
HUMAN COST OF OLYMPIC GAMES IN EMERGING ECONOMIES: WHITEWASHING LEGACY AND INVISIBLE LABOR

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ABSTRACT

The Olympic Games in the developing economies have become a complicated game of national pride, international show and in most cases unrealized human implications. The paper explores the so-called whitewashed legacies, whereby the outline of progress and development in which the Games are embedded dominates over the displacement, exclusion, and exploitation of vulnerable groups. It is also an important critique of how the Olympic ambition in developing countries often results in the annals of local histories, the trampling of dissent and the continuation of social inequalities, making the efforts and sacrifices made by millions of people disappear in the great story of athletic success and city regeneration. The paper presents the complex aspects of human cost in the hosting of the Olympic games in the emerging economies, which include forced eviction, exploitative labour, environmental destruction, and loss of cultural heritage. Moreover, it aims to reveal how these adverse effects are hidden or justified such as, the manipulation of media discourse, suppressing the critical voices, and the prioritization of economic benefits over the social welfare.

Keywords: Olympic Games, Emerging Economies, Human Rights, Social Justice, Urban Development.

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1. Introduction:

The Olympic Games (Games) as a festival of human superiority and international collaboration have become more and more a sign of national pride and economic potential especially to the developing economies that want to declare their presence on the international stage. Nevertheless, the Olympic glory may be very costly, and host cities experience rapid changes that tend to dislocate communities, promote inequalities, and their legacies are a set of social and environmental issues (Silvestre et al., 2024). The motive behind the need to host the Olympics in developing countries may be based on a number of reasons some of which are nation-building, social policies and recognition among the international community (Riordan, 1986). The idea of a whitewashed legacy is created when the story of progress and development that surrounds the Games hides the ugly truths of the displacement, exploitation, and marginalization that the concerned groups of people have had to endure. A critical approach to the Games shows the human price of achieving Olympic dreams, which requires a thorough grasp of the moral consequences of such undertaking as to the emerging economies (Bush et al., 2013; Medeiros et al., 2012).

Although it is a noble ideal, Olympics is usually implicated in the larger urban change processes, and it may contribute more to the inequalities that already exist (Davis, 2010). The transformation of Barcelona into a brand that attracts investment and visitors illustrates this phenomenon (Cócola-Gant & Rubio, 2015). The study of the earlier trends in the development of cities where the event will be hosted can give valuable information about the hidden reasons of hosting and residential redevelopment (Davis, 2010). Even the experiences of the past, like the Asian Games that were held in 1982, indicate the possible problems of anti-poor development and environmental destruction, in the way the activities carried out under the banner of these games were not thought through (Uppal, 2009). The act of displacing the vulnerable communities to accommodate stadiums, infrastructure and tourist accommodation is a recurring problem. This effect poses some serious concerns regarding the allocation of gains and losses of hosting the Games, especially where already existing social and economic inequalities are already high. Host countries can be encouraged to focus on the infrastructure and income-generation rather than the welfare of their citizens due to the economic growth and global acknowledgment.

Also, labour conditions of the construction of Olympic facilities and other infrastructure are

often associated with precarious working conditions, including low wages and unsafe working conditions. The conditions are particularly prevalent among migrant workers and marginalized communities which in most cases are not included in the economic gains of the Games but are the victims of the negative impacts of the Games. One should wonder how such modes of labour exploitations are condoned or hidden behind the general discourse of economic development and national pride. Additionally, the effects of Olympics on the environment, such as deforestation, pollution, and consumption of resources, may be catastrophic to the local ecosystem and the populations relying on them. Sports organizations are investing in ensuring environmental sustainability and are increasingly paying more attention to climate change and energy consumption (Cayolla et al., 2021). The ecological footprint of the Games in the long run is a source of concern regarding the sustainability of this developmental mode especially in developing economies with scarce resources and weak environments. Dwelling upon the social and ethical aspects of organizing Olympic Games in third world countries, it is significant to critically evaluate the social relations of power, historical injustices, and unequal distribution of benefits and losses in due course of the mega-event.

By revealing the human cost of Olympic dreams, this paper aims to contribute to a more sophisticated perception of the multifaceted case of sport, development, and social justice and promote a larger conversation about the need to make sure that the pursuit of athletic excellence does not harm human rights and environmental sustainability (Boros et al., 2024). The idea of hosting international sports events has gained more appeal to the developing countries, as they understand the benefits that it can bring (Roper, 2015). In most cases, the urge to put their country on the global map may supersede the issue of adverse social and environmental effects. Although sporting organizations are growing more conscious of what an environmental impact their activities have, there remains a tendency to focus on sustainability in Olympic Games.

Due to the Olympic Games, complex relations between stakeholders may arise and need attentive consideration (Chappelet, 2021). One method to address sustainable sports events is to possess sustainable initiatives measurement, assessment, and reporting tools (Hugaerts et al., 2021). There should be developed more holistic approaches to the issues of hosting the Olympic Games in the countries with emerging economies, safeguarding the rights and welfare of the vulnerable groups, and ensuring inclusive and sustainable development (Hautbois & Desbordes, 2023; Liu & Chen, 2013).

The paper investigates the human cost of staging the Olympic Games in emerging economies using a critical, legal, and governance-oriented lens. The report questions whether the current Olympic framework, which includes host city contracts, the Olympic Charter, and IOC monitoring, can guarantee the human rights of migrant workers and vulnerable populations. The paper's central argument is that, despite the IOC's commitments and promises, the current framework allows for violations of forced evictions of marginalised populations and abuse of migrant workers by putting development, urban transformation, and national image ahead of human rights obligations. These consequences are not isolated incidents, but rather a regular occurrence in emerging economies as a result of the present framework's lack of accountability and divided responsibility.

The research builds on sociological descriptions of the impact of such mega events within international human rights and labour law frameworks, revealing that breaches committed during the planning of such events are justified in the media by emphasising long-term development objectives. In doing so, the article highlights the sacrifices and hardships of communities that are overshadowed by the Olympic narrative of success and growth. Finally, the paper discusses the limits of the present Olympic governance system and calls for a rights-based model that emphasises responsibility from authorities, community involvement, and social justice as fundamental features of Olympic legacy.

2. Mega-Events and the Developing World:

The effects of mega-events such as Olympic Games on the host cities and especially developing countries have been discussed in academic literature. Mega-events often introduce considerable changes in host cities such as development of infrastructure, tourism, and the growth of economies, and may benefit the region (Herbold et al., 2020). Nevertheless, these phenomena are also linked with the possible negative outcomes, including displacement, environmental degradation, and enhanced social inequality (Gandola & Asdrubali, 2024). Mega-event strategies may serve as a driver of economic growth, enable the revitalization of a city, enhance the image of a city, and make it a competitive entity in the global arena (Chen, 2015). The literature examined the opportunities and issues related to hosting mega- events in developing countries, including such challenges as governance, sustainability, and social impact (Dashper et al., 2014; Moustakas, 2020).

The case of the sustainability strategies of the Torino Olympics can be helpful to study how

such events contribute to the territorial development of those hosting regions (Frey et al., 2008). The short-term oriented planning views may make many host cities fail to achieve the projected benefits. The major projects that may lead to the long-term benefit are the mega-event projects that are part of the larger urban and regional development plans. The management and organization of the mega-event in developing countries should consider the possible effect on the vulnerable population, social inclusiveness, and the distribution of the Games benefits should be carried out fairly. The attitudes and demands of residents towards the economic and tourist effects of mega events, such as FIFA world cup, have been studied (Briedenhann, 2011).

The political systems around mega events are usually complicated networks of government agencies, business groups, and the international organizations. Hosts of the events have to ensure that they enter into more favorable agreements with the bodies governing the events. Such alliances may open the possibilities of cooperation and innovation and provide the challenges related to accountability, transparency, and citizen involvement (Müller, 2015). There is a strong need to know what leads to positive governance and what can be done to control the threat of corruption, mismanagement and abuse of human rights. The effects of the Olympics on urban development have been discussed, with the emphasis laid on the importance of looking at mega-events as the drivers of long-term urban regeneration and development.

The concept of sports mega-event viewed through the sustainability prism is essential to comprehend its long-term effects on the host cities and regions (Li, 2021). The various aspects of environmental sustainability, social equity and economic viability are intertwined elements that need to be well addressed during the planning and organizing of the mega-events. Effective organization is a key to the success of any event, and one of the components of this success is sustainability (García-Vallejo et al., 2020). It has been stressed by the literature that it is very important to consider sustainability principles in all the phases of event lifecycle, including bidding and planning, construction, operation, and legacy management. The consideration of sustainability in event planning helps host cities to reduce the negative effects, maximization of positive impacts, and leave a legacy of environmental stewardship and social responsibility (Cayolla et al., 2021).

3. Olympic Governance, the IOC, and Human Rights Obligations:

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) governs the Olympic Games, serving not just as a sports body but also as a strong transnational private regulator (Byrne & Lee Ludvigsen,

2024). The IOC has substantial control over the legal, political, and geographical conditions under which the Games are held. This is accomplished through tools such as Host City Contracts (HCC), the Olympic Charter, and other operational requirements imposed by the host country. Although these devices are mostly private and contractual in origin, the consequences are deeply public. IOC activities and requirements have an impact on domestic legislation, urban development, employment regulations, and public space in host cities (Byrne & Lee Ludvigsen, 2024).

The Host City Contract is the IOC's most significant power. By accepting the HCC, the host country offers broad protections to the IOC's interests. This involves implementing particular laws to safeguard business interests, branding, and venue control. While the host country bears the financial, social, and legal risks associated with hosting, the IOC retains economic control and reputational benefits, allowing it to evade culpability for any human rights breaches in the mega event (Byrne & Lee Ludvigsen, 2024).

In response to global condemnation of human rights transgressions in past Games editions, the IOC included Article 13 into the HCC, imposing tighter obligations on host cities in terms of discrimination and human rights protection. This was interpreted as an attempt to guarantee that human rights abuses be addressed in accordance with international law and globally acknowledged human rights norms. However, it is unclear which rights are to be preserved. Thus, it effectively meant that the Host City, the Host City National Olympic Committee, and the Organising Committee simply had to respect and preserve the human rights to which the Host Country is committed by international human rights law (Heerdt, 2020).

This can perhaps be explained by comparing the 2024 Paris Olympic Games to the impending 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. France has accepted all main international human rights treaties apart from the Migrant Workers Convention and a few Optional Protocols. The United States has signed but not ratified several international treaties, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Furthermore, the US has not acted on most Optional Protocols or the Migration Workers Convention (Heerdt, 2020). This means that the organizers of the 2028 Olympic Games would have fewer human rights obligations to comply with than the organizers of 2024 Olympic Games.

Nonetheless, the 2017 reform does not benefit the right holders. This is because the right-holders are not parties to the HCC and hence cannot directly enforce these restrictions. Thus, only the IOC can initiate legal proceedings against the Host City, the Host National Olympic Committee, or the Organising Committee if they violate their human rights duties under Article 13 of the HCC (Heerdt, 2020). Further, the disputes are to be resolved through arbitration at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), which is a private forum. This means that the forum is not mandated to apply the internationally recognized human rights standards. This creates an accountability gap between the IOC and the host nation which allows them to blame each other while the violation persists (Byrne & Lee Ludvigsen, 2024).

4. Urban Displacement and the Spectacle of Development:

There is a high possibility of high costs of housing and displacement especially in low-income neighbourhoods as a result of Olympics (Schulenkorf et al., 2018). Mostly the citizens are forcibly displaced to allow new constructions or even infrastructure development. World Cup or the Olympics, which represent mega-events, is a frequent example of close cooperation between the government and the marketing organization that results in major effects on the development of cities (Yang, 2020). The promise of economic development and urban renewal can mask the social costs of displacement, leading to the marginalization and exclusion of vulnerable populations.

Social networks, cultural traditions and community cohesiveness can be broken, which have long-term adverse effects on the affected individuals. Mega-events, particularly those held in developing countries, are often dressed as drivers to massive urbanization projects. Moreover, the emphasis on development of a beauty-appealing environment to the tourists and spectators may result in the disregard of the current communities and their needs. Analysing the social and economic consequences of displacement, scholars can highlight the human cost of mega-events and lobby the government to set up policies and practices that give priority to the rights and well-being of vulnerable populations.

Sporting structures and arenas are regularly designed on land, which may cut down the numbers of residents and businesses (Tomino et al., 2020). The London 2012 bid had the part of the legacy claims of inspiring a generation to be more physically active. The construction of sports facilities must be done in a way that would solve the environmental disturbance and difficulties. Most of these projects are rushed and put in place without proper consultation and

compensation, which causes resentment and opposition of the concerned communities. The utilisation of intangible values of sports to create brand awareness is a considerable aspect in the development projects in the region (Amara & Theodoraki, 2010).

Marginalized populations, including low-income inhabitants, ethnic minorities, and unofficial workers, usually bear the brunt of this displacement and might not have the resources and political influence to defend themselves (Singh, 2020). The connotation of displacement caused by development has been the focus of academic planning by the policymakers because of its conflicting allusion (Singh, 2020). As the government and the general citizens may be very excited about urban development policies and accomplishments, the relocation of the low-income households is sometimes unrecognized (Yntiso, 2008). Moreover, despite the resettlement and rehabilitation policies, which are put in place, they are not always responsive to the social, economic, and cultural demands of the displaced communities (Owen & Kemp, 2014). The effects of resettlement are not considered well in impact assessment and there is the need to enhance the exercise of project-induced resettlement (Vanclay & Kemp, 2017).

Mega-events can increase the level of inequalities and vulnerability which are already present and cause social unrest and conflict. About 15 million individuals are displaced every year to accommodate massive development projects (Aboda et al., 2019). These projects are reported to elevate ecological and social vulnerability, thereby leaving the people affected displaced, disempowered, and destitute (Aboda et al., 2019). It is necessary to understand the causes and effects of displacement to facilitate more balanced and sustainable development outcomes. Governments can conclude that some small communities were no longer a viable and public services can no longer be offered, and the population should be evacuated to the greater centers (Vanclay, 2017). The massive displacement process has led to traumatic psychological and socio-cultural impacts such as traditional production systems dismantling, desecration of the ancestral sacred zones, graves and places of worship, separation of kinship groups, family system and informal social network disruption (Singh, 2020). The less measurable and observable human aspects of displacements are potent, and the destruction of social relations and links, loss of identity and status, personal emotions of sorrow, anxiety, and powerlessness have apparently weakened the capacity of some people to recuperate displacement (Arhin et al., 2022).

5. Case Study: Forced Evictions in Rio de Janeiro Ahead of Rio Olympics 2016

In the run-up to the 2016 Olympic Games, Rio de Janeiro experienced one of the most brutal episodes of forced evictions in recent memory. After the nation was granted hosting rights, the government carried out a large-scale eviction and resettlement operation in the guise of urban planning, infrastructure development, and site building. According to sources, over 6,600 people were either evicted or threatened with eviction in 2015 to make room for the 2016 Olympic Games (NRC/IMDC, 2016).

The great majority of individuals impacted lived in favelas or informal communities and were evacuated from the city's centre sections to outlying suburbs. Given that 60% of the Rio 2016 Olympic Park area will be condominium buildings sold on the free market following the Games, individuals displaced will not be able to return. The inhabitants received no formal information regarding the urbanisation schemes. The city's choices were not published, and citizens were not contacted or participating in talks on potential alternatives to evictions (NRC/IMDC, 2016).

As a result, many have been compelled to migrate to low-income housing developments in the city's impoverished outskirts. The travel to the city centre from certain relocation sites takes more than two hours by public transportation, indicating that rather than benefiting from urban improvements, people moved endure their consequences (NRC/IMDC, 2016). Furthermore, the households claimed a lack of work possibilities, a local school, medical facilities, and other necessary infrastructure. As a result, they ended up paying higher utility bills. Additionally, in such places, local militia organisations extorted "taxes" from these citizens in exchange for supplying them with basic amenities (Douglas, 2015).

This incident demonstrates the systemic risk of forced evictions involved with hosting the Olympic Games. It demonstrates how vulnerable populations' human rights are overlooked and abused in order to obtain worldwide attention while disregarding legal protections and human rights commitments.

6. Olympic Workforces and the Precarious Labor: The Legal invisibility of this Industry

Mega-events are associated with the exploitation of workers especially those working in the

construction and service industries due to their high demand of labor. A lot of these workers have low payments, inadequate working environments, and poor access to social safeguards as they are hired on temporary contracts (Patel et al., 2015). Mega events usually depend on one huge and mostly unrecognized workforce which includes migrant workers, informal workers and volunteers. These workers can also be exposed to precarious working environments, such as low pay, extended hours of work, and hazardous working conditions (Rhomborg, 2018). Also, the regulatory regimes that exist to curb abuse are not well implemented.

The focus on what is happening in the short-term and the necessity to finish the projects within the budget and on time may motivate employers to sacrifice corners and neglect labor standards. This may lead to accidents, injuries as well as fatalities with little or no responsibility on the people involved. In many cases, migrant workers are brought out of the developing countries under the guise of good paying jobs and improved living conditions, and are usually exploited, discriminated, and subjected to debt bondage (Rhomborg, 2018). The migration of workers into the country during the construction of such projects is also significant and may overload local community services, such as medical services, educational facilities, and safety because of inadequate infrastructure that can no longer sustain a higher number of people (Araújo et al., 2020).

These workers are not under legal protection and social support, and this puts them at risks of abuse and exploitation. A significant number of local aid workers are considered to be second class citizens, and their voices are often muted (Ong & Combinido, 2017). Freelancer and Upwork online labour markets are likely to replace traditional physical labour migration and bring more employment opportunities to the digital platform (Joshi et al., 2024). The transnational workers are especially prone to the violation of labor rights and theft of wages because of their status of illegality and deportability (Hallett, 2017). The immigration law is structured to enable and encourage exploitation, which is beneficial to capital and disciplines workers to do their job as a subordinate group (Hallett, 2017). The statistics about the real number of migrant workers working through on-demand platforms remain under wraps because platform companies are not obliged to publish such numbers because of the miscarrying of workers as self-employed contractors (Lata et al., 2022).

Lack of legal recognition of most of the Olympic labor force adds to their lack of protection. A large number of workers work informally or are considered independent contractors, ensuring that employers do not offer any basic labor rights, such as a minimum wage, overtime, and workers' compensation (Alturkey, 2024). Platform work is viewed by migrant workers as

an escape to racism that exists in the formal economy in a number of situations (Bonhomme et al., 2024). Even in regularized or safeguarded jobs, individuals of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have a higher risk of being injured at the workplace. Such inability to legally protect and acknowledge workers does not give them much to do in the instance of abuse, exploitation or injury.

New forms of exploitation of labor are made possible by the emergence of digital platforms (Kharisova et al., 2021). The workers in the developing countries start competing with the workers in their own countries in such online labor markets, which tends to push down the wages and results in the race to the bottom (“Digital Labor Markets and Global Talent Flows”, 2018). The opportunities offered by digital platforms have never been seen before by workers, entrepreneurs, and society, taking advantage of innovative approaches to working at the global level (Kharisova et al., 2021). Among the advantages of crowdsourcing activities, it is possible to note the knowledge sharing, better networking and communication among the business partners, new working opportunities, and better interaction with consumers (Chidoori & Belle, 2020). Nevertheless, they are not entirely free of difficulties, such as a lack of job security and benefits to employees, and the threat of exploitation increases (Howson et al., 2021). The importance of knowing how this could affect the livelihoods of the workers, should be kept in mind (Graham et al., 2017). The issue of low job security, no benefits, or even exploitation deserves attention, and it is necessary to research the labor conditions in the platform economy (Alturkey, 2024; Gruszka & Böhm, 2020; Raval & Pal, 2019; Soriano et al., 2021). The impact is not only economic, but also social because digital platforms change the conditions of work and employment (Oluka, 2024). The ubiquitousness of the digital ecosystem transforms the structure of labour (Arcidiacono et al., 2019). The platform economy growth can further promote the existing types of inequalities and introduce some other kinds of precarity (Rani & Dhir, 2020; Schor et al., 2020; Sutherland et al., 2019). In many cases, these platforms monetize the work of the workers, leaving the workers with too little and the inequality between labor and capital with more inequality (Heeks, 2022).

7. Case Study: Exploitation of Migrant Workers Ahead of the 2014 Winter Olympic Games

In preparation for the Winter Olympics and Paralympic Games, Russia hired thousands of migrant labourers, primarily from Central Asia and Russia’s North Caucasus Region. Sochi, a small resort town in Russia, was to be converted into a metropolis with state-of-the-art sports

stadiums, luxurious hotels, freshly constructed highways, telecommunications systems, transport hubs and other important infrastructure required to support several weeks of top-level Olympic activities (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

As per an interview conducted by the Human Rights Watch, these migrant workers working in Sochi were subject to a range of abuse and exploitation by the employers. This includes not paying full salaries, delaying payment of payments, and, in some circumstances, failing to pay any wages at all. These workers' passports and work permits were taken by their employers to keep them from leaving the construction sites and finding employment elsewhere. The workers' accommodations were congested, and there was inadequate food. There were around 200 workers in one residence. Furthermore, the labourers were required to work in harsh cold circumstances with limited time off. Even on days off, the workers were urged to only sleep so that they could work for longer durations in the ensuing week (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

Despite Russia's commitment to safeguard these workers under national and international law, including the ban of forced labour and mandated days off, no efforts were made to implement these regulations. Workers who resisted and attempted to complain to the authorities were harassed and silenced by their bosses. Even labour inspections conducted on building sites were ineffective since they provided no protection to these migrant workers.

Human Rights Watch addressed the IOC about human rights violations in Sochi. The IOC noted that it contacted the Organising Committee to give information on such occurrences. However, the IOC made no attempt to investigate the claims by forming a committee or visiting the venues to monitor the situation. The IOC also refrained from utilising its contractual authority to guarantee that these workers received safeguards by the Russian government (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

What happened in Sochi is an excellent illustration of how mega-events aggravate an impacted population's existing vulnerabilities. The necessity of building infrastructure for the Olympic Games and changing Sochi worsened the workers' misery. To make matters worse, lax enforcement mechanisms and regulatory monitoring fostered an environment in which exploitation of such labour went unpunished. This example demonstrates the importance of independent monitoring and robust grievance channels as part of current Olympic reforms to prevent widespread worker exploitation.

8. Environmental Harm and the Politics of Sustainability Discourse:

Besides the human cost, Olympic infrastructure may also have serious environmental effects. Sports usually require the demolition of natural habitats, communities and the pollution of air and water when constructing stadiums, roads, and other facilities (Bourkadi, 2023). The environmental degradation occasioned by the mega-events may have a long-term effect on the environmental degradation and health and well-being of the local communities. During this period, the world of work and employment has significantly changed, making the formations of traditional entities difficult (Siegrist & Li, 2018). Reliance on digital platforms as a source of income is becoming a new trend (Affeldt & Kesler, 2021). It has led to a significant rise in the number of remote jobs and the flexible working patterns (Hardaker, 2021). The impact of the Olympic Games on the environment is much more than that of the host city (Mirghaderi et al., 2023). The games also use tremendous resources such as water, energy and raw materials as they lead to climate change and depletion of resources. Elite athletes may be affected by the environmental effects as they use the environment to train and perform (Rogerson, 2017).

Sustainability as a notion has become a more visible subject of discussion of the Olympic Games, and organizers tend to boast about their concern of the environment and social responsibility. Nonetheless, such assertions are in many cases contradictory to the situation on the ground, where economic development and political achievements are usually prioritized over ecology (Hugaerts et al., 2021). The problem of the environment has become a worldwide issue and subject to academic studies (Lee et al., 2024). Sport and sustainability are linked to a long-term relationship since every sphere can be impacted directly and indirectly by the sport activity (Boros et al., 2024). The sport stakeholders have increasingly incorporated sustainability activities in their organizations (Boros et al., 2024; Cayolla et al., 2021; Kim, 2017). Sport industry is starting to appreciate the need to consider the natural environment in the course of its operations (Pelcher et al., 2021). Other companies in the sporting goods sector are concerned with sustainability and environmental safety and are more likely to make some innovations and changes so that the industry could be more environmentally friendly and offer some products that are made out of recycled products and offer some goods that are made either locally or with minimum environmental impact (Hautbois & Desbordes, 2023). Due to the increased interest of the population towards climate change and the heightened involvement of the sport industry in environmental sustainability, the number of studies exploring responses to pro-environmental conduct of stakeholders has increased (Cayolla et al., 2023).

The problem of ineffective regulation and enforcement remains after the increased awareness of the environmental effects of mega-events. The environmental laws are either poorly enforced in many of these host countries, or they simply do not exist, and this has offered developers scope to cut corners and rake in profits at the expense of environmental conservation. The severe issues which have threatened environmental sustainability include the impact of greenhouse gases, air, water, and soil pollution, species extinction, and natural resource depletion (Wang et al., 2025). Other companies attempt to expand their corporate social responsibility activities by minimizing the adverse environmental impacts of their operations through environmental social responsibility (Ross & Mercado, 2020). Ever since the 1990s, the organizations of the major sporting events throughout the world have been committed to promoting the development of environmental sustainability (Lu, 2024). Sporting events consume a lot of resources like water and energy and produce waste and therefore should be evaluated in terms of their sustainability. The rising sustainability interest is consistent with the rising level of interest in sustainability in the sports industry (Gandola & Asdrubali, 2024). Sporting events may use so many resources resulting in adverse environmental effects.

The rhetoric of sustainability is also used to avoid the fact that there are contradictions and trade-offs behind the Olympic Games host. Though organizers can be encouraged to develop green activities, such as recycling materials or investing in renewable energy, it is usually overwhelmed by the sheer size of the event and unjustified consumption of resources (Kou & Shen, 2014). There is also the possibility that mega sporting events can have positive effect on the environment. Indicatively, certain organizers of sporting events are attempting to incorporate and endorse environmental sustainability through creating environmental awareness which could bring about positive environmental change, e.g. services related to promoting sustainable transportation, energy economy and waste minimization. The media can play an important role in this by airing these efforts as well as raising the awareness of the people. Despite these advances, it is necessary to have more sustainable management, monitoring, and strategic planning (García-Vallejo et al., 2020). Teams must have more than a mere display of their environmental commitment, they must demonstrate a sustainability commitment.

Furthermore, sustainability may shift the attention to some other important problems, like human rights violations and exploitation of workers. Sustainability is a practice that has attracted attention, due to the increased environmental concerns. Social, economic, and

environmental factors are critical aspects to take into consideration when organizing an event. Through the three pillars, Olympic Games can help in making the world sustainable. Although it is important, the issue of sustainability is often overlooked during the organization of sporting events. Global campaigns such as the Sustainable Development Goals also drive the goals of sustainable practices in sports as they offer a platform to tackle the environment problem (Villarino, 2021). Sustainability efforts can be piloted and championed using sporting events.

9. Narrative Control Media, Nationalism and Olympic Construction as a form of Legitimacy:

The media has a significant influence on the creation of the public perception about the Olympic Games, and it tends to reproduce a plot of national pride and solidarity which masks the shadows of this event hosting. Media has a significant role, either through the broadcasting of events or through raising the awareness of the people (Kolotouchkina et al., 2020). The concept of nationalism is widely employed to justify the Games and to gain the audience of the masses (Teare & Taks, 2021). The news about Olympics is usually dedicated to the performance of sportsmen and the visual impressiveness of the show and supposedly ignores or minimizes the adverse effects on the population and nature (Lopera-Mármol & Jiménez-Morales, 2021). Government and corporate sponsors can pressure media organizations to show an excellent picture of the Games, which further supports the dominant narrative (Zhou et al., 2017). The media is an important component that can be employed to reinvent and change the brand of a country and can impact the perception of a country (Li & Feng, 2022).

Olympic organizers and host governments have had a reputation of manipulating media stories to filter the message down and prevent dissent. The digital and social media changes how both producers and consumers challenge the dominant major events discourses (McGillivray, 2016). Moreover, through a consideration of the narratives that individuals engage in the process of the Games delivery, the lived experience of mega-events, which tends to be opposed to the dominating and celebratory discourses supported by host cities and the organizing committees, can be comprehended. By controlling information and strategically employing propaganda, they will be able to develop the feeling of national spirit and mission, which will distract the focus on the social and economic expenses of the Games (Gilchrist et al., 2015). Media are usually keen on the economic aspects of hosting the Olympics which include things like creation of jobs, tourist growth yet neglecting the fact that people get displaced, and their

livelihoods are lost.

The Games are usually promoted and popularized through nationalism, which generates a feeling of community and oneness (Stephens, 2015). It can be politically applied to legitimize military dictatorship, which distracts the people with the Games instead of democracy (Koh, 2005). This may be done by using national symbols which include flags, anthems, national colours to instil in people the feeling of national pride and patriotism. Moreover, this justifies the state ideology and its narratives too (Pugsley, 2017). Promotional devices, including the backstory of athletes, can be used to attract the audience (Pullen et al., 2018). The personal issues and moments of success of athletes are echoed by the viewers and support the story about national pride and success.

But the constant propagation of nationalism has its disadvantages as well. The media news frames were based on the concept of squalor and embarrassment around a very limited concept of corruption that does not give a platform to the voices of marginalized communities (Sarkar, 2014). This nationalism may also cause marginalisation of the minority and subjection of dissent since any form of criticism of the Games is considered unpatriotic. Interest in the effects of international sporting events on host countries and the environment has risen.

The argument is that the incredible growth trend of the Olympic city cannot be sustainable. Proper following of the size of mega-event is capable of helping planners, policymakers, and event owners to plan smaller and more sustainable Games (Silvestre et al., 2024). Moreover, legacy plans are required to be handled throughout the preparations to, and following the event (Teare & Taks, 2021). Olympic construction projects and infrastructure development projects usually lead to the destruction of natural habitats as well as the eviction of the local people. Even though the Games can have certain positive economic effects, such effects are usually temporary and uneven, which leaves most of the residents in a worse situation than they were before. The stories provided by the media should be critically analysed and the voices of the people who are the most impacted by the Games should be considered (Jiang, 2017; Merwe & Westhuizen, 2007; Riordan, 1986; Rocha, 2015). School ceremonies can be used to promote the western values using the Olympics (Medeiros et al., 2012).

10. Legacy as Erasure: Reclaiming Narratives of Resistance and Resilience

The term of legacy is often applied to justify the huge expenses and inconveniences of the

Olympic Games, but it is more of a kind of erasure that silences the voices and experiences of people adversely affected by the games. The impacts of the Olympics are experienced most by the affected individuals within the society due to forced evictions. The concept of a good long-term legacy of the Olympics is often disputed by the facts of eviction, environmental devastation and financial hokeypokey. The emphasis on representation of a city to a worldwide audience might cause the disrespect or even active violation of local culture and identity. The 1960s sport activism and the political apathy of modern sport are two opposing ideas (Leonard & King, 2009).

Gentrification as a result of the Games can also become a booster of property prices and displacing long-term populations. This is the type of erasure whereby, the process of erasing the social structures that existed and the repositioning of the communities at risk so that new developments and infrastructures can be built (Davis, 2010). The process of urban transformation implied that the Olympics was an aspect of a larger process of eviction in Seoul, both prior to the Olympics and afterwards, and this indicates that the Olympics occurred in a timeline of massive eviction in the city (Davis, 2010).

There is a strong need to give a voice to the people who have been discriminated or pushed out by the Games. By writing and posting such stories, we can disrupt the prevailing discourse about the Olympics as a universally positive sport and encourage more people to see its social and economic impacts in a more sophisticated way (Kim, 2012). The community-led measures to preserve local cultures and traditions should be encouraged, and the policies that ensure the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups should be promoted. When we raise these voices, we will have the opportunity to disrupt the official narrative of the Games and spread a more fair and equal agenda of urban development.

The Games also have the potential to unify the country and give a sense of pride, yet this may be achieved at the cost of majorities oppressing minorities and marginalizing them. The resistance and the resilience narratives play a key role in comprehending the entire effects of Olympics on host cities and their citizens. The emphasis on the sporting performance and national pride may lead to the neglect of the social and economic expenses of the Games, and the voices of the harmfully affected people.

These stories can make us see how communities have managed to resist displacement, struggle towards their rights and defend their cultural heritage despite the Olympics. It is possible to

start fighting against the predominant narrative of the Games and ensure a fairer and more equal image of urban development (Bush et al., 2013; Uppal, 2009). One reason why factories in Beijing shut down in the year 2006 was to clean the air but this was brought about by the upcoming 2008 Olympic Games (Siddall, 2020). This demonstrates the use of Olympics as an agent of change.

11. Way Forward: Rights-based Approach

The Olympic system is a multi-layered and complicated matter, and there are numerous stakeholders, such as the International Olympic Committee, the national Olympic committees, governments of the host cities, sponsors, and other organizations (Chappelet, 2021). Such a network of actors and interests tends to create a void of accountability and transparency, and thus it is hard to guarantee that the Games will be carried out in a fair and sustainable way. One of the areas that the IOC has been challenged is revenue distribution and legacy plans in the host city athletic facilities (Elcombe & Wenn, 2011). The negative effects of the Olympics on the host nations and their citizens in the long term are rarely taken into consideration.

The international Olympic body can implement policy change within cities. An alternative governance of the Olympics based on rights would put more emphasis on the rights and welfare of all the stakeholders especially those that are the most susceptible to the ill effects of the Games. This would entail making sure that communities can play a significant role in the planning and decision-making process as far as their rights are also considered during the entire Olympic cycle. The Olympic Games policies should be developed and implemented based on international human rights standards such as right to proper housing, right to freedom of expression, and right to be involved in culture. The IOC has been demonstrating its commitment to sustainability, and the 2024 Paris Olympics are designed to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by half when compared to prior Games (Boros et al., 2024).

The running of the Games must be more open and responsible and there should be proper systems in place to handle complaints and conflicts. This would entail the establishment of independent oversight organizations to keep track of the behavior of the Games and hold all the stakeholders responsible to their actions. Host cities selection criteria must be updated to give priority to sustainability, social justice, and human rights (Anagnostopoulos & Winand, 2019). Economic, social and environmental impacts of the Games in the long term must be given serious considerations and the host cities obliged to prepare detailed plans of legacy that

are of benefit to all societal members. It may result in better health results and cost reduction in healthcare (Ljungqvist et al., 2009). There should also be strategic planning of future Olympics hosts (Chen et al., 2019).

To turn the situation around and see more cities bidding to host the Olympic Games, the interdisciplinary cooperation is necessary, particularly in the fields of facilities management, communication, sports marketing, and sports psychology (Cayolla et al., 2021). Through a collaborative strategy, this can be done to ensure that the Games are carried out in a socially responsible and economic manner. This would assist in making sure that the Games are held in an economically viable and socially responsible manner. The Games can become a platform of positive social change that can bring about intercultural awareness, community involvement, and the motivation of generations of athletes to come. The last ten years have revealed that large international bodies show ambitions and commitment towards ensuring sustainability in sports (Gandola & Asdrubali, 2024).

The sporting organizations can lead and influence the lifestyles of millions of people worldwide by establishing the standard of environmental sustainability (Hautbois & Desbordes, 2023). It has to measure and report more sustainable efforts in the Olympic sector (Hugaerts et al., 2021). Sports have an opportunity to impact other industries by inserting the standard of sustainability to the sports industry, which would lead to the ripple effect of using sustainable standards of both production and consumption (Ali et al., 2024). In the future, Far East will become the centre of hosting the subsequent three Games.

The main focus has increased around mega-event strategies and their role in developing host cities as they now form part of broader city development strategies (Chen, 2015). International sports events have become appealing to most of the developing nations, and they understand the various gains these events can bring (Roper, 2015). Sports tourism encompasses more than mega-events that have been central in the impact analysis, which results in a negative perception of mega construction projects (Herbold et al., 2020). Mega-event hosts are encouraged to shun the mega-event syndrome to ensure that mega-events do not necessarily associate mega-events with massive urban development (Müller, 2015). The results of research can serve as useful data in the future organizing/governing bodies of sports mega-events (Kim et al., 2004). The community gains are the benefits of the Games that can be utilized through participatory planning, open communication, and involvement of communities (Frey et al.,

2008; Schulenkorf et al., 2018).

12. Conclusion

This study maintains that the human costs involved with hosting the Olympic Games are not an unusual consequence caused by improper execution or some uncommon local occurrence, but rather a recurring pattern that has become predictable as a result of the present Olympic Games architecture. The study combines instances of forced evictions, abuses against migrant workers, and environmental degradation to demonstrate how a system that does not hold those responsible accountable for their actions allows for violations of many rights. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is at the heart of the framework due to its jurisdiction under the Olympic Charter and the Host City Contract. However, given the flaws in the structure, the IOC is immune from direct accountability for such human rights infractions.

The argument is further supported by case studies from the 2016 Rio Olympic Games and the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. The forced evictions carried out in Rio de Janeiro ahead of the 2016 Olympic Games demonstrate how the right to adequate housing, guaranteed by Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, was ignored and violated in the name of Olympic-driven urban redevelopment priorities. Similarly, the abuse of migrant workers during the Winter Olympics preparations in Sochi highlights systematic failures to uphold international labour standards, such as prohibitions on forced labour and obligations to provide safe working conditions and fair remuneration for workers. In both cases, the government accepted such misuse by failing to hold anybody accountable for such acts. This permitted the Organising Committees, private contractors, and the IOC to walk off because there was little to no remedy for the affected persons to seek justice.

A review of the IOC's 2017 revisions, which included Article 13 guaranteeing the safeguarding and protection of human rights in the host country, uncovers more flaws in the governance structure. While the improvements demonstrate the IOC's commitment to preserving internationally recognised human rights, they are only as good on paper because no protection is provided to the right-holder to defend his rights against violation. The changes do not specify which rights are protected, enabling the authorities to interpret them in a way that allows them to avoid accountability. Furthermore, the changes apply only in the host nation, which has the discretion to respect or disregard certain human rights. Furthermore, the disputes are required to be dealt with by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), which is a private body with no

need to uphold internationally recognised human rights in its decisions. Thus, the changes serve solely as an internal oversight and risk control mechanism, not as a tool for human rights protection.

This raises multiple issues concerning the human rights breaches emerging out of global athletic mega-events. The IOC's governance approach is mostly private in character; yet the regulation has generally created public law impacts while not being subject to public law obligations. The international human rights law takes a state-centric approach where the law only compels the state to uphold and safeguard the commitments. This enables non-state players, like as the IOC, to employ private contractual arrangements to support changes in host nations' legal and regulatory environments while avoiding international human rights duties. To address these gaps, an approach centred around rights is required. Under this approach, the Olympic governance model would be changed to include mandatory human rights impact assessments during host nation preparations, independent monitoring and oversight mechanisms, and the establishment of a grievance redressal body to hear worker complaints. Such steps would bring the Olympic governance into conformity with the UN Guiding Principles.

Finally, the legitimacy of the Olympic Games as a global sporting institution is dependent not only on cutting-edge stadiums, lavish infrastructures, and the ability to deliver outstanding athletic events to the audience, but also on compliance with human rights obligations and accountability under the law. Without real reform, the gap between Olympic ambitions and material consequences will deepen, resulting in legacies that are lauded worldwide but challenged locally.

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