



# The Perceived Sustainability of Sports and Social Legacy Goals of Beijing Summer and Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games

Charlie Song<sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Administration and Law, University of West Florida, Florida 32514, United States

\*Corresponding author Email: [csong@uwf.edu](mailto:csong@uwf.edu)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34256/ijpefs2221>

Received: 17-03-2022; Revised: 12-04-2022; Accepted: 18-04-2022; Published: 28-04-2022

**Abstract:** Inspired by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Legacy Strategic Approach, Beijing 2022 issued the Legacy Plan of the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games as a continuing effort from the 2008 Beijing Olympics “to promote a positive legacy from the Olympic Games to the host cities, regions and countries” (IOC, 2020). Using a qualitative approach guided by Asper’s (2009) empirical phenomenology and Alase’s (2017) interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), the author interviewed the Olympic officials in legacy planning for the 2008 Summer Games and/or the 2022 Winter Games, the scholars in Olympic studies, and a journalist reporting the Olympic legacy related news in Beijing. The narratives presented the interviewees’ positive experiences and perceptions in most of the sustainability inquiries of the “soft” legacy goals. The results revealed that the Olympic and Paralympic ideals had been well appreciated by the mass public since Beijing hosted the 2008 Summer Games and the sports and social legacies from the Games had been carried forward to Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics. At the same time, a gap existed between urban and rural, especially on the sustainability of the legacy goals concerning people with disabilities.

**Keywords:** Olympic Games, Beijing 2022 Olympics, Sports legacies, Social legacies, Sustainability



**Dr. Charlie Song** is an associate professor in the Department of Administration and Law and the coordinator of the Sport Management program at the University of West Florida. He earned his doctoral degree in Sport Administration/Management and M.S. in Physical Education from Texas A&M

University. His research interests include social and economic impact of sport mega-events, sport market analysis, and Olympic studies with numerous publications and presentations in these areas. He has an extended experience in working for and research on major sports events, including seven Summer and Winter Olympic Games.

## 1. Introduction

Beijing just hosted the 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, 14-years since the 2008 Summer Games, to become the only city in the world that hosted the summer and the Winter Olympics. According to the International Olympic Committee [4], the Beijing Olympic Development Association (BODA) was founded in 2009, immediately following the 2008 Summer Games, to oversee the Olympic legacies and manage the financial surplus from the Games for the benefit of sports and culture to accommodate the Olympic legacy goals. The IOC further revealed in the same report that

“In terms of linking the legacy of Beijing 2008 with the 2022 Winter Games, BODA has helped organize the annual World Winter Sports (Beijing) Expo since 2016, with the aim of promoting the development of winter sports in China and the world. Consisting of exhibitions, forums and other activities related to the winter sports industry, the event in 2019 was

attended by about 160,000 visitors, including 24,000 industry professionals."

The general sociological significance of mega-events such as the Olympics and FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) World Cup is important both substantively and more formally in understanding structure, change, and agency in modern society [5]. The IOC (2014), with a new philosophy in the bidding procedure, encouraged potential candidate cities to present a holistic concept of respect for the environment, feasibility, and development to leave a lasting legacy [6]. Inspired by the IOC Legacy Strategic Approach [7], the Beijing Organizing Committee for the 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games [8] released the Legacy Plan in which four key messages were developed from the Games' mission of "delivering fantastic, extraordinary and excellent Games which are green, inclusive, open and clean." The four messages are to "inspire young people with the Olympic spirit; encourage millions to embrace winter sports; promote social progress through the Winter Games; and create a harmonious world of better mutual understanding". There are seven themes in this legacy plan, including sports, society, economy, culture, environment, urban development, and region development. The plan echoes the IOC's (2019c) approach to legacy, which encourages embedding legacy initiatives early in the Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games' (OCOG) lifecycle to ensure that the benefits of hosting the Games are implemented in advance of the opening ceremony, and last well beyond the closing ceremony [9].

The Olympic legacies have been carried out by the Games as a mega-event, a multidimensional concept that was discussed and defined in various studies [5, 10-15]. Preuss (2007) suggested the conceptualization and measurement of sport mega-event legacies with "hard" and "soft" event-structures, or "tangible" and "intangible" legacies, respectively [16]. The Beijing 2022's seven legacy themes may clearly be identified as Preuss categorized in "hard" legacies for economy, environment, urban and region development and "soft" legacies for culture, sports and society.

Literature in Olympic and other sport mega-events' "hard" or "tangible" legacies were found in the areas of urban development, environmental sustainability, tourism, economic impact, infrastructure, venue construction, and post-game utilization/sustainability [16-25]. These "hard" legacies

were comprehensively researched based on the relatively concrete measurability. The "soft" or "intangible" legacies of the Olympics and other major sport events were mostly discussed with conceptualization [26-32]. The examples of the studies on the "soft" or "intangible" legacies of sport mega-events' social impact include researches on the aspects of residents' perceptions of the event [14, 33-35], sport participation [36-37], media effect [38-40], social injustice [41], local and national politics [42-43]; and culture [5, 44].

The Beijing 2022 Legacy Plan, as a continuing effort, has been carried forward since the 2008 Summer Games (IOC, 2016) and the sustainability initiatives are at the core of the Beijing 2022's operations [45-46]. Taks (2017) concluded in his study that, comparing social sustainability of non-mega sport events (NMSEs) to mega sport events (MSEs), NMSEs appear to provide more positive social impact and outcome opportunities for local residents compared to MSEs [32]. However, the researcher believed that accurately measuring impacts of events is extremely complex, and further emphasized that

"Starting to understand how these social impacts vary according to the types of events and the types of communities that host these events, is a first step in increasing an understanding of what each type of event actually means for local residents who are directly affected by these events."

Since its conceptualization, the basic philosophical premise of the Olympism has been to leave society, its people and its culture enhanced by Olympic products and, as such, it has always been 'about' legacies, both "hard" and "soft" [44]. The purpose of this study is, by adopting the interpretative phenomenological methodology, to inquire and reveal the perceptions of the sustainability of "soft" legacies, specifically of sports and social legacies that are enlisted in the Beijing 2022 's Legacy Plan [8]. Online interviews were conducted with the 2008 summer and the 2022 Winter Games' officials in legacy planning and operations, the scholars in the Olympic studies, and the media personnel having reported the Beijing's Olympic legacies. The "soft" or "intangible" legacy goals for sports, social and culture in the Beijing 2022's Legacy Plan are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Beijing 2022 Legacy Plan's "Soft" Legacy Goals

Sports	Social	Culture
Promote participation in winter sports in China for both able-bodied people and people with impairment Significantly enhance performances in competitive winter sports in China Ensure that venues are well used after the Games Cultivate and train a large number of sport event professionals Foster innovation on event management and services	Promote a healthy lifestyle for Chinese people, facilitate the "Health China" national strategy Carry forward volunteerism Improve the level of civic duty in the society Promote awareness, respect and social inclusivity of people with impairments	Promote the Olympic and Paralympic spirit and values in China Disseminate Chinese civilization and culture to the world Encourage cultural integration for a more understanding and harmonious world

## 2. Concept of "Soft" Legacies and Sustainability

The word "legacy" was first time used in Melbourne 1956 Olympic Games' bid document, according to Leopkey and Parent (2012), and the concept of Olympic legacy has evolved over time [47]. Legacy has played an important role in the evolution of the Olympic Games as they have exploded in size, scope, and cost over the past thirty years [17]. In the current Olympic Charter (IOC, 2020), Rule 2, Article 15 states "to promote a positive legacy from the Olympic Games to the host cities, regions and countries" [1]. Cashman (2001) stated that legacy encompasses a large range of factors: public perceptions, and memories; media, identity and culture; business and economic outcomes; the future of the Olympic sites; impacts on sport itself; and impacts on the environment and the future of the "green Games" [48]. Preuss (2007) conceptualized the mega sport event legacies with two distinguishable categories [16] (see Table 2) and concluded that

"Mega sport events are multidimensional and multipurpose occurrences. Therefore, intangible sporting, recreational, political, psychological, and promotional and other aspects have to be considered. These event legacies can also indirectly stimulate the economy in the long-term, and should not be isolated from general development."

Using "the contemporary lens of sustainability to critically appraise the major legacies of the three 'East Asian' Olympics" (Tokyo 1964, Seoul 1988, and Beijing 2008), Horton and Saunders (2011) believed that legacy as what cannot be limited to the economic and fiscal evaluation of the event or the cost-benefit analysis of the subsequent infrastructure and its post-Games use and management, nor can it be merely extend to the wider dimension of urbanization or urban renewal [44]. They regarded "an Olympic Games, indeed any mega sports festival, is in the first instance a *social* event."

Chalip (2006) summarized that although rapid worldwide growth in the number of sport events has been driven largely by the economic impact [26] that events are expected to generate [49-50], a number of researchers have argued for greater attention to the social value that events provide [5, 51-52]. The economic concept of psychic income has been used to describe the feelings of excitement, pride, and euphoria generated among the host city and country residents from hosting sporting events such as the Olympic Games [53]. That euphoric feeling is itself a leverageable resource, as it can sustain agendas for social and community action [54-55]. One of the hopes from hosting the Olympics is for this psychic income to translate into longer-time feelings of community or what is commonly referred to as social capital [17]. Silvestre (2009) examined the nature of the social impact caused by hosting a mega-event drawing examples from the academic literature available to produce a typology of impacts [30] and pointed that

host cities can only produce and benefit from lasting social legacies if they are an integral part of a long-term urban strategy that is not dependent on the mega-event for its implementation [56-57]. Chalip (2006) believed that more work is needed to explore the ways that post-event euphoria can be used to foster social initiatives and community development [26].

The concept of social sustainability as an element of culture, suggested by Littig and Griessler (2005), is a quality of societies and signifies the nature-society relationships, mediated by work, as well as relationship within society [58].

of adaptation, according to Horton and Saunders (2011), and the Olympic Games may well prove to be sustainable as long as all three fundamental indicators of sustainability are attended to and all are regarded as forming a tightly interrelated "web of interactions among the environment, the economy and society" [44].

### 3. Method

As a qualitative approach, phenomenology was first conceptualized and theorized by Husserl (1931) as a way to understand the context of the "lived experiences" of people (research participants) and the meaning of their experiences [59].

**Table 2.** 'Hard and "Soft" Event-structure \*

"Soft" structure	"Hard" structure
Knowledge: e.g. organizational, security, technological Networks: e.g. political, sport federations, security Cultural goods: e.g. cultural identity, cultural ideas, common memory	Primary structure: sport infrastructure, training sites Secondary structure: villages for athletes, technical officials and media Tertiary structure: Security, power plants, telecommunication networks, cultural attractions

**Table 3.** Realization of Sport Legacy in Mass Citizens' Participation

Response	Rationale
Affirmed <i>n</i> = 15	There has been continuous adjustment of the national sport policy's focus from competitive sports to mass sport participation with financial budget support. There have been added public sports facility with better utilization, popularized square dances in communities, and increasing number of youth sport programs. Citizen self-organized sport events have significantly increased and the number of fitness centers in hotels and residential subdivisions have been fast grown. A birthday/gift card with an entry to a fitness facility has become a fashion. Per the national sport statistics, participants in regular exercise had risen from 28.2% of population in 2004 to 33.9% in 2014. Public's participation in sport activities has significantly increased in length of time, spatial availability, types of sports, and number of participants.

Sustainability of the Olympic Games may well revolve around the adoption or creation of the most appropriate discourse, which implicitly will be a process

Alase (2017) believed that as a qualitative tradition, phenomenology is a well-known and well-used tradition, thus there are many less-known authors who have written or discussed some important aspects of

the tradition in their research studies and/or in their writings [3]. Some authors (theorists) have also expanded the theory to make it more aligned with the qualitative research methodology of today [60-61].

The design of this study was principally guided by the Asper's (2009) seven steps of empirical phenomenology as qualitative research methods of interviewing and participant observation [2], and by the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), "a good qualitative research approach" as Alase (2017) concluded [2]. The main idea of empirical phenomenology is that scientific explanation must be grounded in the first-order construction of the actors; that is, in their own meanings. Methodologically, as a qualitative research approach, IPA allows for multiple individuals (participants) who experience similar events to tell their stories without any distortions and/or prosecutions. Creswell (2012) stated that "a phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon" [62].

Both English and Chinese language versions of research questions for this study were generated in reference to the bilingual versions of the of Beijing 2022 Legacy Plan [8]. The questions intended to exploit the experiences in sustaining the legacy goals (first-order constructions) of the Olympic legacy related personnel (actors) in Beijing (target region) per Alase's (2017) suggestion [2]. The original question list was comprised of the "soft" legacies in three categories, specifically in sports, social, and culture. The culture legacies were eventually eliminated from the analysis because of a high rate (50% plus) of the interviewees' decline to respond to the questions. These interviewees commonly expressed their unconfident self-judgment about the contextual elements of the culture legacy goals, and specifically, the implementation and measurability of the cultural legacy goals were rather blurred to them. Thus, the validity and reliability of its IPA would have been fundamentally compromised if the results were reported.

A total of 15 interviews were conducted for this study, including seven Olympic legacy officials from the OCOG of either the 2008 or the 2022 Beijing Games or both, three Olympic scholars who also wore a hat of the OCOG's official for either one or both Games, four Olympic scholars, and one media person who has reported and continued reporting the Beijing's Olympic legacies. Such narrative approach as one of the qualitative research methods may be well justified

with Alase's suggestion (2017) that the researcher "should conduct semi-structured and unstructured interviews with as many as 25 participants, but as few as two [2]".

The original plan of data collection was to conduct face-to-face interviews onsite in Beijing. Due to the breakout of COVID-19 pandemic and the nationwide lockdown since the spring of 2020 in China, the interviews were changed from in-person to online. The interviewee was presented with the questions and inquired to respond to each question statement in a coded scale from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). Followed with either affirmed (5 or 4), neutral (3), or disagreed (2 and 1) response, the interviewee was requested to rationalize his/her response based on his/her own experience and observation on the sustainability of the questioned legacy goal. The interviews were conducted in Chinese language and the narratives from the interviews were translated into English using the Back Translation's three-step method for quality control [63].

## 4. Analysis and Results

### 4.1 Sports Legacies

The interview questions on sports legacies were focused on participation by the mass public and the elite sports legacy goals were not included in this study. All 15 interviewees responded positively, either agreed or strongly agreed that there had been an obvious increase of sport participation by the mass public, which was considered to be an Olympic legacy and credited to hosting the 2008 Summer and the 2022 Winter Games (see Table 3).

The interviewees' narratives highlight several critical aspects of "the longer-time and lasting social capital" [17] in sport policies, post-Games venue sustainability/utilizations, growing number of sport events, marketing tools for sports and fitness, and the statistical data of increased rate of nation's population on sport participation. The narratives also reflect the distinguishable backgrounds of the interviewees. For example, the Olympic Games officials who commented more about the sport policies; the Olympic scholars paid more attention to the statistics; and the journalist cared more about the popular fashions.

In order to assess the perceived increase of participation in specific sports, a follow-up question was asked to inquire the interviewees' observation of three sports that have had the most increase in

participation by the mass public. Table 4 displays the three sports that were named more than one third of the interviewees with the narratives that supported their selections. Marathon/distance running is the only sport that was named by more than one half of the interviewees (9 out of 15). The interviewees listed the reasons for marathon to have gotten so popular and grown so much because of a combined effect of the marathon's unique characteristics as a sport activity, the increasing number of marathon events, the growing media attention, and the booming number of citizens' self-organized running groups/clubs. Basketball and swimming are respectively the second and the third mostly participated sports that have been impacted by hosting the 2008 Olympic Games. The rationales for basketball's growing popularity have been obviously attributed from the star-effect (Yao Ming), as well as the increased media explosion of both professional and collegiate leagues. The enhanced accessibility by the general public to the increasing number of aquatic facilities that was part of the venue legacies from hosting the Olympics has made swimming a more popularized sport. This enhancement of accessibility has also elevated the number of swimming programs in schools and colleges.

## 4.2 Social Legacies

Chappelet (2012) [27] argued that "In particular, social legacies are more and more important because communities which host mega sport events are searching for a greater sense of belonging and well-being, as well as for the "feel good factor" that researchers have identified as an intangible factor resulting from a well-organized event."

The interviewees were requested to respond to six questions in the category of the social legacies that are legacy goals for both the 2008 summer and the 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics. Four of the six questions are contextual to the Games' legacies on educating the general public about and benefiting people with physical disabilities in society. One question each is dedicated to assess the Olympism perceived by the general public and the volunteerism implemented in society.

The interviewees positively confirmed that Beijing has accomplished the legacy goal of promoting Olympic and Paralympic ideal to the general public since the city hosted the 2008 Games. The narratives addressed the importance of educational programs in schools for such an accomplishment, and at the same time, disclosed a gap between urban and rural areas

on this endeavor. One of the narratives credited this legacy goal for the nation's infrastructure development guideline, "building no barrier cities" (see Table 5).

The interviewees' narratives are predominantly positive on the Paralympic Games and Paralympic ideal's effect to the general public as an intended effort to sustain these legacy goals, but a couple of interviewees expressed their hesitance (see Table 6). Twelve of the 15 interviewees offered their positive affirmation to the Paralympics' effect to the general public with the contributing factors of hosting the 2008 Summer and the 2022 Winter Games, growing number of facilities/organizations, and improved public accessibility for people with disabilities.

The interviewees' opinions are sort of split regarding the public awareness for people with disabilities in society as a result of an effort to promote this Olympic legacy (see Table 7). Inquired about the accomplishment of facilitating the public awareness to people with disabilities through various media channels and information dissemination in society, six out of the 15 interviewees responded positively. The same number of interviewees stood neutral in their observation on this accomplishment as an Olympic legacy. Those who were not confident to give their thumbs-up because neither could they see the obvious improvement that had been made, nor felt that this issue, except within the sport communities, had gotten enough attention by the media to educate the general public.

The narratives of the interviewees about participation in the Paralympic sports and organizing such sport activities as rehabilitations for people with disabilities are displayed in Table 8 and Table 9, respectively. One narrative credited the establishment of the Sport Consulting Center for People with Disabilities, as a result of hosting the 2008 Beijing Olympics, for the realization of this legacy goal (see Table 8). The center has its own facilities and organizes sport events for people with disabilities. The interviewee who stood neutral to the accomplishment of this legacy goal believed that although the policies of public affairs in Beijing and in China had been steadily enhanced, but there was not enough direct evidence to significantly verify if the improvement was due to the impact of hosting the Olympics and Paralympics in Beijing.

**Table 4.** Growing Sports Impacted by hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games

Sport	Rationale
Marathon (including jogging)  <i>n</i> = 9	<p>It is easy to get started with low technical and financial demands; and it is a good sport for health.</p> <p>The citizen self-organized running groups/clubs have steadily grown.</p> <p>The number of marathon events have been fast growing (1,900 marathon events in 2019 around the country) and several brands of popular marathons have been established in China.</p> <p>There have been increased broadcasts and live coverage of marathon events.</p> <p>The number of the participants in marathon events have drastically increased.</p> <p>We have witnessed the increasing number of runners/joggers/walkers in parks and on streets.</p> <p>People can flexibly choose time to practice and exercise.</p>
Basketball  <i>n</i> = 6	<p>The leagues such as CBA, WCBA, CUBA, etc. after the 2008 Olympics have been more visible.</p> <p>There has been a star effect such as Yao Ming in our society.</p> <p>It is a good sport to build team work.</p> <p>It is one of the most popular sports in schools and colleges.</p>
Swimming  <i>n</i> = 5	<p>The growing number of aquatic/swimming facilities such as the Water Cube have become available and accessible for citizens.</p> <p>There are more schools offer swimming in PE with increased and improved swimming facilities.</p> <p>We have seen growing number of youth swimming programs in society.</p>

**Table 5.** Accomplished Social Legacy of Promoting the Paralympics and the Paralympic Ideal in Society

Response	Rationale
Affirmed  <i>n</i> = 15	<p>There have been positive results in urban areas, especially through school systems; but less effective in rural areas due to the infrastructural and economic gap between urban and rural.</p> <p>General public got the idea of Olympism and Paralympics from hosting the 2008 Olympics and Paralympics.</p> <p>The city has implemented the programs of educating Olympism and Paralympics in schools (personally was repeatedly invited to schools as a speaker for this subject).</p> <p>More attention has been given to the rights and services for people with disabilities that impact the public policy making, for example, "building no barrier cities" policy.</p> <p>Promotion of Olympic and Paralympic ideals had positive influence in society in general.</p>

**Table 6.** Social Legacy of the Paralympics and Paralympic Ideal's Effect to the Mass Public

Response	Rationale
Affirmed <i>n</i> = 12	<p>It comes with hosting the 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Games.</p> <p>The promotion of the 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics has made the effect more direct and specific.</p> <p>The effect may be observed with the public acceptance and support for hosting the 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics.</p> <p>There have been Improved public acceptance and accessibility for people with disabilities, for example in Beijing, there were less than 100 related organizations and assistant facilities before 2010, and more than 400 in 2017.</p> <p>The effects are more witnessed in major municipalities and urban areas than in rural areas.</p>
Neutral <i>n</i> = 1	No comment was offered
Disagreed <i>n</i> = 2	There have not been obvious changes.

**Table 7.** Social Legacy of Promoting Public Awareness for People with Disabilities

Response	Rationale
Affirmed <i>n</i> = 6	<p>The awareness has been come with the overall improvement of modern civilization in society, particularly in Beijing as the nation's capital.</p> <p>Most of the newly constructed infrastructure require access for people with physical disabilities. For example, wheelchair services have become common in transportations after the 2008 Olympics.</p> <p>The knowledge and awareness of people with disabilities via media promotion have achieved positive outcomes.</p>
Neutral <i>n</i> = 6	No obvious changes have been observed.
Disagreed <i>n</i> = 3	There has not been enough media information about Paralympic ideal and people with disabilities, especially for the mass public outside the sport circle.

The interviewee who disagreed with the accomplishment of this legacy goal, as it should have been achieved, believed that there had been more promotions than actually organized sport activities for people with disabilities.

The interviewees' positive, neutral, and negative perceptions about the organized sports for

People with disabilities as rehabilitations are closely split in six, five, and four, respectively (see Table 9). The debates were focused on the effectiveness of such sport activities to achieve the desired objectives and the missing services in rural areas.

**Table 8.** Social Legacy of Participation in Sports for Rehab

Response	Rationale
Affirmed n = 7	<p>More positive results have been observed in urban areas, especially through the related services in school systems; but seen less in rural areas, mainly due to the infrastructural and economic gap between urban and rural.</p> <p>One symbol could be the establishment of "Sports Consulting Center for People with Disabilities" in Beijing with sport facilities for participation and events.</p> <p>Regularly organized sport events and the encouragement for participation by people with disabilities have resulted in significant outcomes, but the number of participants and types of events are still limited.</p>
Neutral n = 4	A national policy on public affair that has steadily improve, but not changed significantly enough from hosting the Olympics and Paralympics.
Disagreed n = 4	There have been more promotional events than actually organized sport activities for people with disabilities.

**Table 9.** Social Legacy of Organizing Sports for Rehab

Response	Rationale
Affirmed <i>n</i> = 6	<p>There have been many added rehab facilities for children with physical disabilities, as well various programs that merged sports, culture, and education into rehab.</p> <p>The self-monitored rehab through sport participation has been encouraged with information dissemination; but the outcomes may vary as a result of the individual differences.</p>
Neutral <i>n</i> = 5	<p>Although the trend of merging medical and sports is there, but it has not gotten to an effective level.</p> <p>The merge of sports, culture, and education into rehab is not particularly for people with disabilities.</p> <p>The effort to organize sports activities for rehab did not all start as the result of the Olympics.</p>
Disagreed <i>n</i> = 4	These services are only provided in urban areas.

The interviewees also could not agree if the increasing sport activities as rehabs for people with disabilities had been a legacy directly coming from hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The interviewees finally responded to the social legacy question about the development of volunteerism in Beijing since the 2008 Olympic and

Paralympic Games in terms of organization, mobilization, and training of volunteers.

All 15 interviewees believed that this legacy goal had been well sustained by establishing and developing a system of volunteerism in Beijing (see [Table 10](#)).

**Table 10.** Social Legacy of Organization, Mobilization, and Training for Volunteers

Response	Rationale
Affirmed  <i>n</i> = 15	<p>A social system in organizing, mobilizing, and training volunteers was formed after the 2008 Beijing Olympics.</p> <p>All sport events have organized volunteers since the 2008 Olympics.</p> <p>There have been many comprehensive organizations for volunteers with more completed laws and policies regulating the volunteerism.</p> <p>The Annual National Volunteer Service Competition began since 2015.</p> <p>There are complete teaching materials, teaching/learning models, and training system in Beijing today.</p> <p>Popularization of volunteerism from the 2008 Volunteer Project produced the "Generation of Bird Nest".</p> <p>Volunteering becomes part of evaluation criteria for one's community involvement.</p> <p>Accumulated experience in organization, mobilization, and training of volunteers through the 2008 Olympics have built foundations for major sporting events thereafter.</p>

The narratives indicate that volunteerism has become a common value in society and the volunteer services have become part of evaluation criteria for people Community involvement in various settings such as schools, government agencies, and businesses. The accumulated experiences from organizing volunteer events since the 2008 Beijing Games have articulated the release of comprehensive training materials with effective teaching/learning models that also helped Beijing host the 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics. An interesting name "Generation of Bird Nest (the National Stadium)" was created and designated to the people who volunteered in the 2008 Volunteer Project that played a critical role on hosting both the summer and Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Legacy is not a one-off occurrence but is dynamic and evolving, and there is a need to capture and document continuing impacts in an Olympic city [47]. Following the turn of the twenty-first century, candidatures for cities vying to host Olympic Games, the notion of sustainable development (i.e. maintaining over the long-term) also emerged as a legacy theme [46]. The interviewees unanimously affirmed the accomplishment of the Olympic legacy goal to elevate

Sports participation by the mass public since the 2008 Beijing Games. Their lived-experiences, either as a Games official, a scholar in Olympic studies, or a journalist, validated the sustained outcome of the sport legacy goal with respect to the most significant increase of participation in the sports of marathon, basketball and swimming.

As the IOC Coordination Commission Chair Juan Antonio Samaranch highlighted [64], "Beijing 2022 is delivering on its vision to engage 300 million people in winter sports, and we can see real benefits resulting from the various actions that are being undertaken across the country." The IOC President, Thomas Bach confirmed this accomplishment in his remark at the opening ceremony of the Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022 [65]. The endeavor on the sport legacy goals by the Beijing OCOGs has generated fruitful outcomes, but there is no guarantee if this would happen to every host city of the Olympic Games. SPEAR (2009) reported that "Surprisingly, many mega sporting events have little (intangible) legacy in terms of sport participation [66]." The assessment of sustained outcomes from promoting the winter sports participation through staging the 2022 Winter Games will need to take some time, reasonably for at least several years after the Games.

There is little doubt that sustaining social legacies of any sport mega-events could become challenging as many researchers found and as discussed earlier in this paper. Taks (2017), drawing an example of the 2012 London Cultural Olympiad, stated that "While bids for mega events, such as the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup are required to demonstrate some types of meaningful social outcomes, their relative value of 'social capital' remains uncertain [32]." Although some dissenting opinions existed, the interviewees' narratives in this study shared with positive experiences and perceptions overall on the social legacy goals from hosting both the 2008 Summer and the 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics. The majority of the interviewees believed that the legacy goal of promoting the Olympic and Paralympic ideal to the general public had been well achieved. They ascertained that observable improvement had been made to increase the number of organizations, facilities, and sport events for people with disabilities. They credited such achievement to educating people, particularly the youth through school programs, about the Paralympic ideal and Paralympic sports. They also agreed that a gap between urban and rural areas on achieving this legacy goal existed, and that the gap was mainly caused by the lack of resources and effective school programs in rural areas. In order to ascertain the sustainability of the Olympic legacy goal for helping people with disabilities, it would be worthwhile to conduct future studies in quantitative assessment of improvement on Beijing's organized sport activities/events as rehabs, as well as the growing trend of sport facilities and services for people with disabilities.

The interviewees' narratives indicated that volunteerism has turned out to be a well-accepted social value endowed from hosting the summer and Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. This value has practically transformed the social behaviors that have produced various types of volunteer services in Beijing. The accomplishment of legacy goal for volunteerism may be regarded as one of the most observable and measurable social changes brought by hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Such a change may greatly appreciate the "social capital" in society in reference to the study by Agha *et al.* (2012) [17]. Unlike economic impacts, social impacts of events can be difficult to measure objectively as many of them cannot be quantified, and they often have a differential effect on different members of the community [29].

Littig and Griessler (2005) suggested that three core indicators, the satisfaction of basic needs and the quality of life, the claim of social justice within the sustainability discourse, and social coherence, should be adopted to assess the social dimension of sustainability [58]. Thus, it is reasonable to assure that the overall improvement of social-economic state of life quality in Beijing beyond the Olympic factors since the 2008 Games has contributed to the implementation and realization of the "soft" legacy goals that were investigated in this study. According to the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics (BMSB), the city's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita had been increased from \$10,070 (68,788 RMB) in 2008 [67] to \$28,370 (183,963 RMB) in 2021 [68].

Assessing the "soft" or "intangible" legacies of sport mega-events continues to be a challenge for researchers in sociological studies of sport. This research intended to stride forward with the theoretical and practical foundations built upon the previous studies in order to understand how the "soft" legacies in sport and social aspect, promoted by the IOC and Beijing's OCOGs, have been experienced and perceived by the key "actors" (the interviewees). "The concept of legacy can be stretched a lot and the debate on mega-sport event legacies is never ending" [27], so is the endeavor to research the truth of "soft" legacies of sport mega-events.

## References

- [1] International Olympic Committee, (2020) Olympic Charter. Retrieved from <https://olympics.com/ioc/olympic-charter>
- [2] P. Aspers, Empirical phenomenology: A qualitative research approach (The Cologne Seminars), *The Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, 9(2) (2009) 1-12. [DOI]
- [3] A. Alase, The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA): A guide to a good qualitative research approach, *International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies*, 5(2) (2017) 9-19. [DOI]
- [4] International Olympic Committee, (2019a). Beijing 2008 legacy dovetails with 2022 Winter Games to boost sports participation in China. Retrieved from <https://www.olympic.org/news/beijing-2008-legacy-dovetails-with-2022-winter-games-to-boost-sports-participation-in-china>
- [5] M. Roche, (2000) *Mega-events modernity: Olympics and expos in the growth of global culture*, Routledge.

- [6] International Olympic Committee, (2014). Olympic Agenda 2020: 20+20 Recommendations. Retrieved from [http://olympic.org/Documents/Olympic\\_Agenda\\_2020/Olympic\\_Agenda\\_2020-20-20\\_Recommendations\\_ENG.pdf](http://olympic.org/Documents/Olympic_Agenda_2020/Olympic_Agenda_2020-20-20_Recommendations_ENG.pdf)
- [7] International Olympic Committee, (2017) Legacy strategic approach: Moving forward. Retrieved from <https://olympics.com/ioc/olympic-legacy#:~:text=Olympic%20legacy%20includes%20the%20long,long%20after%20the%20Olympic%20Games>
- [8] Beijing 2022, (2019a) The legacy plan of the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games Beijing 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.beijing2022.cn/a/20190219/009247.htm>
- [9] International Olympic Committee, (2019c). Beijing 2022 has big plans to produce big benefits. Retrieved from <https://www.olympic.org/news/beijing-2022-has-big-plans-to-produce-big-benefits>
- [10] D. Dayan, F. Katz, (1992) Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA and London, England. [DOI]
- [11] J.F. Larson, H. Park, (1993) Global television and the politics of the Seoul Olympics, Avalon Publishing, United Kingdom.
- [12] M. Malfas, E. Theodoraki, B. Houlihan, Impacts of the Olympic Games as mega-events, Municipal Engineer, 157(3) (2004) 209-220. [DOI]
- [13] M.D. Moragas, N.K. Rivenburgh, J.F. Larson, (1995) Television in the Olympics, John Libbey Media, Italy.
- [14] E.W. Rothenbuhler, The living room celebration of the Olympics, Journal of Communication, 38(4) (1988) 61-81. [DOI]
- [15] E.W. Rothenbuhler, Values and symbols in orientations to the Olympics, Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 6(2) (1989) 138-157. [DOI]
- [16] H. Preuss, The conceptualization and measurement of mega sport event legacies, Journal of Sport & Tourism, 12(3-4) (2007) 207-227. [DOI]
- [17] N. Agha, S. Fairley, H. Gibson, Considering legacy as a multi-dimensional construct: The legacy of the Olympic Games, Sport Management Review, 15 (2012) 125-139. [DOI]
- [18] E. Barget, J.J. Gouguet, The total economic value of sporting events: Theory and practice, Journal of Sports Economics, 8 (2007) 165-182. [DOI]
- [19] J.L. Chappelet, Olympic environmental concerns as a legacy of the Winter Games, The International Journal of the History of Sport, 25(14) (2008) 1884-1902. [DOI]
- [20] J. Davis, A. Thornley, Urban regeneration for the London 2012 Olympic Games: Issues of land acquisition and legacy, City, Culture and Society, 1(2) (2010) 89-98.
- [21] J.T. DeLuce, J. DeLuce, The Olympic legacy and parks and recreation, Parks & Recreation, 31(6) (1996) 42-47.
- [22] K. Kaplanidou, K. Karadakis, Understanding the legacy components of a host Olympic city: The Case of the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games, Sport Marketing Quarterly, 19(2) (2010) 110-117.
- [23] K. Kaplanidou, The importance of legacy outcomes for Olympic Games for summer host cities residents' quality of life: 1996-2008, European Sport Management Quarterly, 12(4) (2012) 397-433. [DOI]
- [24] S. Li, & S. McCabe, Measuring the socio-economic legacies of mega-events: Concepts, propositions and indicators, International Journal of Tourism Research, 15(4) (2013) 388-402. [DOI]
- [25] C. Song, E. Ranelli, Reading the major economic indicators to examine the impact of the Olympic Games on Beijing's economy, Journal of Business Issues, 1 (2008) 37-55.
- [26] L. Chalip, Towards social leverage of sport events, Journal of Sport Tourism, 11(2) (2006) 109-127. [DOI]
- [27] J. Chappelet, Mega sporting event legacies: A multifaceted concept, Papeles de Europa, 25 (2012) 76-86. [DOI]
- [28] S. Cornelissen, U. Bob, K. Swart, Towards redefining the concept of legacy in relation to sport mega-events: Insights from the 2010 FIFA World Cup, Development Southern Africa, 28(3) (2011) 307-318. [DOI]
- [29] L. Fredline, L. Jago, M. Deery, The development of a generic scale to measure the social impact of events, Event Management, 8 (2003) 23-37. [DOI]
- [30] G. Silvestre, The social impacts of mega-events: Toward a framework, Esporte e Sociedade, 4(10) (2009) 1-26.
- [31] A. Smith, Theorizing the relationship between major sport events and social sustainability, Journal of Sport & Tourism, 14(2-3) (2010) 109-120. [DOI]
- [32] M. Taks, Social sustainability of non-mega sport events in a global world, European Journal for Sport and Society, 10(2) (2017) 121-141. [DOI]

- [33] A. Balduck, M. Maes, & M. Buelens, The social impact of the Tour de France: Comparisons of residents' pre- and post-event perceptions, *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 11(2) (2011) 91-113. [DOI]
- [34] Y. Guo, C. Zhou, Y. Hou, (2012) People's perception of the social impacts of the Beijing Olympic Games before and after 2008. In W. Maennig & A. Zimbalist. *International handbook on the economics of mega-sport events* (461-481). Edward Elgar.
- [35] N. Pappas, Hosting mega events: Londoners' support of the 2012 Olympics, *Journal of hospitality and Tourism Management*, 21 (2014) 10-17. [DOI]
- [36] J.L. Contreras, A. Corvalan, (2014). Olympic Games: No legacy for sports, *Economic Letters*, 122, 268-271. [DOI]
- [37] V. Girginov, L. Hall, A sustainable sports legacy: Creating a link between the London Olympics and sports participation, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 25(14) (2008) 2091-2116. [DOI]
- [38] A.C. Billings, (2008) *Olympic media: Inside the biggest show on television*, Routledge.
- [39] C. Song, J. Zhang, S. Ryan, Perceptions and attitudes of university students in Beijing toward the international media's coverage of the 2008 Olympic Games, *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 3 (2010) 207-225.[DOI]
- [40] C. Song, J. Zhang, A. Zhou, S. Ryan, and Effect of sport media on social behavior: The attitude and perception change of Chinese college students toward the international media reporting the Beijing Olympics. *International Journal of Physical Education, Fitness and Sports*, 8(4) (2019) 125-141. [DOI]
- [41] L. Minnaert, An Olympic legacy for all? The non-infrastructure outcomes of the Olympic Games for socially excluded groups (Atlanta 1996eBeijing 2008). *Tourism Management*, 33 (2012) 361-370. [DOI]
- [42] Amnesty International, *People's Republic of China: The Olympic countdown - one year left to fulfill human rights promises*, Amnesty International Publications, (2007) 17-33.
- [43] J.J. MacAloon, (1998) the politics and anti-politics of Olympic marketing. Keynote address to the Annual Conference of the Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand.
- [44] P. Horton, J. Saunders, the 'East Asian' Olympic Games: What of sustainable legacies? *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 29(6) (2011) 887-911. [DOI]
- [45] International Olympic Committee, (2016) *Legacies of Olympic Games 2008 set to benefit Beijing 2022*. Retrieved from <https://olympics.com/ioc/news/legacies-of-olympic-games-2008-set-to-benefit-beijing-2022>
- [46] International Olympic Committee, (2019b). *Beijing 2022 shows positive impact of Games vision*. Retrieved from <https://www.olympic.org/news/beijing-2022-shows-positive-impact-of-games-vision>
- [47] B. Leopkey, M. Parent, Olympic Games legacy: From general benefits to sustainable long-term legacy, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 29(6) (2012)924-943. [DOI]
- [48] R. Cashman, (2006) *The bitter-sweet awakening: The legacy of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games*. Walla Walla Press.
- [49] J.L. Crompton, The economic impact of sports tournaments and events, *Parks and Recreation*, 34(9) (1999) 142-150.
- [50] T. Mules, B. Faulkner, An economic perspective on special events. *Tourism Economics*, 2 (1996) 314-329. [DOI]
- [51] M.J. Burbank, G.D. Andranovich, C.H. Heying, (2001) *Olympic dreams: the impact of megaevents on local politics*, Lynne Rienner.
- [52] E. Fredline, B. Faulkner, Variations in residents' reactions to major motorsport events: why residents perceive the impacts of events differently, *Event Management*, 7 (2001) 115-125. [DOI]
- [53] B. Burgan, & T. Mules, (1992).Economic impact of sporting events. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 19, 700-710. [DOI]
- [54] D.M. Goldstein, Dancing on the margins: transforming urban marginality through popular performance, *City & Society*, 9 (1997) 201-215. [DOI]
- [55] G. Hughes, (1999). Urban revitalization: the use of festive time strategies, *Leisure Studies*, 18, 119-135. [DOI]
- [56] S. Essex, B. Chalkley, Olympic Games: Catalyst of urban change, *Leisure Studies*, 17(3) (1998) 187-206. [DOI]
- [57] M. Raco, (2004) Whose gold rush? The social legacy of a London Olympics. In: Vigor, A. et al. (Ed), *After the Gold Rush: A Sustainable Olympics for London*, IPPR/DEMOS, London
- [58] B. Littig, E. Griessler, Social sustainability: a catchword between political pragmatism and

- social theory. *International Journal for Sustainable Development*, 8(1, 2) (2005) 65-79. [DOI]
- [59] Edmund Husserl, (1931) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Retrieved from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/husserl>
- [60] C. Moustakas, (1994) *Phenomenological research methods*, Sage Publications, USA [DOI]
- [61] M. van Manen, *Phenomenology of practice*, *Phenomenology & Practice*, 1 (2007) 11-30 [DOI].
- [62] J.W. Creswell, (2012) *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). Pearson, United Kingdom.
- [63] Ppactranz, (n.d.) *The Back Translation method: What is it and why use it?* Retrieved from <https://www.pactranz.com/back-translation/>
- [64] Beijing 2022 (2019b) *Beijing 2022 shows positive impact of Games vision*. Retrieved from <https://www.olympic.org/news/beijing-2022-shows-positive-impact-of-games-vision>
- [65] T. Bach, (2022) *Opening remark for the Beijing 2022*. Retrieved from <https://posts.careerengine.us/p/62013d8a5872e523d7135817?from=latest-posts-panel&type=title>
- [66] SPEAR, (2009) *A Systematic Review of Evidence Base for Developing a Physical Activity and Health Legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games*. Centre for Sport, Physical Education and Activity Research, Department of Health, UK.
- [67] Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics, (2009) *Beijing Statistical Yearbook 2020*. Retrieved from <http://nj.tjj.beijing.gov.cn/nj/main/2009-en/index.htm>
- [68] Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics, (2022). *Beijing Statistical Yearbook 2021*.

Retrieved from <http://nj.tjj.beijing.gov.cn/nj/main/2021-tjnj/zk/indexeh.htm>

### Acknowledgement

This study was greatly helped by **Dr. Baoli Sun**, a highly respected Olympic scholar from Beijing Sport University, who deserves a heartfelt appreciation from the author.

### Funding

This study was not funded by any individual or organization.

### Ethics Approval

This study did not require ethics approval.

### Informed Consent

Written consent was obtained from participants

### Availability of data and material

No additional data are available.

### Conflict of interest

Author has no conflict of interest between the author or author's employer and any other individual or organization.

### Does this article screened for similarity?

Yes

### About The License

© The Author 2022. The text of this article is open access and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License