

Rescinding a bid: Stockholm's uncertain relationship with the Olympic Games

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ABSTRACT

The City of Stockholm has undergone a curious process of considering whether to launch a bid for the 2026 Winter Olympic Games. That Stockholm has contemplated launching a bid is not surprising from a regional perspective—the Olympic Games have not been held in a Scandinavian country since Lillehammer, Norway played host in 1994 and Sweden has never hosted the Winter Olympics. A potential bid from Stockholm would also be consistent with Sweden's self-identification and embracement of being a 'sportive nation'. Failed applications by the Swedish cities of Gothenburg, Falun, and Östersund to host the Winter Olympic Games confirm the long-standing interest of the Swedish Olympic Committee to secure the Games, although it should be noted that the Swedish Olympic Committee did not submit a bid for the 2006, 2010, 2014 or 2018 Winter Olympic Games competitions. Although recent reports indicate that Stockholm will not vie for the 2026 Winter Olympic Games, the notion that the city was even considering the option remains surprising. Stockholm had withdrawn its bid from the 2022 bidding competition citing a variety of concerns including a lack of government and public support, financial uncertainty, as well as the post-event viability of purpose-built infrastructure. Stockholm's withdrawal from the 2022 competition resonates with the growing apprehension by potential bid cities (especially those emerging from democratic countries) towards the Olympic Games. This thesis seeks to illustrate that Stockholm's Olympic hopes have book-ended a transformative period in the Olympic bidding process and to expose the struggle that bid cities have in adjusting to the demands of the IOC's bidding process.

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ABSTRACT (GENERAL AUDIENCE)

The City of Stockholm's recent Olympic hosting ambition has gone through a tumultuous and curious process in recent years. This ambition is especially visible during the 2026 Winter Olympic bidding process in which the Swedish Olympic Committee considered the feasibility to bid for the Games. While smaller Swedish cities including Gothenburg, Falun and Östersund have all failed in materializing a competitive bid for the Winter Olympics, the ambition still lingers. Although media reports state that Stockholm will not consider a bid for the 2026 Winter Olympics, the notion that Stockholm was even considering the option to bid remains surprising recognizing that the Swedish capital withdrew its 2022 Winter Olympic bid due to lack of support from both the public and the city government. The issues behind Stockholm's withdrawal of their 2022 bid falls in line with comparable complications that the International Olympic Committee has witnessed regarding other, similar social democratic countries withdrawing bids at a higher rate than normal. These issues include a variety of concerns ranging from lack of political and public support, financial uncertainty, and the usage of purpose-built Winter Olympic venues after the conclusion of the Games. This thesis investigates the transformative period of the Swedish Olympic Committees ambitions for the Olympic Games, while also highlighting issues that can arise during the bidding process, including difficulties and adjustments required by the International Olympic Committee.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this to my wife and my daughter who helped me keep a clear mind through this process. The encouragement from my wife and the laughter from my daughter have helped in keeping my feet planted and staying in the moment. Secondly, I would also like to thank my mom, dad, and brother for their continuing and unrelenting support.

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List of Abbreviations

<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
SOK	Swedish Olympic Committee
IOC	International Olympic Committee
NOC	National Olympic Committee

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The use of sporting mega-events¹ for urban development has generated considerable attention across a range of academic disciplines. As the preeminent sporting spectacle, the Olympic Games² have served as a condensing nucleus for a host of authors to express concern over the rampant escalation of bid promises and hosting requirements. As Oliver and Lauermann (2017, 28) argue, “[b]id committees not only have to defend why pursuing the Olympic Games is a reasonable proposition but also explain what expected legacies might develop.” The challenge of catering to both a domestic and international audience, respond to concerns of local and national governing bodies while accommodating the demands of extra-local agencies such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has become a delicate exercise of place promotion and protection. For many cities, the risks have become too unclear and the implications too severe should their bids win the hosting rights. As such, there has been a steady decline in the number of cities willing to enter the bidding competition for recent competitions. For example, the number of bidding cities seeking the Summer Olympics has shifted from nine cities for the 2012 Games to seven cities for the 2016 Games, and five cities for the 2020 Games (“Past Olympic Host City Election Results” 2018). After a series of withdrawals, the IOC was left with only two competing cities, Los Angeles and Paris, for the 2024 Olympics. Similarly, the Winter Games has also witnessed a comparable decline in bid cities. Although geographical limitations and the controversial Olympic legacies of Sochi 2014 (costs of games, human rights issues etc.) are offered as potential explanatory rationales for the dip in bidding cities for the Winter Olympics,

¹ There is inconsistency in the spelling of megaevent or mega-event in the literature. In this thesis, the hyphenated option will be used, unless the word appears in a direct quote.

² Debate exists in the literature regarding the capitalizing of ‘Games’ in mega-event research. For this paper, Games will be capitalized throughout the paper unless it is situated within a direct quote.

the reduction in bids from socially democratic, and particularly European countries has been obvious.

This research seeks to examine the decline in bid cities through the exploration of a single case study. By focusing on Stockholm, Sweden there is an opportunity to contribute to a more general narrative of bid decline while uncovering a more specific story of one city's struggle to adjust to and 'shift' the logic of mega-event development. With over 20+ years invested in pursuing an Olympics in Stockholm, it is surprising to find that Stockholm's "high frequency bidding" (Lauermann 2016) remains understudied. By illustrating how Stockholm's Olympic hopes have book-ended a transformative period in the Olympic bidding process there is an opportunity to build on the important conversations of mega-event legacies and leveraging literature.

1.2 Why Stockholm?

Sweden's role and prestige within the Olympic movement and its participation in the Olympic Games should not be understated. Not only has Sweden fielded a highly competitive team for every Olympics since the 1908 Summer Olympics in London, the country has also hosted the 1912 Summer Olympics and the equestrian events of the 1956 Summer Olympics. Beyond Olympic hosting, Sweden's mega-event history is also very robust; the country previously hosted the 1958 FIFA Men's World Cup, the 1992 UEFA European Football Championships, the 1995 FIFA Women's World Cup, in addition to numerous other smaller championships and competitions. The prominence that Swedish athletes and athletic teams have on the international sporting stage is complemented by a well-developed domestic sport policy, with half of Sweden's population between the ages of 7 and 70, being members of a sporting

club (Stockholm 2004 Candidature File 1996). The country's robust commitment to physical exercise and education permits declarations claiming: "[i]n terms of size of its population, Sweden is one of the world's most sporting nations" (Stockholm 2022 Hosting Concept Summary 2014, 11).

Despite having failed to secure the 2004 Olympics, the effort was purposeful because it afforded local policymakers and city planners an opportunity to leverage the bid plans to communicate a compelling vision and strategy of sustainable city-building (Stahre 2004). Of course, Stockholm sought to be viewed as a modern urban center that could attract the attention and investment dollars of extra local organizations. As Stahre (2004, 72) argues, Stockholm, similar to many other cities seeking to secure a post-industrial business climate, has had to grapple with "...new competitive forms of urban development; the erosion of traditional welfare rights; and the expansion of the urban political system" all while negotiating "a shift from 'government' to 'governance'." An Olympic bid was one mechanism to address multiple concerns of urban competitiveness.

It is important to consider how Stockholm's bids have been framed. It is reported that Stockholm withdrew its bid from the 2022 Winter Olympic Games mainly due to the Stockholm city council's "refus[al] to back the project..." as well as estimates that the costs of the games would outweigh the actual revenues (Associated Press 2014b). However, it appears the Swedish Olympic Committee (SOK) struggled with its decision to withdraw its bid from the 2022 Winter Olympics (e.g. "Stockholm regrets withdrawal of 2022 Games bid" 2014). As of early 2017, the SOK saw 2026 as "possible and desirable" (Swedish Olympic Committee 2017). Within a few months of stating interest in the 2026 Winter Olympics, however, Sweden then backed away from its ambitions to host the Games (Associated Press 2017b) citing, "the International Olympic

Committee will not immediately be able to report how big the financial contribution to the host city will be.”

For Lauermann (2016, 313), it is clear that bid committees/cities are feeling increased pressure, as “[a] proliferation of anti-bid social movements has pursued a form of urban politics, which more aggressively questions the legitimacy of using mega-events to pursue urban development.” With the current wave of anti-bid politics exposing the unseemly aspects of the mega-event bidding process, it is curious to find that Stockholm has struggled to extinguish its Olympic aspirations. Although reports indicate that Stockholm *will not* vie for the 2026 Winter Olympic Games (e.g. “Stockholm pulls out of Winter Olympics bid ... again.” *The Local*. 27 April 2017), the notion that Stockholm was even considering submitting a bid remains surprising. After losing out for the 2004 Summer Olympic Games, Stockholm had withdrawn its bid for the 2022 Winter Olympic competition citing a variety of concerns including a lack of government support (e.g. “Sweden Wants to Host 2026 Olympics” *NBC Sports* 27 Jan. 2017), ever-changing public support and financial uncertainty. What remains unclear is whether Stockholm’s decision to ‘pass’ on the Olympics is rooted in municipal reluctance or if the decision is linked to a broader political debate that has been summarily dismissed.

1.3 Problem statement and research objectives

Event-led development models are in the midst of an intense political upheaval; a number of bidding cities have withdrawn from recent competitions, and the broader landscape of mega-event planning has become the locus for rich interdisciplinary scholarship dedicated to exposing the various spatial, geopolitical, neo-liberal, civic and urban policy tensions that accompany the pursuit of the world’s most prestigious sporting event. Of significance is how cities are

responding to reforms enacted by the IOC designed to encourage more cities to participate in the Olympic bidding competition.

With IOC developed reforms, adjustments in a National Olympic Committee's (NOC) pursuit of the Games and their strategy in developing a sufficiently competitive bid that either conforms to reformations or sets the standards for future bids is an integral aspect of the path the Olympic bidding process is following. While the impacts of the most recent Olympic bidding reforms are still relatively new to the bidding process, the ability to investigate a singular NOCs endeavor affiliated with an Olympic bid helps to illuminate potential arising complications involving both the nation's government and its public sector.

This research seeks to investigate the apparent trepidation about the value of the Olympic Movement and the Olympic Games in Stockholm over the past two decades. The focus is placed on Stockholm's reluctant pursuit of the Olympic Games not just because the city's quest is understudied, but because Stockholm's process of preparing their bids has exposed the incongruencies of sport mega-event development. Two interrelated questions concern us:

(1) How has Stockholm's bidding logic shifted across a series (2004, 2022, 2026) of Olympic bids?

(2) How has the shifting logic been represented?

To address these questions, we use the phrase "Stockholm shift" as a trope, unpacking it in three different domains: (1) reflecting metropolitanism; (2) cultural relativity and context; and (3) political ambiguity. The thesis seeks to illustrate that Stockholm's Olympic hopes have book-

ended a transformative period in the Olympic bidding process and to expose the struggle that bid cities have in adjusting to the demands of the IOC’s bidding process. The SOK’s perseverance in bidding during this critical time has the opportunity to emphasize a constructive template for other NOCs to follow, as well as leading a productive discussion towards addressing the perceptible Olympic bidding issues.

1.4 Methodology

Beyond literature reviews, the paper examines the reporting on Stockholm’s bidding process in primary material emerging from the SOK, Stockholm City Council, news agencies including the daily Swedish newspaper *Aftonbladet* as well as international news outlets, and documents sent to (i.e. bid books, candidature files) or produced by the IOC (i.e. Agenda 2020). The research is also informed by semi-structured interviews with a select group of individuals who were involved with the 2004, 2022 or 2026 Olympic bidding process or who were knowledgeable about the recent transformations to the Olympic bidding process (Table 1).

Table 1: List of Professionals Interviewed

Stefan Lindeberg	Former President of the Swedish Olympic Committee (2000 – 2016); Honorary President and Senior Advisor to the Swedish Olympic Committee
Olof Zetterberg	Current CEO of the Stockholm Business Region; Former Director of Sports Culture; Former Director of City Planning in Stockholm
Jesper Ackinger	Current Chief Security officer; Interviewed as Project Director for the Winter Olympics and Paralympics in Stockholm 2026
Robert Livingstone	Producer and journalist at Gamesbids.com

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Scholarship on urban sport development has matured considerably over the past three decades. What was once a niche subfield, with few ‘sports geographers’, has transformed into a rich interdisciplinary community seeking to explore themes as diverse as nationalism (Falcuos and Silk 2010; Ho and Bairner 2013; Billings et al. 2013; Grant 2014;), legacy discourse (Gold and Gold 2008; Smith 2012; Tomlinson 2014), policy mobility (Lauermann 2014; Müller 2014b), mediatization (Baker and Rowe 2012; Austermann and Wassong 2014; Bailey et al. 2017), branding (Zhang and Zhao, 2009), urban entrepreneurialism (Hall 2006; Surborg et al. 2008), urban development through failed bids (Malfas et al. 2004; Lauermann 2016; Oliver and Lauermann 2017; transportation planning (Kassens-Noor 2012) globalization (Short 2008), environmental sustainability (May 1995; Chalkley and Essex 1999; VanWynsberghe et al. 2012), security and surveillance (Giulianotti and Klauser 2011), the education value of sport and Olympism (Kidd 2013), and social learning (Bennett et al. 2013). The ambitions of host cities have been deconstructed and the impacts and influence of various ‘Games’ have been recorded (Walters 2011). It is beyond the purview of this thesis to provide an exhaustive examination of the plethora of topics that have been explored under the umbrella of sport development. Instead, in this chapter I seek to: (1) highlight the maturation in defining mega-events and to offer a working definition that guides this thesis; and (2) to highlight several contemporary debates that are informing the scholarship of mega-events in urban geography.

2.2 Defining mega-events

The definition of mega-events has evolved from being considered mainly tourist attractions (Ritchie 1984; Müller 2015b) in the 1980s, to include a mixture of variables that give rise to “ambulatory occasions of a fixed duration that attract a large number of visitors, have a large mediated reach, come with large costs and have large impacts on the built environment and the population” (Müller 2015b, 638). Considerations of an event’s image, infrastructure, and impact have been central to recent understandings of why mega-events are more intrusive and more important than regular events. Several efforts have been made to distinguish an ‘order of events’ based on the varying degrees of attention that events generate (Roche 2000; Black 2008; Müller 2015b). For example, Roche (2000) proposes that an event’s intended geography must be considered. In Roche’s (2000) estimation, more than an accounting of size, mega-events must target a global audience both in terms of media coverage/viewership and tourist participation.

It is generally understood that when it comes to mega-events, size matters. Müller (2015b) argues that the cost of an event and the extent of urban transformation should also be included in attempts to distinguish the uniqueness of mega-events. For Müller (2015b), the application of a scoring matrix based on the number of tickets sold (visitor attractiveness), value of broadcast rights (mediated reach), total cost of the event (cost) and capital investment (transformation) does help us to differentiate the ‘largeness’ of various sport events (i.e. the Olympics, Pan American Games, Super Bowl) and other political (i.e. economic summits) and cultural events (i.e. European Capital of Culture). For example, while the Asian Games are often referred to as a lower order sporting event, in some iterations, it has been larger than the Winter Olympic Games at times.

Two further aspects of ‘size’ currently dominate popular and scholarly literature: (1) ‘size’ of the price tag; and (2) ‘size’ of the candidate cities pool.

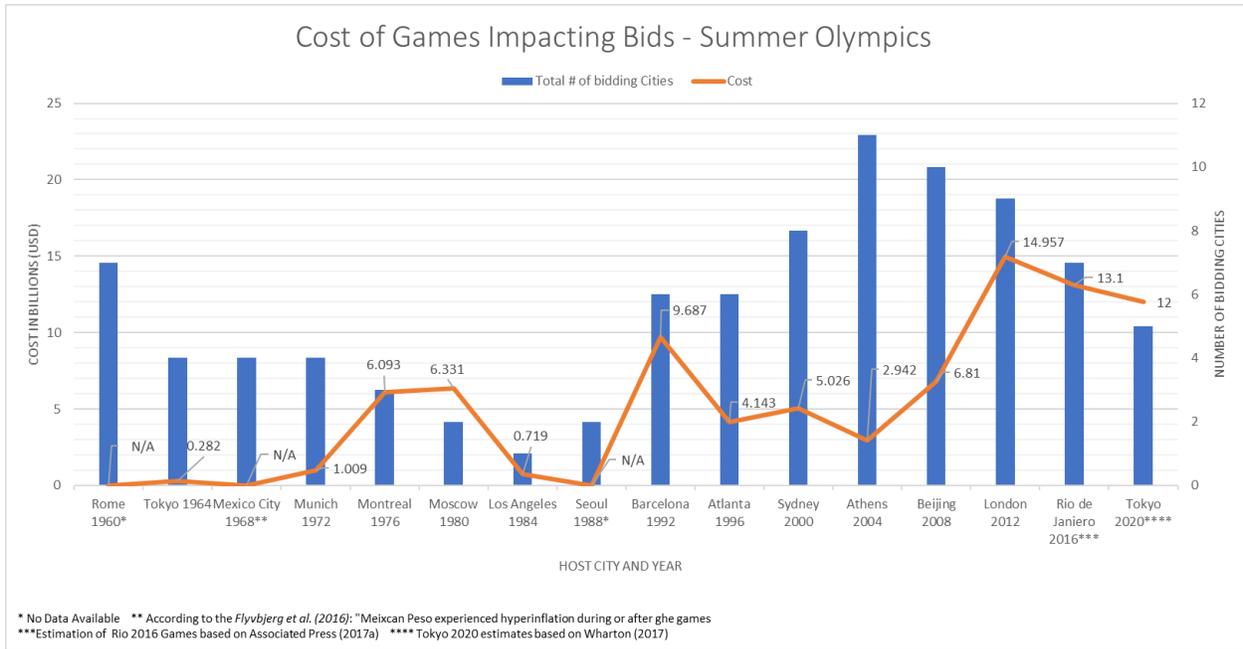


Figure 1: Cost of Games Impacting Bids – Summer Olympics Note: Data based on Flyvbjerg et al. (2016) when available. Other Sources include Associated Press (2017a) and Wharton (2017). The cost is represented by “actual outturn sports-related costs” (Flyvbjerg et al. 2016, 8). Does not include non-necessary costs for the Games (other infrastructure developments). The graph symbolizing the rising costs of the Games leads to fewer candidates for subsequent bidding competitions.

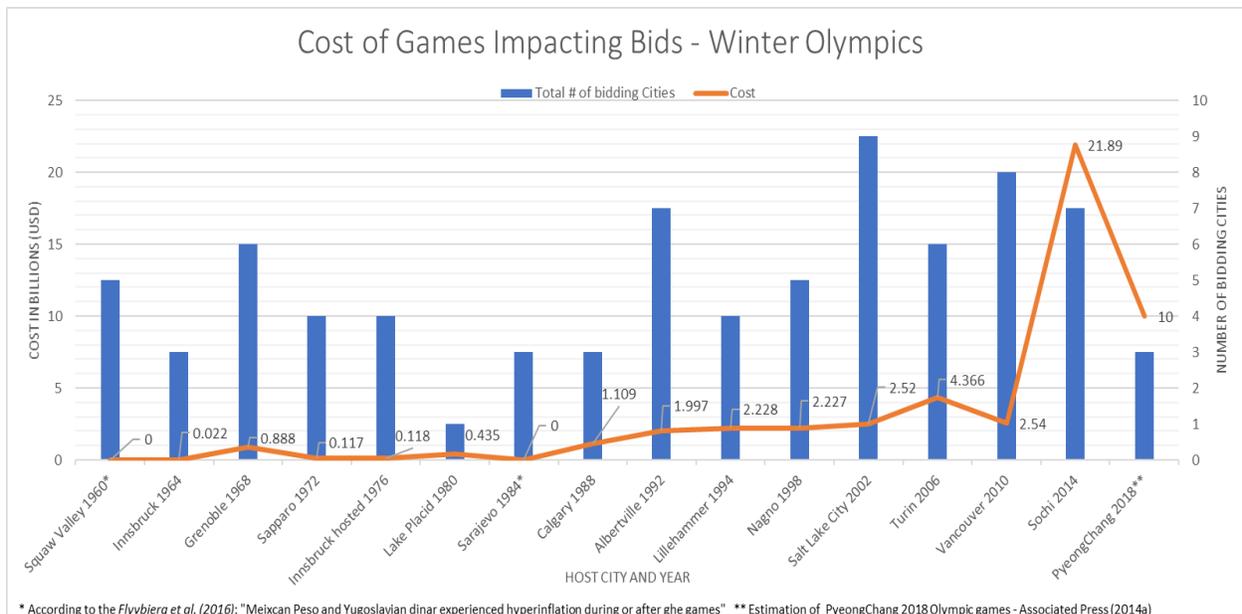


Figure 2: Cost of Games Impacting Bids – Winter Olympics. Note: Data based on Flyvbjerg et al. (2016) when available. Other sources include Associated Press (2014a). The cost is represented by “actual outturn sports-related costs” (Flyvbjerg et al. 2016, 8). Does not include non-necessary costs for the Games (other infrastructure developments). The graph symbolizes the rising costs of the Games leads to fewer candidates for subsequent bidding competitions.

Recently there have been concerns about the link between escalating costs and the decline in the number of bid cities. This is especially noticeable during the 21st-century bidding competitions as the Olympic Games costs have risen drastically. Post Athens 2004, the sport-related costs of hosting the Games increased (Figure 1; Flyvbjerg et al. 2016), signaling a decline in bidding cities for the following Olympics. After the revelations that the 2014 Sochi Winter Games was estimated to cost more than USD\$50 billion (Arnold and Foxhall 2014; Orttung and Zhemukhov 2014), potential bidding cities began to reconsider their bids at an alarming rate. This is supported by the data; three bidding cities for the 2018 Olympics (down from seven for 2014) and four of the six cities bidding for the 2022 Winter Olympics withdrew their bids (Coates and Wicker 2015; Müller 2015a; Baade and Matheson 2016).

2.3 Olympic gigantism

The Olympic Games have grown tremendously, including participants, stadia, number of sports and potential revenue. For instance, Darcy and Taylor (2013) inform us that only 295 athletes competed in the inaugural 1896 Olympics in Athens while over 11,238 athletes participated in Rio 2016 (“Rio 2016” 2018). Although, Chappelet (2014, 586) notes the “numbers of athletes...have remained stable since Sydney 2000, at approximately 10,500” the size of supporting staff, security, volunteers, officials, media personnel, and other assorted representatives has remained elastic. In practice, this means that the Olympic Games often have to accommodate participants and personnel that can number in hundreds of thousands (Chappelet 2014). The growth of the Games can be further attributed to the rise in the number of sports, sporting events and venues proliferation. As Darcy and Taylor (2013) explain, there is typically more than 25 sports taking place over approximately 300 events at dozens of venues. For reference, the Winter Olympics have fewer competitors and sporting events than the Summer Games; Sochi 2014 (“Sochi 2014” 2018) had 2,780 athletes competing in 98 events, while Rio 2016’s (“Rio 2016” 2018) 11,000+ athletes competed in more than 300 events.

Another issue of gigantism emerges when host cities seek to find a post-Games use for the venues. A number of authors have noted the proliferation of ‘white elephants’, large infrastructure and stadia projects, that often burden public taxpayers both in terms of initial construction as well as post-Games maintenance costs. Finding patrons to populate large stadiums to visit specialized sporting facilities (e.g. luge or ski jumping) has proven difficult. In short, Horne (2007, 91) argues that many hosts are left with structures that cost “considerably more than they are worth.” Although former IOC president Jacques Rogge “spoke out against Olympic ‘luxury’ projects that would become ‘white elephants’” (Cashman 2002, 9), bid cities

continue to struggle to meet the demands of the IOC, while ensuring that capital and operational costs remain sustainable.

One final concern related to gigantism stems from the rising security apparatus required to host a safe and successful sport mega-event. The 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics security budget is estimated to cost close to USD\$1 billion, having empowered a force of over 15,000 people (McRoskey 2010). In Sochi 2014, the security figure ballooned to USD\$1.92 billion (Müller 2014a). Reflecting greater geopolitical concerns, security costs have often risen sharply in the years leading up to the event, upsetting projected values, and demonstrably increasing deficits. For example, Coaffee (2015) notes that the 2012 London Games security budget was 5 times what was initially estimated.

2.4 Bidding for transformative purpose

The bidding process for sport mega-events has become subject to close scrutiny as an apparent bidding crisis has emerged (MacAloon 2016). In the last decade, there has been a shift from examining the legacies of host cities to investigations concerned with how an event can be *leveraged* during the bidding process. For instance, Oliver and Lauermann (2017) explain that there is increasing evidence that winning the bid competition is often not the primary goal of bid cities. Instead, many bid cities seek to use the bidding occasion to enact policy experiments (Oliver and Lauermann 2017) or to develop new governance strategies. Many of these “experimental narratives” as Oliver and Lauermann (2017) consider them, “are often linked to rescaling of urban policy: using the bid as a way to develop local policy that has transnational political significance” (Oliver and Lauermann 2017, 39). For these authors, it is important to recognize, that “even failed Olympic bids have the potential to trigger or reformulate a host of

urban policies, processes, and practices, and can be employed as rhetorical tools designed to influence/project/ imprint an image/identity” (Oliver and Lauermann 2017, 87).

Literature focusing on mega-event impacts in developing countries is becoming more prevalent with social justice issues, consuming media focus. While only a few developing countries including Mexico City in 1968, Seoul in 1988 and Sarajevo in 1984 (Matheson and Baade 2004) have hosted the Olympics, bidding from developing countries is on the rise. These bids are viewed as an opportunity for the country to develop cities considered to be “world-class” (Giulianotti and Klauser 2009, 56) while also being a “catalyst for improving the life conditions of the historically disadvantaged” (Pillay and Bass 2008, 331). A recent rise of developing countries bidding for mega-events is noticeable as many cities are demanding the right to host events (Matheson and Baade 2004) in order to instigate change within the host country by changing the world’s perception (Black 2007) or as Black (2007, 262-263) suggests “the signaling impulse” to “use major sporting events in efforts to reframe the host.” The growing influence of BRIC countries in bidding competitions results from those countries potentially becoming powerful economies in the world in the next 50 years (Tien et al. 2011), shifting government and growing regional and international influence (Alon et al. 2010). Developing countries aspire to host mega-events in order to utilize its potential impact, including such optimism as the opportunity to “‘fast track’ urban regeneration, a stimulus economic growth, improved transport and cultural facilities and enhanced global recognition and prestige” (Chalkley and Essex 1999, 369) as well as increasing global visibility and international appeal (Matheson and Baade 2004; Booth 2011). For some places, sport mega-events still have the capacity to generate an “economic windfall” (Matheson and Baade 2004, 1085), boost tourism revenues (Fourie and Santana-Gallego 2011; Andranovich et al. 2001), trigger temporary or

permanent job creation (Fayos-Solá 1998; Malfas et al. 2004; Alberts 2009), and catalyze other potential sanguine legacies (Gratton and Preuss 2008).

2.5 Anti-bid politics and public sentiment

For Kassens-Noor and Lauermann (2017, 1) not only have mega-events reached a critical juncture but “[t]here has been a power shift in the relationship between cities and the International Olympic Committee towards the former.” Drawing attention to the rise in bid cancellations, Kassens-Noor and Lauermann (2017) claim that there has been a shift from critiquing mega-events to questioning the underlying logic of pursuing sport development in the first place. For these authors, anti-bid campaigns are emerging earlier in the mega-event planning stages. The recent disengagement of several cities from the Olympic planning process, according to Kassens-Noor and Lauermann (2017), is unique because it reflects a situation whereby cities are pulling their bids due to unfavorable deals with the IOC. Various dissenters and critical social forces are increasingly seizing upon these events to advance their causes, emphasizing the opportunity costs and seeking to bring attention to issues of injustice and inequality.

Public protests exercised towards the Olympic Games emerges during every facet of the event: from the inception of the bid to the Olympic torch relay (Grant 2014), during the Games, and post-event. These protests can cause such turmoil that bids would be scrapped altogether; for instance, the “No Boston Bid” essentially wiped out Boston’s 2016 Olympic chances (Zimbalist 2016; Kassens-Noor and Lauermann 2017). For Cashman (2002, 7), “almost every contending Olympic city now has an anti-Olympic alliance which makes use of the internet to promote its Olympic critique.”

2.6 Mega-event complications

Gentrification and displacement resulting from sport event hosting is commonplace. For instance, in Athens 2004, Beijing 2008, and Rio 2016 there was evidence of the removal of less-wealthy neighborhoods to accommodate the infrastructure demands of the events (Gaffney 2010; de Almeida and Bastos 2016). In Brazil, residents were displaced to permit the siting of the Olympic Park (Silvestre and de Oliveira 2012). Elsewhere, South African residents were removed and relocated to unfamiliar urban areas for World Cup infrastructure (Pillay and Bass 2008; Maharaj 2011; Giulianotti and Klauser 2011) while not being compensated (Maharaj 2011) or receiving political support (Pillay and Bass 2008). The South African Supreme Court of Appeal ruled in Johannesburg City Council's favor permitting the removal of 300 squatters from inner-city buildings (Giulianotti and Klauser 2011) and exposing "tens of thousands of poor inner-city South Africans liable to systematic 'social cleansing' strategies" (Giulianotti and Klauser 2011, 56). These social and spatial dislocations only add to the list of negative impacts that are intimately intertwined with the hosting of large sporting events (Matheson and Baade 2004; Curi et al. 2011; Silvestre and De Olivera 2012).

2.7 The Olympic bidding process in crisis?

In the fall of 2017, the IOC exercised its right to award the Olympic Games for the next two Summer Olympic Games to Paris (2024) and Los Angeles (2028). The double allocation was indicative of a larger struggle to generate applicant cities during several recent bidding competitions. Both the 2022 Winter Olympic Games and the 2024 Summer Olympic Games bid competitions garnered only two candidate cities for the final vote, with both competitions plagued by bids being terminated because of negative referendum results, or withdrawn due to

uncertainty concerning risks such as cost guarantees. Although the awarding of two Olympic Games at the same time is not without precedent—Paris was awarded the 1924 Games on the condition that the 1928 Olympics be held in Amsterdam—the IOC has grown accustomed to vibrant bid competitions since the 1984 Olympiad held in Los Angeles. Even in the aftermath of the cash-for-votes scandal that tarnished the awarding of the 2002 Winter Olympic Games to Salt Lake City, multiple cities continued to submit their candidature files, permitting Feddersen et al. (2008, 174) to claim that “the Olympic Games are currently enjoying greater popularity than ever before among applicant cities.” As MacAloon (2016) documents, it was the exorbitant costs of the 2014 Sochi Winter Games which helped to curb interest amongst potential bid cities, while simultaneously generating negative public discourse about the viability of sport mega-development. The estimated USD\$51 billion spent on the Sochi Games came to represent a ‘crisis figure’ with Oliver and Lauermann (2017, 7) arguing that the “staggering costs” when coupled with other concerns such as “ecological mismanagement, sexual discrimination, and human rights” resulted in many cities, especially those emerging from urban democracies, to reconsider their bid plans.

If Booth (2011, 381) is correct when he writes, “[t]he selection of host cities for the Olympic Games constitutes the *raison d’être* of the IOC and a strong pool of candidates is critical for its existence,” then it is clear that the IOC has reached a critical junction. By awarding the Olympic Summer Games through 2028, the IOC has effectively secured time to initiate change and generate stability in the bidding process. The IOC is trying “to encourage more cities (especially democratic cities) to re-engage with the Olympic Movement” (Oliver and Lauermann 2017, 19).

Chapter 3: ‘The Stockholm Shift’

Erik Olson, Robert Oliver, Luke Juran and Korine Kolivras

To be submitted...

3.1 Introduction

The City of Stockholm has navigated a curious route in terms of determining whether or not to launch a bid for the 2026 Winter Olympic Games. A bid from Stockholm would not be unexpected from a regional perspective; the Olympic Games have not been staged in a Scandinavian country since Lillehammer, Norway hosted the 1994 Winter Olympics. Although Sweden is thought of as a major winter sports country, it has never hosted the Winter Olympics. Stockholm was the host of the 1912 Summer Olympics and, intriguingly held the equestrian events for Melbourne’s 1956 Summer Olympics when quarantine laws prevented the Australian city from staging those competitions (Dashper 2012). The SOK has also demonstrated a long-standing interest in securing the Olympic Games, having supported bids from Gothenburg, Falun, and Östersund, but it should be noted that it did not produce a representative city for the 2006, 2010, 2014 or 2018 Winter Olympic Games competitions. Moreover, two efforts emerging from Stockholm ended in defeat (2004 Summer bid) and withdrawal from the bid competition (2022 Winter bid).

For several decades, sports ‘mega-events’ like the Olympics have been promoted as a catalyst for urban development: an opportunity to fundamentally re-envision the city through mega-scale strategic planning, and to secure tens of billions of dollars for land investment by tying that vision to a hosting deadline (Hiller 2000; Essex and Chalkley 2003; Broudehoux 2007; Gaffney 2010; Andranovich and Burbank 2011; Grix 2014; Müller and Pickles 2015). The literature focusing on this subject is extensive with several authors proposing that it was the 1960

Olympics in Rome that helped to trigger the use of the Olympic Games as a means to perform large-scale alterations to the urban environment (Essex and Chalkley 1998, 2004; Shoval 2002; Liao and Pitts 2006; Oliver 2011; Azzali 2016). Host cities have leveraged the Olympic Games to construct “municipal water supply systems, airport facilities, tourist accommodations, sewage disposal plants, road and highway networks, new shopping centers, and subways” (Oliver 2011, 769). For example, Barcelona’s hosting of the 1992 Summer Olympics is frequently referred to as an urban regeneration ‘model’ (Gold and Gold 2008; Alberts 2009). While it is clear that over the last half-century, multiple cities have coupled sport mega-event development to an urban revitalization program (Gold and Gold 2008; Alberts 2009), it is equally important to recognize that the vast majority of mega-event planning projects ‘fail’ as bidding cities lose out to their competitors (Oliver and Lauerman 2017). As the Olympics Games have “...evolved into a tool of urban renewal and a catalyst of substantial urban transformation” (Essex and Chalkley 2003, 1), there has been a struggle to balance objectives, legacies, and costs (Oliver and Lauerman 2017) and to locate the connection between sport, neoliberalism, and urban transformation (Koch 2017). In more detail, Horne (2007) has critically argued that the “known unknowns” of sports mega-events include: (1) an emphasis on consumption-based development; (2) a form of urban transformation premised on gentrification; (3) the conspicuous displacement of communities that lack more robust forms of agency; and (4) the transfer of funds from public sector to the private sector. For Horne (2017, 328) exposure to “the ‘tension points’ in mega projects” is a critical reminder that playing host to sports mega-events like the Olympic Games “is a political act.” Likewise, Müller (2017, 235) argues that it is beneficial to view sports mega-events as paradoxical, serving both as “[c]reatures and reflections of modernity”, creatively destroying and renewing simultaneously. As Müller (2017, 236) puts it: “[a]s late modernity *en miniature*,

mega-events provide a cross-section of many areas of modern life and encapsulate, at the same time, many of its conflicting tendencies.” While it is tempting to draw conclusions following each iteration of the Olympic Games, both Horne (2007) and Müller (2017) help us to consider “what kinds of action the ambiguities of mega-event paradoxes make possible” (Müller 2017, 240).

The results of both bidding for and hosting mega-events have been mixed. The emergence of a number of negative impacts of hosting, stretching for an over-investment in infrastructure to a reduction of civil liberties amongst the local residents (Silk 2014), has caused anti-bid social movements to question the viability of using sport for development (Lauermann 2015; Zimbalist 2016; Oliver and Lauermann 2017). As Oliver and Lauermann (2017) illustrate, a sense of crisis has permeated both popular and scholarly debate as bids have been abandoned, and as the logic of hosting large-scale sporting events is interrogated and shown to be questionable. The dwindling number of bid cities for recent competitions signals that for many cities, the Olympic Games have simply become too risky an endeavor to justify dedicating significant contributions of human, financial and other forms of capital. Media outlets have been keen to draw attention to the current bidding dilemma running headlines like “‘The Olympics are dead’: Does anyone want to be a host city anymore?” (*The Guardian*, 28 July 2015), and “Olympics in crisis mode as only 2 cities vie to host 2024 summer games” (*Bloomberg News*, 23 February 2017). Elsewhere, scholars have focused on the sinister effects of hosting, drawing attention to the “wholesale transfer of assets and wealth from the public sphere to the private” that frequently accompanies the process (Sweet 2016, 12). With increasing evidence that the benefits of hosting are not distributed in an equitable manner and often fall far short of expectations, the viability of the Olympic Games has been pushed to a precipice. Even as the

IOC has instituted broad reforms, anti-Olympics dissent continues to expose the “creative destruction” unleashed by participating in the sport development arena (Gruneau and Horne 2015). For Lauermann (2016, 313), it is clear that bid committees/cities are feeling increased pressure, as “[a] proliferation of anti-bid social movements has pursued a form of urban politics, which more aggressively questions the legitimacy of using mega-events to pursue urban development.”

This research seeks to investigate the apparent trepidation about the value of the Olympic Movement and the Olympic Games in Stockholm over the past two decades. The focus is placed on Stockholm’s reluctant pursuit of the Olympic Games not just because the city’s quest is understudied, but because Stockholm’s process of preparing their bids has exposed the incongruencies of sport mega-event development. Two interrelated questions concern us:

- (1) How has Stockholm’s bidding logic shifted across a series (2004, 2022, 2026) of Olympic bids?
- (2) How has the shifting logic been represented?

To address these questions, we use the phrase “Stockholm shift” as a trope, unpacking it in three different domains. First, we trace the emergence of the phrase in the 2004 bid book illustrating how Stockholm has come to singularly represent the hopes of the SOK. Next, we illustrate how the SOK (along with three other Olympic Committees/Sport Associations) played an important role in articulating the underlying frustration with the Olympic Games bidding process and helped to identify circumstances that gave rise to the recommendations embodied by Olympic Agenda 2020. Finally, we explore how the parameters of reform central to IOC’s Agenda 2020 have been negotiated by stakeholders in Stockholm. Although we are sensitive to the notion that the revised bidding process remains in its infancy--as only a couple of bidding

cycles have been guided by new procedures--we propose that uncertainty still defines the bidding process, and continues to challenge those cities like Stockholm who are reliant on a shift (or sharing) of risk from the public to the private sector, and between the host city and the IOC.

This paper examines the reporting on Stockholm's bidding process in primary material emerging from the SOK, Stockholm City Council, news agencies including the daily Swedish newspaper *Aftonbladet* as well as international news outlets, documents sent (i.e. bid books, candidature files) to or produced by the IOC (i.e. Agenda 2020). The research is also informed by semi-structured interviews with a select group of individuals who were involved with the 2004, 2022, or 2026 Olympic bidding process or who were knowledgeable about the recent transformations to the Olympic bidding process. We identify interviewees by name and affiliation in the following sections. Central themes and discussion points were developed through a survey of the mega-event literature and other textual material (media and official reports). These themes guided the questions of the semi-structured interviews, although the interviewees did introduce new and locally specific ideas that contributed to a more insightful understanding of Stockholm pursuit of the Olympic Games. The paper also illustrates that Stockholm's Olympic hopes have book-ended a transformative period in the Olympic bidding process and exposes the struggle that bid cities have in adjusting to the demands of the IOC's bidding process.

3.2 Stockholm secures the nomination of the SOK

Nestled in the pages of Stockholm's 2004 candidate file (Stockholm 2004 Candidature File 1996) are a couple of paragraphs drawing attention to a "Stockholm shift". This phrase was used to highlight the repositioning of "the focus of Sweden's Olympic movement toward the

Royal Seat of Stockholm” and the value of mobilizing the full spectrum of resources (specifically political and economic) located in the capital city (Stockholm 2004 Candidature File 1996). Previously, Sweden’s Olympic Committee had supported bids from smaller urban centers including Gothenburg (1984 Winter Olympic bid), Falun (1988 and 1992 Winter Olympic bids), and Östersund (1994, 1998 and 2002 Winter Olympic bids) (See Figure 3). For Stefan Lindeberg, President of the SOK from 2000-2016, two salient observations emerged during the preparation of Stockholm’s 2004 Summer Olympic bid. First, Lindeberg (personal interview, 2017) notes that it became clear that Summer Games had grown too big for the Stockholm region and “that by losing 2004, it would not be possible to come back with another bid for the Summer Games.” The 2004 bid competition was robust, with 11 candidate cities (Athens, Buenos Aires, Istanbul, Cape Town, Lille, Rio de Janeiro, Rome, San Juan, Seville, Stockholm, and St. Petersburg) (Feddersen et al. 2008; Billings and Holladay 2011) all espousing their suitability as host.

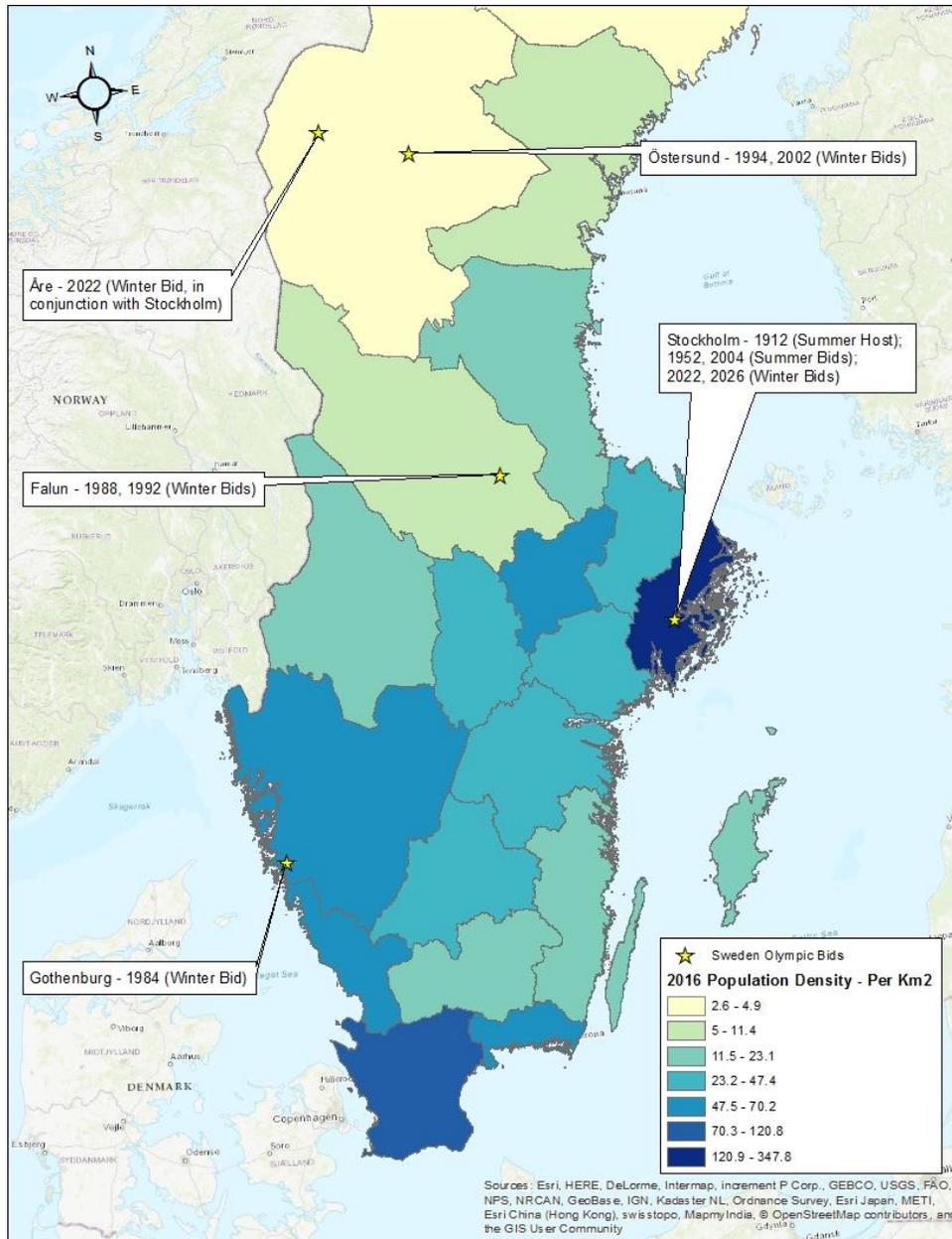


Figure 3: Map of Sweden's Olympic bidding history. Source: "Past Olympic Host City Election Results" (2018); Statistika centralbyrån, Statistics Sweden (2016)

Stockholm was eliminated in the third round of voting having never really challenged the eventual winner, Athens. However, losing out on the 2004 Winter Olympic bid helped to strengthen Stockholm's global appeal. As Olof Zetterberg, former Director of both Sports

Culture and City Planning in Stockholm (personal interview, 2017) states, losing the bid resulted in bolstering Stockholm's world image: "nobody knows about Stockholm they say...the good thing that came out of this is bid was that, of course, we got more attention for ourselves of what has to be done" and were able to "put Stockholm on the world map." At the time, Stockholm was the newcomer to the bidding process, as Zetterberg (personal interview, 2017) professes "we were called the cousins from the rural area so to say; we did not really understand how things were going in the International Committee." The failure of the 2004 Summer bid provided valuable Olympic bidding experience to the SOK, which would offer appreciated assistance for future bidding developments.

Lindeberg's (personal interview, 2017) second observation was that it had also become obvious to the SOK that Östersund was "no longer big enough to host the Winter Games." Essex and Chalkley (2004) have captured the unique challenge of preparing for the Winter Olympics, highlighting that the infrastructural demands of the Winter Olympics are often more burdensome on host communities than even those of the Summer Games. While the post-event utility of sport infrastructure/event facilities is typically cited as being a major concern, equally important to consider is the challenge of securing the appropriate ratio of hotel rooms/accommodations and the feasibility of investing in transportation and telecommunications infrastructure for the 16-day event (Essex and Chalkley 2004). Although Östersund had pressed Lillehammer, Norway for the right to host the 1994 Winter Olympics, the Norwegian city had illustrated the difficulties of a small urban center trying to accommodate the facility and infrastructure demands of the Games. With less than 25,000 inhabitants, Lillehammer not only "lacked most of the necessary facilities and infrastructure" but the provision of such facilities generated problems for regional development and tourism post-Olympics (Teigland 1999, 306). In its failing effort for the 2002

Olympic Games, Östersund was praised by the IOC's Evaluation Commission for its compact plan and realistic budget, but was criticized for failing to perform environmental impact assessments on planned facilities and the uncertainties of site plans for several new venues (i.e. ski jumps, bobsleigh and luge track). The underlying narrative of Östersund's bid was that if the IOC desired an intimate approach, then the Swedish bid was well poised for success. The IOC obviously went a different direction with Östersund being soundly defeated during the first round of voting gaining only 14 IOC members votes to Salt Lake City's 54. According to Lindeberg (personal interview, 2017), the lopsided results helped to convince the board of the SOK that if Sweden wished to host the Games, "it must be Winter Games in the region that has the infrastructure and capacity as much as possible in place, and the only place for that is Stockholm."

While there is no pre-requisite for population size when bidding for either iteration of the Olympic Games, Chappelet (2008, 1897) documents how "the winter games have moved away from mountain resorts (Chamonix, St Moritz, Lake Placid, Garmisch, Cortina) towards cities in alpine valleys (Innsbruck, Grenoble, Nagano), and then to metropolises on the plains (Calgary, Salt Lake City, Turin) or even seaside cities (Vancouver, Sochi) relatively far away from the mountains." Chappelet (2008, 1897-1898) also opines: "the change has come about as a result of the ever-increasing size of the winter games, and could be perceived as a consequence of the very notion of durability, since larger towns are more easily able to guarantee sustainable post-Olympic use for the installations built for the games." Given the rise of Stockholm's centrality in the Swedish urban system, it is not surprising to find that the city became the locus of a spatially reoriented bidding strategy. While Stockholm's population lags other host cities for recent editions of Summer Games (Table 2), it compares favorably to recent Winter Olympic hosts

(Table 3). If the 2004 Stockholm bid for the Summer Games would have succeeded, Stockholm would have been the smallest city, by population, to host the Games within the past 20 years (Table 3).

Table 2: Summer Olympic Games - Host Populations - 2000 to 2024		
<i>Host City, Country</i>	<i>Year of Games</i>	<i>Population Approximate to Games</i>
Sydney, Australia	2000	3,948,000 (2001)
Stockholm, Sweden	Bid for 2004	776,692 (2007)
Athens, Greece	2004	789,166 (2001)
Beijing, China	2008	16,950,000 (2008)
London, Great Britain	2012	8,135,700 (2011)
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	2016	6,320,400 (2010)
Tokyo, Japan	2020	9,273,000 (2015)
Paris, France	2024	2,244,000 (2010)

Note: Google Population tool was used for this data; Source: UNData 2018

Table 3: Winter Olympic Games - Host Population - 1998 to 2022		
<i>Host City, Country</i>	<i>Year of Games</i>	<i>Population Approximate to Games</i>
Nagano, Japan	1998	360,112 (2000)
Salt Lake City, U.S.A.	2002	182,413 (2002)
Turin, Italy	2006	900,589 (2006)
Vancouver, Canada	2010	603,500 (2011)
Sochi, Russia	2014	364,171 (2012)
Pyeongchang, South Korea	2018	43,666 (2013)
Beijing, China	2022	21,500,000 (2016)
Stockholm, Sweden	Bids for 2022, 2024	935,619 (2016)

Note: Google Population tool was used for this data; Source: UNData 2018

Perhaps the largest selling point of shifting the bids away from smaller urban centers like Östersund or Gothenburg is that sport-related and other forms of basic urban infrastructure were already *in situ* in Stockholm. Moreover, new infrastructure development for proposed installations like the Olympic Village could also be leveraged to fulfill a need for additional housing and leave a positive legacy. Stockholm’s record of post-event use of facilities stemming from its 1912 hosting of the Olympic Games as well as its failed 2004 Olympic bid offers compelling evidence. Many of the sport venues used during the 1912 Olympic Games remain in use, hosting major national championships and regional competitions (Bairner 2015). In addition, the redevelopment of a large industrial harbor site located in southern Stockholm’s, Hammarby Sjöstad, is linked to Sweden’s application for the 2004 Olympic Games (Levin and Iveroth 2014; Khakee 2007). Initially proposed as an opportunity to develop an Olympic Village as a new sustainable urban district, the Hammarby Sjöstad project proceeded despite the failed bid effort

and is being transformed into “a fully developed residential district containing approximately 11,000 apartments and accommodating 25,000 people” (Iveroth et al. 2013, 716-717). By shifting to Stockholm, the SOK has the opportunity to leverage competitive forms of urban development through demonstrating alignment between Stockholm’s bid objectives and broader urban development goals. The continued demand for housing in Stockholm meant that a similar strategy of integrating planned residential development projects into the overall Games concept helped to characterize Stockholm’s 2022 bid effort.

Existing urban and stadium infrastructure, globally competitive companies, and a growing and powerful economy that is having a larger impact within Europe and Scandinavia are all characteristics that highlight Stockholm as *the* site for an Olympic Games in Sweden. But, it is important to note, as Lindeberg (personal interview, 2017) candidly summarizes, that it required significant time and effort to not only legitimate the shift to Stockholm to those living in other regions of Sweden such as Östersund but also to convince those who had been willing to back a Stockholm *Summer* Olympic bid to begin to imagine Stockholm playing host to the *Winter* Games.

3.3 The SOK, Stockholm, and the rise of Agenda 2020

In December of 2014, at their 127th Session in Monaco, the IOC unveiled its strategic roadmap for the future of the Olympic Movement: Agenda 2020 (International Olympic Committee 2014). Launched by IOC president, Thomas Bach, the process that led to the adoption of the recommendations outlined in Agenda 2020 reflects a serious reconsideration of the status of the Olympic Movement and the Olympic brand. With the social and economic concerns of Sochi 2014 and to some extent Beijing 2008 (Livingstone personal interview, 2017)

serving as a backdrop, Bach emphasized the need for the IOC to implement meaningful changes to safeguard the future of the Olympic Games. As Oliver and Lauermann (2017, 8) explain, “Olympic Agenda 2020 comprised a reform package that was built from 40,000 public submissions synthesized by 14 working groups over the course of a year.” The result was 40 specific recommendations designed to “improve the relationship between Lausanne and host cities” (MacAloon 2016, 776). Some of the recommendations addressed issues of gender equality, discrimination, and ethics, while others stressed the need to engage with communities and foster better dialogue and good governance. But it was the IOC’s acknowledgement of the need to: (a) reduce the costs of bidding and hosting; (b) improve transparency in terms of Olympic Games delivery requirements; and (c) enhance sustainability in all facets of the Olympic Games, that were likely of interest to potential bid cities seeking greater flexibility to mesh urban development goals with the expectations of being an Olympic Games host. For IOC member Richard Pound (2015, 4), the success of Agenda 2020 hinges on whether or not the Olympic Games “become more of a collaborative search for tailor-made solutions in the different circumstances of each potential host city than a non-negotiable, all-or-nothing, bid against a static set of IOC-designed criteria.”

Intriguingly, many of the recommendations articulated in Agenda 2020 and the subsequent alterations to the Olympic bidding process were voiced in a poignant report entitled, *Olympic Agenda 2020: The Bid Experience* (Austrian Olympic Committee et al. 2014). This report, written by the Swedish Olympic Association, in conjunction with the Austrian Olympic Committee, the German Sports Confederation, and the Swiss Olympic Association, highlighted the difficulties that many NOCs face when trying to generate a candidate city from their respective nations. Prompted by Thomas Bach’s invitation to contribute to the formation of

Agenda 2020, the report was designed to communicate the experience of the four committees' involvement in recent bid competitions (Vienna explored a bid for the 2028 Games and Munich, Graubünden, and Stockholm all considered the 2022 Olympic Games). The report avoided ambiguity in its assessment of the bidding process:

The developments in the latest bid race for the 2022 Olympic Winter Games make it very clear that it has become increasingly difficult for established sports nations to communicate the Olympic values and the benefits that arise from bidding and hosting the Games... As a result, more and more nations, especially European nations, either not dare to submit an application anymore or withdraw it later on as just happened in Stockholm and Krakow (Austrian Olympic Committee et al. 2014, 6).

Stressing the need to “proactively communicate the social and economic benefits of bidding and hosting the Games” the report recommended that “the IOC enters a dialogue process with a city and its NOC as soon as a city explains interest in bidding” (Austrian Olympic Committee et al. 2014, 6).

Not surprisingly, in January 2015, the IOC launched a new non-binding “Invitation Phase” to the bid process. This invitation phase is designed to allow NOC’s and potential candidate cities to share their ideas and gain feedback from the IOC prior to the application deadline. Lasting for nearly a year, the invitation phase not only extends the bid horizon but offers the occasion for candid feedback and avails potential candidate cities to the expertise and services of the IOC (e.g. workshops, Olympic Games Knowledge Management (OGKM) network).

The report also emphasized the need to “rethink the bidding procedure in order to reduce complexity and increase transparency and flexibility for potential bid cities (Austrian Olympic Committee et al. 2014, 4). It was also a reaction to the unprecedented number of withdrawals of bidding cities. As Robert Livingstone, producer and journalist at Gamesbids.com (personal interview 2017) suggests “it’s new that these cities are dropping out in mass quantities. Four dropped out for 2022, three dropped out for 2024 and it’s even more than that because a few dropped out before the bid even started.” At the same time, the report mentioned the need to improve communication between the IOC and the potential bidding cities about expectations and the sharing of potential risks (Austrian Olympic Committee et al. 2014). The report clearly communicated the underlying frustration of the four NOCs and concluded by calling on the IOC to provide: “More support in bidding; More certainty in process; More partnership in risk; More flexibility in scale” (Austrian Olympic Committee et al. 2014, 14).

In terms of Stockholm’s experience, voters had determined to reject the idea of pursuing the 2022 Winter Games in January 2014. For Lindeberg (personal interview, 2017) there was a clear ‘Sochi effect’ at work: “the situation was when this came forward in December and January 2013/2014, it was Sochi staging the backdrop with the costs, but not only the costs but the environmental impact.” The concerns of the citizenry were echoed by politicians at all levels of the Swedish government. Although the 2022 bid had initially generated solid political support from both the Social Democrats and Conservatives in the halls of Stockholm’s city council and was viewed to offer a socially and an environmentally sound bid plan, anxiety regarding the spiraling costs of staging served to upset commitments of support from senior levels of government. Crucially, 2014 was an election year in Sweden for parliament as well as for Stockholm’s City Council, and the environmental, financial and other costs evident in Sochi’s

preparations generated a negative image that could not be ignored (Lindeberg personal interview, 2017; Zetterberg personal interview, 2017). In more detail, Lindeberg (personal interview, 2017) explains “the ruling parties had won their credibility in taking good responsibility for the financial situation in Sweden” and for a politician “to go out in the streets and say ‘Hey, hey, we are going to stage the Olympic Games,’ it was not really possible.”

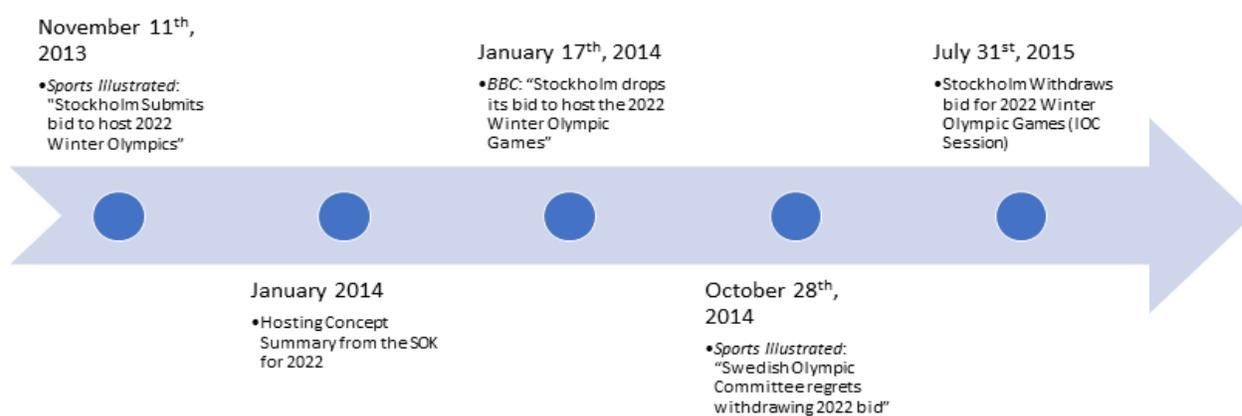


Figure 4: Timeline of Bidding Process for 2022 Winter Games; Source: *Sports Illustrated* (Associated Press 2013; *SI Wire* 2014); "Stockholm drops its bid to host the 2022 Winter Olympic Games" (2014); *Stockholm 2022 Hosting Concept Summary* (2014).

Tellingly, once the details of Agenda 2020 started to become clear, various stakeholders began to express regret about abandoning the bid competition. There were even conversations amongst IOC members about the feasibility of reopening the bidding process, but this prospect was stifled by IOC president Thomas Bach ("Agenda 2020: the revolution begins" 2014). For Lindenberg the timing of the IOC's reforms was unfortunate:

If we had known in January what we know now about the contribution from the IOC, the new Host City contract including new international standards for workers' rights and all these ethical factors, we would have been in a totally different situation in Sweden. If we'd known that in January, we might still be in the race (Lindeberg quoted in "Agenda 2020: the revolution begins" 2014, 7).

In more detail, Lindeberg (personal interview, 2017) explains that the strength of Stockholm's 2022 bid was that it already represented the core objectives of Agenda 2020, incorporating a sensible sustainability strategy that limited the number of Games-related investments, while emphasizing the social and environmental benefits that would result from integrating Games and city planning.

Whilst Agenda 2020 was developed with hopeful intentions of addressing issues in the Olympic bidding and hosting processes, as well as supporting countries with similar characteristics and aspirations that Sweden portrays, the timing of Agenda 2020 and the 2022 Stockholm bid could not have come at a more inopportune juncture. If the IOC's timetable presented Agenda 2020 in an earlier fashion, the potential of a strong, fully-fledged and competitive Stockholm bid would seem more plausible. The regret expressed by various SOK members after withdrawing the bid, as well as the continuing ambition for hosting, was palpable. However, the SOK saw the possibility to continue its pursuit of the Winter Olympics within a few years. The 2026 bidding process, while only a few years removed from 2022 and Agenda 2020, allowed the opportunity for the SOK to learn from their mistakes as well as grow in confidence. As Zetterberg (personal interview, 2017) alludes to "when we started with the 2026 process, we were much, much more confident that we got a position not just in Scandinavia but in the world also." However, 2026 will have its fair share of difficulties; Lindeberg (personal

interview, 2017) states “the risk is that we will have a very strong concept that will end up in the difficult question of whether this is a good issue to bring forward for the election or not.”

3.4 Agenda 2020 and the phantom 2026 Olympic Games bid

What might Agenda 2020 mean for Stockholm? The adoption of Agenda 2020 with its focus on establishing a bidding process that is less “made in Lausanne” and more concerned with curbing costs and improving sustainability strategies would seem to bode well for Stockholm. Three years removed from pulling the 2022 bid, roughly 24 months since the adoption of Agenda 2020, and shortly following the commissioning of a feasibility study designed to investigate Stockholm’s conditions and interest for bidding and hosting the 2026 Winter Olympic Games, Stockholm’s City Council issued a press release claiming: “... the Olympic movement’s new strategy, Olympic Agenda 2020, is fully in line with Stockholm’s ambitions for social, financial, environmental and democratic sustainability” (Stockholm City Council, City Executive Office, 2017).

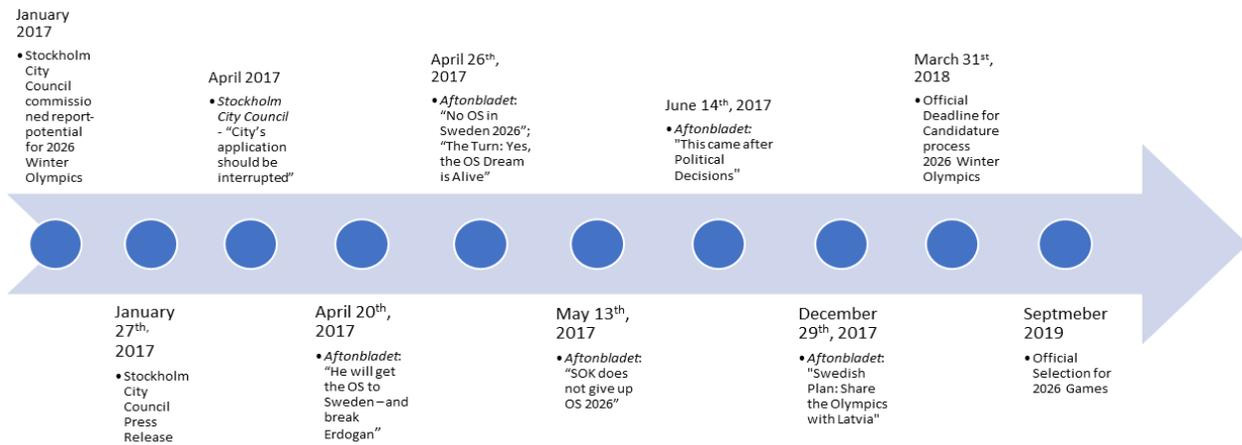


Figure 5: Timeline of Bidding Process for 2026 Winter Games. Sources: Stockholm City Council (Stockholm City Council, City Executive Office 2017; Stockholm City Council 2017); Aftonbladet ("Swedish Plan: Share the Olympics with Latvia" 2017; "SOK does not give up OS 2026" 2017; Bergström 2017a; Bergström 2017b; Brenning 2017; Arwidson 2017); International Olympic Committee 2017

The feasibility report commissioned by the City of Stockholm claimed that there was the potential to create a new Winter Games model that was forward-looking, reflecting not only Stockholm's track record of developing innovative solutions to enhance sustainable development but also its ambitions regarding human rights and its commitment to civic discourse on how to improve the city's brand. While not ignoring the challenges of hosting, the Winter Games were pitched as an opportunity to make investments that would improve the city's sport and public health objectives while increasing the attractiveness of the region as a tourist destination and business location.

Nevertheless, a close reading of the report and particularly the appendices reveals lingering sources of uncertainty towards the Olympic Games and the IOC. For instance, the report incorporated the results of more than 2,100 web interviews and four focus groups (Demoskop AB 2017). The results of this empirical work reveal a split in attitude towards the

Olympic Games in Stockholm. Ackinger adds clarity: “the population in Stockholm is divided roughly 50/50 with for and against the Olympics. The pros are talking about the benefits and how the event could help Stockholm position itself in a global arena. The cons are focused on the cost and the risk of overrunning the budget. They are also negative or very negative towards the International Olympic Committee due to scandals regarding corruption and other affairs” (personal interview, 2017). Intriguingly, the appendix indicates that less than 5% of the people involved in the study were actually aware of Olympic Agenda 2020, with even less claiming some understanding of what Agenda 2020 entails. It is further noted that when Agenda 2020 was more thoroughly explained, many felt that if the objectives of Agenda 2020 were adhered to, then it would likely improve Stockholm’s chances of securing the Games. At the same time, the information did not actually increase overall support for the Winter Olympics in Stockholm (Demoskop AB 2017). Here we find that lack of trust in the IOC and the desire for risk reduction continue to trouble many residents of Stockholm. The report reiterates some of the long-standing concerns: (1) the Olympic Games were viewed to be too expensive; (2) Stockholm was not thought to be a winter city; and (3) Stockholm’s urban infrastructure, particularly transportation, was thought to be inadequate, but equally important is the articulation of the “low confidence” that Stockholmer’s have in the IOC. While encouraged by Agenda 2020 reforms, the report suggests that people still want concrete evidence that the IOC has improved its institutional integrity and that it will actually award the Olympic Games to those cities who emphasize more economically modest and sustainable Games concepts.

3.4.1 2026 at a crossroad

Despite the failures of the 2004 and 2022 bids, the SOK remains dedicated to encouraging a submission from Stockholm. In January 2017, the SOK posited that a 2026 Olympic bid was “possible and desirable” (Swedish Olympic Committee 2017), and yet, within a few months the effort was seemingly abandoned (e.g. “Stockholm drops its bids for 2026 Winter Olympics” *USA Today* Apr. 2017). Once again, the lack of clarity on the IOC’s financial commitment was cited as being a key intervening obstacle. The IOC had delayed instructions for potential bid cities regarding the implementation of Agenda 2020 by more than a year and as result, Karin Wanngård, Mayor of the City of Stockholm and Social Democrat, was unable to develop cross-party political support (Arwidson 2017). As Lindeberg (personal interview 2017) supports “the Social Democrats say they are for the bid, but they can not gather the majority of the city hall they don’t trust whether the Conservatives or Liberals being in their position, would support the bid.” Similar to the 2022 effort, the 2026 bid overlaps with an election cycle in Sweden and in Ackinger’s estimation moving a bid application forward during the campaign season (Spring-Summer 2018) was problematic politically and thus unlikely (Ackinger, personal interview). Until the IOC’s deadline (March 18th, 2018) for applicant cities is reached, it is possible that Stockholm’s City Council could reconsider an application.

3.5 Conclusion

This study focused on the shifting attitudes towards the Olympic Games being hosted in Stockholm. The central concern was to expose and explain the apparent reluctance of different stakeholders in Stockholm and Sweden to committing the precious resources necessary to pursue

the Olympic Games. We used the foundation of the ‘Stockholm Shift’ as a trope, breaking the apparent reluctance into three separate, but interconnected sections.

First, we inspected the decidedly metropolitan shift that has emerged within the SOK: shifting the bid efforts to Stockholm. This shift reflected the spatial abandonment of a bid, a strategy that had previously encouraged smaller urban centers such as Östersund, Falun, and Gothenburg from representing Sweden’s mega-event hopeful. The rise in prominence of Stockholm as a small European capital with growing significance regionally and a complete offering of urban infrastructure meant that a Swedish bid could provide a more captivating and attractive bid to both the local citizenry and an international audience. Of course, the metropolitan shift also illustrated that Stockholm remained relatively insignificant in terms of world cities, thus convincing the SOK to focus bid efforts on the Winter Games, which traditionally have placed fewer demands on the host.

The second shift examined in the paper concerned the growing necessity of recognizing the cultural relativity and context of mega-event bids. Drawing on the SOK, and other NOC’s criticism of the Olympic bidding process, we explained how hosting the Olympics has come to be considered incompatible with the hosting objectives of many cities. By tracing the influence of the several Olympic committees on the IOC’s Agenda 2020, we illustrated the underlying need for the IOC to provide a less templated mega-event. Central to the reluctance of many cities from submitting a bid is the notion that it had simply become too difficult to marry local urban development objectives to the requirements imposed by the IOC. Beyond the obvious gigantism that has taken root, recent editions of the Olympic Games had failed to accommodate local contingencies. Put differently, the Olympic Games had begun to lose sight of the fact that despite being a global mega-event, they remain locally rooted. For Stockholm to consider mounting a

bid, the IOC must take sustainability seriously and be willing to award the Games to a city offering a more modest project proposal.

The last shift exposed the political democratic deficit that has developed across Stockholm's series of bids. The adoption of Agenda 2020 would appear to improve Stockholm's chance of securing the Olympic Games. As outgoing SOK President Hans Vestberg states:

Sweden has great chances of arranging the Winter Games in 2026 because IOK's new regulations focus on sustainability and cost-effectiveness. We in Sweden have very nice conditions for arranging such Olympic games as IOK wants to see, with our view on sustainability and our values. In addition, we have virtually all infrastructure for the competitions in place. We also have great expertise among the associations in organizing international winter sports competitions (Swedish Olympic Committee 2018).

Despite such enthusiasm, Vestberg decided to resign from his post as SOK President at a critical time in the bidding cycle. In short, support for a 2026 bid remains politically weak. Stockholm's City Council remains unwilling to commit to a project that has uncertainty, while voices from the grassroots remain skeptical about whether there has been actual existing reform. As such, there remains a casual interest in the possibility of submitting a bid, but a lack of conviction from anyone that winning the Games is actually desired.

To date, it is difficult to feel optimistic that Stockholm will be an early beneficiary of Agenda 2020. Perhaps the awarding and hosting of the XXIII Winter Olympiad to Pyeongchang 2018 might signal another shift that encourages Stockholm to more fully engage in the bid process. Many cities are awaiting proof that the IOC is willing to rescale the sport mega-event ambition. A smaller Winter Olympic Games, hosted by a smaller urban center, has the potential

to contribute the necessary distance from Sochi 2014 and even Rio de Janeiro 2016 to convince Stockholm that the IOC is ready for Stockholm's shifts.

While this research focuses on a single case example, the richness of Stockholm's bidding experience should permit investigators to draw parallels to other bid city efforts. We have argued that Stockholm is at the forefront of reimagining how bid cities will no longer produce template bids in response to demands placed from Lausanne. Instead, bid cities such as Stockholm will reconsider their options if the risks are perceived to be too great or if the response to a scaled-back and sustainable Olympic Games is not received enthusiastically by the IOC, nor supported by the public. Sweden's bidding tribulations have the capacity to help lead a discussion on how an Olympic Committee requires full cooperation and support from City Council to develop a competitive bid. Although the full impacts of Agenda 2020 remain unknown, the focus on the SOK and its Olympic bidding ambitions do offer some preliminary results illustrating that the relationship between bid cities and the IOC requires further strengthening.

Stockholm's consistent 'shifting' in its pursuit of the Olympic Games illustrates the reluctance to discount the mega-event delivery as means to broaden the economic, social, and physical objectives in the city, but simultaneously exposes the political reluctance to tie an urban development strategy to a delivery mechanism that remains uncertain. While the significance of Agenda 2020 is widely trumpeted by IOC affiliates, other observers continue to warn of the lack of evidence showing that real change has occurred to the bidding process, often citing the existence of a form of consensus politics that prevents more democratically charged discussions. Meanwhile, Stockholm's public remains unaware of the IOC's reform process and awaits evidence illustrating that the IOC is actually 'shifting' itself, by being opening to new bidding

logics not designed in isolation and those that are sensitive to local conditions. In the absence of a transparent bidding process that illustrates that the IOC is willing to share the risks of the process, and without tangible proof that Agenda 2020 is more than a rhetorical document, the apprehension of cities with characteristics and Olympic aspirations similar to Stockholm will continue to be prevalent. While less dramatic than reports of politically charged withdrawals of cities such as Boston 2024 from recent competitions, Stockholm's reluctance remains instructive because it speaks to a measured assessment of the pace of the IOC's institutional change, as well as the growing dissatisfaction with trying to ascertain and defend that public benefits that are supposedly tied to hosting.

Chapter 4: Thesis Conclusion

4.1 Why do Stockholm's Olympic ambitions matter?

Inspecting Stockholm's relationship with the Olympic Games reveals the difficult road that many NOCs encounter when attempting to generate a candidate city for the Olympics. In Sweden, the SOK's pursuit of the Olympics has been marred by multiple failures. The constant tinkering and shifting logic of bids illustrates "the struggle of urban and extra-local actors to legitimate particular forms of urban transformation" (Oliver and Lauermann 2017, 11). Even with multiple bidding failures, split public support, non-unified political support, and the negative views/anti-bid politics disseminated by the media, Stockholm's ambition has not been convincingly extinguished.

With each new bid, the SOK has been able to reinvent its bidding application, applying learned mistakes to future bids in order to appease the public and political hierarchy. Developing a strong bid aimed at unifying the multiple Stockholm City Council political parties to support the Games, would provide the greatest chance at hosting. Unfortunately, every modification, no matter the extent, has proven ineffective. Shifting the bidding location to a more suitable urban region, plans to more fully capitalize on existing sport and housing infrastructure to limit financial exposure, and potentially having increased financial support from the IOC, while addressing several of the publicly expressed concerns, has not added clarity. This seemingly endless process of modifying bids with no positive or gratifying result can have a deflating sense, deterring optimism for future bidding and inducing a sense of 'bid fatigue' (Bellás and Oliver 2016; Oliver and Lauermann 2017) within the competing city and its Olympic Committee. At the same time, the perseverance exhibited by the SOK can serve as an inspiring blueprint for other NOC's that are experiencing similar bidding difficulties.

4.2 Moving Forward

Stockholm's Olympic bid future remains unknown. As discussed, a 2026 Winter Olympics bid remains an option but would require Stockholm's City Council to reverse its decision to delay (Social Democrats, Stockholm City Council 2017). It is even possible that the SOK will shift its support 'back' to a different Swedish city. It is useful to remember that one of the key functions of a NOC is to encourage a domestic competition to generate awareness and support for the Olympic Movement. The situation has not yet become acute in Sweden, because members of the Stockholm City Council have kept the possibility of a potential 2030 bid open: "When we can see how the new Agenda 2020 is implemented, we will assess whether the city will apply for OS 2030" (Social Democrats, Stockholm City Council 2017).

With each additional iteration of the Games, it is also plausible that a distancing effect will curtail the negative connotations associated with Sochi 2014. Moreover, should the reforms of Agenda 2020 begin to materialize in a positive manner, it is likely that Stockholm would seek to re-engage. To date, however, there has been very limited proof that Agenda 2020 is altering the sport mega-event landscape, with Zimbalist (2016) showing the difficulties that Pyeongchang 2018, Tokyo 2020, and Beijing 2022 have had dealing with age-old concerns of financial security, stadium construction, political protest, environmental and broader issues of social sustainability including human rights. For Zimbalist (2016, 164), recent withdrawals from bid competitions, such as Boston 2024, is a useful reminder that: "it is prudent to be vigilant when dealing with unregulated, international monopolies. And sometimes it is even a good idea to fight back." The clearest indication that a city can show that reforms must extend beyond rhetoric is to refrain from entering the bid competition. In the absence of the SOK *and*

Stockholm's City Council being convinced that there has been a shift in bid expectations by the IOC, it remains difficult to imagine a Stockholm Olympics.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

- What is your name? What is your position/title?
- What is/was your role in Stockholm's 20XX Olympic bid?
- You were involved in [how many bids] ('04, '22, '26), can you talk about the process and indicate how these bids compared to one another? Who led the bidding process etc.?
- Apart from the bid's explicit purpose to present this global sporting event—what were the main local objectives to be achieved by hosting the Olympic Games in 20xx?
- What was achieved during the bidding process?
- What lessons, if any, were learned by Stockholm's civic, political, and grassroots leadership from being part of the host city competition?
- Has the bidding process altered political relations in Stockholm? If so, how?
- In your opinion was the withdrawal of the 2022 Olympic bid a good decision? Why or why not?
- Earlier this year, there have been multiple media reports that seemed to contradict each other, such as a few reports from Aftonbladet, which on the same day says that there will be no Olympics in 2026, then there will be Olympics in 2026. Why is there so much confusion stemming from the media?
 - What might be the reasons behind this? Is there miscommunication, or different ideologies coming from the government and the SOK?
- What are the greatest obstacles that Stockholm faces in its quest to host the Olympic Games?
- What needs to happen to get the different government parties to work together to get the Olympics to Sweden?