



## Sports-led urban regeneration - *bright flame or slow burn?*

### The context of urban regeneration

Globalisation and de-industrialisation have forced urban planners to rethink policies of economic development since the traditional industries are no longer the major generators of wealth or creators of employment. Consumption-based activities such as service industries and tourism are buoyant and growing sectors of the economy but these are not easily attracted to old industrial areas. These new businesses are highly geographically mobile and often favour high quality environments.

Consequently old industrial areas have had to undertake major urban revitalisation projects in order to convert their damaged environments into places that new businesses (e.g. biotechnology, financial services, digital industries etc) would consider as suitable locations.

The changes taking place in city centres are now so notable and different from anything that has happened before that the process can be likened to a 'revolution'. In some instances that revolution has been brought about by sport. This Factsheet will attempt to evaluate the benefit of hosting of major sporting events (or mega-events - see Table 1 left) and consider to what extent such events really are spearheading urban regeneration.

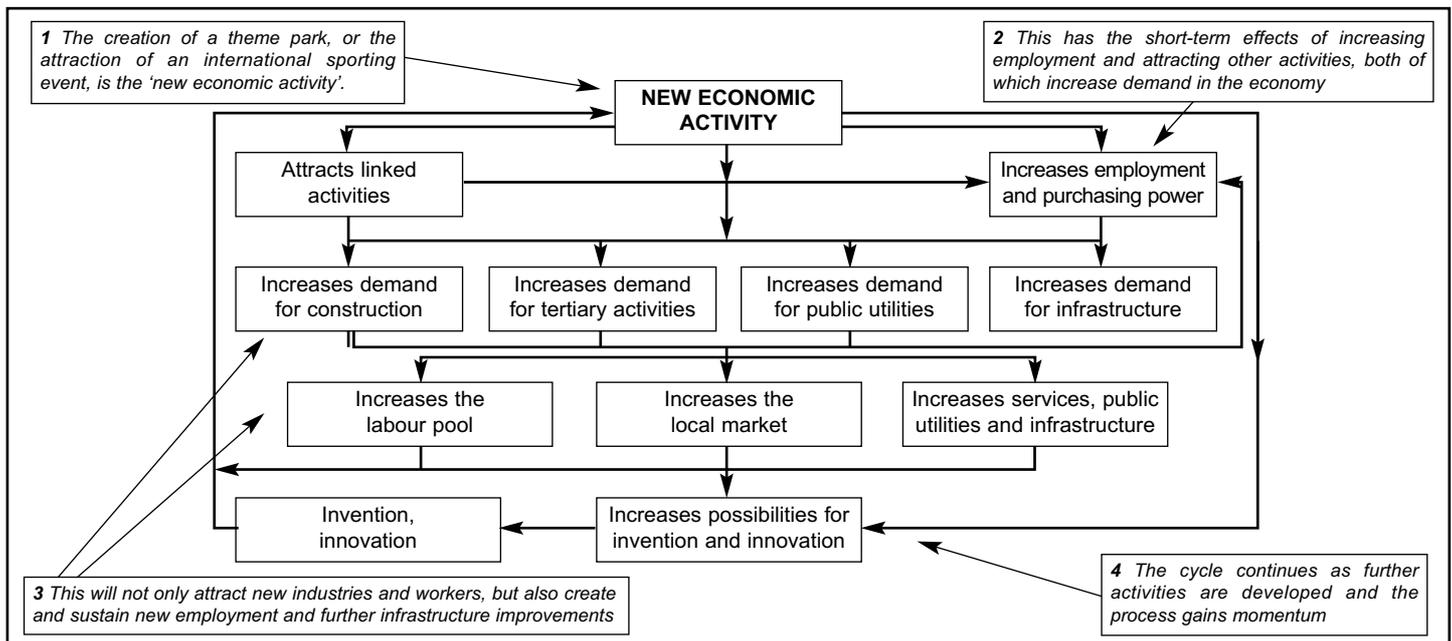
**Table 1** Types of sports event.

Type of event	Example of Event	Target attendance/ market	Type of media interest
Mega-Event	Expos Olympics World Cup	Global	Global TV
Special Event	Grand Prix (F1) World Regional sport, e.g. Tour de France	World Regional/ National	International/ National TV
Hallmark Event	National sport event, e.g. Wimbledon Big city sport/festivals	National	National TV
		Regional	Local TV
Community Event	Rural town event Local community event	Regional/Local Local	Local TV/Press Local Press

### The increasing importance of mega sporting events as a component of urban regeneration

Many cities have recognised that staging a large sporting event can bring them major benefits in terms of the event (and associated developments / infrastructure) acting as a catalyst for regeneration. There may also be additional paybacks including investment in tourism, public services, hotel accommodation and environmental improvement. The media attention both before and during an event usually acts as a form of marketing, which can in turn create longer-term spin-offs in terms of inward business long after the event has taken place. Cities are now looking to use a mega-event to underpin their global status. Fig. 1 shows the cumulative causation model adapted to recognise the impact of a mega-event.

**Fig. 1**



- In the short term events create employment during construction; it may also help improve quality of life within an area by boosting the economic activity during and shortly after the event.
- Longer term implications are more significant in terms of regeneration. Events can attract further (external) investment and act as a catalyst. Economic regeneration is usually paralleled by social regeneration.

Yet there may be considerable risks associated with hosting large sporting events. The most fundamental threat is capital outlay which does not generate significant economic return during or after the event. Other key costs or disbenefits can include:

- overcrowding in the city
- noise pollution
- unused facilities (this has been a particular problem following the Athens Olympics)
- increases in local council tax to pay for the events
- damage to local shops and businesses on designated sites
- increased crime rate during the event

There are also instances where sport initiatives do not necessarily deliver the images envisaged by city elites. The 1996 Olympic Games hosted by Atlanta, USA, demonstrated that poor organisation and security incidents can erode the benefits of staging a major sport event. It has been suggested that it was Atlanta's prioritisation of image benefits, at the expense of the 'nitty-gritty' of the Games, that resulted in these problems. The potential for negative publicity leads some commentators to suggest that the re-imagining credentials of sport events may be seriously flawed.

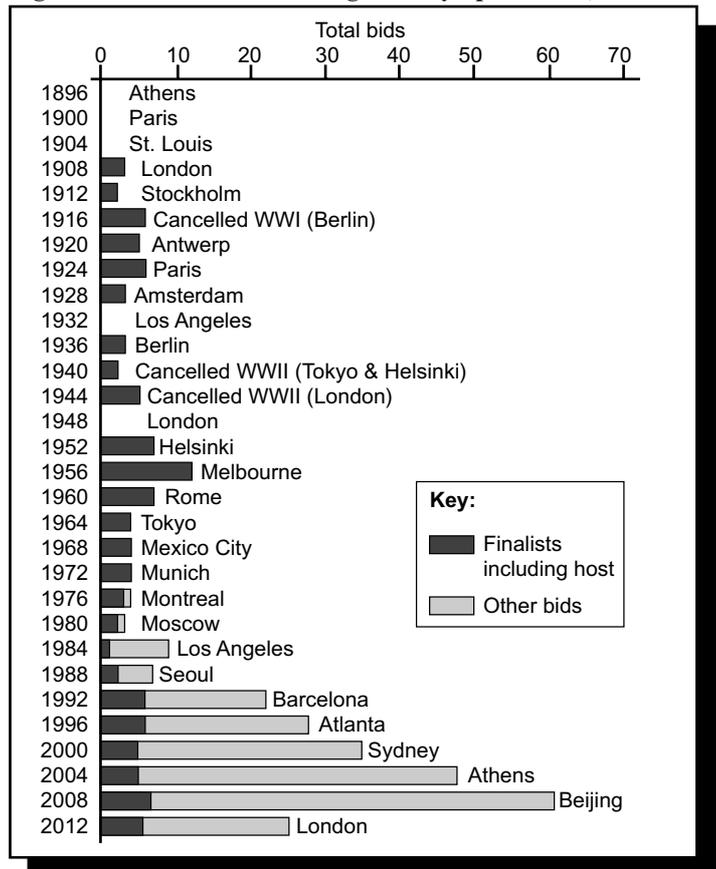
**Barcelona - the model Games?**

The Olympic Games have come to represent a major opportunity for economic regeneration, infrastructural investment and environmental improvement, as well as a means of achieving international prominence and national prestige through 'place marketing'. Consequently, the Olympics are perceived by many urban and political leaderships as a highly desirable event to host. Indeed, the interest of existing global cities in staging the Olympics is now considerable - see Table 2 and Fig. 2.

**Table 2 The changing infrastructural impact of the Summer and Winter Games, 1896-2002.**

Summer Olympic Games	Winter Olympic Games
<b>PHASE 1: 1896-1904</b> Small-scale, poorly organised and not necessarily involving any new development.	<b>PHASE 1: 1924-32</b> Minimal infrastructural transformation apart from sports facilities.
<b>PHASE 2: 1908-32</b> Small-scale, better organised and involving construction of purpose built sports facilities.	<b>PHASE 2: 1936-60</b> Emerging infrastructural demands, especially transportation.
<b>PHASE 3: 1936-56</b> Large-scale, well organised and involving construction of purpose built sport facilities with some impact on urban infrastructure.	<b>PHASE 3: 1964-80</b> Tool of regional development, especially transportation and Olympic Villages
<b>PHASE 4: 1960-96</b> Large-scale, well organised and involving construction of purpose built sports facilities with significant impacts on urban infrastructure.	<b>PHASE 4: 1984-2002</b> Large-scale urban transformations, including multiple Olympic Villages.

**Fig. 2 The number of bids to stage the Olympic Games, 1896-2020.**



The remarkable growth in the number of candidates is the clearest possible evidence that cities now perceive major benefits to be derived from the Games, related in part to the globalisation of television coverage.



The 1992 Barcelona Games is regarded as one of the most successful Olympics ever. The transformations made in the city for the Olympics have become regarded as a model for other cities wishing to initiate large-scale revitalisation schemes. The organisation of the Games permitted a complete change of scale of urban regeneration in Barcelona. Up to these Games planners had been speaking about new streets and gardens, but after the Olympic nomination they were able to speak of new ring roads, seaports and Olympic Villages. The games development opened up the coast to the expansion of the city and began to change the size and shape of the urban form. Table 3 shows the relative proportions of spending in key areas.

**Table 3**

Investment Project	Proportion of Olympic spend	Equivalent in today's money Euros (Million)
Road construction projects	35.9	2,066
Construction at the Poble Nou Olympic Area (Olympic Village - now housing)	22.2%	1,280
Construction in other Olympic areas of Barcelona	12.3%	709
Other projects in Barcelona, e.g. port redevelopment and hotels	19.1%	1,096
Projects in Olympic sub-sites and other sports infrastructure	10.5%	420

While the general perception of the 'Olympic effect' in Barcelona has been highly positive, instances of less welcome outcomes can also be identified. The transformation of a deprived residential area at Parc de Mar (Barcelona) into a much more affluent and privileged community who now reside in the Olympic Village has led to criticism of 'unnecessary gentrification'.

Barcelona also expanded its hotel accommodation stock for the Games but levels of occupancy could not be maintained. Between 1990 and 1994, the room capacity of Barcelona increased by 44.5%, but the occupancy decreased by 23.2%.

Some host cities have utilised the Olympics as a springboard to wider urban development much more energetically than others. In the case of Barcelona, the Games were actually part of a much bigger programme of urban renewal that was initiated in the mid 1970s.

### World Student Games: Sheffield 1991 - a piston in the engine of growth?

Steel and its association with Sheffield is a global brand. But during the 1970s and 1980s the city experienced the pain and uncertainty of de-industrialisation. This was captured in the film *The Full Monty* - the opening scenes of which sought to contrast the vision of hope from the 1960s with images of decay and despair from the mid 1980s.

In 1991 the city hosted the World Student Games. This gave the city a high profile 'kick' and has left Sheffield with some of the best sporting and leisure facilities in the country. These facilities include a 25,000 seater athletics stadium and a 10,000 seater arena and exhibition centre both of which are now being booked up for major sporting and leisure events.

Yet a look at the Sheffield Forum in 1993 reveals mixed feelings about the Games:

*"Now at the time of these games there was lots of opposition about whether it was a good idea or not for Sheffield Council to get in so much debt in order to hold these games. Looking back I think it was a good decision as it gave us Sheffield Arena and Don Valley Stadium etc. These things are at the heart of Sheffield's more popular developments. I really think it help put us on the map."*

*"Didn't do much for all those people who got kicked out of their homes to make way for the athlete accommodation. A lot of them ended up being relocated into right dives before the refurbished flats were sold to private housing authorities."*

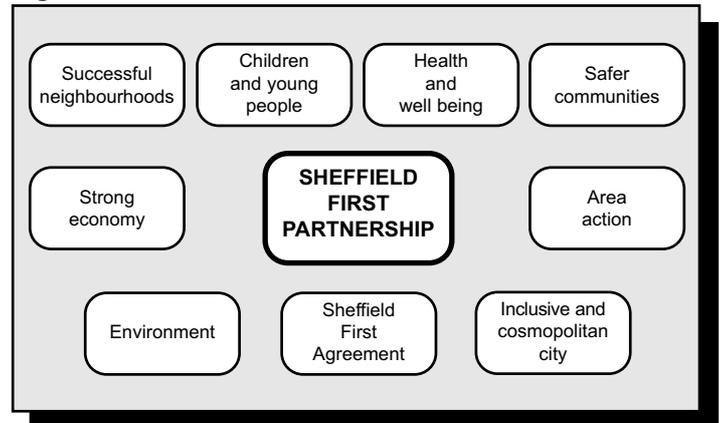
*"Every council tax bill in Sheffield contains 250 quid of 'games debt'. We won't have repaid the debt 'till 2050."*

There is no doubt that the Games were very costly to build, support and manage. However they acted as precursor to city-wide regeneration - attracting lots of additional investment for the city especially in the late 1990s which came on the back of the initial public investment.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century regeneration within the city is built around a number of key strands - biotechnology, creative digital technologies, environmental technologies, business and financial services and specialist metals technology.

The World Student Games acted as a significant catalyst for city-wide economic regeneration in the last 15 years. However, regeneration has also been aided by additional initiatives such as the Sheffield First Partnership (see Fig. 3) which have a number of regenerative strands.

Fig. 3



### Japan 2002 World Cup - a slow burn?

The impacts to the economy by the World Cup tournament are both direct and indirect in nature. The tournament directly impacts a country's and affiliated city's infrastructure, tax base, tourism stream and hospitality revenue generations. This does not take into account the indirect impacts such as marketing value, secondary and tertiary follow-on spending, and the increase in community pride that accompanies the tournament. Besides the economic impact, World Cup soccer can greatly impact on nationalism, both in positive and negative aspects, as well as the world-wide economy with sponsors and other affiliated businesses, and also the perception of soccer with any outbreaks of violence, both on and off of the pitch (i.e. hooliganism).

Cities in both Japan and South Korea (which jointly hosted the Cup in 2002) developed stunning new stadiums and in some cases did so with urban regeneration and economic development in mind. The South Korean organisers were in little doubt that the regeneration impact of the World Cup would be large. New stadiums, it was envisaged, would act as a magnet for investment and regeneration in the 10 host cities. In total \$4.7 billion was invested at the 20 sports facilities in both countries.

But more recent research is suggesting that the long-term regeneration impact on the 2002 hosts has not been as significant as hoped:

- The 2002 tournament was spread widely between two nations and over 20 host cities - the largest number of different locations ever used for the World Cup. This means most cities hosted a maximum of three or four matches and these were often day visits from the major cities. Therefore there was no concentrated impact on any one city for the month of the World Cup and at the end of the tournament there is was specific real estate legacy (or regeneration) other than the actual stadium. This is a contrast to the Olympic Games where the impact on one location is more intense and yields a range of infrastructural benefits.
- The 2002 World Cup avoided venues in major cities. For instance, the largest Japanese cities to host any games were Osaka and Yokohama with no games held in Tokyo. It is these smaller, less developed areas that were hoping for the biggest regeneration boost. But they have been so far disappointed.
- In Japan and South Korea the new facilities generally appear to show questionable business plans for post-World Cup use. There are a large number of broad plans such as the 'multipurpose cultural centre' in Suwon World Cup Stadium in South Korea. However, key regeneration issues such as the urban and economic context for the city have been neglected.

### Manchester - the regeneration games

For the Commonwealth Games, regeneration has been focused on one area of the city - East Manchester (see Fig. 4). This means the intensity of activity and 'destination creation' in this area provided maximum benefits from hosting the event.

One of Manchester's key motivations for hosting the Commonwealth Games was in its aim to make a *step change* to become a successful 21<sup>st</sup> century city. Central to this was the notion of enhancing the city's brand to allow it to compete more effectively to attract international business and tourists.

#### Economic impact of the Games - facts and figures

- £570m direct investment in East Manchester
- A further £600m invested in Manchester and the north west as a result of the Games
- Rate of return was almost 300% the initial investment
- The overall legacy of the Games has boosted Manchester's economy by an estimated £18m per year

#### Significant outcomes:

- New projects were used as a catalyst in other regeneration projects such as Sport City, which has become part of the Institute for Sport and involved the reclamation of a large area of brownfield land.
- The Games were seen as a success with businesses benefiting from the attendance at the Games events.
- There was an ongoing feel-good factor within Manchester derived from the hosting of the Games.

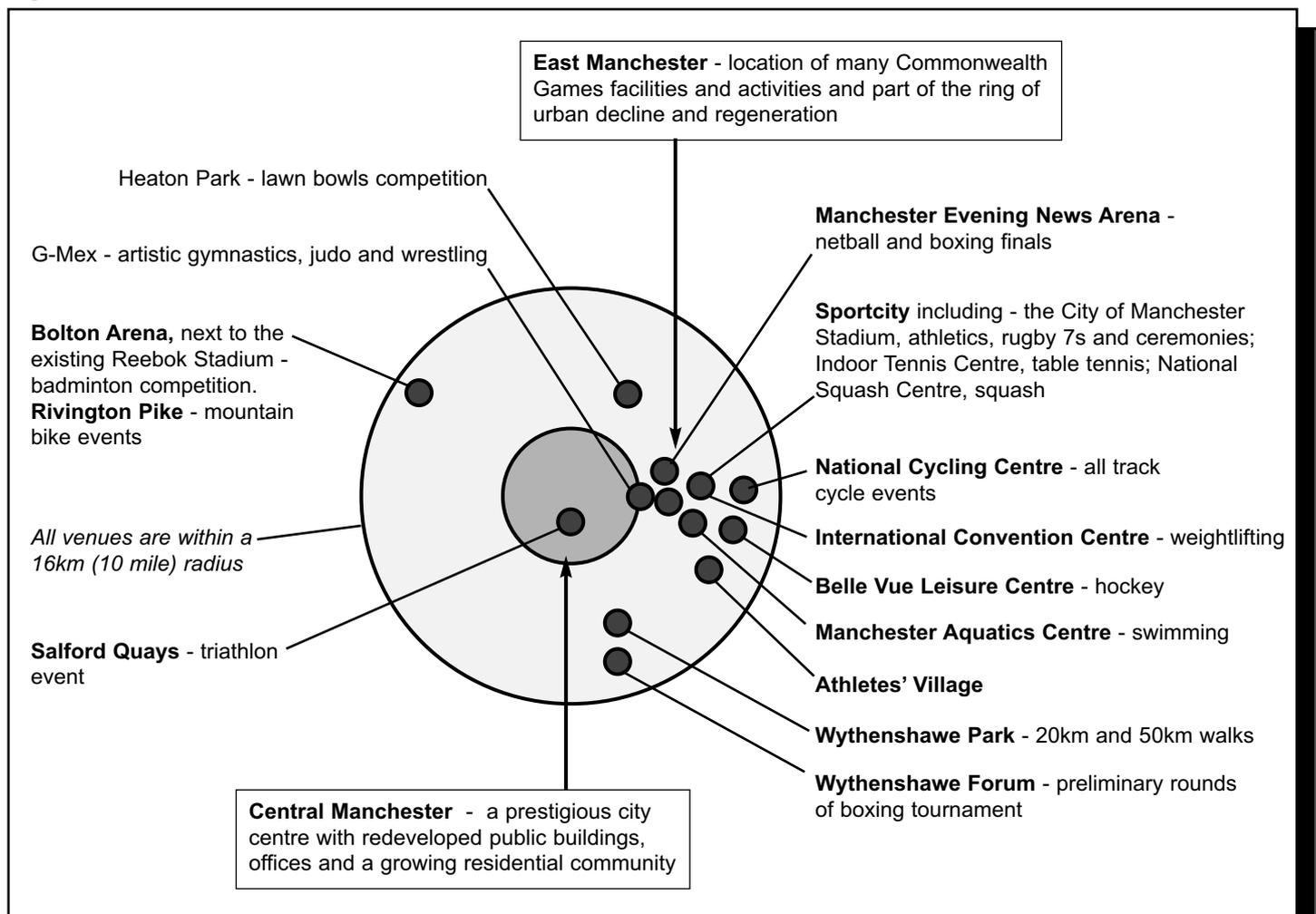
For all the positive impacts of the Games, there were negatives. In addition to the more obvious impacts of hosting the Games (overcrowding, noise, increases in local taxes, unused facilities etc) the local population did not feel ownership for the facilities as they are seen, especially in the Institute for Sport, as only being for the elite. Also for much of the population the economic benefits do not equate to much in terms of social benefit.

### London Olympics 2012

The development of the 2012 Olympic Park in East London is promising to bring new life to some of the most deprived parts of the city. This revival boom has led to the regeneration of areas which have been vacant and derelict for decades.

However there is a concern that such 'bright flame' redevelopments may have negative impacts in terms of driving up house prices and driving out local residential communities and businesses. Perhaps the key to making high-profile schemes work for local areas is to ensure they are part of a comprehensive regeneration strategy - including social regeneration. Most urban regeneration programmes and government policies now work in a partnership approach. This involves getting the public sector, such as local councils and local and central government agencies to work with private sector firms, community and voluntary sector organisations. In the case of the London 2012 Olympics a partnership approach will be key to its success. Linking organisations from different sectors helps in resourcing and problem solving.

Fig. 4



## Conclusion

Using mega sporting events to act as a catalyst for urban and social regeneration represents a significant gamble. Some cities and regions have used the initial public investment as a springboard to wider urban development much more successfully than other areas. There is also the 'legacy' issue. Athens 2004, for example, is still left with considerable debts of 9 billion Euros. There are also too many sport sites with a design that is not appropriate for post-Games use.

Mega sport events may also present additional concerns:

- Local government investment can be diverted from social services and education in order to pay for sport-related infrastructure.
- Disruption and disturbance of existing communities by sport development can be a significant problem. Inner city renewal induced by the Olympics can entail evictions or displacement of existing working class populations or industrial functions and their replacement through gentrification by middle class residents and consumers. These are hidden social costs.
- There is increasing concern over environmental issues and size of the 'eco-footprint'.
- Using mega sporting events as a catalyst for urban revitalisation also raises global equity issues in terms of the evenness of event distribution (least developed vs. most developed).

But there is a great prize. Potential urban transformations relate not simply to the sporting venues, but to transport, hotel accommodation, urban services, telecommunications and general environmental improvement which can improve the socio-economic standing and quality of life for large areas. Barcelona effectively demonstrates how the mega-event can stimulate urban regeneration. The Sydney Games (2000) were also considered a major success - illustrating what can be achieved by event-led urban regeneration with a strong prominence given to sustainability credentials.

Success is ultimately dependant on a number of factors. These include the ability to initially pump-prime the event (or developments) using the public purse; timely planning and development of infrastructure; the backing of the local community, the media and the government, and local regeneration schemes which include creating 'liveable places', i.e. those which are building on the character and heritage of the area.

## References

- Bright flame or slow burn?* Supplement to the Times July 2006.
- Gaining world city status through staging the Olympic Games.* Geodate Vol 17, No. 4 August 2004.
- What's the Story - More than Sporting Glory? Manchester and the 2002 Commonwealth Games.* Jones, Lang Lasalle, 2002
- Impact of the Games on Olympic host cities.* Barcelona : Centre d'Estudis Olímpics (UAB). 1992
- NEM Resident Perception Survey 2005 Summary Report For Beacons/ NDC Geography.* Kwest Research.
- The regeneration Games?* BBC news article 28/7/2003
- From Steel to Sport.* Norton College Video Production 2005.
- An Achievable Goal Stadiums, Arenas and Urban Regeneration.* Jones, Lang Lasalle, 1992
- The Olympic Games as a tool for urban renewal: the experience of Barcelona '92 Olympic Village.* Barcelona: Centre d'Estudis Olímpics UAB. 1997
- The Geography of Sport and Leisure.* Warn, S and Witherick, M (2003)

## Useful websites

- [www.gameslegacy.com/cgi-bin/index.cgi/362](http://www.gameslegacy.com/cgi-bin/index.cgi/362) report on the impacts of Manchester 2002
- [www.gameslegacy.com/files/LN%20Final%20Dissertation.pdf](http://www.gameslegacy.com/files/LN%20Final%20Dissertation.pdf) - a dissertation entitled "To What Extent has the Commonwealth Games Accelerated the Physical, Social, and Economic Regeneration of East Manchester?"
- [www.research.joneslanglasalle.com/](http://www.research.joneslanglasalle.com/) select 'Global Reports' to download sports and regeneration related items

## Questions

### Skills and shorter answers

Using Fig. 2:

- 1a. What is the general trend in the number of cities expressing interest in hosting the Games (even though they may not have presented a formal bid?)
- 1b. Why does such a trend exist?
- 1c. Why should so few cities actually make formal bids, having initially expressed an interest?
- 2a Describe the general location of mega-sporting events.
- 2b Comment on this distribution with regard to fairness and equity.

### Ideas - Q1

There is a general increase, although the most significant increases are from 1980s. You can link this with the ideas in *Table 1*. Hosting the Olympics has become a big prize if all goes well. Making formal bids is very costly and requires considerable resources. It is also a very long term process (up to 10 years before the actual Games).

### Longer answers and ideas for discussion

Make list of the major advantages and disadvantages of staging a global sporting event. If possible, try to classify these into social, environmental and economic.

Using a range of case studies, explain how and why the hosting of a mega-event generally results in urban regeneration and renewal.

## Acknowledgements

Written and researched by David Holmes who is Able, Gifted and Talented Coordinator at Kilve Court, Somerset and works as a consultant to the Field Studies Council.

Curriculum Press, Bank House, 105 King Street, Wellington, TF1 1NU. Tel. 01952 271318.

Geopress Factsheets may be copied free of charge by teaching staff or students, provided that their school is a registered subscriber. No part of these Factsheets may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any other form or by any other means, without the prior permission of the publisher. ISSN 1351-5136