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**INDEXING AND DISTRIBUTION:** Research Papers in Economics and Finance is indexed, abstracted and distributed in: BazEkon, CEJSH, CEOL, EBSCO, ERIH Plus, ICM UW, ICI Journals Master List, Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals, Series and Publishers, PKP Index.

The journal included in the Polish Ministry of Education and Science list – Unique Identifier of the Journal: 201496, number of points: 40, scientific disciplines: economics and finance, management sciences and quality.

*Research Papers in Economics and Finance* are a free of charge for authors.

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**ISSN 2543-6430**

<https://doi.org/10.18559/ref.2022.2>

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**PUBLISHER:** Poznań University of Economics and Business Press  
ul. Powstańców Wielkopolskich 16, 61-895 Poznań, Poland  
phone +48 61 854 31 54, +48 61 854 31 55  
[www.wydawnictwo.ue.poznan.pl](http://www.wydawnictwo.ue.poznan.pl), [wydawnictwo@ue.poznan.pl](mailto:wydawnictwo@ue.poznan.pl)  
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# Third time lucky: An analysis of Paris' bids for the Olympic Games in 2008, 2012 and 2024

 Julia Jastrzębek<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The Olympic Games have become a unique occasion to implement several projects to upgrade public infrastructure and improving the economic performance of the host city. Thus, some cities are so determined to host the event that they decide to bid multiple times. One of the examples of such a city is Paris, which since the 2000s has submitted its bids three times, for 2008, 2012 and 2024, of which the last attempt turned out to be successful. Based on the above, the main aim of this article is to present the trajectory of changes and developments made by the three successive bid campaigns, with an emphasis on the latest successful one for the 2024. This study demonstrates that there are some recurrent ideas, projects and plans shared by each bid with some modifications to emphasise their uniqueness, novelty and up-to-date approach. In some aspects, the Paris 2024 bid builds on its previous candidature from 2012 in the field of long-term legacy effects and sustainability. Therefore, the bid managers and the city authorities take a consistent action in terms of using the Olympic Games as a tool for urban regeneration and sports development.

Article received 15 June 2022, accepted 5 November 2022.

## Keywords

- Olympic Games
- Paris
- urban development
- strategy

**Suggested citation:** Jastrzębek, J. (2022). Third time lucky: An analysis of Paris' bids for the Olympic Games in 2008, 2012 and 2024. *Research Papers in Economics and Finance*, 6(2), 86–106. <https://doi.org/10.18559/ref.2022.2.5>



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## Introduction

The modern Olympic Games are an extremely complex project. Apart from its sport dimension, historically rooted in ancient times and celebrated through sport competition of the greatest athletes, this event represents several important non-sports features today. Although the Olympics are a relatively short-term spectacle, they are preceded by years of preparations, including various infrastructure projects such as the construction of sports venues, transportation improvements, the tourist base, the revitalisation of urban facilities and the development of public spaces.

Usually, cities of strategic importance to the regional and national economy implement urban development policies, which embrace the social, economic or infrastructural sectors. This is especially important when city authorities use several instruments to tackle the objectives of urban policy and identify the most crucial issues to resolve. The Olympic Games promise to represent a 'fast track' urban regeneration, a stimulus for economic growth, significant improvements in the transport system, as well as intangible effects such as improved global recognition and prestige (Chalkley & Essex, 1999, p. 369) or influence the subjective well-being of the residents of the host city during the event (Dolan et al., 2019). Bidding cities embodied by public authorities and private sector representatives try to maximise the potential from hosting the Olympic event to conduct a multi-dimensional urban and socioeconomic transformation.

Over the last decades, the literature on the various impacts and legacies of the Olympic Games has expanded significantly, but the research outcomes are rather ambiguous and depend on the applied research perspective. Economic studies are mainly dedicated either to analyse the cost and benefits of the Olympic Games in the context of economic viability of staging the Games (Baade & Matheson, 2016) or to estimate the impact of the event on basic macroeconomic variables in the cause-and-effect analysis. For example, Rose and Spiegel (2011) find out that the Olympic host countries experience significant positive, lasting effects on exports and that similar effect applies to bid countries. But Maennig and Richter (2012) challenge the empirical findings of this study, because they may suffer from selection bias and, with an appropriate matching and treatment methodology, lasting positive effects on export diminish. In the similar fashion of countering research results are the studies on the 'news shock effect' hypothesis due to the Olympic bid, where Brückner and Pappa (2015) confirm this positive effect, while Langer et al. (2018) challenge these findings because they may suffer from selection bias and, by redesigning the econometric model, the authors do not find a significant economic effect. The recent study by Firgo (2021) proves that the Summer Olympics show positive effects on regional GDP per capita for the year of the event and the year before, but the results on positive longer-term effects are less robust; a differ-

ent situation exists with the Winter Olympic Games where no positive effects are observed. Most of the studies from the management field focus on the aspect of Olympic governance and stakeholders through analysing the links, networks and decision making in the processes related to the Olympic Games (Chappelet, 2016, 2021; Parent, 2013). The social research perspective investigates the influence of the Olympic Games on the society's emotional and practical approach to sport, i.e. the way it may boost national pride, community spirit, festive atmosphere and the feel-good factor (Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010). However, a history of previous Olympic editions shows several examples of negative or adverse legacies in the urban and socioeconomic sphere, where promises included in the bid books did not meet the post-Games reality (see e.g. Müller, 2015). The ambiguity of quantitative empirical findings, also due to selection bias of the research sample, lead us to the fair conclusion that candidate and host cities are very heterogeneous, which underscores the need for complementary case studies.

Considering the issues listed above, some cities are so persevering to host the Olympics that they decide to bid for the event multiple times. Such cities perceive the Olympic Games as a driving force to carry out urban and socioeconomic projects that would be conducive to the city development. One of the examples of such a city is Paris, which in the 21st century submitted bids three times—for the Olympics in 2008, 2012 and 2024, of which the last attempt turned out successful<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, the main objective of this article is to present the trajectory of changes and developments made for the three successive bidding procedures, with an emphasis on budget, key legacy goals, long-term urban development strategies and sustainability issues.

## 1. Legacy planning and socioeconomic impacts of the Olympic Games: a literature review

The Olympic-driven urban and socioeconomic development has an evolutionary character (Chalkley & Essex, 1999; Essex & Chalkley, 1998; Gold & Gold, 2017). The very first modern Olympic Games were rather a modest occasion, held with international exhibitions such as the World's Fair. Despite the rather secondary character of this event at the beginning of the twentieth century in terms of its contribution to urban development, the first modern Olympics in 1896 left Athens with some improvements in the urban landscape. The Panathenaic Stadium was

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<sup>2</sup> In the past, Paris was a host city in 1900 and 1924 and unsuccessfully bid for the 1992 Olympic Games.

built on the site of the ancient one, becoming a landmark and tourist attraction of the capital. Basically, until the 1960s, both the Summer and Winter Games were organised on a relatively small scale, with a very modest contribution to the urban infrastructure and local economy. Since the 1960s, a growing demand for non-sport urban infrastructure has been observed, and the Games have started to involve large-scale urban transformations, which have performed as tools of municipal and regional development (Essex & Chalkley, 2003, p. 7). As a consequence, the Olympic Games have become a catalyst of urban change (Chalkley & Essex, 1999; Essex & Chalkley, 1998), and an important force for global urban development (Müller & Gaffney, 2018, p. 1). Gold and Gold (2017) provide a comprehensive review of city agendas, planning and portraits of host cities in the period between 1896 and 2020 with an extended analysis of urban and socioeconomic impacts and legacy. The authors also present a four-stage trajectory of urban regeneration and renewal throughout the modern era of the Olympic Games, particularly summer editions—from the regenerative impact on host cities between 1896 and 1980; then a more economically rational and private sector-led model of Olympic regeneration management; next by going through the development as a more holistic and city-wide models of regeneration, firstly adopted in Barcelona 1992; and finally by discussing attempts made since 1992 to implement the Barcelona model for Olympic host city regeneration, taking into consideration a growing importance of environmental impacts of holding the Games.

The emergence of the Olympic Games as a tool for urban regeneration has increased significantly due to several factors. Each subsequent edition of the Games has seen a growing number of sports and athletes, media expansion and an increasing role of commercial sponsorship and marketing (IOC, 2020). Therefore, the character of this event has significantly changed as host cities have commenced to use the Olympics as a stimulus for much wider urban development (Essex & Chalkley, 2003, p. 7). This enhances the promotion activities of the 'placemaking' of the host city in the context of Olympic cycle: from bidding, planning, preparing the event, to hosting the Games, and finally developing and maintaining a variety of legacies. Cities strive for capital and labour inflow, as well as a tourism industry boost, to improve their position on a global economic stage in a highly competitive environment. This kind of action can cause a signalling effect to a global audience that the city is under a transition process, opened up to new businesses, events and changes in the urban lifestyle (MacRury, 2009, p. 59). This trend is in line with David Harvey's (1989) concept of a shift from managerialism to entrepreneurialism in urban governance that has been preoccupied with seeking new ways and possibilities to improve urban and socioeconomic development. Moreover, the evolutionary and complex character of the Olympic Games is driven by neoliberal doctrine in making local development policies (Burbank et al., 2002). The Olympic event not only initiates the construction of new sports venues and transport sys-

tems, but also shapes or reconfigures urban governance arrangements and strategic development plans, affecting cities and residents (Müller & Gaffney, 2018, p. 2). Every city has its own characteristics; thus, mega-event strategies on urban development should be tailored to respond effectively to its problems and challenges.

Impact and legacy are key terms for understanding the rationale and motivation of cities behind the decision to bid for the Olympics. The term impact refers to short-term effects derived from the organisation of the Olympic Games. In most cases, the impact studies take the form of *ex ante* or *ex post* quantitative analyses related to economics (Gratton & Preuss, 2008, p. 1925). However, having recognised the growing number of operations and actions related to the event, along with raising questions about the costs and benefits of the organisation, the concept of legacy has been developed to embrace the long-term character of several impacts driven by the organisation of the Olympic Games. Apart from quantitative effects, the term legacy includes qualitative aspects and provides a holistic framework for event assessment. The Olympic legacy “encompasses all the tangible and intangible long-term benefits initiated or accelerated by the hosting of the Olympic Games/sport events for people, cities/territories and the Olympic Movement” (IOC, 2017, p. 13). With the growing importance of sustainability issues in the Olympic Games, the term legacy (defined as physical, economic, environmental, social, cultural, psychological, political or even ideological impacts) can be combined with the concept of sustainable development, indicating how the Olympic event can contribute to sustainability in urban milieu (Furrer, 2002, pp. 2–3). In turn, Preuss (2007) defines legacy as “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, irrespective of the time of production and space” (p. 211).

Since the last few years, the notions of legacy and sustainability have both been substantially developed, and simultaneously, become one of the most researched subjects in the field of the Olympic Games (Agha et al., 2012; Boykoff, 2017; Chen, 2015; Gaffney, 2013; Gold & Gold, 2013; Müller et al., 2021; VanWynsberghe et al., 2021). Furthermore, the Olympic Games planning process required a better alignment with long-term urban development plans. These aspects were undoubtedly induced by increased public awareness about the adverse impacts caused by the Games, together with concerns about their cost and complexity. As a response to these issues and to make the event more attractive to cities, in December 2014, the IOC unanimously agreed on the Olympic Agenda 2020: “a new strategic roadmap for the future of the Olympic Movement” (IOC, 2014). The final document in the form of 40 recommendations was preceded by months of consultations, enriched by ideas and contributions submitted by various stakeholders within the Olympic Movement as well as external organisations and individuals. The next milestone in reforming the Olympic Games lifecycle (Candidature, Delivery, Legacy) was the

release of 'the New Norm' in February 2018. This document contains more than 100 measures that apply to six recommendations (1–4; 12–13) related to the organisation of Olympic Games (IOC, 2018). Most importantly, they put an emphasis on more cost-effective and reformed bidding process, sustainability, well-suited legacy for the host city and maximum use of existing or temporary facilities to reduce costs. The 2024 candidature process was the first conducted according to the new procedure implemented with the Olympic Agenda 2020 and New Norm documents. Five cities (Budapest, Hamburg, Los Angeles, Paris, Rome) entered the non-committal Invitation Phase, but only two cities—Paris and Los Angeles—sustained interest in staging the Olympic Games until the end of the bidding procedure. The other three cities withdrew during the Candidate City phase. Paris and Los Angeles presented very strong proposals that reflected the recommendations of the Olympic Agenda 2020. Therefore, in July 2017 after a Tripartite Agreement between the IOC and both cities, Los Angeles changed its candidature from 2024 to 2028. It paved the way for an unprecedented decision to simultaneously award the 2024 Olympic Games to Paris and the 2028 to Los Angeles.

## 2. Materials & methods

The three Paris bids for the Olympic Games in 2008, 2012 and 2024 were selected to investigate their main aspects in terms of urban and socioeconomic development and sustainability issues. Of these three bids the 2024 bid turned out to be successful. The author focuses on the anticipated plans, a trajectory of urban and socioeconomic changes, together with their alignment with long-term city development strategies. The analysis is based on official bid documents, the Organising Committee publications, IOC reports and evaluations. Therefore, it may not include potential changes that appeared over time, since Paris was elected as a host<sup>3</sup>; however, several updates on the Games preparations for 2024 are present. To provide a more holistic view, an urban and socioeconomic diagnosis of the French capital is drawn to identify its major problems and challenges, and in what way the Olympic project responds to them. This study applies comparative and descriptive methods based on analysis of bid books, articles, reports, press releases, official web sources and other available sources to present urban and socioeconomic interventions and the legacy planned throughout all three Paris bids.

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<sup>3</sup> From host city election, some changes and modifications in planning and delivery may appear in comparison to the original project presented in bid book.



### 3. Results

The results of this study are comprehensively presented in Table 1. All three bids were analysed according to various selected criteria, such as the financial aspects, key legacy goals, alignment with long-term urban planning strategies, sustainability issues, types of sports venues, Olympic Village and its post-Olympic use, transport improvements, as well as public support, which is a very important factor in tracing people's support throughout every subsequent bid.

As the time span of all Candidatures spreads between 2000 (candidature process for the 2008 Olympic Games) and 2017 (host city election for 2024), the financial data include the budget values in current (at the time of bid creation, approx. 8 years before the event) and constant prices expressed in USD<sub>2016</sub> (see Table 1)<sup>4</sup>. The latter expression aims to control the effect of inflation. There is also an issue of the types of budget. Usually, we distinguish between three types of budgets: Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (hereafter: OCOG), non-OCOG (direct) and non-OCOG (indirect). The OCOG budget is mainly privately financed with a large IOC contribution that comes from different revenue sources, mostly sponsorship programmes and the sale of broadcasting rights. In turn, the non-OCOG (direct) budget is provided and controlled by the local authorities and divides generally into two elements: the capital investment budget that is directly related to the construction of competition and non-competition venues, and the operations budget comprising the operational services of public authorities such as security, transport, medical services, etc.). The third type is the so-called non-OCOG (indirect) budget and is related to a long-term investment plan for general infrastructure which is independent of the Games, such as improvements to public transport (roads, airports and railways) or other projects. This budget is usually funded by the public authorities at different levels (city/region/country) (IOC, n.d.). The latest Parisian bid stands out from the others with a very high financial participation from the private sector, thus mitigating the pressure on financing the Games from the public purse, which is always a highly debated issue on the Games' inflated budgets rather than fulfilling urgent needs in the areas of public policy. The organisers claimed that the Paris 2024 OCOG budget will be 97% funded by the private sector, with only 3% funded by the public sector (for the Paralympic Games), while the budget for delivering the Olympic and Paralympic venues will be mostly funded from public financial resources (SOLIDEO, n.d.). In

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<sup>4</sup> Candidature Files include the Olympic budgets calculated in USD (and usually in national currency), and that is why the author decided to implement this currency rather than EUR, and also because the US dollar is the global currency and allow us to make international comparisons. The figures are inflation adjusted to the year 2016 by using the US GDP deflator for the years 2000, 2004 and 2016 (World Bank, 2022).

**Table 1. Paris bids for the 2008, 2012 and 2024 Olympic Games: a comparative analysis**

Subject	Paris 2008	Paris 2012	Paris 2024 (Phase 1–3)
Competition (Candidature Phase)	<p><b>Beijing–Host City</b>, Istanbul, Osaka, Toronto</p>	<p><b>London–Host City</b>, Madrid, Moscow, New York City</p>	<p>Los Angeles–Host City 2028</p>
Budget (Total expenditure, in billion USD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 3,915 (USD<sub>2000</sub>)</li> <li>– 5,306 (USD<sub>2016</sub>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 8,863 (USD<sub>2004</sub>)</li> <li>– 11,046 (USD<sub>2016</sub>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 7,269 (USD<sub>2016</sub>)</li> </ul>
OCOG budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 1,877 (USD<sub>2000</sub>)</li> <li>– 2,544 (USD<sub>2016</sub>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 2,658 (USD<sub>2004</sub>)</li> <li>– 3,313 (USD<sub>2016</sub>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 4,083 (USD<sub>2016</sub>), Phase 3 of the Candidature Process</li> </ul>
Non-OCOG budget (direct or/and indirect expenditures)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 2,038 (USD<sub>2000</sub>)</li> <li>– 2,762 (USD<sub>2016</sub>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 6,205 (USD<sub>2004</sub>)</li> <li>– 7,733 (USD<sub>2016</sub>)</li> <li>– Non-OCOG capital investments budget, which includes direct and indirect expenditures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 1,049 (public financing) (USD<sub>2016</sub>), Phase 2</li> <li>– 2,137 (private financing) (USD<sub>2016</sub>), Phase 2</li> </ul>
Key legacy goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The rejuvenation of a sector of the city in the Saint-Denis area close to the Stade the France—the Olympic Village</li> <li>– Major transport improvements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The Olympic Games as a tool for the urban development and regeneration of Saint-Denis—one of the poorest areas in France and a former industrial site. The Olympic Village as a significant housing opportunity and a benchmark for sustainable development and environmental innovation in this area</li> <li>– Upgrading and expansion of the transport infrastructure</li> <li>– Legacy through the building of new sports venues to increase the regular participation of youth in sport</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Games-related investments in Saint-Denis are aimed at contributing to the socioeconomic development of one of the most diverse and poorest areas in the region. The Olympic Village in the Grand Paris Zone to be converted into much-needed housing after the Games</li> <li>– Upgrading and expansion of the transport infrastructure; transport connections between Saint-Denis, the city centre and airports</li> <li>– Significant improvements in sustainable development and the environment (a goal of becoming Europe’s first sustainable ecoregion)</li> <li>– Important social legacy through various initiatives based on the principles of inclusion, civic responsibility and engagement</li> </ul>

Subject	Paris 2008	Paris 2012	Paris 2024 (Phase 1–3)
Alignment with long-term planning strategies (urban and transport)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Venues and investments are an integral part of the region's urban planning programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Strategic Action Plan of the French Government and the Île-de-France Region</li> <li>- The Local Urban Plan (PLU) and the Urban Transport Plan (PDU) of Paris</li> <li>- The Development Scheme of the Île-de-France Region (SDRIF)</li> <li>- The Paris 2012 Strategic Transport Plan (STP)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Full integration with long-term development strategy:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Paris Region masterplan for 2030 (adopted in 2013)</li> <li>- Long-term urban planning schemes in three territories mainly impacted by the Olympic Games (Plaine Commune, Le Bourget and the City of Paris)</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Grand Paris development strategies</li> <li>- The State-Region Planning Contract (fully aligned with the Games concept; a major enabler in implementing the Paris Region's development strategy for 2015-2020)</li> <li>- New Grand Paris Transport Plan</li> </ul>
Selected sustainability and environmental issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Importance of sustainability and environment protection</li> <li>- Environmental Action Plan</li> <li>- Commitment to sustainable development (controlling direct and indirect effects, controlling the impact of transport on the environment, the economic use of natural resources; protecting, managing and restoring biodiversity, natural landscapes and cultural heritage; involving various sectors of the population)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sustainable development and 'environmental excellence' as key themes</li> <li>- Core commitment to ensure that the Games generate zero net greenhouse gas emissions and have a sustainable legacy</li> <li>- Olympic Village as a symbol of 'environmental responsibility'</li> <li>- Reduce noise and air pollution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sustainability as a core theme of Paris 2024</li> <li>- Paris 2024 as a benchmark for future international sports events and the sport movement</li> <li>- Sustainability embedded in Games governance and delivery throughout the whole Games cycle</li> <li>- Paris 2024 Environmental Excellence Strategy</li> <li>- Adoption of ISO 20121 for the management of sustainable events (certification earned in March 2017, first time at the bidding stage)</li> </ul>

Venues (total)	- 39	- 32	- 38 (Phase 3)
% of existing venues	- 56,4% (22)	- 37,5% (12)	- 72,2% (28)
% of newly built	- 23,1% (9)	- 21,9% (7)	- 5,6% (2)
% of temporary	- 20,5% (8)	- 40,6% (13)	- 22,2% (8)
Zones/Clusters	- Four zones (north-eastern: most events; the Olympic Village and the Olympic stadium, centre, south-western, southern); compact Games with short distances between venues	- Two major clusters: Northern—Plaine Saint-Denis and Western—Porte d’Auteuil, Bois de Boulogne); compact Games with short distances between venues	- Two main zones: The Paris Zone (in the city centre) and The Grand Paris Zone (in Saint-Denis); compact Games with short distances between venues
Olympic Village	- Newly built as part of the urban development project for Saint-Denis Plain	- ‘One village, two clusters’ - Newly built as an urban redevelopment project in the Batignolles district - As a legacy of the bid, new 3,500 housing units were built in Paris-Batignolles through public and private funding	- Newly built on the boundaries of Saint-Denis, one of the poorest and underdeveloped areas in France, Île-Saint-Denis and Saint-Ouen
Post-Olympic Use of the Olympic (Athletes’) Village	- Olympic Village: conversion to family housing	- Olympic Village: A new quarter of the French capital—the “Olympic Quarter”. A significant new residential district, offices, leisure, commercial, retail, community, educational facilities	- Olympic Village: a new residential district with extensive leisure, commercial, community, educational facilities. Located close to a new metro station and other transport links
Media Village	- Media Village: “Cité Universitaire” Media Village (6,500 people), new accommodation (3,000 rooms) and additional 7,500 rooms in hotels	- Media Village: accommodation based on existing hotel rooms and newly built hotels up to 2012 to provide additional capacity	- Newly built Media Village on a site adjacent to Paris Le Bourget, host of the MPC and existing accommodation capacity

Subject	Paris 2008	Paris 2012	Paris 2024 (Phase 1-3)
Transport improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Suburban express lines (RER) and improvements to tramway lines, roads and railways</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Several transport investments, mainly in rail public transport</li> <li>- All Olympic and Paralympic venues would be served by existing public transport facilities—bus, metro, tram, RER and trains</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 100% spectator travel by public transport</li> <li>- Transport links between the Seine-Saint-Denis and the city centre, for example, the Grand Paris Express project</li> </ul>
Public support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- October 2000 (bid book):</li> <li>- France: 86% (against 10%)</li> <li>- Île-de-France Region: 88% (against 9%)</li> <li>- Paris: 79%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- October 2004 (bid book):</li> <li>- Paris: 77%</li> <li>- Île-de-France Region: 77%</li> <li>- France: 79%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- January 2016 (bid book):</li> <li>- Paris: 74%</li> <li>- Paris Region: 77%</li> <li>- France: 80%</li> </ul>

Source: own work based on: Paris 2008 Candidate City (2000); Paris 2012 Candidate City (2004); Paris 2024 Candidate City (2016, 2017).

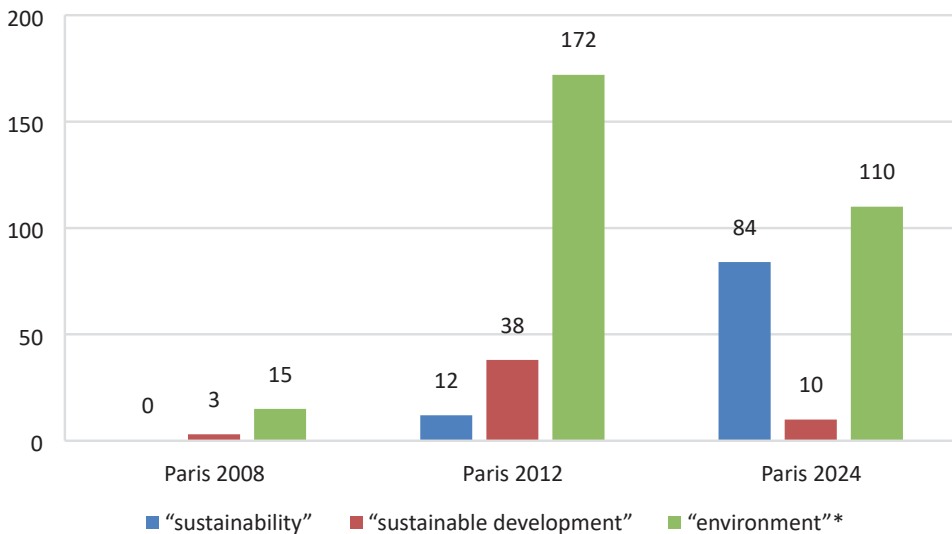
terms of budgetary issues, it is important to clearly divide public and private financial responsibilities. Therefore, there is a crucial role of close cooperation between all stakeholders representing the public sector, private sector and civil (non-commercial) sector (NGOs, local communities, social organisations, etc.) to ensure a socially just legacy agenda.

The analysis shows that the 2012 and 2024 bids have several common points in terms of strategic aspects such as legacy goals, post-Olympic use of the Olympic Village or sustainability issues. The Paris 2024 bid was to some extent inspired by its previous candidature from 2012, where great emphasis was placed on long-term legacy effects, particularly in urban space and the most disadvantaged departments in France, among them Saint-Denis. This area was also a subject of regeneration agenda in the bid for the 2008 Olympic Games, especially in terms of the location for new venues. In the Paris 2012 bid, the Olympic Village was planned to be built in the Batignolles district, and despite the fact that this bid was not elected, the urban project of this area was a bid legacy successfully realised by providing 3,500 new housing units and a large parkland (Paris 2024 Candidate City, 2016, p. 25). However, we can observe a consistency in treating the Saint-Denis area as a priority for urban change and development in the three bids. The 2024 bid extended its regeneration plans with the adjacent Île-Saint-Denis and Saint-Ouen-sur-Seine. The major urban project planned in these municipalities is the Athletes Village, and this site seems to be well chosen to fit the legacy and regeneration agenda. Saint-Denis is one of the poorest and youngest areas in France with low income, high unemployment and social exclusion, making this community one of the most disadvantaged areas in France. Although this area is in close proximity to inner Paris, the combination of limited opportunities, lack of proper training, institutional barriers, all prompted by systemic racism and multicultural, immigrant society, makes this area socially and economically stigmatised and neglected by “the mainstream life of the French capital” (O’Sullivan, 2019). When comparing all three bids, each of them emphasises the rejuvenation, regeneration and development of Saint-Denis together with major transportation upgrades to improve the accessibility and mobility of the residents. Looking at the location of major legacy projects in Paris and the character of the social structure, some parallels could be found between the French concept and the London 2012 Games, where the event was used as a catalyst for the regeneration of the East London boroughs— one of the most underdeveloped areas in the UK before the Games (see Davies, 2012; Evans & Edizel, 2017; London 2012 Candidate City, 2004).

Bids for 2012 and 2024 are much more detailed in terms of their alignment with long-term strategies, as they refer to specific documents on urban and transport plans. In particular, the latest bid declares full integration with long-term development agendas. This is of great importance, as this bid was fully prepared according to the recommendations of the Olympic Agenda 2020 and the New Norm mea-

tures. In the 2024 bid book, it has been claimed that the concept of the Games is perfectly aligned with the strategic development plans of Paris and the Paris Region (Paris 2024 Candidate City, 2016). One of them is the Paris Region strategic master plan for 2030 adopted in 2013, and acclaimed by the governments of France, the Paris Region as well as all relevant local authorities. In detail, the three territories will be mainly impacted by Games-related urban development projects (Plaine Commune, Le Bourget and the City of Paris), which also have complementary long-term planning strategies. Plaine Commune<sup>5</sup> is a central part of the event-led urban transformation. This is a public territory institution that comprises nine *communes* (i.a. Saint-Denis, Île-Saint-Denis, Saint-Ouen-sur-Seine), and the Olympic Games in 2024 are one of the flagship projects promoted by this entity to foster social, cultural and economic development of these areas, with respect to sustainable measures and practices (urban sustainability).

Sustainability and environmental protection are other themes strongly emphasised in each Paris bid book. At the time of the 2008 bid submission, both issues have started to gain much more widespread attention among the candidate cities and the Olympic Movement in general. But the spectrum of sustainability and



\* It is a word stem and the word counts also include words such as: environmental, environmentally, etc.

**Figure 1. Word counts in candidature files for each word/phrase in every edition**

Source: own analysis.

<sup>5</sup> See more on Plaine Commune: <https://plainecommune.fr/qui-sommes-nous/>

environmental plans has varied between the bids, which can be demonstrated by a straightforward text analysis of three Candidature Files, the results of which are visualised in Figure 1.

The text analysis based on word counts manifests the rising importance of sustainability issues in the subsequent bid books; however, there is a significant increase in the concept of sustainability, which encompasses much broader topics, not only concerning the environment, but also economic and social aspects. Already in the 2008 bid, many ideas and projects regarding environmental protection were established. In the 2012 bid, sustainable development and environmental excellence emerged as key themes with a commitment to a sustainable legacy. In the vision for the 2012 Games, one of the pledges included “taking into full account environmental concerns and the need for sustainable development” and it was planned that “all Olympic projects reflect the desire to reduce the pollution and noise of transport and to limit the use and impact of car travel” (Paris 2012 Candidate City, 2004, p. 25, 33). There were very ambitious plans concerning the Olympic Village by setting “new benchmarks for sustainable development in an urban setting, and each new venue will incorporate advanced environmental technologies” (Paris 2012 Candidate City, 2004, p. 35). A very similar expression appears in the Paris 2024 bid, where the Olympic Village “will set a new benchmark for sustainable development and best practices” (Paris 2024 Candidate City, 2017, p. 24). In the latest bid for the 2024, sustainability and legacy are “at the core of its project” (The Paris 2024 Organising Committee for the Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games, 2021a) and are inextricably connected to each other. The Table of the Paris 2024 contents of Candidature File differs from the years 2008 and 2012, because it dedicates an individual point (3.6 in Paris 2024 Candidate City, vol. 3, 2017) entirely to sustainability plans. Sustainability and environmental excellence could be perceived as leitmotifs of the Paris 2024 Games with the statement that this event will constitute a benchmark for future international sport events and the sport movement (Paris 2024 Candidate City, 2016, p. 24). Moreover, the Paris 2024 Bid Committee received the ISO 20121 certificate (for the first time as a bidding city) by excelling in the following areas: social consultation, commitment to stakeholders, governance and legacy (Butler, 2017). In August 2021, the Organising Committee published a *Sustainability and legacy report* presenting the first results and the then status of the implementation of the sustainability and legacy strategy (The Paris 2024 Organising Committee for the Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games, 2021a). It should be highlighted that this strategy has been developed to embrace the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals. Undoubtedly, the Paris 2024 event could be perceived as an exemplary event in the above areas, as it promises to deliver a carbon neutral event, minimise carbon and environmental footprint, use 100% renewable energy during the Games, establish a circular economy, provide certified power supply, clean mobility solutions, public trans-



port and environmentally friendly means of transport, biodiversity and water management (Paris 2024 Candidate City, 2017, pp. 83–89). These aspects reflect the challenges related to climate change and environmental protection that the modern world faces today. However, the overall evaluation of sustainability and legacy plans will only be possible once the event in 2024 is completed.

Since the development of professional and amateur sports, France and Paris have always had great traditions in holding international sporting events and possess a well-developed sporting and training base. Therefore, each bid proposed a relatively high percentage of existing venues, which automatically reduces the total costs of the event. The 2024 bid outperforms the rest of the bids with only two permanent venues to be newly built, the Olympic Aquatics Centre and Porte de la Chapelle Arena. The Athletes' (Olympic) Village is another strategic infrastructural project that will be delivered from scratch, being "a key part of the history of the Plaine Commune and the project to develop the area, a combined authority that brings together nine urban areas within the Seine-Saint-Denis department north of Paris" (The Paris 2024 Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, 2021b, p. 39). As part of the legacy plan, this project aims to transform an ex-industrial corner of the French capital and will add almost 2,000 new apartments (of which 25–40% are planned to be converted into social housing, depending on the town). Like the Athletes' Village, the construction of the Media Village will be one of the main urban legacies delivered, as this project is due to be newly built. After the Games, the Media Village will be converted into 1,300 homes located in the municipalities of Dugny, Le Bourget and La Courneuve (The Paris 2024 Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, 2022). The site will have extended connections to the city's public transit system. The new Pleyel transport hub will be created in the vicinity of the Village. Due to the Olympics, Paris public transport is expected to be upgraded in alignment with the existing transport network and the New Grand Paris Transport Plan. Among other major initiatives in the public transport network is the Grand Paris Express. This project is included in the Grand Paris Transport Plan, which will modernise existing public transport and bring more than 200 km of rail lines and 68 stations, extend existing lines and develop four new automated metro lines. In 2021, the construction works for the Athletes' Village, the Olympic Aquatics Centre, the Porte de la Chapelle Arena started (The Paris 2024 Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, 2022).

Finally, what should also be highlighted is that all Paris candidatures stand out with relatively strong public support. Over the last decade such cities as Rome, Hamburg or Budapest have withdrawn from the bidding procedure, because the idea of hosting the Olympic Games was rather unpopular among the public. Hamburg held a referendum, and the results turned down the aspirations to host the event. The level of public support, which in the case of Paris was kept relatively

high for several years, is a very important aspect of every bid, as the growing scale, size and scope of the Olympic Games with potential for urban and socioeconomic transformation have made this event an immensely complex and costly project over the last decades. Having a strong support from city residents and all French nation, it has undoubtedly underpinned the Games concepts and allowed the bid committee to submit interest into staging the event.

## 4. Discussion

On the one hand, each subsequent Parisian bid reflects dynamic changes and tendencies that can be observed in the modern world; among others, these are related to climate change, technological change or innovations. On the other hand, increasing public awareness of the staging of this event in terms of costs, its impacts, legacy and environmental concerns has led bid managers and city authorities to propose solutions, projects and plans that could meet the needs and expectations of residents. The Olympic Games in Paris in 2024 are used to facilitate metropolitan transformation and integrate urban governance in the entire Île-de-France region (Geffroy et al., 2021). The latest Parisian bid was not free from public protests criticising the Olympic project due to concerns about displacements of residents, schools and businesses (Pavitt, 2020), but at the time of bidding, the Candidature enjoyed relatively high public support (see Table 1). These concerns arise from the experiences of previous Olympic events, for example, in Sochi 2014 and Rio 2016, where many adverse impacts and legacies have been reported (see, e.g. Braathen et al., 2017; Chestin, 2014; Garcia & Moreira, 2017; Golubchikov, 2016). Therefore, a democratic and collaborative approach to urban governance should be established and include a wider representation of resident voices in order to minimise the distance between the promises of the bid books and their real implementation (Wolfe, 2022).

Paris has presented three ambitious projects and could be perceived as an example of using the potential of the Games for social inclusion, job creation, better public transport and an economic boost by highlighting these themes in each bid. But a comprehensive evaluation of these plans will only be possible a few years following the event. The global COVID-19 pandemic has caused turmoil in the preparation process, but organisers have taken significant steps to reduce costs. However, there is another challenge for the organisers: inflation. The Paris 2024 Organising Committee also promises to optimise the budget wherever possible (Houston, 2022), but at the time of writing this article the inflation is still a serious problem for a global and European economy.

One of the limitations of this study is that only Paris is taken as a unit of analysis, whereas there are other cities that have submitted their bids more than once. Since the 2000s, Tokyo and Rio de Janeiro bid for the Summer Olympic Games more than once and were elected as hosts, while Beijing was elected as a host for the summer 2008 and winter 2022 editions. In contrast, there are cities that bid a few times unsuccessfully (taking into account an Application City phase). One of the explanations could be that the nominations of host cities strictly followed the unwritten rotation rule, i.e. circulating Games around continents. Therefore, the Games were not awarded successively to cities on the same continent. This leads to the recurring question—why have cities kept bidding anyway? In the literature, it is evidenced that the Olympic bid process could be used as a leveraging resource for a city or nation in areas such as building national and local pride, global recognition or the formation of networks of stakeholders and coalitions (Bason, 2019; Bason & Grix, 2018, 2020). Thus, it can be concluded that this group of cities seeks a global promotion or socioeconomic and political leverage via participation in Olympic bidding despite the bleak prospects of being selected as a host city.

## Conclusions

In each of the three attempts to hold the biggest sport mega-event worldwide, the French capital has presented very ambitious Games concepts, with a great emphasis on sustainable development and urban regeneration in the areas where such an intervention has been especially needed. The latest concept of the Paris 2024 Games is to be fully aligned with the recommendations of OA 2020 and the New Norm, which aim to make the event much more flexible, efficient and sustainable. However, there are also concerns among the local public if the Olympic Games will truly serve the local community and not repeat some of the negative effects from previous Olympic editions. Moreover, there are two aspects that add to the state of uncertainty among organizers. First, a health crisis due to the coronavirus pandemic and the economic turbulences are serious challenges for the organisers, especially in terms of budget and financial constraints. Second, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is a source of enormous geopolitical and economic instability and uncertainty all over the world. The year 2022 witnessed one of the highest inflation rates since decades in basically every country owing to the above calamitous events. There is still a lot of global uncertainty all over the world and many organisational challenges and pitfalls ahead, but undoubtedly the Olympic Games might serve as a tool for social and economic recovery for French capital in the post-pandemic world.

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