Main Findings

- **Lack of robust evidence.** The body of robust evidence on legacy from past large-scale sporting events was limited and the available evidence varied greatly in quality and rigour. In particular, there was a distinct lack of long-term rather than short-term assessments in all legacy areas.

- **Mixed evidence.** Some studies showed increases in economic growth and employment, however, many of these studies were based on estimated rather than primary data and included only very short-term post-event assessments. The evidence for increases in physical activity was very limited and often of low quality.

- **Past events varied greatly in their explicit legacy plans.** Most major sporting events did not plan for legacy beyond the economic and infrastructural benefits and the lack of evidence of legacy could, therefore, be a reflection of lack of explicit planning. London 2012 and Glasgow 2014 appear to be in a strong position as their legacy programmes are more comprehensive than for past events.

- **No automatic ‘trickle-down effect’**. There does not appear to be an inherent direct link between elite sporting events and positive legacy outcomes. Rather than happening naturally, the evidence stresses that long-term legacy needs to be carefully planned and implemented. In particular, special attention needs to be paid to the processes and steps which link the event to the positive outcomes, including a focus on the grassroots level.

- **Importance of a long-term perspective.** The evidence suggests that without a long-term perspective, legacy ambitions are unlikely to be achieved. For example, infrastructure needs to be built with long-term use as the priority and funding and resources need to be allocated to the post-games period.

- **Importance of good institutional organisation.** In order to achieve a partnership legacy, the evidence highlighted the need for clear roles and responsibilities across different organisations. This involved the need for clear strategies and objectives in order to keep the legacy plans focused as well as clear and reliable communication channels between different stakeholders.

- **Importance of community engagement.** The evidence showed that this could include encouragement of grassroots-level participation in sport and cultural programmes, as well as allowing the community to be part of the planning and delivery of the programmes.
Introduction

In July 2014, Glasgow will host the 20th Commonwealth Games. The event will bring together athletes from 71 Commonwealth countries and territories, and will provide 11 days of sport and cultural activities. However, the ambitions of the Games reach far beyond the days of the event itself. The Games are seen as a once in a lifetime opportunity to create a lasting legacy. This legacy is hoped to promote more active, more connected, more sustainable and more flourishing communities. This involves increases in economic growth, employment and tourism, improvement of the physical environment and infrastructure, increase in physical activity, cultural participation, and environmental responsibility, and celebration of our own and others cultures.

Nonetheless, there is also an awareness that achieving these legacy aims will take a lot of careful planning and collaboration. This poses a great challenge, as well as opens up a range of opportunities. Lessons from past sporting events could potentially play an important role when facing these challenges by providing a wider knowledgebase and informing strategies and decisions.

Aim and Method

The aim of the review was to identify evidence assessing past legacy achievements of major sporting events. The focus was on independent and peer-reviewed empirical evidence of past events and excluded predictions and baseline data of future events. The review was undertaken over a three month period between April and June 2012.

The evidence surveyed drew initially on relevant material over the previous 10 years, however as the body of evidence was limited this was expanded to all relevant available empirical evidence. The scoping methods used for this report are eclectic and include:

- a search of major electronic databases by the Scottish Government Library service including IDOX, EconLit, PAIS, EBSCO host knowledge network databases, Sociological Collection and Academic Search Premier Internet, for relevant publications since 2002.
- following citation pathways, by following up bibliographies of key studies, including McCartney, et al., 2010a.
- limited communication with academic colleagues working in or with knowledge of sporting legacy.
- analysis of papers presented at academic conferences.

Initially, the literature was sifted to exclude events that were not comparable with our context, however again due to the limited literature in this area this was broadened to include any major sporting event that featured in the literature. It is important to recognise that events included in the review differ in many significant ways:

- size and type of sport event (e.g. Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, FIFA World Cup, Rugby World Cup).
- length of event.
- national and political context.

Findings

The body of robust evidence was very limited and the available evidence varied greatly in quality and rigour. Moreover, there was a distinct lack of long-term rather than short-term assessments in all legacy areas.

Economic growth

A substantial body of research indicated economic growth as a result of hosting a major sporting event (Kasimait, 2003; McCartney, et al., 2012a). However, many of these studies were based on estimated data rather than primary data. Moreover, most included only very short-term post-event assessments and failed to account for the cost of the event (see McCartney, et al., 2010a).

In terms of business growth, there was evidence to suggest that Manchester became more attractive as a business city as a result of the Commonwealth Games in 2002 (Gratton, et al., 2005).

Employment

Several studies show increases in employment, although there was some concern about the sustainability of these employment opportunities (Burgan and Mules, 1992; Spilling, 1996; Gratton, et al., 2005; McCartney, et al., 2010a).

There has also been a focus on improving people’s chances on the job market through achievement of qualifications and skills development. The Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games targeted a part of their volunteering program at disadvantaged groups and evidence suggests this led to increases in skills, self-esteem and aspirations, as well as desire to volunteer.
in the future (Smith and Fox, 2007; Nichols and Ralston, 2002).

**Tourism**

A study looking at 18 major sporting events found an average increase of 8% in tourism numbers (Fourie and Santana-Gallego, 2011). However, there were large differences between different types of events, with Summer Olympics and FIFA World Cup generating much more tourism than Winter Olympic Games. Moreover, the authors found that this increase was only short-term. Three years following the events, there was on average no increase in tourism numbers or expenditure. Several other studies have also noted the lack of long-term tourism impact (Dansero and Puttilli, 2011; Spilling 1996; Tiegland 1999; du Plessis & Maenning, 2011).

**Infrastructure**

A substantial body of research highlighted the problem of long-term use of event infrastructure, often referred to as the problem of ‘White Elephants’. This research highlighted several strategic difficulties:

- insufficient long-term plans for legacy, instead it was assumed that legacy would happen naturally.
- lack of coordination between the public and the private sector.
- too much focus on the inner city with insufficient integration with wider areas.
- permanent buildings that were too large for everyday use.

This research emphasised the need to incorporate the event infrastructure into existing long-term city and regeneration objectives (Lochhead, 2005).

**Environmental impact**

Major sporting events also have the potential to lead the way in terms of environmental innovation and technology. For example, the Sydney 2000 Olympics developed the world’s largest waste-water recycling systems and the old Athletes’ village is now the largest solar-powered suburb in the world.

Nonetheless, there are several environmental costs of hosting a major sporting event. Waste, travel, and food and drink consumption have been identified as creating large ecological footprints (Collins & Flynn, 2008). Therefore, research has highlighted the importance of encouraging public transport, environmentally friendly building material, recycling and locally grown and organic food (Jones, 2008).

**Displacement**

Regeneration initiatives associated with major sporting events can have both positive and negative impact. One issue raised in the literature was forced evictions and forced relocation of local housing and business. This was a particular concern in Beijing 2008 (Wang, 2008; Shin, 2009) but also in the Atlanta 1996 Olympics and the Calgary 1988 and Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics (Olds, 1998; Porter, 2009).

Research in this area point out several problems related to the regeneration process:

- a tendency to replace what has been before rather than building on existing resources.
- a lack of clear communication channels between local officials and residents.
- a lack of acknowledgement of the different relative positions of stakeholders, leading to sense of powerlessness among residents (Olds, 1998; Porter, 2009; Smith, 2012).

**Physical activity**

The evidence base for increase in sport participation, physical activity and other health outcomes as a result of major sporting events was very limited and was often of low quality. The evidence that did exist provided a very mixed picture and if anything it suggested a decreased rather than an increase in physical activity (McCartney, et al., 2010a).

However, it has been suggested that an increase in physical activity can happen through two different types of processes:

- the ‘demonstration effect’ – watching elite athletes will inspire people to take up sport. There is no evidence that the ‘demonstration effect’ works for people who are not already physically active, although it might inspire people who already participate in sport to try different types of activities (Weed, et al., 2009).
- the ‘festival effect’ - generation of a general desire to participate in the event in some way, which could translate into a desire to take part in community sport also among people who normally are not physically active. There is only very limited evidence that this process has worked in the past (McCartney, et al., 2010a; Weed et al 2009).

**‘Feelgood factor’**

There are often strong claims about the ability of a major sporting event to generate a ‘feelgood’ factor – that is increased enthusiasm and excitement among
the general public. However, the evidence for this was mixed. There were some indications of increases in enthusiasm and perceptions of strengthening of the community before and immediately after some events (Ritchie and Lyons, 1990; Waitt, 2001; Waitt, 2003; Ohmann, et al., 2006). However, from a more long-term perspective, a study looking at 12 European large-scale sporting events found no association between hosting the Olympic Games and life-satisfaction. Nonetheless, the same study did find a positive relationship between life-satisfaction and hosting the World Cup (Kavetsos and Szymanski, 2010).

**Partnership legacy**

There was some evidence of strengthening of networks and partnerships between different organisations as a result of hosting a major sporting event (Jones, 2005; Smith and Fox, 2007, Kellet, et al., 2008). An issue raised in relation to partnership building was the asymmetry of power between different stakeholders. Moreover, different organisational goals and vague division of responsibilities were highlighted as likely to complicate this process (Jones, 2005).

**Key lessons**

**Past events varied greatly in their explicit legacy plans**

Most major sporting events did not plan for legacy beyond the economic and infrastructural benefits. Some events claimed to have social legacy objectives, but these were not always operationalised in the distribution of resources or priorities. The lack of evidence of legacy could therefore be a reflection of lack of explicit planning.

**No automatic ‘trickle-down effect’**

The evidence suggested that there is no inherent, direct link between elite sport events and health, nor with cultural participation and community cohesion. Legacy therefore does not seem to happen naturally. Rather, long-term legacy needs to be carefully planned and implemented. In particular, special attention needs to be paid to the processes and steps that link the event to positive outcomes. This should include the improvement of facilities and emphasis on grass-roots sport participation.

**Importance of a long-term perspective**

Across the evidence reviewed it was clear that without a long-term perspective, legacy ambitions were unlikely to be achieved. For example, infrastructure needs to be built with long-term use as the priority and funding and resources need to be allocated to the post-games period. It was also clear that in order to maximise the benefits, event-related skills and training need to be capitalised upon in the post-games period.

**Importance of good institutional organisation**

In order to achieve a partnership legacy, the evidence highlighted the need for clear roles and responsibilities across different organisations and agencies. This involved the need for clear strategies and objectives in order to keep the legacy plans focused and efficient as well as clear and reliable communication channels between different stakeholders. Without clear communication channels, issues of power asymmetries and unequal relationships are likely to generate feeling of cynicism and disillusionment. Moreover, it is suggested that in order to maximise the partnership benefits, the aim should be joint decision-making rather than using a top-down approach.

**Importance of community engagement**

Considering the lack of a ‘trickle-down effect’, it is clear that the emphasis needs to be on the community level. This includes encouragement of grassroots-level participation in sport and cultural programmes as well as allowing the community to be part of the planning and delivery of the programmes. Community involvement can increase enthusiasm, commitment and pride, which has been pointed out as crucial for positive legacy aims to be realised (Weed, et al., 2009). Moreover, community engagement can also help reduce feelings of powerlessness and invisibility among local residents and communities and improve the overall positive attitudes towards the event.

An extended report is available from Communities Analytical Services on request.
References


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