

## **Britain Welcome's The World: Dressing Up London**

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### **Introduction: Regeneration Games**

The rationale for hosting hallmark events - whether site, area or regional in scale - has been located within the fourth era of World Fairs, running from the early 1960s, namely 'the city of renewal' (Hall, 1992: 29). London2012 is no exception to this now 50 year trajectory, which has hardened in recent years towards major cities hosting and bidding for the 'greatest show on earth'. National capital (e.g. Madrid, Paris, Tokyo, Beijing) and dominant cultural cities (e.g. Sydney, Rio, Istanbul, New York) now vie for hosting Olympics despite their escalating cost and perennial controversies and dubious legacy effects (Evans, 2011a). Re-presenting and re-imaging major cities through these mega-events is therefore both a competitive city strategy and reflection of the 'festivalisation of the city' (Palmer and Richards, 2010). These once in a lifetime events also present a dualistic challenge to their hosts - between the temporal/ephemeral nature of the event, and the permanent legacy (facilities, transport, urban design etc.) - and between the 'host' (local/city/national) audience and the outside world. The latter includes visitors/tourists, global media, commercial sponsors and institutional 'brand' holders, notably the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

The public investment in the facilities required to host the Games - sports venues, athletes village and infrastructure, i.e. public transport, media/ICT - also presents a host

city with the dilemma of whether to use existing spaces and facilities or to build new ones, and if so, where. London did both, but followed a traditional path in building largely new sports and other venues and upgrading rail/underground transport in a part of East London long identified as an area for sustained regeneration and socio-economic convergence with the rest of the city. The London docklands and Lower Lea Valley area have been subject to urban regeneration investment since the late 1970s, so this mega-event opportunity was taken to accelerate the pace and direction through celebratory and iconic interventions and ‘statements’. Given the experience from previous Games however, the after-use of these major facilities is unlikely to present a viable legacy and to this extent, London was no more a ‘Sustainable Games’ than Beijing, Athens, or Sydney. It is the wider regeneration in and around Stratford (e.g. housing), the public transport infrastructure, and the less tangible effects, that in time may lead us to conclude whether or not event-based regeneration was both worthwhile and justified. Part of these effects include the experience of the event itself; how the event was visualised and manifested to Londoners and visitors; and how these collective memories were imprinted and marked. The Olympics event itself has spawned a range of parallel and fringe activities alongside the sporting competition, notably the national Cultural Olympiad and local cultural events programmes, the torch processions, as well as the public images and promotion of the Games. This chapter considers how London was ‘dressed’ for the ‘Games party’, including issues of inclusive design, the Look and Feel borough programme and how local residents perceived their changing landscape as the party came to town.

## Vision for the Games

Firstly, it is worth considering the original visions for the London2012 Olympics expressed by various tiers of government - central, city-region and local. These indicate the extent of convergence of the respective priorities, as these have evolved over time.

**Table 1.1 London2012 Olympic and Legacy Visions** (adapted from Evans, 2010)

<b>London2012 Olympic Objectives and Legacy (DCMS, 2007)</b>	1. 'Green', sustainable games, Lower Lea Valley regeneration <i>Making the Olympic Park a blueprint for sustainable living</i>	2. Cultural Legacy, Olympic festivals, Creative Hub. <i>Demonstrating that the UK is a creative, inclusive and welcoming place to live in, visit and for business</i>	3. Participation in Sport and Culture <i>Making the UK a world leading sporting nation; inspiring a generation of young people to take part in volunteering, cultural and physical activity</i>	4. Park, environmental and transport improvements, Olympic Institute and Media Centre <i>Transforming the heart of East London</i>
<b>UK Government Legacy commitments (DCMS 2010)</b>	Sustainable communities: Promoting community engagement and achieving participation across all groups in society through the Games	Tourism and Business opportunities: Exploiting to the full the opportunities for economic growth offered by hosting the Games	Harnessing the UK's passion for sport to increase grass roots participation, particularly by young people	Ensuring that the Olympic Park can be developed after the Games as one of the principal drivers of regeneration in East London
<b>London Mayor Olympic Legacy commitments</b>	Delivering a sustainable Games and developing sustainable communities	Showcasing London as a diverse, inclusive, creative and welcoming city	Increasing opportunities for Londoners to become involved in sport	Ensuring Londoners benefit from new jobs, business and volunteering opportunities; Transforming the heart of East London
<b>London2012 Olympic Legacy Programmes (LDA, 2009)</b>	Olympic Park & Land delivery	Culture; Tourism & Business	Sports participation (including Healthy & Active Workplace)	Tourism & Business; London Employment & Skills Taskforce (LEST)
<b>London2012 Host Borough Legacy framework</b>	Nexus with physical regeneration; Developing successful neighbourhoods	Visitor economy	Sporting legacy; Culture; Supporting Healthier Lifestyles	Nexus with physical regeneration; Creating Wealth and Reducing Poverty

As the schedule of visions and legacy promises indicate, London2012 was seen as an opportunity to inspire change in many different ways. The London2012 Games were to be more than sporting achievement, but also included culture and education programmes with wider programmes like the Cultural Olympiad and Torch Relay to be celebrated beyond the Olympic venues and London, where the benefits and excitement, it was hoped, would be felt across the UK and around the world - and to be as accessible and inclusive as possible.

It is perhaps the 'cultural' vision (Table 1.1) that is addressed by how London 'Dressed Up' for the Olympics – how it was showcased and made welcoming to visitors - and local audiences and residents. Reconciling the local benefits, impacts and 'ownership' of the event with the imperatives of hosting an international media and mega-event is one intrinsic challenge, raising fundamental questions of 'whose city?' and 'whose event' in terms of how these costs and benefits are felt and distributed. One test of this is how far the Games and the physical and visual experience created, has been 'inclusive'. The next section therefore deals with the inclusive design of London2012 and how this was delivered.

### **3. Inclusive design and accessibility**

London2012 has created a legacy of inclusive design and accessibility. For the first time, both the Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games were planned together from the outset (GLA, 2011a). The highest standards of accessible and inclusive design were adopted in the London Plan 2011, and inclusivity has been embedded in the building of

the Olympic Park to create ‘the most accessible piece of city in the UK’ (Firth, 2012).

Specifically, the legacy of inclusivity is manifested as (Firth, 2012):

- The legacy of ‘the most accessible Games ever’
- The legacy of a Park and venues designed and built specifically for both Olympic and Paralympic sport equally
- The Legacy of a Park and venues designed and built for people from 205 nations.

Inclusive design is a key concept steadily being embraced and culturally accepted by British society, and in a narrower sense promoted by legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA, 1995). In principle, it places people at the heart of the design process. As an approach that considers the widest possible audience, addressing the needs of people who have been traditionally excluded or marginalized by mainstream design practices, inclusive design means designing and building places that everyone – regardless of disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, race or faith – can enjoy confidently and independently with choice and dignity (LLDC, 2012). The following principles of inclusive design were embedded in the Games (Hickish, 2012):

- People at the heart of the design process
- Acknowledgement of diversity and difference
- Choice
- Flexibility in use
- Convenient and enjoyable for all users

In the bid, London committed that the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games would be ‘the most accessible Games ever’, and that they would be fully integrated as one. The Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) developed an Inclusive Design Strategy and Inclusive Design Standards (IDS), and also employed a panel of disabled people, and another of inclusive design experts, to offer advice and guidance to ensure compliance with the IDS (LLDC, 2012).

As a result, the Games’ venues were built to meet the needs of a diverse community and to the highest standards of accessibility with facilities such as: faith rooms, Changing Places toilets (fully accessible toilets that provide more space and adult changing facilities for disabled people who require the help of one or more carers), baby change facilities and wheelchair user accessible viewing spaces. The parklands and public realm have also been designed with disabled and older people in mind with gradients kept to a minimum, regular resting places, accessible/blue badge parking and accessible toilet facilities (LLDC, 2012).



Figure 1. Accessing public toilets, spectating (Paralympics) and moving (Olympic Park)

In meeting the objectives of re-imagining the city, the success of the Games is not just about the sporting events themselves, it is about the whole visitor experience from arriving at the airport to leaving at the end of the trip. The London2012 City Operations Programme was responsible for the games related work required in London, but outside of official venues.

For example, the Southbank Improvement Scheme was a project to improve accessibility of the riverside walkway from Westminster Bridge to Tower Bridge, aiming to widen the user groups who can appreciate the walkway. The renovation of Clink Street in London has created a surface that is comfortable for all to navigate; its colour and size mix has helped to give the surface a traditional feel (Fleck, 2012).

A fundamental part of the London experience during the Olympic and Paralympic Games was how visitors were welcomed. The London Ambassadors were key to this welcome, with over 8,000 volunteers located in 35 pods across the city: travel (e.g. London airports, railway stations and tube stations); visitor hotspots (e.g. Covent Garden, Trafalgar Square) and City Live Sites and London Media Centre. The London Ambassador team was responsible to deliver seamless information and support to the visitor (for more detail see Chapter 6).

In addition, specific web resources were provided to help businesses welcome disabled visitors (e.g. [www.london.gov.uk/destinationlondon](http://www.london.gov.uk/destinationlondon)), and to offer comprehensive virtual guides to over 35,000 accessible touch points around London for all visitors (Fleck, 2012), see [www.inclusivelondon.com](http://www.inclusivelondon.com).

The London Games also created an accessible transport legacy manifested by the Accessibility Implementation Plan which covers London underground and over ground transport. Features include lifts, induction loops (including audio guides at venues), tactile paving, platform humps, wide aisles, information points, the spectator journey planner and Access for All Programme (Fleck, 2012). The transport for the Games was deemed to be a success with fast track links from King's Cross and via Jubilee and over ground lines, and free one-day Travelcard for Games ticketholders. Blue Badge holders had reserved parking and cyclists had secure bike parking in walking distance of venues. Inside the venue, a free Games Mobility service provided mobility vehicles on a first come first served basis. The popularity of the Paralympic Games did however catch out transport operators who reduced the numbers of direct trains to Stratford, leading to overcrowding and a less than ideal experience for mobility impaired travellers.

### **Look and Feel of the Games**

The whole visitor experience and legacy of the Olympic and Paralympic Games are highly important in evaluating the success beyond the staging of the Games themselves. Government data showed that the UK welcomed 590,000 visits either for the Olympics or Paralympics, or attendance at a ticketed event and who spent an average of £1,290 during their visit, compared with £650 by other visitors (ONS, 2012). VisitBritain research (2013) found that that 99% of departing overseas visitors during July to September 2012 said they had felt welcome in Britain, with 83% 'very' or 'extremely' welcomed' (versus 79% a year before).

GLA in collaboration with LOCOG led several programmes to make the Games experience an unforgettable memory for all visitors. The 'Look and Feel' programme was designed to maximise the benefits to residents and visitors by providing an exciting environment to the Games and building a celebratory atmosphere throughout London. A budget of £32 million was allocated to deliver this programme as part of the Olympic public sector funding package, funded from a rate precept on London residential council-taxpayers. The 'Learning Legacy' report (Dabbs et al., 2012) defines the main objective of the Look and Feel Programme, as follows: 'The key objective of the programme is to leverage and build upon the pre-Games brand identity to create a distinct and consistent Look of the Games that contributes to and enhances the overall experience for the Olympic and Paralympic audiences: athletes, spectators, Host City residents, visitors, media, and television and new media viewers.'

Following this objective, GLA wanted to extend the Games experience from the competition venues to London's landmark destinations such as bridges, parks and other tourist destinations as well as local sites in as many London boroughs as possible. The 'Look and Feel' Funding Agreement covered four areas and each was delivered through separate work programmes: spectaculars, experience themed areas, Your London 2012 (also known as Your 2012 and London Boroughs) and transport (GLA, 2011a). Later in an update briefing 'London 2012 Games Report' (2011) they were grouped under three principal elements: Your London 2012, the London Outdoor Touring Festival and the London City Dressing Programme (previously known as the 'Look of London', Themed Experienced Areas, and London Look & Feel - The Transport Experience). The programme covered zones in London representing transport node to venue (Olympic

Park, Excel, Greenwich Park, Woolwich Barracks, Earls Court, Wimbledon, Lords and Wembley) and Central London (five zones covering the West End, City, Southbank, Museum Quarter and King's Cross).



Figure 2. Olympic banners, Regents Street

**1. Spectaculars** - this programme was divided into two main parts: iconic spectaculars were part of the 'Look' programme and focused on dressing the City through Games time and it covered all of the London Boroughs, whilst specific experience zones were identified in the City, the Transport network and in lighting London's bridges (Evans, 2011b). Iconic spectaculars were aimed at developing a visual experience for the city and to be rolled out so that a consistent look was established all over London during Games time. Creative spectaculars included visual 'wow moments' which were to be 'visual postcards that will be forever burned into people's memory as one of their key London2012 Games experiences' (GLA, 2010b). Two Creative Spectacular projects were *Streb* and *Circus Circus*. These aimed to provide the 'Feel' aspect of the programme and enhance the creative experience of London (see Table 1). Multiple stakeholders across private and public sectors delivered the Creative Spectaculars. Live festival venues were part of the programme which provided free entertainment to

Londoners during the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Over 240,000 visitors per day visited the Live Site venues during Games time to experience entertainment events, as well as live coverage of the Games broadcast on big screens. Moreover, city parades were organised during Games time and included support for the Torch Relay and Olympic and Paralympic Athletes' Parades. The Creative Spectaculars were planned between 21 June and 9 September in London during the London 2012 Festival. The key elements (and costs) of the Spectaculars programme were *Artistic spectacular moments* (£2.5 million), *Rings and Agitos* in iconic locations (£4.5 million), *Picotgrams* (the costs of which were covered by Olympic and Paralympic Sponsors) and *Lighting the Bridges* (£2 million) (GLA, 2010a).

**2. Experience Themed Areas** - were strategically important visitor areas such as Oxford Street, Regents Park, Houses of Parliament and Wimbledon, for which additional dressing and animation was supplied (GLA, 2010a). £300,000 per zone was provided to deliver the 'Look' in these areas at a total cost of £4.8 million (GLA, 2011b). Each zone was masterplanned in the form of a journey audit considering location, purpose, environmental assets and content/graphic images, For example, the Greenwich themed area journey would start with the Cutty Sark as an area or point of interest and performance space, with flags, banners, official 'graffiti' both reinforcing the brand and providing wayfinding, as well as key London 'facts' - cultural, historical and future.

**3. Your London 2012** - This part of the programme was delivered by GLA with thirty-three London Boroughs to bring the Games Experience to life in local areas for the

benefit of residents and tourists. GLA provided a grant of £50,000 to each borough to enable them to purchase ‘street dressing’ from LOCOG. This sought to help boroughs ‘dress’ their town centres, enhance their parks and green spaces and create focal points for celebrations and local involvement. 15 boroughs and provincial towns outside of London also co-operated at their own expense in the general scheme, in most instances these boroughs decorated their public buildings with national flags and bunting. LOCOG in consultation with local authorities created the *Look Book* (previously called ‘Kit of Parts’ catalogue) which included the London2012 colour and planting schemes, bunting, banners, flags and bespoke *Look* items. The *Look Book* had been designed to enable local authorities to work with their communities to select what works best locally, with formal purchasing beginning in autumn 2011. An example of two London (‘non-host’) borough ‘dressings’ is shown in Table 1.2, with an indicative budget for Burgess, Park (LB Southwark) and Sutton town centre (GLA, 2011e).

**Table 1.2 Dressing London boroughs - Indicative Cost Estimates**

<b>Sample Item</b>	<b>Unit Cost £</b>	<b>Burgess Park (No.)</b>	<b>£ Total</b>	<b>Sutton High Street (No.)</b>	<b>£ Total</b>
Lamppost	199.00	<b>55</b>	10,945	<b>60</b>	11,940
Banners					
Tensioned Wall Banners (m <sup>2</sup> )	52.50	<b>235</b>	12,337	<b>140</b>	7,350
Railing Wraps m <sup>2</sup>	10.74	<b>1350</b>	14,500	<b>300</b>	3,222
Vinyls					
Table / Bench	66.75	<b>10</b>	668	<b>10</b>	667
Lamppost	45.75	<b>12</b>	549	<b>60</b>	2,745
Bin	54.75	<b>15</b>	821	<b>10</b>	547
Shards					
Lake	441.00	<b>8</b>	3,528	<b>0</b>	-
Grass / Freestanding Building	249.00	<b>6</b>	1,494	<b>8</b>	1,992
	306.00	<b>2</b>	612	<b>8</b>	2,448
Planting (m <sup>2</sup> )	26.23	<b>55</b>	1,443	<b>75</b>	1,967

Gym Mats	700.88	3	2,103	3	2,103
Hurdles	396.60	2	793	0	-
			<b>£49,792</b>		<b>£34,982</b>
GLA (2011e)					

**4. Transport** - this is where the *Look and Feel* for the city was rolled out across the transport network to add to the Games experience. Tube travellers would have noticed the Olympic signage going up in stations all around the network. Much of this was planned to be paid by the media and £6.5 million was estimated to be spent on this package (GLA, 2010a).

As well as the major investment in new and upgraded rail/light rail and underground lines and stations, including special Olympics operational facilities, more than 100 walking and cycling schemes on eight routes across London - including some that link the Olympic Park - were upgraded, as well as paths linking to outer London venues. Improvements included wider paths, smoother surfaces and better entry and access points. Providing the right walking and cycling infrastructure was designed to help London2012 to meet its aim of 100% of spectators getting to the Games by public transport, cycling or walking. It is, however, also expected to further encourage cycling in London, which has increased by 83% since 2000 (ODA, 2011).

**5. Experiencing the Games** - As in previous host cities, LOCOG was responsible for producing a variety of decorative elements, in keeping with the overall 'Look and Feel' of the Games. Dressing publicly accessible areas across London and hosting Games

related events were part of spreading the London 2102 experience throughout the capital.

The enduring symbol of the Olympic Games is of course composed of five interlocking rings representing the five continents, coloured blue, yellow, black, green and red. The image was designed in 1912, adopted in June 1914 and made its debut at the 1920 Antwerp Olympics. During June 2012, giant Olympic rings (25 metres wide and 11.5 metres tall) had been installed at key landmark locations in London (Fig.3).



Figure 3. Olympic rings and Agitos: St Pancras station, Tower Bridge, Serpentine bridge (Hyde Park)

Lighting of bridges also brought the rings to life at night. After the installation of Olympic rings over the Thames on Tower Bridge, the London2012 chairman Sebastian Coe said: ‘with one month to go to the Olympic Games opening ceremony, these spectacular rings on one of London's most famous landmarks will excite and inspire residents and visitors in the capital’ (Press Association, 2012). The Agitos, the symbol of the Paralympic movement, replaced the rings on these landmark locations for the Paralympic Games. Constructing iconic structures is one of the most commonly used approaches to place the city on the mental map of tourists (Holcomb, 1999) and attract them to visit the location. However, there is always the question of whether this money

is worth spending. The Green Party candidate for the Mayor of London for example criticized the money spent on dressing up London: ‘the Mayor has cut programs which would have helped people find jobs and cut their energy bills, but he has found £3.2million for this display. There were better things to have spent this money on’ (Hanna, 2012). Inside the Olympic Park, the decision to build the ArcelorMittal (Fig.4) is considered the most tangible example of an increasing focus to attract people into the area by the use of iconic structures (Stevenson, 2012).



Figure 4. ArcelorMittal in Olympic Park during Games

The torch relay had been a huge and unanticipated success during the run-up to the Games. On 18 May, LOCOG launched the Torchbearer nomination process and the Olympic Flame began its tour all over the UK to bring the excitement of the Games to everyone. 8,000 torchbearers in all carried a version of torch. The Torch Relay had succeeded by creating a genuine sense of enthusiasm about the Games in the communities that it moved through. Thousands of people had lined the streets to cheer it

on while the torch was passing through their neighbourhood. Several city councils in the UK published Community Engagement Information Packs to encourage local people to be involved and participate in the Torch relay. The success of the Torch relay was attributed to the sense of national pride and Britishness, fuelled by media coverage, and for most, the fact this would be the only live experience they would have of the Games.

*London Live 2012* was designed as a key part of the Games time experience. The aim was to ‘create inspiring spaces where Londoners and visitors can come together and celebrate the atmosphere and excitement and to share in the unique highlights of the London 2012 Games’ (GLA, 2011b). The London Live 2012 programme included large screens showing the Games events and other digital content, and several events included music concerts, sports activities, interactive exhibitions, outdoor arts events and other cultural activity (Fig.5). The three Live Site locations were Hyde Park, Victoria Park and Trafalgar Square. The GLA, The Royal Parks and London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) worked jointly with promoters Live Nation to deliver the programme. Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, said: ‘with its unbeatable locations London Live will be a thrilling highlight in a summer of highlights, allowing even more people to watch awe inspiring sporting heroes in high definition action for free, and other fantastic attractions for Londoners and visitors alike.’ (GLA, 2011c)



Figure 5. Hackney London 2012 (Stevenson, 2013)

In order to extend the London2012 ‘feel good factor’ and visitor experience the Mayor’s annual Thames Festival weekend was also staged along riverside venues and spaces. Coinciding with the Paralympics in early September, events ranged from Night Carnival and fireworks displays, to international performing arts and boating competitions (Fig.6).



Figure 6. Circolombia, More London, City Hall

**Local Perspectives on Your London 2012** - the local perception towards Your London 2012 is now considered, especially the initiatives that have been developed and delivered in the four London 2012 Olympic Host Boroughs bordering the Olympic Park: Newham, Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest. During March 2012, focus group meetings were organized (by author-Edizel) with residents living in and around the fringe of the London 2012 Olympic Park in order to understand their expectations; to what degree they were participating in Olympic-related activities; to what extent hosting Olympic Games has changed their life and outlook; and what they think about the social, physical and economic regeneration in the area. The participants were asked to sign a consent form and informed that the meeting would be recorded and

all data would be treated confidentially and anonymized. Four focus group meetings in total were organised, one in each of the above host boroughs bordering the Olympic Park.

The GLA and LOCOG were keen to deliver a consistent message in terms of the way London presents itself while allowing for local variations and borough specific content. LOCOG contracted a private company to provide street dressing items and low cost items that community groups could use (GLA, 2011d).

The 'Look Book' was available to Games stakeholders and included a variety of decorative elements for them to purchase. There were three elements to the Look Book: *Business as Usual* - ideas that may fall within current plans and budgets for next year and may include planting in local parks and existing architectural schemes; and *Look Items* - high impact street dressing and *Bespoke* items: ideas that stand out.

As a part of *Business as Usual*, planting, painting and Games records and temporary lighting projects were implemented in the host Boroughs. Creative planting through existing hanging baskets and flowerbeds or creating something entirely new had been encouraged. However, these new designs sometimes created conflicts with local residents and raised the question of whether this was primarily for the Olympic visitors or for locals as well. During the focus group meeting in Hackney for instance, residents complained about the design of the flowerbeds at one of the estates which is on the way to Olympic Park from Ethan Manor Station. The borough wanted to dress up the path starting from the station to the Olympic Park by new planting and flowerbeds. However,

the residents complained that the changes were done for the visitors but not for the locals since they cannot enjoy the flowerbeds anymore as a result of the new layout:

‘We’ve got fencing up round every one of them [flower beds] so you can’t see what’s in them, and when I asked them why, the fella said ‘because they’re coming from the station’ ...So why’ve they done all that? Look at the waste of money. ...They don’t give a \*\*\* for the locals. I’m gonna go and live with Sebastian [Sebastian Coe] while the Olympics are on.’ (Respondent 1)

On the other hand, residents appreciated the overall change and improvements, especially around the River Lea, which had been cleaned up significantly, thus applying one of the main principles of inclusive design: to be as convenient and enjoyable for all users (Hickish, 2012).

‘I’ve noticed recently a couple of people walking by the River Lea, you know, I’ve walked down to the Olympic Park. It’s a lot better, there are new paths, the bushes have been cut down – places where I was scared to cycle because it was so dense with bushes, they’ve all been cut down. There were more seating areas, there were more families walking out with children, people walking their dogs and so on.’ (Respondent 13)

As already mentioned, there were several *Look and Bespoke* items for local authorities to purchase, in consultation with their communities. The items had however to be purchased only from a LOCOG appointed private company which meant the money

given to local authorities had re-circulated back to LOCOG. Some locals believed that street dressing created a positive atmosphere for the Games whereas some think that it is only a waste of money. A Tower Hamlets resident thought that the changes in the physical environment and look of the city did increase community spirit:

‘I was at Westfield yesterday, spent the whole afternoon and the evening there, and obviously it’s exciting to go round to that area and see all the different shops and hotels and things like that somewhat go for the youth especially, because they compete in those areas. Also there are Olympics banners, logos and stuff everywhere. So actually it is community spirit and everybody’s looking forward to the Games’. (Respondent 3).

Whereas, a Waltham Forest resident thought that the money spent on banners and mascots was a waste:

‘But all that money spent on Olympic banners, that weird mascot, you know, everywhere! Is it worth the money? Waste, waste of money really.’ (Respondent 2).

The chief role of this fund was to ‘dress up’ the key locations within each borough. However, if a borough considered that their selected area could be dressed with less, the grant could also be used to purchase additional content from the London 2012 Festival (GLA, 2011d). As a part of the Cultural Olympiad, the London 2012 Festival was a 12 week programme of ‘high quality artistic animations, events, installations and interventions across live performance, film and visual arts’ (LOCOG, 2013). It took

place in town centres, squares and parks across the 33 London boroughs. UK-wide this celebration brought together more than 25,000 artists from across the world and the very best of the UK in order to deliver an unforgettable summer of culture as part of the Olympic and Paralympic experience (LOCOG, 2013). Millions of people from all over the UK enjoyed events and performances that brought the spirit of the Games closer to everyone (a separate evaluation of the Cultural Olympiad is being undertaken, but yet to be published). The London 2012 Festival aimed to spread the spirit of 2012 more widely across London and engage communities who might not otherwise become involved. However, a Waltham Forest resident believed that Olympic related events and festivals do not have an impact on community spirit:

‘...I mean I know what Waltham Forest has tried to talk about the big six events that they’re trying to do for the community. So I think the first one was the – or at least one of the ones at the beginning of the year – the fireworks and those sort of things, we’ve had leaflets to sign up and obviously I haven’t signed up to go up as yet. And I’m aware that’s going on, I guess. And I know friends who’ve been to some of them and have really enjoyed them, but I haven’t been to those at all. I am not sure if these kind of events and activities really create a community spirit. Not really!’ (Respondent 4)

The London 2012 Festival aimed to have a strong local aspect, engage local communities, increase participation and attract visitors. However, Stevenson’s research has shown that ‘at the local level, people do not appear to understand the term Cultural Olympiad and do not have a sense that the programme is already running and might

benefit them' (Stevenson, 2012, p.141). Most of the time, locals were not aware of the events or opportunities related to Cultural Olympiad (Stevenson, 2013).

Finally, it is clear that the most significant impact of the 'Your London 2012' programme is on physical transformations. Residents consulted typically questioned whether these changes had been made for the locals or for the Olympic show. During a focus group meeting with Tower Hamlets residents, this point was discussed from opposing perspectives:

**Respondent 5:** I lived in Tower Hamlets all my life, sixty years, and I have seen changes. ...All I'm trying to say is I've lived in this area all my life and when I was growing up there were rats, rat infestations. It was a dump. And now that a lot of money has gone into regeneration...

**Respondent 3:** They're not doing it for us, darling, they're doing it for the Olympic people!

**Respondent 5:** No, they're doing it for us, we're gonna benefit once the Olympics are over.

This reflects the contrasting approaches of locals on the physical change in their neighbourhood. Similarly, a Tower Hamlets resident whilst appreciating the positive changes in the physical environment is still concerned about how these changes will reflect benefit locals after the Games: 'I mean these shops are nice, the improvement to road network is fantastic, and we've had an additional two or three train stations around

the area because of the Olympics, so everything is fantastic, but for good for the right reasons. But then the future for the locals after the Olympics, the Games is kind of a big problem.’ (Respondent 2).

## Conclusion

There is no doubt that many Londoners and visitors embraced the spirit and enthusiastically engaged with the Games experience, in addition to those in the UK and abroad who followed the sporting performances, dramas and ceremonies. As well as more self-conscious official branding of London2012 as outlined above, participants also dressed up (Fig.7) and participated in good humoured collective activity.



Figure 7. Girl with Olympic tattoo and Woman walking through wildflower meadow in Olympic Park, Games time; Fans at England vs. Brazil womens football, Wembley

The unexpected success of the volunteer Ambassadors (of all ages) and Paralympics (and accessible design strategies); the ability of the public transport to meet the extreme capacity and crowd controls (ICE, 2012), perhaps compensated for the debacles over ticket allocations and unused seats at venues, and the inescapable commercial branding and Olympic franchises. Small gestures such as the Royal Mail’s ceremonial stamp collections and special issues of British gold medallists rushed out the day after their

win, contrast with the ubiquitous official logos and souvenirs. How far the Dressing London programmes and events contributed to the positive Olympic effect and encouraged wider participation in the Games is not clear, whilst local resident reactions were mixed. The Legacy of course, is another story that is yet to unfold. As the Olympic Park was unceremoniously closed immediately the Games finished, to allow conversion of the Park, venues and redevelopment of the athlete's village, London2012's feel good period also ended. How London dressed up for the Games therefore persists largely in individual and collective memories and in the images and memorabilia kept for posterity. The inclusive design of London2012 has however provided a level of expertise and knowledge which is being transferred to Rio, as Brazil plans for the 2016 Games.

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