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## OLYMPIC IMPACTS AND SPORT DEVELOPMENT AS SOFT LEGACY: CHALLENGES OF MEASURES AND EVIDENCE

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Synopsis:

The paper builds on research into soft legacy creation in schools in NW England in the build up to London2012 by exploring the regional data on childrens participation in sport in National Statistics, with a focus on regional differences and socio-demographic variations.

Abstract:

Although much literature on legacy has recently emerged, the impacts of mega events have often concentrated on the assumption of positive economics and hard legacy or infrastructure. Soft legacy however, may be considered those impacts on people, processes and practice, for example in sport development, which may feature as part of the rationale for multi-sector planning and leverage efforts, as was the case with the London2012 Games (Bell, and Gallimore, 2015). Sport development, in terms of impacts on sport participation has also been identified in a more 'balanced scorecard' of event impacts evaluation (Gratton, Shibli and Coleman, 2005). This conceptualisation of soft legacy may be linked to social and human capital through community engagement in events (Misener and Mason, 2006 ). However the social capital and sport participation literature is somewhat contentious, particularly when used to explain or predict sport participation or consumption patterns (Widdop and Cutts 2013; Veal, Toohey and Frawley, 2012) so the operationalisation and measurement of soft legacy impacts of mega-events remains problematic.

This paper focuses on the soft legacy impacts of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games on sport participation rates, using an investigation of human and social capital levels and pupil experience in local schools in a community outside of the hosting city (Minshull, 2013). The complex nature of legacy creation and social capital was explored in the study of schools' efforts to generate a soft legacy using the LOCOG programme Get Set as a catalyst to inspire and enthuse pupils and staff (Minshull, 2013). An additional analysis of

the child results from Taking Part is examining the regional data on legacy impacts, linked to social attitudes and intentions.

A mixed method approach of surveys with pupils, secondary analysis of participation data from Schools and interviews and teachers involved in legacy work and school sport was utilised. National surveys established a baseline of PE and school sport data in the pre-Olympic Games period (Quick et al 2010) and Taking Part (DCMS, 2013) provides Olympic attitude results. Local results from within the subregion was provided by clusters of schools in the area of study. Secondary analysis of the quantitative survey results showed no clear pattern in sport participation rates which could be attributed to Get Set status before the London Games in 2012. Nationally, in surveys of children's participation in school sport and PE and in the PE and school sport survey, higher rates were associated with schools with fewer children of disadvantaged communities or high ethnic diversity, and males across all school years were more active. However, limited post event comparisons or meta evaluations of legacy impacts on young people could be made because of the PE and School Sport Survey was withdrawn in 2010 (Grant Thornton, 2013), along with the dismantling of the funding to school partnerships and relevant sport development interventions attempting to develop a greater impact in sport linked to the 2012Games. This clearly had some negative and unintended consequences for school sport and potentially reduced the social or sporting legacy of the Games. Qualitative data, to explore the processes of efforts to create a lasting legacy from 2012 was obtained via interviews with teachers and pupils in three secondary and one primary school. Thematic analysis revealed factors central to the creation of a school level Olympic legacy. These were: the importance of enthusiastic people to drive the legacy; a strong focus on the Olympic and Paralympic values, rather than sporting participation and the subsequently positive impact upon inclusion of a wide range of pupils in sporting and other cultural activity. Field observations enabled an insight into the variety of Olympic and Paralympic activities that the schools used to leverage the Games, to inspire and engage pupils using the Get Set and school generated resources, School Games and other legacy related programmes. These clearly demonstrated the potential of a soft legacy for young people before the Games had even taken place.

Subsequent investigations into other 'legacy' programme of the contemporary sport policy have illuminated the problems of conversion of legacy aspirations to engagement of schools and pupils (Meta evaluation report4). Though the development for selected children and teachers of enhanced personal social, cultural or human capital was clear, it was difficult to track into future or community sport and national surveys cannot provide sufficient evidence of soft legacy impacts or social capital gains. The paper thus proposes additional analysis of regional differences in the Taking Part child survey relating to Olympic legacy, which may provide evidence of a 'distance decay' effect of soft legacy from London and could potentially offer a methodological advance on current work, against which legacy planning and aspirations might be assessed.

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