local communities, erode place identity and dilute the local, cultural offer. This article builds on Duignan et al’s (2018) concern that such structural economic and place development effects has the propensity to reduce destination competitiveness. Here, SMEs may well be seen as just one of the multivariate factors producing the urban landscapes that continue to pervade, displace and erode urban diversity, vibrancy, authenticity and deeper cultural offering across the UK (NEF, 2010; Duignan et al, 2018) – and beyond. Although bottom-up community events often play a key role in constructively supporting small business sustainability (Richards, 2017), SMEs, in this case illustrate the potentially destructive nature of (top-down) SMEs may well pose gentrified futurities as opposed to the utopian developmental opportunities as initially projected. Both objective evidence alongside subjective accounts illustrates these pervasive processes post-London 2012, and feeds into a wider narrative amplified in the UK media (e.g. The Guardian, 2017) and government policy narrative (e.g. UK Government, 2015) about the structural economic challenges posed by rising rents and business rates on micro and small business survival more generally. In terms of current managerial and policy implications, this is a critical space of research, related to associative clone town effects, that will be undertaken by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) across 2019 – 2020 according to recent Personal Communication (2018) between the author of this paper and the Principal Director for Communities and Localities at NEF.

Indeed, findings reveal that SMEs – and those responsible for managing them, including local authorities – may well fail to acknowledge local interests (Cashman, 2002), recognise the potentially critical role local communities play in collectively contributing to local identity, vibrancy (e.g. Raco and Tunney, 2010), and strengthening the local cultural offer (e.g. Everett, 2016; Hawkins and Ryan, 2013; Maheshwari et al., 2011). As a result, this article argues that a community driven place marketing and city branding outlook is required to not only support the sustainability of small business communities but create a portfolio of event activity (e.g. Richards, 2017) to help ex-host Olympic communities (re)position and further differentiate their local destination offer and localised brand identity – a key aspects of urban diversity London’s 2012 project wished to demonstrate (Mayor of London, 2007). Yet, in light of current evidence, the paper agrees with Raco and Tunney’s (2010) sentiment that:

Local firms [of whom] have found themselves on the receiving end of the process of remaking this part of London and the production of new spaces in which they have no part (2010: 2082).

As a result these critical insights, a key question raised by this case is the extent to which findings are reflective of a wider indifference for protecting local, independent small businesses that contribute to the cultural diversity of UK high streets – and beyond. This is particularly true in the place-based context of an artisanal destination like Central Greenwich that by and large depends on cultural diversity (alongside a rich, cultural heritage) as a unique selling point and destination attractor for stimulating the visitor economy and touristic consumption. Do such outcomes represent, from a broader place management and development perspective, an oversight by place managers to represent and protect the image of destination – both within the melee of SME lifecycles, and more broadly across neoliberal cities, towns and spaces? Perhaps, as raised by Duignan and Wilbert (2016), this is a normal – and naturalised - outcome stemming from the privatisation of Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) and tourist boards, particularly across the UK, that may be seen to appear to chase profit over place – ignoring the rich, plural and diversity that underpin vibrant urban environments. An indifference for small business survival appears to be a by-product of a wider reticence to protect elements of localism – as host communities themselves become leverageable resources to be commoditised and colonised by global, corporate chains. Conceptually, this article illustrates that changing business demographics, in this case: independent small businesses to corporate chains, is a latent but vitally important dynamic to be absorbed under the definition of the so-called ‘Olympic effect(s)’. This is particularly so as such shift serves to undermine alternative and plural narratives at the heart of community, but simultaneously erode an existing local-cultural offer, urban vibrancy, and ‘reduce diversification’ (#7 (SG4), also see Everett, 2016) that underpins a competitive, and unique urban destination to visit, work and play as denoted by perspectives at the heart of this study claiming:

...you will [be able to] go anywhere and it will be the same (...) will people still want to visit it? I do not know’ (#15 (SG3)); and ‘it’s [Central Greenwich] always been a bit quirky (...) largely untouched and it’s developed its own little subculture (...) with artists, poets, musicians (...) it’s like Frankie and Benny’s and these American chains going in there all with their like neon signs and stuff (...) slowly but surely Greenwich Council is destroying the old artisan culture’ (#18 (SG3)).

Rising rents, both residential and commercial, are clearly identified as a core risk to existing small businesses illustrative of the changing nature of ‘spaces’ affected by legacy structures as identified earlier by Preuss (2007). An emerging question, related to both the conceptual and practical aspects of delivering a ‘local legacy’ is whether gentrification (and somewhat inevitability of rising commercial rents) is a planned or unplanned outcome of SMEs? This is a key, structural aspect of legacy addresses by Preuss (2007). As discussed in the literature review, alongside case study evidence presented, various bodies including the House of Lords (2013), Work Foundation (2010) and OECD (2008) all point to the systematic challenges and likelihood of such local economic effects post-Games. Therefore, can we assert that such local economic development legacies be conceived of a planned aspect of SMEs? And, more specifically and pertinent to this study: Are place managers, those in the visitor economy and local and (host) city wide tourism boards perceptive to the potential challenges of gentrification and shifting business demographics on place image and destination competitiveness? Although one would imagine such developmental outcomes are not an ideal outcome for place managers, the loss of local diversity and cultural offer as a result of small business displacement emerges as a very real, tangible outcome of London’s legacy. Indeed, this case illustrates the ever ambiguous, contradictory, highly contested aspect realities of legacy (Getz, 2007; Preuss, 2007; Zimbalist, 2015) – with implications on small business sustainability and place developments that appears to strip away the culturally-colourful artisanal

character and reducing a diverse set of small independent business, toward a monochromatic urban landscape of global and national chains.

London's local embryonic legacies appear to be a far cry away from the virtuous aims of positive local development that drove London's legacy narrative in the first place and across the lifecycle of the project. Indeed, beyond London as host city – it is pertinent to critique whether aforementioned local developmental outcomes are congruent to the wider, supranational aims of the Olympic 2020 Agenda, and, the Olympic Movement. Indeed, this article argues that such ex-ante projections vs. ex-post realities appear somewhat opposed – thus, begging the question for practitioners, policy makers and academics: How can the interests of wider Olympic policy, SMEs within specific host cities, and soon-to-be impacted local communities be better aligned to close the dichotomies gap between rhetoric and reality? Although the catch all concept of legacy is, as Bourdieu and Wacquant (2001) suggests on everyone's lips – this article argues that legacy provides an ideal narrative to pay lip service and divert attention away from the inevitable structural challenges and inequalities fostered by SME projects (Duignan, Pappalepore and Everett, 2019). A legacy of lost, forgotten and invisibilised small businesses at the margins of post-Olympic host communities and their legacies illustrate the power of legacy as an ideological fetish – to obfuscate structural and systematic socio-economic challenges at the local level (Zizek, 2008). It feeds into existing notions of SMEs as entrepreneurial gambles (Zimbalist, 2005), representing a bread and circus character – a scenario whereby 'the circus succeeds [in this case, the SME] even if the bread [i.e. legacy] - is lacking' (...) the triumph of image over substance is complete' (Harvey, 1989: 14). The 'legacy fetish' – in this respect – affords the invisibilisation of aforementioned challenges, local narratives, and the exclusionary Olympic effect(s) that manifest across the legacies of SMEs.

As a result, a key managerial and policy implication of this study is the extent to which local authorities and governments may well intervene in protecting existing small businesses against some of the – what seems to be – inevitabilities of gentrification that occur systematically within ex-Olympic post-Games spaces. One Senior Manager at the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) argued how '*...regarding the risks of gentrification and rental increases, this is a major issue for the East End. The LLDC and I need to consider how we can use our planning powers to maintain the fabric of businesses in the local area*' (Interviewee #3 (SG4)). Yet, if we look at local developmental effects so far in Central Greenwich, little intervention – and protection – has been offered to secure intended positive small businesses legacies as described earlier. Subjective accounts revealed in the analysis illustrate how small businesses felt unsupported with little protection against the post-Games economic inevitabilities that threaten their success, survival and sustainability. Effectively illustrating the scenario whereby small businesses must either 'improve margins' or 'go to the wall'. This supports earlier arguments that SME led development frequently leads to gentrification on, as opposed to development for and with existing communities (House of Lords, 2013). And yet, the 'hard outcomes of neoliberalism' as Hall (2006) typifies as a consequence of SMEs awkwardly contrasts and undermines London's initial virtuous legacy objectives. Indeed, the article builds on the concern that the rhetorical allure of inclusion, quickly and frequently results in a local reality of exclusion, where Olympic-led urban development may...

...degenerate not regenerate (...) brushes it [existing local culture and respective communities] aside for a corporate sports day (...) it [the legacy] boils down to 1000s upon 1000s of individual lives that are now forever changed for three weeks of a brand fest (Sinclair, 2012).

As outlined in the introduction, little qualitative, in-depth examination of the idiosyncratic aspects of local legacy rise to the surface of both academic and policy event impact analyses. As a result, the very real objective place transformations, alongside local perceptions of how local communities physically change post-Games, become forgotten – or as Raco and Tunney (2010) argue – communities become invisibilised. London's clone town legacies and the pervasive transition toward urban landscapes emerge as just one of the many nuanced legacy outcomes affecting local livelihoods at the heart of ex-Olympic host communities. As a result, this paper builds on Pappalepore and Duignan's (2016) call that more idiosyncratic place-based analysis of legacy is needed to reveal the full extent – objective and subjective outcomes of SME legacies.

The critical positionality of this study lends itself to development of both policy and managerial implications – highlighting two core themes. Firstly, re-thinking the geography of Olympic activity - hosting both sporting and commercial events outside of densely populated suburbs in one isolated site is a simple, direct way of negating challenges raised. Secondly, protecting local cultural offer and producers of culture – critical for urban diversity, vibrancy and identity – emerges vital to maintain destination competitiveness, and, more pertinently, delivering on the local legacy promise. Clearly, actions are to be taken to dampen negative and/or negate against demise and/or displacement, for example by controlling rents, public subsidy, and/or creating a strategic portfolio of grassroots events to generate visitor economy returns – vital for the sustainability of small businesses (Duignan et al, 2018). Philosophically and methodologically speaking this article calls for future researchers, event practitioners and policy makers engaged in event impact and legacy analysis to engage in deeper, empirical excavations of the contextual, messy legacies – and exclusions – of less visible stakeholders at the margins of SME led urban development – to build and generate theory, directly from the horse's mouth.

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