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Social impacts of mega-events: a systematic narrative review and research agenda

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ABSTRACT

Whilst the economic costs and benefits of mega-events to host cities and countries are well documented, the evaluation and nature of the social impacts of such events are less clear. Although these social impacts typically include education and skills, destination branding, social cohesion, environmental sustainability and sport development, there is currently a lack of consensus on their measurement and focus upon both benefits and costs. In an evolved mega-event landscape which must align with political, social and cultural priorities, sports governing bodies, industry partners, residents and governments are increasingly concerned with qualitative impacts. Accordingly, through a systematic review of the existing literature, this paper assesses the current state of knowledge of the social costs and benefits of mega-events, including how they are identified, defined and measured, highlighting a need for further research to fully understand the social impacts of mega-events. To our knowledge, this is the first review to examine mega-event social impact evaluation, and we therefore provide a useful evidence-based guide to mega-event stakeholders in determining cases for host bids, event planning and related legacy evaluation. Our review culminates in a research agenda, providing practical guidance for future mega-event assessment.

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Introduction

Mega-events have been the subject of considerable research due to their lasting effects on host communities (e.g. Gursoy et al., 2017; Zhou & Ap, 2009). Mega-events are occasional, large-scale events that exist on an international scale (Magno & Dossena, 2020). They are major/mega by virtue of size, attendance, public interest, level of financial investment, and media coverage, and have a trickle-down effect to the host community in the form of new infrastructure, economic growth and urban renewal (Lorde et al., 2011). The massive scale of these events, such as the Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, FIFA Soccer World Cups, and World Expos, mean that they have a significant effect on a broad range of stakeholders and provide opportunities for catalysing changes (O'Brien, 2006; Tournois, 2018). These impacts start long before the event commences, extending to the bidding and planning phases, the staging of the event, and continuing well after the event (Gibson et al., 2014; Minnaert, 2012). As noted, mega-events are not all

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related to sport; however, as this review will demonstrate, much of the literature to date has focused on sporting mega-events.

Mega-events bring a range of benefits and development to host destinations. The existing literature has largely focused on the economic impacts of mega-events, whereas social impacts and their measures remain elusive and highly contested due to their undetermined duration and relatively qualitative nature (Pappalepore & Duignan, 2016; Ritchie et al., 2020). Social impacts have been defined as 'any impacts that potentially have an impact on the quality of life for local residents' (Fredline et al., 2003, p. 6). They can be considered as individual-level (e.g. civil liberty, participation), community-level (e.g. gentrification), host city-level (e.g. pride), and national-level (destination image/accessibility) (Ritchie et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2019). While economic benefits are clearly quantifiable (e.g. direct and indirect economic outcomes, job creation, and inbound investment), social impacts are harder to discern and measure objectively (Ritchie et al., 2009). They include intangible elements such as increased civic pride, social capital, enhanced destination image, and the development of new business networks (Mair & Duffy, 2018). Despite these benefits, there are also costs associated with the hosting of mega-events, many of which are borne by local residents. These include increased traffic, noise, and congestion (Fredline & Faulkner, 2001), as well as potential disenfranchisement from the event planning process (Chien et al., 2012). Such social costs and benefits are often referred to the Triple Bottom Line of sustainability and are closely linked with the notion of event legacy (Mair & Duffy, 2018).

Although the terms 'impacts' and 'legacies' are often used interchangeably, legacy incorporates a broader range of impacts that remain post-event to benefit the host community (Kaplanidou et al., 2013; Shipway et al., 2020). One of the most cited definitions of mega-event legacy is provided by Preuss (2007), which states that 'irrespective of the time of production and space, legacy is all planned and unplanned, positive and negative, tangible and intangible structures created for and by a sport event that remain longer than the event itself' (p. 211). Legacy remains an elusive and highly contested concept due to its undetermined duration (Pappalepore & Duignan, 2016). Some researchers have also cautioned the consideration of legacy as solely positive (e.g. Leopkey & Parent, 2017). The International Olympic Committee (IOC) further emphasises that 'delivering legacy requires strong partnerships between city leaders, the Games organisers, regional and national authorities and local communities' (International Olympic Committee (IOC), 2012, p. 58).

Despite all the expected benefits, in recent years destinations have shown a decreasing interest in bidding for and hosting mega-events (e.g. both Budapest and Hamburg withdrew bids to host the 2024 Olympic Games due to resident opposition). Their concern and reluctance have been sparked by past event hosts' failure to strategically plan and capitalise on the potential benefits (e.g. Rio 2016), and a lack of understanding of legacies (O'Brien & Gardiner, 2006; Smith et al., 2019). In response to this changing landscape, the IOC has recently released its 'New Norm' plan, with a new philosophy that invites potential hosts to present projects that best fit their sporting, economic, social, and environmental planning needs, rather than trying to fit the local context to the Games (IOC, 2018). This approach clearly emphasises the social, sporting, and environmental aspects of hosting and staging mega-events, and it is likely that other mega-events will also consider the principles of sustainability and maximal dispersal of benefits underpinning this new plan. Other mega-events, such as the Commonwealth Games, have also incorporated sustainability guidelines into their bidding documentation (Commonwealth Games Federation, n.d.). Establishing cause and effect in social and cultural changes, however, has been challenging, especially when the effects are only measured cross-sectionally and independently from each other. It would therefore be of interest for any host destinations to have a better understanding of the categorisation, scope and evaluation of social impacts associated with mega-events, so as to support their leveraging and legacy assessment.

In considering how mega-events impact society, it is important to emphasise the evolving nature of impact assessment against a backdrop of macro-environmental, political and

technological shifts that are rapidly occurring and presenting new risks to mega-event assessment. Examples of such change include the ever-present risks of natural disaster, terrorism and cyber-attacks, as well as the changes wrought by the sudden appearance of the COVID-19 pandemic. A review and critique of extant social impact research is timely and relevant in this rapidly evolving context of mega-event planning and evaluation.

To this end, we provide a review of the current literature on the conceptualisation and measurement of social impacts and specifically address the following research questions:

1. What is the state of the field in terms of mega-event social impact measurement and conceptualisation?
2. What research is needed to reveal reliable social impact assessment and ensure practical measurement outcomes for stakeholders?

It is not our intention to critique the identified social impacts, but, rather, we intend to assess and map out the measurement and conceptualisation of these impacts to date.

Methodology

This paper takes a systematic approach to reviewing the literature regarding social impacts of mega-events. As Buchanan and Bryman (2011) note, systematic reviews are intended to locate existing studies, and by analysing and synthesising them and evaluating their contributions, provide clarity in relation to the state of the field. Given that many of the studies in the events field are mixed method or qualitative, a narrative synthesis approach is taken in the paper, which allows both a systematic review and a synthesis of findings that relies primarily on the use of words and text to summarise and explain the findings of the synthesis (Popay et al., 2006). The narrative synthesis approach moves beyond a simple summary of the findings of various studies in a bid to generate new insights or knowledge (Mays et al., 2005).

The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items of Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis) model developed by Moher et al. (2009) was adopted to provide a framework for deciding which studies should be included in the review and which should be excluded. This enhances the rigour of the design and the reliability of the findings and has four stages – identification, screening, eligibility and inclusion. A total of 107 papers are included in the review. Relevant studies and papers were identified by conducting online searches for a number of identified social impacts together with the words and phrases ‘Olympics’, ‘mega-event’, ‘World Cup’, ‘Commonwealth Games’, ‘legacy’, and ‘impact’. Searches were also conducted using words and phrases related to social impacts typically associated with mega-events, including social cohesion, pride, image, diversity, diplomacy, volunteering and networks. We searched and reviewed articles that were published between 2000 and 2020 and included journals that range from tourism and events, to hospitality, sport, leisure, marketing, business, and public policy. Databases searched included Science Direct (Elsevier), EBSCO Host (Hospitality and Tourism Complete), Scopus, Web of Science, ProQuest, Sage, Business Source Complete, and Google Scholar.

Initially, we located 34 articles from tourism journals that are ranked as A* publications on the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) Journal Quality List, namely, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *Tourism Management*, *Journal of Travel Research*, and *Annals of Tourism Research*. From the retrieved articles, a cross-citation search was undertaken to locate other relevant articles, starting with the ABDC A-ranked journals that included *Event Management*, *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, and *Leisure Studies*, as well as cross-disciplinary works such as *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* and *Journal of Sport Management*. Sixty-six studies were identified at this point. The next stage, screening, allowed for removal of any duplicates or non-relevant publications. Six studies were removed as a result. Following the PRISMA guidelines, the

selected articles were checked for eligibility and cross-checked by looking at their reference lists to identify any studies that might have been overlooked. An additional 13 studies were added at this stage, resulting in the final list of 107 studies which were included in the review. All the articles included in this review were published in journals with an impact factor of 1.0 and above. A database was created to manage the data, which included bibliographic details of the studies, methods used, study context, and key social impacts examined (see Appendix 1 for the full list of studies). This represents the conclusion of the PRISMA model. Open coding was used to analyse the contents of the database to seek similarities and differences between and across the studies included (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

During the coding and analysis process, some impact categories emerged that were clearly recognisable and had been discussed in the literature on many occasions (e.g. volunteering; civic pride; the showcase effect on destination branding). Other impact categories identified included those that had previously been subsumed under economic impacts, but on further investigation appear to have significant impacts on local residents, their quality of life, and can act as an agent for social change (e.g. business & government networks; sports infrastructure as community connector). Finally, some social impact categories emerged that have not been explicitly considered; yet, they appear to be of importance for communities and society (e.g. disaster preparedness; and improved accessibility to infrastructure and services).

Findings

Table 1 shows the key impact categories from the extant literature that emerged from the analysis of the articles in this review, along with their definitions and measures observed. The review shows that there are clearly established social impacts and that new impacts warrant academic study as society changes (e.g. disaster preparedness and accessibility). Using these eight social impact categories as a framework, and taking a narrative approach rather than simply providing statistical details of the dates, types and sources of the articles, this review interrogates the main methods used in prior studies to identify and evaluate the social impacts of mega-events, the conceptualisation and classification of social impacts, and in some cases the theoretical underpinnings used. Given the lack of consensus on social impacts of mega-events, this study will form a comprehensive basis to inform further empirical research on sustainability of mega-events, in addition to guiding decision-making in practice, in determining viability of such events. Each of the social impact categories identified are detailed in the following sections.

Direct impacts on residents

Volunteering, education and skills

Volunteers are defined as those who offer their labour, knowledge, skills, and experience at no wage cost to an organisation. Mega-events rely heavily on volunteers, known as episodic volunteers as they generally seek only short-term or one-off volunteering positions (Lockstone & Baum, 2009). The 2012 London Olympic Games, for example, involved over 70,000 volunteers (Holmes et al., 2015) and the 2016 Rio Olympics required over 50,000 (Playthegame.org, 2016). Whilst volunteering is often associated with increased wellbeing resulting from new friendships, deeper connections with the community, the acquisition of new skills, and the protection of mental and physical health, there are no generally accepted measures of volunteering legacies (Minnaert, 2012).

Mega-events can provide a catalyst to upskill the current labour force of the host community and to retain skilled workers who originally only came to the host community for the event (Kirby et al., 2018). Upskilling through volunteer training and experiences has been linked to enhanced educational standards within the broader population, improved employability, and the

Table 1. Review key impact categories.

Impact	Definition	Key measures used	Key studies
Direct impact on residents			
Volunteering, education and skills	<p>Volunteering = those who offer their labour, knowledge, skills, and experience at no wage cost to an organisation or event.</p> <p>Education and skills = learning systems or upskilling opportunities developed as part of hosting the mega-event, that provide enhanced educational achievement and improved employability or job prospect of the population.</p>	<p>A range of self-report surveys and interviews are used to measure volunteer motivations & satisfaction. Some post-event long-term studies have been carried out, but are difficult to operationalise. Interviews and surveys have been conducted with event volunteers to understand their perceptions of event engendered training and upskilling. Autoethnography has also been adopted to gain in-depth understanding.</p>	<p>Nichols and Ralston (2011): Post-event (2002 Manchester Commonwealth) survey and individual in-depth interviews revealed a social inclusion legacy from volunteering at the event. Volunteering was found result in skill development and an increase in time spent volunteering after the event.</p> <p>Gornostaeva & McGurck (2013): A case study of the 2012 London Olympic Games revealed that skill enhancement and other social cohesion benefits of volunteering are driven by broad and integrated social inclusion policies. Unemployed residents were found to be the least likely demographic to benefit from Olympic volunteering.</p> <p>Fairley et al. (2016): A post-event (2000 Sydney Olympic Games) qualitative questionnaire and in-depth interviews revealed a positive relationship between volunteering at the Olympics and continuing or increasing time spent as a volunteer after the event, and the development of transferable skills.</p>
Social cohesion, civic pride and social capital	<p>Social cohesion = the way people feel within their community, their networks and connections, and their opportunities for community participation.</p> <p>Civic pride = the positive attitude that residents have towards their local area.</p> <p>Social capital = the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behaviour, based on commonly shared norms.</p>	<p>All three concepts are usually measured using self-report surveys, interviews, or focus groups of residents.</p>	<p>Kim et al. (2006): Pre- and post-event (2002 FIFA World Cup, South Korea) surveys of residents found a significant perceptual change amongst residents in that perceptions of the expected social benefits of hosting the event were higher than the perceived actual benefits. Revealed that residents perceived the event to have generated more societal and cultural benefits as compared to economic benefits.</p> <p>Karadakis and Kaplanidou</p>

(continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Impact	Definition	Key measures used	Key studies
			(2012): A longitudinal study of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games using surveys. Both host and non-host city residents were found to place more importance on social, rather than economic, impacts of hosting the event. Revealed that non-host city residents perceived the event as having left greater legacies than host-city residents. Minnaert (2012): Semi-longitudinal comparative case studies based on post-event (1996 Atlanta Olympic Games, 1998 Nagano Winter Olympic Games, 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympic Games, 2004 Athens Olympic Games, 2006 Turin Winter Olympic Games, & 2008 Beijing Olympic Games) interviews of host city residents and secondary data (academic research, reports from social and charitable organisations etc.). Revealed that socially excluded groups rarely benefit from their city hosting the Olympic Games, even where the city explicitly seeks to achieve social goals through hosting the event.
Inclusion and diversity	<p>Inclusion = when a variety of people feel valued and respected, have access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute their perspectives and talents to improve their community.</p> <p>Diversity = (inter alia) people of different ages, cultural backgrounds, ethnicities, genders, religions, geographical locale, SES status, and disability.</p>	Measured using proxies, such as perceived tolerance of diversity, and more recently through tracking and analysing social media	Kaplanidou et al. (2013): Pre- and post-event (2010 FIFA World Cup, South Africa) surveys of residents of host cities. The World Cup was perceived to have increased quality of life through providing social benefits such as reducing racial segregation. Gibson et al. (2014): A pre- and post-event (2010 FIFA World Cup, South Africa) quasi-experiment on residents of various host cities revealed that residents perceived tolerance of diversity to have decreased from before to

(continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Impact	Definition	Key measures used	Key studies
			after the event. Kirilenko and Stepchenkova (2017): Text mining and content analysis Twitter data before, during, and after event (2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games). National sentiment in Russia was seen to increase over the duration of the Games. It was also revealed, however, that the Olympic Games seemed to act as a 'magnifying lens' for contested issues between Russia and other countries, including in relation to inclusion and diversity within the country.
Sport participation, infrastructure & health	Sports social impacts = enhanced participation and community health, amenities enhancement through sporting infrastructure investment, enhanced pathways to elite sport, and the promotion of integrity and trust in sport.	Quantitative cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys post-event which capture perceived community amenity attributable to sporting infrastructure, frequency of participation, re-engagement in grassroots sports and physical activity. The direct effect of mega-events on sports participation and access to community sporting infrastructure is often also measured using resident surveys.	Veal et al. (2012): Secondary analysis of national survey data (2000 Sydney Olympic Games, 2003 Rugby Union World Cup, & 2006 Melbourne Commonwealth Games). Did not reveal any significant increase in adult sport participation following any event. Revealed a possible positive link between sport mega-events and children's sport participation, however this could not be definitively established. Chen et al. (2018): Case studies of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games and 2008 Beijing Olympic Games revealed that hosting the Olympic Games initially has a positive effect on elite sport in the host country (i.e. following the announcement of the host city) but that without distinct government strategic planning and investment, that effect will not be sustained beyond the time of the country's home Olympics. Found that a host country's Olympic performance will likely improve in the Olympic cycles before their home Games, peak at its home Games, and

(continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Impact	Definition	Key measures used	Key studies
			then decline in subsequent cycles. Cleland et al. (2020): A longitudinal study of the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games revealed little to no correlation between the event and increased sport participation of host city adult residents.
<i>Impacts on the destination ecosystem</i>			
Business & government networks	Networks = inter-organisational, inter-city and inter-country relationships, through which business networks and commercial investment can be accessed. A sport events network typically includes entities from tourism, sports, events, government, media and private sectors.	Qualitative and quantitative survey methods aimed at determining the extent of relationships and frequency of their interaction post-event. Strength of ties across the network has rarely been examined, and usually only in relation to ties post event.	Werner et al. (2015): an exploratory study based on the 2011 Rugby World Cup, New Zealand revealed limited collaboration between regional tourism organisations ('RTOs'), likely as a result of a shared view that increased collaboration was unnecessary and only desirable if it helped an individual RTO to attain its own objectives.
Destination branding (showcase effect)	Destination branding = marketing activities that are aimed at promoting a destination, through image building and reputation enhancement, to both internal and external stakeholders.	Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used to measure visitors' as well as residents' perceptions of the host destination's brand equity dimensions (e.g. image, reputation). Examples include surveys of residents, interviews of small business, and big data analysis of visitor sentiments.	Zhou and Ap (2009): Pre- and post-event (2002 FIFA World Cup, South Korea) surveys of residents and visitors. Perceptions of the destination brand were found to depend on an individual's lifestyle and culture in addition to prior perceptions about the costs and benefits of hosting the event. Liu et al. (2014): A post-event (2008 Beijing Olympic Games) survey of non-host city (Shanghai) residents revealed that non-host city residents perceived the Olympic Games to have improved Beijing's image however host city residents did not perceive this to be a legacy of the event.
Disaster preparedness	Disaster preparedness = measures taken to prevent, prepare for and reduce the effects of natural and man-made disasters.	Common methods used include case study, in-depth interviews and content analysis of archival data. Studies sought to understand awareness and perceptions of event related risks from the spectator or tourist's perspective have	Toohy and Taylor (2012): A case study based on post-event (2000 Sydney Olympic Games) revealed that strict security measures were generally accepted as the price required to be paid for the international prestige of hosting an Olympic Games. Revealed legacy of increased security

(continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Impact	Definition	Key measures used	Key studies
		employed self-report surveys.	measures in host city and country following event. Walters et al. (2017): A survey conducted during event (2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games) revealed that level of ‘fandom’ and trust in security officials at event can alleviate security concerns of spectators. Fans with a strong attachment to the event are likely to have fewer security concerns than other fans.
Accessibility and accessible tourism	<p>Accessibility = the delivery of universally designed products, services and environments that allows people to function independently and with equity and dignity.</p> <p>Accessible tourism = development and provision of accessible destination experiences that enable people with access requirements, including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access.</p>	Qualitative methods such as case study and Delphi group, and quantitative methods such as survey have been used to understand aspects of accessible experiences.	<p>Kaplanidou (2012): A post-event (1996 Atlanta Olympic Games, 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, 2004 Athens Olympic Games, & 2008 Beijing Olympic Games) survey. Accessible tourism measured by perception of availability of accessible pathways.</p> <p>Pappas (2017): Pre- and post-event (2012 London Olympic Games) surveys of residents, based on social exchange theory, revealed that the Olympics were perceived to have had positive social benefits including the development of information services for visitors.</p>

development of transferable skills which can be utilised in future work, volunteering endeavours, and other areas of life (e.g. Kirby et al., 2018; Nichols & Ralston, 2011; Werner et al., 2015). The Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic Games, for example, provided carpentry training and work experience for disadvantaged young people, indigenous people, single mothers and immigrants (Vanwynsberghe et al., 2013). Mega-events also have the potential to facilitate knowledge and skill transfers between prior and future host cities, though existing research suggests that this does not always occur for reasons of, among other things, historical issues, city rivalries, and socio-cultural differences (e.g. Beesley & Chalip, 2014).

Existing research suggests that volunteering at a mega-event results in a positive social legacy and promotes continued volunteering after the conclusion of the event (e.g. Fairley et al., 2016; Nichols & Ralston, 2011). However, further research conversely suggests that intentions to continue volunteering after a mega-event may not necessarily endure (e.g. Ralston et al., 2005; Ritchie et al., 2020). Another reason for the impermanent nature of volunteering is that efforts and intentions are stifled by a lack of adequate government funding for future events and support of organising committees to build a volunteering legacy (e.g. Nichols et al., 2017). Additionally, the link between volunteering at a mega-event and ongoing volunteer efforts is difficult to examine. Nichols and Ralston (2011) studied volunteers from the 2002 Manchester

Commonwealth Games; however, only volunteers who remained registered with Manchester Event Volunteers were surveyed, reducing the number of potential participants and adding bias in that participants' perceptions of volunteering at the Games were influenced or overshadowed by subsequent volunteering endeavours.

Volunteers at mega-events are most likely to be older people (Dickson et al., 2016), students, individuals in short-term employment contracts, and those moving between part-time or unskilled jobs (Gornostaeva & McGurk, 2013). At the same time, because they are comparatively 'hard to reach' and difficult to influence, the unemployed are the least likely to benefit from mega-event volunteering legacies (Gornostaeva & McGurk, 2013). This may be compounded by an apparent preference for skilled workers and tradespeople as mega-event volunteers (Lenskyj, 2002), presumably because this lowers training costs.

The impact of mega-events on education and upskilling has previously been measured as part of community consultation projects and volunteering studies (e.g. Fairley et al., 2016; Nichols & Ralston, 2011). Such studies have involved asking participants to self-report on their volunteer experiences and the long-term benefits of volunteering. The relevant studies do not, however, include a baseline from which to compare the education and skills of mega-event workers following the event. Moreover, those post-event studies conducted after a lengthy period of time do not appear to adequately account for the effect of other external factors on previous volunteers' skills and prospects of employment including, for example, the changing state of the overall economy (e.g. Fairley et al., 2016).

Social cohesion, civic pride and social capital

The term 'social cohesion' is commonly used by governments and policymakers to refer to an intangible concept encapsulating the way people feel within their community, their networks and connections, and their opportunities for community participation (Duffy & Mair, 2017). High levels of social cohesion are associated with good perceptions of wellbeing and quality of life in addition to a well-functioning society (Kaplanidou et al., 2013). However, social cohesion is less common in academic events research and to date, there appears to be no single accepted or validated way to measure this important social impact. In the events context, notions that underpin social cohesion are more commonly assessed using the concepts of civic pride and social capital (Gibson et al., 2014). Social cohesion, therefore, is often measured through self-report resident surveys, using Likert scales and focusing on the related notions of social capital and/or civic pride (e.g. Al-Emadi et al., 2017; Duignan et al., 2019; Li et al., 2015). The term civic pride does not represent an exclusively well-defined and understood construct; however, civic pride is linked to shared beliefs about a place which result in a shared or cohesive city image (Wood, 2006). Relevantly for the purposes of this research, civic pride relates purely to the attitudes and feelings of local residents to their local area rather than to the opinions of tourists or visitors (Wood, 2006). A number of studies have revealed a positive relationship between mega-events and residents' levels of civic pride, not only in the host city itself, but also within the host country (e.g. Chi et al., 2018; Gibson et al., 2014; Karadakis & Kaplanidou, 2012; Liu et al., 2014).

Social capital is a multi-dimensional construct, referring to the social structures and the actions and interactions within these social structures in any given society (Coleman, 1988). A full review of social capital is beyond the scope of this paper; however, it has been described as the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behaviour, based on commonly shared norms (Gibson et al., 2014). The positive outcomes from high levels of social capital can be considered as the creation of a civil society; a strong sense of community; community cooperation; and community empowerment (Ooi, Laing & Mair, 2015).

Research has found that social capital increases following a mega-event due to increased perceptions of quality of life and wellbeing (e.g. Kaplanidou, 2012; Kaplanidou et al., 2013), in

addition to reinforced community spirit, heightened national identity and enhanced social unity (e.g. Kim et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2014). Importantly, studies also indicate that mega-events can have a negative effect on social capital, particularly if the event creates congestion, noise, increased crime, or other anti-social behavioural and cultural conflicts (Chiam & Cheng, 2013; Kim & Petrick, 2005). The displacement of the homeless and other marginalised groups as a result of mega-events has also been cited as a negative social capital impact (Lenskyj, 2002; Minnaert, 2012). The existing research suggests that these negative effects are felt during the event, rather than afterwards. Research into the long-term effects of mega-events on residents' social capital is still limited. As highlighted by Kaplanidou (2012), such a lack of research could be due to the difficulties of measuring the effects of a single event in light of later social, political, and economic shifts. Further research on both the positive and negative effects of mega-events on social cohesion is badly needed.

Inclusion and diversity

Social inclusion is the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society. It occurs when a variety of people (e.g. of different ages, cultural backgrounds, genders, religions, socioeconomic status, and disability) feel valued and respected, have access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute their perspectives and talents to improve their community (Laing & Mair, 2015). Thus, whilst diversity refers to differences within a group, inclusion speaks to how those members are treated and how they feel (Nichols & Ralston, 2011; Ziakas, 2015).

Diversity is traditionally examined through surveys and interviews using surrogate indicators (e.g. Al-Emadi et al., 2017; Chen & Tian, 2015; Zhou & Ap, 2009). Proxies include, among other things, perceived tolerance of diversity, the perceptions of minority groups such as migrants, refugees, the homeless, and indigenous people in relation to collective involvement, influence in decision-making, access to resources and opportunities surrounding mega-events, and the extent of any anti-social behaviour towards particular minority groups (e.g. Chen & Tian, 2015; Gibson et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2006; Minnaert, 2012; Pappalepore & Duignan, 2016). While there is evidence from the literature of the impacts of multicultural festivals on tolerance of diversity within a community (see for example Lee et al., 2012), there is little research examining the way that mega-events affect diverse groups within the host/resident community.

There is a significant body of evidence which suggests that mega-events increase residents' perceptions of social inclusion (e.g. Kaplanidou et al., 2013; Kim & Petrick, 2005). More recently, measurement of social inclusion has also involved tracking and content-analysis of social media posts and comments (e.g. Kirilenko & Stepchenkova, 2017). The majority of this evidence, however, stems from cross-sectional surveys conducted before, during, or shortly after the conclusion of the relevant mega-event (e.g. Chiam & Cheng, 2013; Gibson et al., 2014; Kim & Petrick, 2005). Accordingly, the long-term and causal effects of mega-events on social inclusion within host-cities and host-countries remains unclear. This is also true in respect of the potential negative effects of mega-events on social inclusion which may include the widening of social and cultural divisions within communities (e.g. Lenskyj, 2002; Minnaert, 2012).

There is some evidence of a link between residents' perceptions of the effect of mega-events on social inclusion and intended or actual involvement in decision-making in relation to the event, and opportunities for participation in the event (e.g. Fairley et al., 2016; Gursoy et al., 2017; Pappas, 2017). Residents' trust in the relevant government and organising committee has also been associated with social inclusion outcomes (e.g. Chi et al., 2018; Gursoy et al., 2017; Nunkoo et al., 2018). Existing literature further indicates that favourable residents' perceptions of mega-events are linked to their support for the event and their direct experiences of the event; however, the driving factor of this relationship is unclear (e.g. Chi et al., 2018; Ouyang et al., 2017;

Prayag et al., 2013). Whilst beneficial for organisers and those lobbying for mega-events, such studies demonstrate two inherent difficulties in measuring the actual impact of mega-events on social inclusion, namely, addressing the effects of confirmation bias which exists because of the selected group of survey participants and/or the nature of questions asked (e.g. Chi et al., 2018; Duignan et al., 2019), and overcoming cultural and political factors which may influence respondents' views on the effects of an event (e.g. Li et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2014; Tournois, 2018).

Sport (participation, infrastructure and health)

Sporting social impacts associated with hosting mega-events include improved participation and community health, amenities enhancement through sporting infrastructure investment, enhanced pathways to elite sport, and the promotion of integrity and trust in sport. These outcomes are typically measured by frequency of participation, re-engagement in grassroots sports and physical activity more generally through cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys (e.g. Carmichael et al., 2013; Weed et al., 2015). The direct effect of mega-events on sports participation and access to community sporting infrastructure is also measured using resident surveys embedding multi-item Likert-style scales (e.g. Al-Emadi et al., 2017; Cleland et al., 2020; Kaplanidou, 2017). Despite the multiplicity of studies examining the effects of mega-events on sports participation, there is a clear lack of baseline data or consensus as to whether or not mega-events do in fact increase sports participation at a grassroots level (e.g. Bauman et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2018; Toohey & Taylor, 2008). Amenity and gentrification associated with event-related sporting infrastructure is commonly measured by community surveys, feedback on liveability, and studies of behaviour in using and enjoying the facilities and surroundings (e.g. Kaplanidou, 2012; Kim et al., 2015). As these measures are often examined in conjunction with quality of life assessment, there is a risk that perceptions of new infrastructure are influenced by residents' overall quality of life perceptions.

The effect of mega-events on a host country's elite sporting pathways and development is generally measured by the country's success on the world stage (e.g. Chen et al., 2018; Karadakis & Kaplanidou, 2012). Some evidence suggests that hosting mega-events can create momentum in elite sport success (e.g. Toohey & Taylor, 2008). However, there is also a lack of research as to why that momentum is generally not sustained in the years following a mega-event (Chen et al., 2018). The alleged aspirational nature of elite sport and its effect upon eliciting activity among the host population is relatively under-researched, and warrants further examination (Grix & Carmichael, 2012). The social impacts of mega sporting events therefore intersect with economic impacts in terms of positive health, social connectivity and mental resilience across the community hosting the event. Beyond the sporting infrastructure accessibility, aspirational pathways and increased participation in physical activity and sports, there is evidence that mega-events more broadly can promote positive wellbeing both physically and mentally, in addition to these quality-of-life outcomes for residents (Moon et al., 2019; Teng & Chang, 2020).

Impacts on the destination ecosystem

Business and government networks

The expansion and strengthening of business and government networks are well established as critical leveraging and legacy impacts of mega-events (Chien et al., 2018; O'Brien & Chalip, 2008). Successful network impacts depend upon inter-organisational, inter-city (including sister cities), and inter-country relationships, through which business networks and commercial investment can be accessed (O'Brien & Gardiner, 2006). A mega-event network typically includes entities from tourism, sports, events, government, media and private sectors (Parent, 2008) and these networks are usually established from existing relationships (Ziakas & Costa, 2011). The structure

and nature of these relationships are under-researched in mega-event evaluation. Most previous research has focused upon the event's ability to build new networks, rather than examining the event's impact upon existing relationships and the strength of relationship ties developed (Chalip et al., 2003; Werner et al., 2015).

Impacts include monetisable and non-monetisable aspects of industry dynamics in the region, which evolve in response to rapid changes in the environment brought about by the hosting of mega-events (O'Brien & Gardiner, 2006). For example, new trade deals, business venture ecosystems, alliances, and innovation, together with strengthened international relationships and increased levels of soft power and diplomacy are positive impacts which may be caused by evolving industry dynamics (Grix et al., 2015; Preuss, 2007) facilitated by mega-events. Qualitative social impacts for business and governments in hosting regions identified by prior research include collaboration, competition, coopetition, and knowledge transfer (e.g. O'Brien, 2006; Werner et al., 2015). These non-monetisable indicators of partnerships and relationship strengths have been typically measured through surveys and interviews, drawing insights into organisational learning from external regionally-based organisations, identification of specific skills, information, knowledge transferred among organisations in the industry, and mechanisms of transfer across the network. Social network analysis has been used to analyse the complex nature of these networks, and identify how they can be enhanced through strengthening of ties, information sharing and reducing barriers (Pavlovich, 2003). Not all mega-event impacts on the business community are positive - tensions between collaboration and competition have also been assessed, in addition to whether knowledge sharing between organisations increased or decreased because of mega-events. For example, Werner and colleagues (2015) examined the improvement of relationships between Tourism Auckland and local business stakeholders, and found differing outcomes between weakly and strongly tied organisations pre and post the Rugby World Cup 2011 event. The strength of post-event ties was found to be correlated with pre-event involvement in the organisation and the strength of the interaction. Existing evidence suggests that the accrual, or lack thereof, of business benefits within host and non-host regions depends on the relationship between organising committees, governments, and key stakeholders (Fairley et al., 2016) and the sharing of common values and purposes (O'Brien & Gardiner, 2006; Ziakas, 2015). The establishment of a well-coordinated network of alliances which are integrated with leveraging initiatives and the host region's development plans has also been shown to be an essential part of ensuring business benefits extend to non-host regions (Chien et al., 2018; O'Brien, 2006).

Destination branding

Marketing activities aimed at promoting a destination through image building and reputation enhancement are generally referred to as 'destination branding' (Knott et al., 2015). This involves conveying the promise of a memorable experience unique to the particular destination (García et al., 2012). Destination branding can increase the desirability of a destination's products, services, and experiences, and therefore has important implications for development in tourism, trade, investment, education, and sport around the world (Knott et al., 2015).

Current research demonstrates that because of global media coverage, hosting a mega-event can enhance or consolidate a destination's brand image (Kaplanidou et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2013). Some studies suggest that evaluations of destination brand image become more positive throughout the duration of mega-events (e.g. Lepp & Gibson, 2011). However, post-event studies are less consistent, with some reporting a decline in image perceptions (e.g. Kim & Petrick, 2005; Kirilenko & Stepchenkova, 2017; Rojas-Mendez et al., 2019) whilst others suggest an increase in the strength of a destination's brand following that destination hosting a mega-event (e.g. Chen & Tian, 2015; Kim et al., 2015; Kim & Morrisson, 2005). The accuracy of

some post-event studies may be called into question in light of the fact that they did not involve comparable pre-event surveys against which post-event perceptions can be objectively measured.

The strengthening or weakening of a destination's brand before, during, and after a mega-event appears to largely depend on coverage of the event and the destination itself in the mainstream media and on social media (e.g. Kirilenko & Stepchenkova, 2017; Rojas-Mendez et al., 2019). As with other social impacts, research on the effect of mega-events on destination brands is piecemeal and ad hoc. Most post-event studies are conducted within 12 months of the conclusion of the event (e.g. Kim & Petrick, 2005; Rojas-Mendez et al., 2019) and those which are more long-term do not appear to consider the impact of other external factors which may alter a destination's brand image (e.g. Kaplanidou, 2012; Liu et al., 2014).

Most elements of a destination brand, such as general awareness, brand association, attitude, reputation, perceived experience, and quality are intangible, reflecting the strength, favourability, and uniqueness of a destination's brand equity (García et al., 2012). These elements are generally assessed from residents' or visitors' perspectives, using self-reporting instruments such as surveys and interviews and, in the context of mega-events, are often examined in broader studies considering perceptions of an event's overall positive and negative impacts (e.g. Chen & Tian, 2015; Lepp & Gibson, 2011; Rojas-Mendez et al., 2019). Other elements of destination branding, such as exposure, intention to visit, and brand loyalty, are both quantifiable and monetisable. These elements can be measured by the number of times a destination brand is mentioned during event broadcasts, advertising value equivalency, media footprints, number of repeat visitors, and the amount spent by tourists in the destination (Chalip et al., 2003; Jago et al., 2010).

Disaster preparedness

This social impact refers to the measures taken to prevent, prepare for and reduce the effects of natural and man-made disasters (Miles & Shipway, 2020). Given the magnitude and international interest, mega-events are susceptible to exceptional risks that range from public health and environmental, to technology and economic risks (Miles & Shipway, 2020). While the nature and number of risks may vary with events and differ from one destination to another (Walters et al., 2017), risks are often associated with or escalated by the onset of disasters such as cyclones, earthquakes, cyber-security, and terrorist attacks, as has been evidenced in 2020 by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which can have serious implications for events themselves, host communities, and a wide range of stakeholders (Toohey & Taylor, 2008; Wong & Chadwick, 2017).

To minimise the impacts of these disasters and reduce the event's vulnerability, past events have adopted processes and measures such as risk assessment, disaster simulations, security arrangements, crisis communication, disaster mitigation plans, and resource allocation (Toohey & Taylor, 2012). Notably, most of the disaster preparation and prevention measures developed for mega-events can remain with the community following the event, resulting in a long-lasting social legacy of greater community resilience against disasters, as in the case of 2000 Sydney Olympic Games (Toohey & Taylor, 2012). Many of the security measures and legislation implemented for this event remained in place after its conclusion. Such strong public and financial commitment to safety and security strengthens the community's robustness at handling future disasters, while encouraging resistance to threats physically, mentally, and managerially (Shipway, 2018; Toohey & Taylor, 2008).

Academic research considering disaster preparedness in the context of mega-events generally employs methods such as case study, in-depth interviews and content analysis of mainstream media reports (e.g. Toohey & Taylor, 2012). Findings suggest that events that do not appear to have adequate preparation can be susceptible to catastrophic risks (Wong & Chadwick, 2017) while engendering public distrust, misconceptions or fear (Konstantaki & Wickens, 2010). Some

studies have also sought to understand awareness and perceptions of event related risks and disaster preparedness from the perspective of spectators and tourists, and to establish a relationship between perceived risks and event attendance (e.g. Walters et al., 2017). The collection or analysis of quantifiable data, however, remains scant, perhaps because it is only possible to evaluate the effectiveness of disaster preparedness measures if a disaster occurs. To this end, the postponement and cancellation of numerous mega-events, including the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games due to the COVID-19 pandemic, presents an opportunity for researchers to consider the effectiveness of different disaster preparedness plans, including, for example, how and if those plans adequately protect long-term athlete wellbeing and reassure traveling sports fans (Walters et al., 2017).

Accessibility and accessible tourism

Accessibility, making destinations and experiences easier and comfortable for visitors, is a central element of any responsible and sustainable tourism policy (Darcy et al., 2010). An accessible, inclusive destination experience means that people of all abilities and ages feel welcomed as guests and are able to enjoy the experiences offered (Darcy, 2010). Specifically, development and provision of accessible destination experiences enable people with access requirements, including special needs, to function independently and with equity and dignity through the delivery of universally designed tourism products, services, and environments (Michopoulou et al., 2015).

Since mega-event organisers must consider the needs of spectators and visitors with disabilities, event hosting is said to result in accessibility legacies for host communities while facilitating the development of accessible tourism (Dickson et al., 2016). Legacies associated with disability sport events, such as enhanced venues and quality of facilities as a result of hosting the Paralympic Games, further improve quality of life for people with accessibility needs and offer a diversified tourism product to attract visitors from a growing market segment (Dickson et al., 2017). Existing research also suggests a link between increased accessibility, residential support for the event, and residents' perceived quality of life (Kaplanidou, 2012).

While an emerging stream of literature suggests that accessible tourism generates economic benefits by increasing the competitiveness of particular destinations (e.g. Domínguez et al., 2013; Vila et al., 2015), there is a paucity of research on the nexus between accessibility measures and visitors' satisfaction with particular events or destinations. Similarly, as perceived quality of life before and after mega-events is normally measured simultaneously with other social impacts, it is possible that the effect of accessible tourism on quality of life is over or understated by residents. Insights from the current literature highlight the need to consider accessibility from the whole of the visitor's journey perspective (Dickson et al., 2016). These issues warrant future research.

Discussion

While the economic impact of mega-events has been extensively examined, there has been less attention directed towards the intangible, social impacts of these events upon host destinations. Our review provides a timely overview of the state of the field in identifying, conceptualising and measuring social impacts associated with bidding and hosting mega-events. This has arisen in response to a growing need to acknowledge both positive and negative short-, medium- and long-term tangible and intangible impacts on the broader destination ecosystem (e.g. Ritchie et al., 2020). We have also identified an important distinction between those social impacts which directly affect residents, and those which have flow-on effects and unintended consequences that may not have been explicitly identified as social impacts. One key outcome from this

review is the lack of a baseline measurement in many of the social impact domains identified. It is very difficult to identify and justify increases and enhancements (or conversely defend decreases and worsening) when there is no baseline measurement to work from. This is an important area for future research.

Our review also revealed the potential for positive social impacts encompassing traditional impacts of tourism accessibility, development of government-industry partnerships and networks, and emerging ideas of community pride and cohesion, regional dispersal, diversity and inclusion. The aspirational role of sport is well established, and the hosting of a mega-event elevates this role and the importance of needing to capture associated impacts in any mega-event impact assessment. Negative social impacts identified in the literature include congestion, noise, increased crime, or other anti-social behaviour and cultural conflicts and displacement of marginalised groups (Chiam & Cheng, 2013; Kim & Petrick, 2005; Minnaert, 2012). It should be emphasised that residents can simultaneously possess positive and negative evaluations of mega-events, culminating in attitudinal ambivalence (Chen et al., 2019). Note again, that the intention of this study was not to criticise the social impacts themselves, but rather to provide a framework that informs which impacts are important to measure, whether they be positive, negative or neutral. The study has highlighted the importance and need for critical research that examines the impacts of mega-events on society as a whole, including the marginalised and underprivileged sections of the community.

Studies on residents' perceptions of mega-events are increasingly coming under scrutiny, revealing a need for more nuanced assessment encompassing residents' willingness to trade off temporary inconveniences for sustainable gains and examination of both personal and collective costs and benefits of hosting (Smith et al., 2019). Recent research has demonstrated the complexity of accounting for the negative and positive impacts of these events, which may even translate to resident ambivalence (Chen et al., 2019). It is clear that temporal and contextual considerations need to be reflected in evaluation, given that residents' attitudes have been demonstrated to shift and evolve over time. Social impact measurement also needs to embrace both personal and collective impacts, especially when typically considered with a political lens of government funding and, therefore, taxpayer support (Smith et al., 2019). Additionally, there is a plethora of terms and concepts that have been used (e.g. social capital, social cohesion, civic/community pride). There is significant scope for future research to determine the correlations and discrimination between these overlapping, yet distinct constructs.

The rapidly evolving landscape of mega-event management, risk and delivery has brought new impacts and risks for the sustainability of such events and their communities, as highlighted by the recent cancellation of the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Future social impact analysis will need to build consideration of how inevitable risks and preparedness for such risks, including terrorism, cyber-security, natural disasters, climate change, and pandemic will affect host stakeholders and event sustainability. Our review highlights this as an emerging social impact category. [Figure 1](#) below summarises our novel, holistic perspective of social impacts associated with mega-events drawn from our review, across time and different target groups.

We advance the current state of knowledge of mega-events' social impacts by elucidating their complexity and interrelatedness, and between social and economic impacts, across time and contexts. For example, social impacts relating to volunteering could positively influence social cohesion and civic pride or vice versa, and volunteering and upskilling can link to economic impacts in terms of employment. Research to date has examined impacts independently and relatively statically, when in practice, impacts can compound further impacts and indirect consequences, temporally (i.e. pre, during and post-event) and spatially (i.e. at a local, regional and national level). Academic literature on these effects is still scarce, due to limited longitudinal studies that examine social impacts over an extended period. The existing longitudinal studies mainly focused on those direct impacts on residents, such as volunteering, sport participation, and social cohesion (e.g. whether people who volunteered at the mega-event continued to

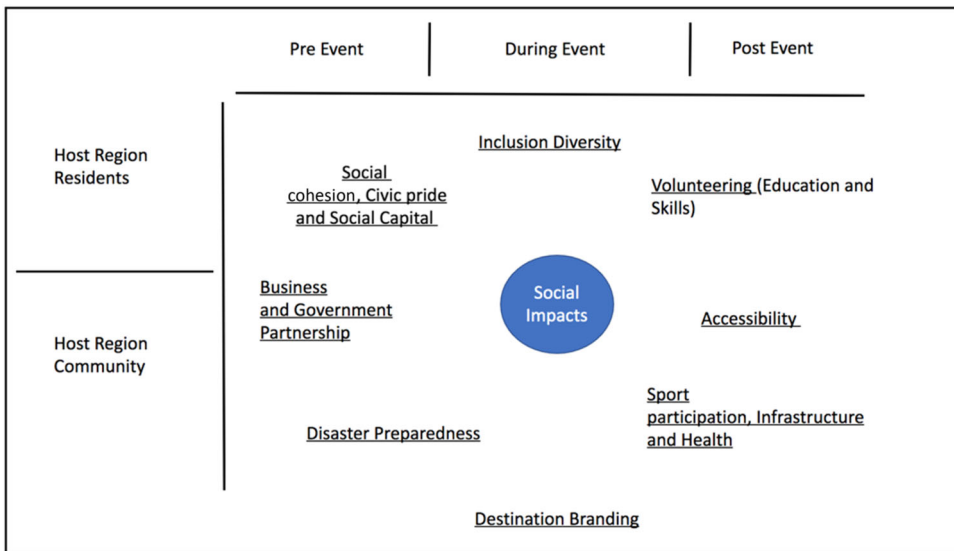


Figure 1. Social impacts of mega- events across time and contexts.

savour the benefits post-event) (e.g. Fairley et al., 2016; Shipway et al., 2020). The interrelationships between the various social impacts, as well as how they spill over to influence each other and residents indirectly, remains unexamined but vital. Hence, future research aiming to inform legacy planning should further develop the measurement of social impacts, but also the complexity of these interrelationships and how horizontal spillover occurs.

The interaction between social and economic impacts is under-researched, with our review revealing that the two categories of impacts have been traditionally examined separately and measured independently. However, the reality is that these impacts co-exist and overlap, and may even trade off, from pre, during and post analysis. To determine the long-term impact of a mega-event, future studies can be developed to investigate the inter-relationship between social and economic impacts.

Theoretically, while our review has identified the use of social exchange theory (e.g. Gursoy et al., 2017; Kaplanidou et al., 2013; Karadakis & Kaplanidou, 2012), future research could consider alternative theories (e.g. social identity theory or social dilemma theory) as overarching frameworks to understand how these social impacts can be further cultivated and sustained. For example, social identity theory can be used to understand volunteer motivation and the maintenance of volunteer network post-event. Similarly, social dilemma theory can be drawn on to understand residents' concerns and the trade-offs they are willing to make for an inclusive and diverse society. There has also been a growing body of research on sport diplomacy and development, which needs to be built into social impacts assessment (Kobierecki & Strožek, 2020). Examination of social impacts in the context of different sized mega-events is also of interest. For example, is there an optimal event size in balancing positive social impacts and sustainability of the host region? Research is needed to evaluate smaller, medium and mega-sized events, in terms of the participation and duration.

Practical implications

Our research has practical application, by providing evidence of best practice in planning bids, hosting events and evaluating legacy for relevant stakeholders, including rights holders, government, sports, industry, sponsors, residents and communities. Specifically, we advocate further research designed to capture the sophisticated and nuanced nature of social impacts, and the

design and testing of novel, multi-faceted measures that align with temporal and cultural facets throughout the event life-cycle. Longitudinal and causal studies are therefore needed, rather than shorter-term, cross-sectional surveys of limited samples of stakeholders. For example, residential support is required to develop sustainable tourism in communities hosting the event, yet, to date, most social impact studies only measure a single instance of residents' social impact perceptions (Lorde et al., 2011; Ritchie et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Mega-events have enormous impacts upon the regions and cities hosting them. They are resource-intensive and often an economic and social burden for residents, who subsidise these costs as taxpayers, and experience significant disruption. However, mega-events also have potential to significantly enhance destination branding, tourism and trade, along with more indirect effects of diplomacy, community pride, and social connectivity. Mega-event evaluation throughout the process of bidding, hosting and post-event legacy, therefore, encompasses assessment and objective measurement of both tangible and intangible impacts. We provide a review of the state of the field, highlighting both positive and negative impacts and the need for further research focused upon development of more nuanced measures that capture the evolving temporal and cultural context of mega-event hosting. Importantly, there is a lack of baseline measures for most of the social impacts identified in this review.

Our research provides useful guidance to mega-event stakeholders and highlights a need to assess the event impacts through a longitudinal and systematic lens. The dearth of live sporting events and grassroots sport during the COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated the critical nature of sport for the sustainability of our communities through enhancement of social fabric, connectivity and health, and these impact categories must be integrated into any evaluation relating to hosting mega-events. While our review is largely built on mega sporting events, it has broader application to all mega-events, including cultural, social and scientific.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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