

# **Unintended outcomes of the London 2012 Olympic Games: Local voices of resistance and the challenge for sport participation leverage in England**

## **Abstract**

This study was undertaken with five families before, during and after the London 2012 Olympics to examine and explore everyday reactions to the Games on families in the East Midlands region of England. The aim of the research was to build localised accounts of the multiple interpretations, potential impacts and reactions to the Olympics in everyday family household settings. The views, perceptions and interpretations of the Games were gathered through qualitative research methods, using video diaries and, pre and post-event, group interviews. Findings from the study illustrated diverse reactions to the legacy messages, resistance to policy interpretations surrounding this mega event and a strong sense of regional and financial exclusion from the event. Lessons can be learnt for both policy makers and event managers in the design of future events that encompass the localised perspectives of those communities and individuals who consume the event beyond direct physical participation. In particular, themes from the data included the importance of regional community involvement of national showcase events, limitations of existing media and web-based information sources and the everyday resistance to policy messages assumed as taken for granted. It is also hoped that the study will provide lessons for the Rio 2016 Olympics from a local delivery perspective.

**Key words:** Sport development Olympics, qualitative, family, sports participation, London 2012, legacy.

## **Introduction**

As indicated by Spracklen (2013) the unintended policy outcomes of mega events are often those that fail to be sufficiently examined. Ironically, large scale mega events that compete on a global scale have gained increased academic, political and commercial attention (Reis, *et al*, 2014). It has been argued that the hosting of the 2012 Olympic Games in London would lead to both a direct physical urban regeneration (Davies, 2012) and a sport and physical activity participation legacy ‘boom’ in England (BOA, 2005, Coalter, 2004, Coalter, 2007; Cabinet Office, 2013; Hughes, 2012). This study specifically focused on the everyday, localised perspectives of families outside London in the East Midlands region of England. The East Midlands region was specifically chosen as it is geographically distant from the epicentre of the London 2012 Games and not directly involved in any elite events delivering competitions linked to the Olympics. The sample of families across the region was purposive and covered five local council areas in two County Council regions of Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire. The research aimed to explore the perceptions of the Games of families, parents and their children living beyond the central Olympic site. The project examined their sports participation, attitudes towards physical activity and interpretations of the mega event. The study follows calls by Hylton and Morpeth (2012:1) to deconstruct and avoid the ‘seductive narratives’ of London 2012 by critically engaging with the everyday lived experiences of local communities, and seeing beyond the sanitised managerialist discourses often projected by policy makers and politicians. Others have commented on the apparent ‘magical’ capabilities of the Olympic Games to deliver far reaching change outlined in political and commercial discourses (MacAloon, 2010). Government and health promotion agencies regularly estimate the potential benefits of physical activity increases conflated conveniently with legacy-led participation increases (British Heart Foundation, 2013).

A substantive amount of academic literature has already discussed the questionable notions of sport participation legacy around London 2012 (Bullough, 2012; Griffiths and Armour, 2012)

and the delivery and governance structures put in place, then partially dismantled in 2010 with the change in UK government (Griggs and Ward, 2012; Mackintosh, 2012; Mackintosh *et al.*, 2014). The creaking capacity of community sport networks to be able to deliver a medium to long term sports participation legacy was also questioned in the lead up to London 2012 (Charlton, 2010; Mackintosh, 2012). A separate but related literature also charts the potential economic and urban regeneration benefits of hosting the Olympics (ARUP, 2002; Blake, 2005; DCMS, 2005; 2007). More pertinent in the context of this paper though, is the recognition that future research in sport development must challenge the assumed virtuous cycle of Olympic medals delivering increased participation (Grix and Carmichael, 2012). This can be defined as referring to “the virtuous cycle of sport holds that elite success on the international stage leads to prestige and... this, then, boosts a greater mass sport participation” (Grix and Carmichael, 2012: 76). Furthermore, Hindson, et al. (1994) critically examined the same process deemed as the ‘trickledown effect’ of elite sport benefitting community sport participation. Initial surveys set up to consider the early signs of a 2012 legacy in sport participation and ‘boosting’ volunteering in the community sport club sector showed mixed results in 2013 (Sport and Recreation Alliance, 2013). This parallels similar studies in commissioned post-Manchester Commonwealth Games in 2002 that illustrated participation decline in some sports (MORI, 2004).

To this end, this research programme has set out to gather a unique set of data within a distinct time frame around London 2012 to examine the narratives and stories of those local families geographically and, in some cases culturally and economically, distant from the epicentre of the Games in Stratford, London. This project set out to examine the following research aims:

- To challenge the dominant accounts of London 2012 Olympic Games legacy from the perspective of families in a region outside of London;

- To identify sites of resistance and challenge assumptions underpinning the ‘legacy’ of London 2012 Olympic Games from the perspectives of local families;
- To gain insights into the perceptions, experiences and understanding of London 2012 of those families outside London;
- To explore barriers against regional sporting involvement and participation for communities that are not living in a host city.

## **Methodology**

Informed by relativist ontology and a constructivist epistemology, the study was designed to capture the rich, detailed narratives and ‘voices’ of localised communities far beyond the glare of the mega-event in the capital city London (Sparkes and Smith, 2014). Accounts of the five families engaged in the project underwent ethical approval from the University Ethical Committee with a focus on providing participants with informed consent, anonymity in the project write up and the option of removing themselves from the project at any time. The intensive nature of this project accounted for one family declining to be involved mid-way through the project. But this family gave consent for their data to be analysed in the final research analysis. Given visual methods were employed through self-managed video diaries, guidelines were produced around their use and the consequent use of images from the discussions. This included a guarantee to anonymise individuals if any video clips or pictures were to be used in disseminated presentations or publications.

The five families recruited were from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds and geographic locations in Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire (see Table 1 for details of the participants). They were recruited from a purposive sample through radio and internet media campaigns and covered five different local government authority areas.

**INSERT TABLE 1 HERE**

**Table 1: Overview of family members, backgrounds and individual ages of participants**

There were three phases (please see Figure 1) to the data collection that encompassed a critical interpretivist methodological position, focused on capturing the attitudes, perceptions and everyday narratives of the families involved in the project (Gratton and Jones, 2010). Phase one involved family interviews with focus group discussions led by a member of the research team. Data capture was driven around semi-structured interviews following a thematic proforma topic guide to establish existing participations, attitudes, views on London 2012 Games, and expected initial changes to family and individual perspectives. Phase two involved the use of video diaries. Here, static digital video cameras were given to each family that were located in their home, at a location of their choice, for the duration of the research. The notion here was to allow individuals to generate their own voices and interpretations regarding their lived experiences of the London 2012 Games. Visual production of data produces insights into everyday perceptions and life experiences (Murray, 2009; Pink, 2009). They were given a guide as to potential topics and support in use of the video equipment. The thematic proforma for the interviews was also utilised to inform their ethnographic diary of events.

**INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE**

**Figure 1: Overview of research methodology process and stages of data collection**

As the representation of sport and mega events such as the Olympics, has become more visual, visual imagery across the globe has expanded through an ever escalating range of visual media, television, the internet and mobile phones (Murray, 2009; Tang and Cooper, 2013). It has been suggested that, “the exploration of the social world therefore requires methodological approaches that encompass these developments with methods that are both mobile and visual” (Murray, 2009:470). This method seeks to address the challenges faced in making research interesting and appealing so as to foster young people’s and their family’s engagement within the research process. In our mediated society, new digital technologies, such as smart phones with video cameras, are increasingly meaningful to young people. They ‘are arguably influenced by the genre of sports ‘reality TV’ and a steady stream of popular cultural forms in which self-presentation, self-representation, self-reflection and performativity are powerful cultural symbols in highly visible and visualised ways’ (Cherrington and Watson, 2010:271). This method creates new opportunities for encouraging young research subjects and their families to represent themselves and participate collaboratively in the research process. By utilising visual phenomena that are present in their everyday lives, we sought to understand how they interpret the representation of the Olympic Games and the impact to their sports participation. Whilst visual methods are increasingly being utilised in sports research no researchers, as yet have employed video diaries to examine the perceptions, experiences and understanding of London 2012 for those families outside London. Indeed video capture methodology has yet to be used in legacy research at all at this stage of the research process. This, in part is the rationale for the use of these methods. It is envisaged that this paper will contribute to the gap in existing knowledge about the innovative facilitation of these methods and mega-event legacy research.

The central aim of the video diary was to ascertain whether young people and their families change their sports participation and attitudes to sports participation due to the presence of

2012 games. Families were asked to produce a minimum of four diary entries. They were asked individually, or collectively to record their interpretations of the different stages of the games, and the various sports they choose to consume. Families were encouraged to engage with their own children in the video diaries and the youngest children especially to see the fun side of the research project. They were also asked to discuss the impact of the mediated games on participation. Please see below in Figure 2 an extract from visual methods guidelines that were discussed with the participants:

**INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE**

**FIGURE 2: An extract from visual methods guidelines [text removed]**

The final phase of the data collection was conducted during the post-Olympic period, one month after the event had been completed. Initial data analysis of stage one interviews was fed into this to probe certain topics that had been uncovered in the initial phase of interviews. Using the phase one data analysis allowed the research team insights into the initial views of families and individuals. It explicitly gave a deeper insight as an iterative process, as opposed to a perhaps traditional summative analysis at the conclusion of the data collection process. Furthermore, the interview topic guide was amended to be shaped around changes in views having experienced the event and to gain rich insights into the multiple ways the Games were consumed by the various families and individuals.

Once all the data was collected and transcribed verbatim, it was inductively coded thematically across the various transcripts of interview and video-generated data (Schensul and LeCompte, 2013). This coding was employed initially after phase one to build initial broad categories of themes and features within the data. More detailed grouping of individual codes or ‘tags’ (Silverman, 2006) allowed for the emergence of specific focuses across the

three phases of data sets that had been developed. This coding process was also undertaken across individuals within the multiple research team, to allow for further refinement of the analysis (Saldaña, 2013). The benefits of this approach can be seen in the definition of what is termed a *negotiated coding* approach,

“The researchers code the transcripts, and then actively discuss their respective codes with an aim to arrive at a final version in which most, if not all, coded messages have been brought into alignment. It provides a means of hands-on training, coding scheme refinement, and thereby, may increase reliability” (Garrison et al, 2006; 3).

It has been argued that this approach is particularly pertinent when considering exploratory research questions and also offers opportunities for teams of researchers to revisit data, quotes and units of analysis from multiple perspectives (Garrison et al, 2006). Such a collaborative and negotiated methodological process as part of the data analysis allowed for numerous fresh insights and diverse lines of enquiry in later data collection. In this sense the data analysis is an iterative process and less of a discrete bounded phase.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Challenging reactions to government policy**

The detailed local impacts and perceptions of the lived experiences of the Games were a key research focus of this study. They also follow recent calls focused on Rio 2016 Olympics research that argued the need to examine “an often cited but rarely explored intangible legacy of the Olympic Games: the sport participation legacy” (Reis, et al, 2014; 437). The concerns of the non-host region participants in relation to the government policy surrounding London 2012 rhetoric was a key theme emerging from the study. One adult family member outlined



the invisibility to them of both the grassroots sport communities and Sport England (the key government agency tasked with guiding the policy of sports development).

“My friends who do the fencing club...they all applied because they wanted to go and watch fencing and none of them got tickets for anything, and you know these are people who are... they’ve started up their own club and put all of that effort in and it’s like surely they should be given some recognition for helping sport in England! And where’s this Sport England?”

(Parent, Family 2, pre-2012 interview).

Sports participation media ‘messages’ and aspirations for behaviour change were a central feature of much of the governmental health policy in the lead up to the Games (Coalter, 2004; Coalter, 2007). However, some families indicated overt resistance to such messages,

“*Change for Life* ... the government brought it in to try to encourage people to get off their backsides, eat healthy, [and] have your five a day. I don’t think it has really got into the community..., the Olympics, you hear a lot more people talking about it, there’s a lot of people that I know that generally were not as active as now, even if they’re going walking more it’s getting more active and it seems to be having a bigger impact”.

(Parent, Family 2, video diary extract).

The transient, fluctuating nature of government sport policy has been well established for a long period of time (Houlihan and Green, 2005; Houlihan and White, 2002). Similarly, the multiple and complex interpretations of sporting mega events are also well established (Horne and Manzenreiter, 2006). However, other family members also recognised this, presenting a key insight into the views of the very communities that the current Coalition

government aims to target with their policies and programmes. Again referencing recent TV adverts of the *Change for Life* initiative, one adult family member expressed concerns around their consumption of such policy;

“Everything just seems so short sighted...you know something will happen for twelve months and then it will all vanish and it’s not just about it being sport it’s about being physically active and I know there is a difference, but I don’t think people do, people say oh I don’t want to do sport, ok but you could be more physically active! *Change for Life* ..., with the little... characters, they’ve really tried with that, but again it’s short sightedness!”

(Parent, Family 5, post-2012 interview).

Whilst it was not the focus of this project, it is clear that for some the legacy messages of the Games were aligned to other ‘short-lived’ healthy lifestyle policies and as others have argued the complexity of behaviour change is not something to be assumed as a given from mega events, such as the Sydney 2000 Olympics (Veal et al., 2012) and Rio 2016 (Reis, et al, 2014). This can be seen in the expressed insight of a young family member in the research,

“I think of the Olympics as... a tourist attraction...to see just like one game of the Olympics or to get a glimpse of the torch...I just think it’s a bit more blown up by the media!”

(13 year old, family 2, pre-2012 interview).

Further examination of the media and the family interactions and interpretations of these aspects will be considered later in this paper.

### **Resistance to legacy assumptions**

Other authors have questioned the ‘virtuous cycle’ of investment from elite sporting success automatically generating further medal success by building a larger resultant participation base (Grix and Carmichael, 2012). The aim of this research project was to establish some of the lived experiences and perceptions of local families outside of London to the 2012 Games. This then can provide deeper and richer insights into the levers (Veal, 2012) that governments attempt to pull to generate sport participation increases through mega events. The politics of such mega events as expressed at the local level can be seen in the following outline of tensions between elite and mass participation government investment,

“There should be more encouragement to allow you to try different sports, there’s so much money being pumped into venues for professionals ...and yet not as much put into the ground...they say there is but there isn’t, you still as parents are having to pump out”.

(Parent, Family 1, post-2012 Olympics).

The context of the UK recession, localised shrinking economy and family budgeting set against the £9.3 billion cost of the Games (Bell, 2009; DCMS, 2012) provided a stark juxtaposition for the voices from this research project. Exclusion from potential participation in sport *per se* and in accessing tickets for the Games for their children and others in their local communities was a strong message to emerge from the project. One adult participant expressed wide ranging concerns,

“There was a thing on the news where most of our sportsman ha[d] ...been privately educated and [it showed] how many have actually come from an underprivileged background because anyone who wants to take up sport has to pay! It costs you to go to tennis, it costs you to go swimming ...but you join a club it costs money, everything you do costs,...so for me there’s something that should be there to make it

right, let's open the doors, let's give people the opportunity and out of that, you might have a churn of 80% that fall by the wayside in that 20% you might then get people that are good that can take it up, that can achieve and push forwards and when... in eight years' time they are at the Olympics and sit there and not "oh I went to Eton", I went to the local comp then those kids there will be there going well they can do it...then it builds the pyramids!"

(Parent, Family 5, post-2012 interview).

Both the lack of regional physical and sporting legacy, as well as reference to more recent regional removal of school and community sport funding in England (Devine, 2013) were outlined by another adult family member in the project,

"I know from them saying that the Olympic park, the village is going to become accommodation, which is great for that part of London because it's a rundown area..., in terms of legacy around here I can't say there's anything that jumps out now other than it really depends on whether the government ...starts going hang on we can't afford it and sports programmes get pulled, sport in schools gets pulled".

(Parent, Family 5, post-2012 Olympics).

This again shows resistance to the policy rhetoric of both the New Labour government that had originally backed the bid and the current Coalition that implemented the Games, but also removed various areas of funding, local families in this project referred to (Devine, 2013). It also shows parallels with initial findings from studies of Rio 2016 Olympics where there is resistance to assumed benefits of the Olympics (Reis, et al, 2014).

### **What did London 2012 mean to you as a family?**

A consistent theme within the academic literature is around the neo-liberal values that imbued the London 2012 Games (Hylton and Morpeth, 2012; Silk, 2012). With consumption patterns and media developments extending the reach of the Games like never before, many families highlighted what might be termed the corporatisation of the Games as a feature of their experience (Wamlsey, 2002). This capitalist feature of the Games can be seen in the conversation below,

Family Member Three: There's a lot of media towards it and I think that a lot of companies use it as an excuse to make more money!

Interviewer One: Do you?!

Family Member Three: Yeah, like there's all the Olympic merchandise, ...you stick the London 2012 logo on something and you can stick the price up by twenty pounds or something like that!... It's like McDonalds- Proud sponsors of the Olympics!

Interviewer One: What do you think about that?

Family Member Three: I think that's absolutely ridiculous! It's complete polar opposites, they have really unhealthy lifestyles and grease and fat and then you have the Olympics which is all health and routine and athleticism... I don't think that they should associate them together.

(11 year old, Family 2, pre-2012 Olympics)

What also is present is a resistance and rejection of the suitability of the values of some of the corporate sponsors of the Games and how they align with the supposed health and physical activity messages presented by government. This is what McGillivray and McPherson (2012) have referred to as legacy deficit where there is a considerable difference between the experience of the mega event by local communities and the messages and policy presented by

government and policy makers. It also shows a politicisation of the interpretation of government sport development policy where young people cannot buy into the values of the Games and this may challenge the hegemonic representations of the Olympic legacy. Here, alternative legacies and unintended consequences of the London 2012 Games begin to emerge in a transient space between the fixed boundaries and taken for granted benefits of the neo-liberal consumerist event (Andrews and Silk, 2012; Silk, 2012).

Such a paradox can also be seen in the following later conversation by other family members,

Family Member Three: I think it's immoral ...they've just linked it all wrong!.. its linked fast food to healthy living supposedly...

Family Member Two: I think what you mean is they give mixed messages don't they?

Family Member Three: Yes I do! They say like...

Family Member Two: It comes to advertising the Olympic brand...

Family Member Three: They say that the Olympic Values are excellence, respect and friendship, the whole like excellence thing I don't think that's very....

Family Member Two: Olympiccy!

Family Member One: It's not in line with what's being advertised!

(Family 2 conversation, pre-2012 Olympics).

It is apparent that whilst some overt resistance political movements may form in relation to the corporate power and ethics of the Olympic movement (Lenskyj, 2008) there are also expressions of resistance in the everyday realities of the families in this project.

Another perspective offered was about corporate brand awareness of the families consuming the Games. But, not just the awareness of the brand itself, but also the social messages aligned to the product, family branding and role models,

Family Member One: I've seen a lot of adverts about, you know mum getting kid up early in the morning for training and that sort of thing, and then they grow up and their an Olympic athlete and I mean that shows that a lot of hard work goes into things at a very early age, and ...all of these athletes require a lot of support from lots of different people as well.

(Parent, Family 2, pre-2012 Olympics).

As Silk (2012) has argued the London 2012 Games became a motif and vehicle for neo-liberal values, as such, the statements above could be seen as recognition that local consumption of the media reach of the event was contested. Indeed, individuals illustrate here that they understand and interpret messages from a diverse package of media processes and that this can shape their views and day-to-day understanding of such events. Legacy here could be seen as the social investment that mothers have to make in their families if they are to become Olympians. The close ties with certain products shows the levels of infiltration of such marketing messages into the lived experiences of local families far removed from the main political and physical event of the London Games.

### **Regional identities and exclusion from the 'main event'**

Most families in the project expressed financial exclusion from applying for event tickets as a negative feature of their experience. However, all families engaged with varying levels of media consumption of the event through formats including the internet, social media (Twitter and Facebook) and interactive TV experiences. In some ways it also supports the use of

visual methodologies to examine mega event consumption and micro interpretations as events connect to our lived experiences. Nevertheless, this does not take away that a remaining feature of the Games was one of a sense of financial exclusion. This must also be considered in the context of the removal of other community funding and perceived cuts to their own local school sport partnerships, Free Swimming and other changes under the Con-Lib Coalition government (Bolton and Martin, 2013; Devine, 2013).

Family Member One: There is no way as a family that we could have afforded to go to London firstly because that's expensive ...and let alone actually getting tickets ... out of our budget anyway! You would have to save for a whole four years!

Family Member Two: Yeah, yeah I suppose with Rio in four years' time there will be some tickets that you can get for pennies just because it's such a poor country.

Family 2, post-2012 interview.

Experiencing the Olympics was also a disappointment in terms of how families could engage due to the limits of the ticketing and finance systems linked to becoming a participant in spectating. Several respondents noted issues around these factors,

"Lots of empty seats though! The whole ticket system unfortunately is totally wrong, and it's just rewarding the rich! People who can afford to pay silly amounts of money for tickets get to go to the Olympics".

(Parent, Family 2, video diary extract).

"Also the fact that for families like us I suspect, we don't have credit cards or anything, we didn't get any tickets because you had sit there in case you got it, which we don't have so we made the decision not to do that."



(Parent Family 1, post Olympics interview).

“We looked into getting tickets actually when they were released and for a family of four even with the ticket prices, even with the lower ticket prices at their age plus travel plus the feeding and everything else we just couldn’t do it, it just wasn’t viable”.

(Parent, Family 5, pre-2012 interview).

Another family member indicated the lack of wider geographical physical generation benefits beyond London,

“Obviously people down in London will take more advantage because obviously they’ve got all the new houses and all of the facilities so I think you will have that from the national team”.

(Child, Family 1, post-2012 interview).

Similarly the mantra of a whole nation-benefit and the narratives that all communities would share the effects and regenerative capacity was further questioned by a family member who stated,

“I think it’s costing us a lot of money but it all seems to be down in London! I know they keep saying ooooh it’s for the whole country... but it’s so not!”

(Child, Family 5, pre-2012 interview).

Here, the respondent indicates that the tax paying population and wider public do not see the benefits and as has been identified in other studies of impact in Scotland it is often the result of very localised strategic planning that the Games can leverage true impact (McGillvray and MacLoon, 2012). This perspective is shaped from a set of hidden voices that are very distant

from the powerful media glare of London 2012 and policy makers in government. This also links to the earlier resistant politics of mega events present within the everyday lives of these local families around the messages and purported legacy of such mega events. Alternative multiple interpretations of the Games are possible that resist such meta-narratives at the very local level.

### **Information barriers to regional involvement**

Sports development has a relatively emergent and new relationship with social media (Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity, CIMSPA, 2012). Information is a key aspect of the choices of young people and their families in linking into sport partnerships through involvement in the London 2012 viewing experience. However, there was very mixed feedback around this theme from the families during the period and it appeared that there are a number of ‘participation information barriers’ that both national governing bodies of sport and local government need to address to provide clearer pathways into potential or lapsed participants. Lessons here could certainly be learnt when planning legacy development projects for Rio 2016 and other mega events in the future. For example one family member stated,

“I think it’s a matter of Googling and seeing what’s available, I mean the individual sports, it isn’t advertised in this area so ... if you’re not directed to the sport then this is where they go, no I don’t think it’s readily available”.

(Parent, Family 1, pre-2012).

Furthermore, there seemed to be confusion around the limited information access and social marketing approaches taken to deliver the legacy of London 2012. On reflection after the

Games one set of parents considered such information provision for supporting sport participation development,

Family Member One: The only thing that I did recognise and they did quite often was on the BBC, the BBC were linking you to various... I think to various I can't remember now I'm assuming some sort of British sport website... it would be the British sport website...

Family Member Two: The UK... Sport UK?

Family Member One: Yeah they were pushing that, they were pushing you to go onto that website and if you wanted to try a sport go on there to the BBC so... I saw that advertised a few times which was good other than that I haven't seen anything else pushed, ...I haven't seen anything from the individual sporting bodies.

(Family 2 conversation, post 2012 interview).

This perceived void of national governing body (NGB) 'presence' within the virtual world that spectators inhabit is a stark reminder that sport development needs to access clearer platforms for engaging with local communities through portals that are both useful and meaningful to them. It is not to say that such portals and information areas do not exist, just that for the realities of the families in this project they were not accessible or overly significant to them. Another conversation discussed the specific 'blocks' around online media support for their future participation enquiries,

Family Member One: I'd tend to Google first of all if the boys said that there was something they wanted to try we would have a look on Google Nottinghamshire,...that would be the first port of call, well for me anyway!

Family Member Two: And when he first said about archery the first thing we did was Google archery and do be honest it was pretty poor!

Family Member One: That's the thing there isn't necessarily things they want to try...

Family Member One: Activities, days out, trips to Sherwood Forest and shooting in the woods for whatever amount of money but it didn't really seem much in the way of clubs that kids could get into!

Interviewer One: There's kind of a block there between the lower popular sports?

Family Member One: Oh yeah if you want to play football you've got lots and lots of opportunities but if you want to try anything else it's more difficult to get into it...

(Conversation between parents, family 5, post-2012 interview).

In contrast with the new processes for recruiting and researching local sports development opportunities linked to the Olympics other families indicated reliance on more old fashioned methods in the local press,

Family Member Two: The problem is it comes in a little brochure, in the Gedling times or news. The kids aren't going to read that... even if I show them! There not going to be interested because it's in some little brochure! You've got to get through to them!

(Father, family 2, interview pre-2012).

## **Conclusions**

It is apparent from this study that research conducted from the perspectives of regional families outside London in the East Midlands of England shows a complex and fluid picture regarding attitudes towards regional legacy. This study employed to capture video diary data during the London 2012 Olympic Games supported by in-depth interviews pre and post Games to examine the perceptions of families at a key policy moment. The project has illustrated a unique methodological approach to capturing rich insights into mega event and sport participation legacy critical policy and practice. The methodology does come with inherent time and logistical challenges due to its intensity and approach to developing video capture from families and individuals perspectives. But crucial initial findings in this paper indicate that there is some resistance to the assumptions of policy makers and those involved in the infrastructure of sports development in England. Here the dual goals of mass participation and delivery of elite sporting success do not sit so neatly alongside each other. It also points towards the need to consider such findings ahead of Rio 2016 Olympics and the benefit of analysis of local perspectives in qualitative research approaches to gain richer insights to the policy and practice interpretations that government purport to envisage delivering legacies through.

However, localised voices indicate both scepticism and confusion as to the experience of local families and the legacy promise. Genuine concerns are raised as to both the vehicles through which government is trying to leverage such change and the viability of such a *raison d'être*. Multiple authors, past studies (Grix and Carmichael, 2012; Mackintosh *et al*, 2014 *et al*; Veal, 2000; 2003; 2012) and systematic reviews of evidence (Weed, 2009, Mahtani *et al.*, 2013) have raised questions over the reality of a sports participation legacy. But it is perhaps the wider, more subtle nuanced questions around unintended outcomes of policy and an assertive public resistance to policy messages that offer fresh critical insights. The notion of a regional exclusion from the London 2012 games had not been explicitly examined in this

study. However, it did emerge as a theme from the video diaries and interviews obtained. This points us towards further lines of enquiry of unintended policy outcomes (Spracklen, 2013; Wong, 2012). A wider analysis of neo-liberal capitalist venture that many have argued now embodies the Olympic Games (Silk, 2012) is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it seems apparent that themes within this empirical study begin to show signs that all is not well in community sport projects to deliver the London 2012 legacy.

The voices from the East Midlands region in this project highlight some much deeper socio-cultural concerns that policy makers should recognise, acknowledge and act upon ahead of the Rio 2016 games and other sporting mega events with a participation legacy aspiration. It seems that the potential recipients of, and participants in the legacy narrative at grass roots level critique the very notion of the assumptions and storylines of this sphere of public policy. Here, some less popular and ‘non-mainstream’ sport and physical activities such as yoga, pilates and archery have been identified in this project as more inaccessible compared to more popular major sports supported by larger more powerful governing bodies. Informational portals to accessing pathways to participation are key and gaps have been identified in this project. It could be that the neo-liberal agendas and commercialisation of larger sports acts as catalysts for widening the gaps in sport development pathway access for potential participants compared to those opportunities in less high profile activities. Centralised funding, sponsorship power and a target driven culture of managerialism within larger more powerful sports could be future areas to examine regarding underlying drivers, tensions and future factors in this area of sport development public policy and practice.

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