

Hackney CIRCUIT

Looking forward to 2012

Produced as part of Hackney Museum's Mapping the Change Programme 2011

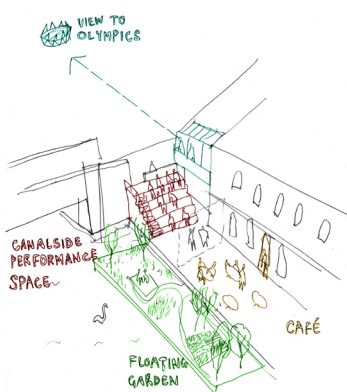
Creative hub to open in Hackney Wick

SPACE, a leading provider of affordable artist workspace in Hackney, is working with the Olympic Park Legacy Company to open a new creative space in Queen's Yard, Hackney Wick.

Due to open in spring 2012, The White Building will operate locally and internationally with a particular focus on creative practice at the intersection of art, technology and sustainability.

With a commitment to environmental and community sustainability in Hackney Wick, The White Building will draw on the area's history as a centre of technological, scientific and creative innovation.

Anna Harding, SPACE chief executive officer and long time Hackney resident, said: "SPACE has had buildings in Hackney Wick and Fish Island since the early 1980s so feel strongly embedded in, and committed to, the area. The White Building is a great opportunity, with the Olympics, to have a platform for world class artists from



The White Building will house an event space, studios, a café and a residency studio for creatives and local artists.

Hackney and beyond, alongside world class athletes."

The White Building will house an event space, studios (available for hire during and after the Games) for a diversity of creatives, a residency studio for international and local artists and a cafe. Key programmes, supported by SPACE sponsor Bloomberg, include the

A range of local and international partners will contribute to and host projects.

international residency programme Permacultures and People Power, a schools programme.

A range of local and international partners will be invited to contribute to and host projects in the building. At the canal side location, the steps from White Post Lane will double up as seating for performances and screenings. The location also offers an opportunity for water-based projects.

For more information visit:
www.spacestudios.org.uk/whats-on/white-building

Sanna Maenpaa

Triple jump Olympian supports anti-doping strategy

Jonathan Edwards, triple jump Olympian and deputy chair of the London 2012 Nations and Regions Group, told Hackney Circuit that he supports the stringent measures and awareness programmes to make London 2012 the cleanest Games ever.

During a press meeting with Mapping the Change journalism students, Edwards said: "It is absolutely crucial that we fight against drugs so when people turn on their televisions or turn up to stadiums at London 2012 they can be as confident as possible that what they are seeing is a natural performance and not one produced in a laboratory."

The official anti-doping laboratory for the London 2012 Games, run by the GlaxoSmithKline's research and development centre in Harlow, Essex, will be working around the clock during the

Games and expects to process more than 6,000 samples.

An anti-doping partnership has been formed between the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, the World Anti-Doping Agency and the Department of Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport. The Win Clean: Say No to Doping campaign, which the partnership launched in London in October 2011, aims to alert athletes to their rights and responsibilities around anti-doping.

Jane Tchan

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History in mind

Welcome to the second edition of Hackney Circuit. The publication is the result of an intensive seven week journalism programme; part of Hackney Museum's Mapping the Change (MtC) initiative, which enables local people to record their experiences and views of the Olympic development.

The journalism programme's students are not trained journalists, but have a passion for Hackney and an interest in the changes taking place leading up to the 2012 Games.

Their stories cover a wide range of topics, from employment and the rental market to archery, nutrition and the role of the Gurkhas in Olympic security.

Hackney Circuit will leave a legacy as it will be part of the Hackney Archives. We hope you enjoy it.

Joy Francis

PROJECT LEAD

Mapping the Change Journalism Programme

MtC is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the journalism programme is delivered by Words of Colour Productions.

To find out more about MtC and how you can participate, visit: www.hackney.gov.uk/mapping-the-change, or telephone 020 8356 3500 or email mappingthechange@hackney.gov.uk.

Disclaimer

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Potential tenants for Olympic media centres announced

The future use of the International Broadcast Centre and Media Press Centre after the London 2012 Games is now in sight as three potential long term tenants have been shortlisted by the Olympic Park Legacy Company (OPLC).

iCITY, the Oxlane Group and the UK Fashion Hub are being considered as future tenants once the Games are over (see box).

The centres are the focal point of ambitious plans by the OPLC to create a vibrant new commercial district, offering a wide range of sustainable employment opportunities in the Hackney Wick area.

Dan Hawthorn, head of the London 2012 Unit at the Greater London Authority, said the centres could form an employment hub with a particular focus on creative and media industries. "If handled correctly, the centre can capitalise on the energy of east London and become a natural extension of Hackney Wick."

Councillor Guy Nicholson, Hackney Council cabinet member for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, said that the centres should be the most connected spot in the UK and would enable Hackney's economy to grow into it.

CLlr Nicholson added: "Whoever takes the plans forward will link to what is happening within our economy in Hackney, which will enable that economy to grow and expand. We will also ensure that our further education colleges and local universities can tap into it."

There are five major universities within five miles of the Olympic Park providing access to more than 83,000 students and could offer the next generation of employees skilled and well-paid job opportunities.

The area builds on the government's promise of an East London Tech City, extending a belt of innovative businesses from Shoreditch to Old Street, through Hackney, to the Olympic Park.

In October 2011, the OPLC invited interested parties to bid for tenancy. Ten bids were received by the 2 December 2011 deadline. The OPLC aims to confirm the tenants by the summer and expects the buildings to be available for fit-out and opening from spring 2013.

Jane Tchan



The Media Press Centre will form part of the local economy.

Picture by Getty Images

New tenants?

The three shortlisted bidders are:

iCITY offers an "Innovation City", and will house a cloud computing centre, research labs, post production facilities, graphic designers, digital education, and an innovation and research centre with links to higher education to showcase British technology.

Oxlane Group, a sports-orientated mixed-use proposal in partnership with Loughborough University, plans to provide a leisure and events space, and a research, education, retail and a technology centre.

UK Fashion Hub proposes a dedicated centre to unite the fashion and textile manufacturing sectors, under plans to be a world-class destination for wholesalers, buyers and the creative industries, and to provide a fashion college and a fashion e-tailing centre.

Rental bonanza during Games unrealistic, claim estate agents

With rental prices up by 25 per cent in Hackney, and the London 2012 Games on the horizon, what are the possibilities of renting out your property at a premium during the Olympics?

Christian Thomas, Director of Currell Residential, an estate agent in Victoria Park, admitted that he has yet to rent out any properties for the Games, but has attracted interest.

Thomas said: "We have four bedroom Victorian houses on our books at £3,000 a week and one for £10,000. I was showing them to some Norwegian Olympic delegates. They were astonished at the prices."

Poppy Maynerd, of Broadway Market estate agent Blake Stanley, said. "We have landlords approaching us every week. We work on an estimated price of £100 a room per night, comparable to a hotel."

Like other letting agencies, Maynerd has advertised extensively on websites, including accommodationforthegames.com, but with limited success. "We haven't let out any Hackney

accommodation specific to the Olympics. Most clients want to rent in either Stratford or Central London."

Lewis McKale, based at Davey Stone, an estate agency in London Fields, has also witnessed a lack of demand for Olympic rentals.

"People could be pricing themselves out of the market," he admitted. "I have heard of landlords putting Olympic breaks in their contracts. I would recommend if you have good long-term tenants to keep them."

Christian Thomas said that it was still early days and that homeowners needed to be modest in their expectations. He added: "If you are already planning to go on holiday during the Games, you might benefit from renting your house out, but be realistic."

Phill Kemp



Paralympian archer reveals training regime

The weather will be a crucial factor in helping British archers to secure medals at the London 2012 Games, according to Paralympian archer John Cavanagh.

A gold medallist in the 2004, and silver medallist 2008 Paralympics Games, Cavanagh regularly checks the weather reports for wind speeds as he trains for Team GB selection, taking place in April and May. He said that foreign competitors will have to acclimatise quickly to British weather conditions to perform at their best.

As arrows fly at 65 metres per second, with a 20 second timeframe for releasing each arrow, Cavanagh will need to be in top physical condition and take extra care of his pulling shoulder. No country dominates in archery, which leaves the field wide open. "You don't know what to expect but the British athletes are doing well, so things are looking up," he said.

Cavanagh trains with an aluminium-carbon compound bow and has a back up on hand. The focus is a target face of 10 concentric rings. The innermost ring is called the "X" ring, which has to be 1.3 metres above the ground. Hitting the "gold" or bulls-eye over a 70 metre range requires optimum concentration on an intense

scale. Archery etiquette includes no coughing or trash talking while opponents' shoot.

Increased public participation is welcomed by Cavanagh who said that home crowd support will help his performance considerably. He hopes that the Games will see the sport become more attractive and accessible to all age groups.

David Russell

As arrows fly at 65 metres per second, with a 20 second timeframe for releasing each arrow, Cavanagh will need to be in top physical condition and take extra care of his pulling shoulder.



John Cavanagh / Picture from Archery GB



Archery test event at Lords / Picture by Getty Images

Legacy of Hackney Marshes will be protected, says council



Picture credit: Ian Buswell

Around 1,500 adult amateur football enthusiasts play matches from September to May on Sunday mornings.

Hackney residents have expressed concern over the redevelopment of land around Hackney Marshes, prompting council assurances that the legacy of the area will be protected.

East Marsh, the area adjacent to the Olympic Park, has been leased temporarily to the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) to provide access to the Olympic Park for coaches, cyclists, pedestrians and disabled visitors during the Games.

Hackney Council has assured locals that the area will be fully reinstated after the Games with funding provided by the ODA. Meanwhile, replacement pitches have been provided elsewhere on the Marsh.

Johnnie Walker, chairman of the Hackney and Leyton Football League, claimed that the start of the football season was disrupted by inadequate replacement fields and not enough available pitches on match days.

Walker said: "The pitches to replace East Marsh have not been fit for purpose. I have had regular meetings with the council. I was assured there would be enough pitches to go around. We have referees who refuse to put on games there."

"Hackney Marshes is benefiting from a multi-million pound improvement plan, including improved pitches for football, rugby and cricket."

Hackney Council spokesperson

Adriana Allen, a senior lecturer at University College London specialising in sustainable development, was involved in a 2008 project called Justice in the Green, a forum for the views of community members relating to Hackney Marshes and supported by the council's 2012 Legacy Team.

Allen said: "The feeling about the legacy planning process among Hackney residents was that of a missed opportunity. It didn't involve local residents and groups in any substantive manner

to decide how the marshes could enhance the various activities happening there."

A Hackney Council's spokesperson said: "Hackney Marshes is benefiting from a multi-million pound improvement plan, including improved pitches for football, rugby and cricket, better changing facilities, a refurbished bridge, footpaths, cycle ways, and community facilities, such as the state of the art Hackney Marshes Centre."

The council's spokesperson added: "For every booking taken for the 2011-12 season, we have had a pitch available either on the Marshes themselves or Mabley Green. The Inner London League has played at Mabley Green since the season started and the Hackney and Leyton League started playing there from the end of September."

Hackney Marshes contains the largest concentration of pitches in Europe. The site accommodates approximately 1,000 young people on the newly-provided junior and mini pitches on Saturdays, and 1,500 adult football enthusiasts on Sunday mornings from September to May.

Keith Mahon

Journalists-in-waiting

Students on the Mapping the Change Journalism Programme 2011 didn't know what they were letting themselves in for. Full on workshops, tight deadlines, getting their heads around the inverted news pyramid (don't ask) and interviewing strangers on the street was all in a day's work. It wasn't all hard graft. They questioned the odd Olympian (triple jump gold medallist Jonathan Edwards) and got top of the range advice from Roger Blitz, leisure industries correspondent at the Financial Times, and Melissa Thompson, feature writer at the Daily Mirror. In the end their efforts got published. Here are some of the highlights.

Ron Newman (l) disability coordinator with the London 2012 Community Relations Team, and Jonathan Edwards find the funny during a press meeting with Mapping the Change journalism students.



Roger Blitz, leisure industries correspondent at the Financial Times, goes through the latest stories with the students.



Who forgot to say cheese? Roger Blitz joins journalism students from both Hackney Circuit and Waltham Forest Voices for a Kodak moment.

Roger Blitz listens intently while Keith Mahon, watched by Cheryl Ward and Kathleen Hudson, gets all Jeremy Paxman.



Melissa Thompson, feature writer at the Daily Mirror, refuses to take responsibility for the global recession. Only kidding. She is just explaining the protocol around interviewing.



Some of our graduates: Back – Nancy McCarthy, Joy Francis, Cheryl Bowen, Dimitrios Tourountsis, Sharon Boulwood and Phill Kemp. Front – Vesela Yovova, Kathleen Hudson, Jane Tchan and Norma McLeod Cooke.



Roger Blitz drives yet another quality point home.



(l-r) Keith Mahon, Jane Tchan and Phill Kemp "shoot the breeze" under the iconic Financial Times sign.

Dr CP Thiagarajah (Waltham Forest Voices), Hackney Circuit's Thamasin Marsh and Keith Mahon at London 2012 HQ.



Olympic employment legacy

Job creation was a great expectation of the London 2012 Games. **Jane Tchan** reports on whether progress on increasing local skills and employment is sustainable in Hackney.

The London 2012 Games was billed as a catalyst for increased employment, business and training opportunities through job creation, new skills for local people and improved links between employers. How is Hackney faring under these expectations?

Deprivation

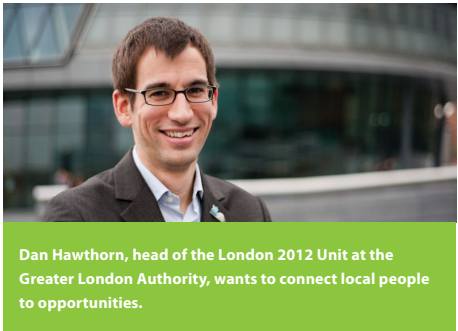
One of the six host boroughs, Hackney is also one of the most deprived boroughs in the country, with an unemployment rate of 10.8 per cent and more than 11,000 people on Jobseekers Allowance. The borough also has a range of culturally diverse communities, some of whom face barriers, such as language, when it comes to finding work.

In May 2010, London Mayor Boris Johnson announced that he was making £19.6m available to be equally divided between the host boroughs “to equip unemployed Londoners with the whole range of necessary skills, to remove the barriers that prevent them from getting into work and staying employed”.

Commenting on how some of the funding is being directed, Dan Hawthorn, head of the London 2012 Unit at the Greater London Authority (GLA), said: “The Host Borough Employment Skills Programme was set up in recognition that there was an imperative to connect local people, particularly those who have been unemployed for a long time, with opportunities created by the Games.”

Improving access

A report published in 2008 by Tank Consulting, The 2012 Olympics: Access to training and employment, highlighted some of the cultural and structural challenges, including a lack of skills, the impact of cultural and personal circumstances and limited access to affordable and appropriate childcare.



Dan Hawthorn, head of the London 2012 Unit at the Greater London Authority, wants to connect local people to opportunities.

When questioned about the report’s findings and possible solutions, Hawthorn said: “A lot of the problems are not specific to the Games or are [not] problems that the Games alone can solve. The programme we have set up specifically tries to capitalise on the opportunities presented by the Games. The aim is to create a sustainable employment legacy for those most in need.”

Many of the barriers highlighted in the Tank Consulting report still exist. They were under discussion in October 2011 at the Hackney Unemployed Workers conference, organised by Hackney Unites, a local community support group.

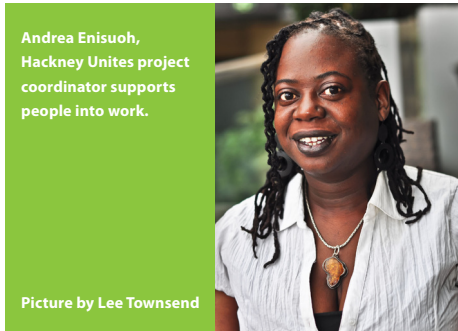
Andrea Enisuh, Hackney Unites project coordinator, explained that since last August, the group has been running a weekly drop-in for local unemployed people. Enisuh said: “The purpose of the group is to empower unemployed people, but they also give each other emotional support. Well-being and support are key issues for many unemployed people.”

Local support

Councillor Guy Nicholson, Hackney Council cabinet member for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, who spoke at the conference, said that the £19.6m from the GLA is an investment for the infrastructure to create employment opportunities for local people.

Cllr Nicholson added that the Games had so far been “excellent” at connecting people and organisations, such as colleges, Jobcentre Plus, Ways Into Work and On Site, Hackney Council’s 2012 Recruitment Centre.

He gave credit to all the local organisations involved, for supporting over 1000 Hackney residents with employment



Andrea Enisuh, Hackney Unites project coordinator supports people into work.

Picture by Lee Townsend

opportunities for the Games. “They have come an extraordinary distance in a very short period of time to create these networks, partnerships and structures,” he added.

According to Cllr Nicholson, the challenge for the Mayor of London is to maintain the investment to sponsor the established local network to provide practical employment support once the Games-related jobs are finished.

Partnerships

Graham Houghton, district manager at the East London District Jobcentre Plus, also pointed out the benefits of partnerships. He said: “We actively work with all our partner forums and customers to get their feedback. With the support of local colleges, training providers and employers, we have had great success in supporting people of all ages to train and find employment.”

Diane Abbott, MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington, admitted that there had been progress, but added: “We need much more. Hackney residents and local businesses need to be in line for these opportunities and the long term benefits, which will exist for years after the Games. Hackney Council has done good work on this, holding several jobs fairs, attended by nearly 5,000 people looking for jobs, training, apprenticeships and volunteering positions.”

However, Abbott recommended “real leadership” in areas such as the 2012 employer-led job creation schemes while Cllr Nicholson pointed out that an adaptable employment market made it difficult to give any definitive answers on the results in the short term.

Visit: www.hackneyunites.org.uk

Mission possible

How best to maintain security during the London 2012 Games is never far away from the headlines. **Phill Kemp** highlights the little known security role being played by the Gurkhas.

The Olympic Park site in Stratford, east London, is huge. Covering 2.5 sq km, it spreads over four east London boroughs, including Hackney. Protecting and securing it was never going to be a simple job and would require skilled personnel. At the heart of this mission is an unexpected contribution from a community with strong roots in the East End - the Gurkhas.

Robust guarding

“Out of the 800 security personnel we employ on the Olympic Park, 170 are ex-British Army Gurkhas,” explains John Whitwam, managing director for Olympic Park Security at G4S Security Services. Four years ago G4S was commissioned by the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) to secure the site while the park was being built. “If you want resilient and robust guarding, where ‘no’ means ‘no’, that’s when we deploy Gurkha ex-services people.”

That is something Whitwam, the genial former British Army Infantry regiment commander, has experience of. He is also managing director of G4S Gurkha Services, which employs over 600 retired Gurkhas, making it the largest civilian employer of former British Army Gurkhas in the UK.

Bhuwani Pandhak is the senior Gurkha in charge of security at the Olympic Park. With 28 years of frontline service in multiple conflicts, from Iraq to Afghanistan, he makes a steely right hand man tasked with screening, vetting and recruitment. “Our oldest recruit at the Olympic site is 65. He is still young of heart and body, motivated and is doing an excellent job.”

Long tradition

The British Army has a long tradition of recruiting Gurkhas. “When the British Army recruits Gurkhas in Nepal, between 18,000 to 20,000 young men apply,” says



Over the past four years G4S Gurkha Services has grown 30 per cent, year on year. Image supplied by G4S

Whitwam. “Of those, approximately 200 are selected. They are the brightest and the best the country has to offer. If you don’t become a Gurkha you might have to become a doctor or lawyer instead.”

In 2004 the Government changed the immigration rules to give Gurkhas the right to work in the UK. As a result, retired Gurkhas returned to the UK, “dreaming of a better future and better opportunities,” says Pandhak. They often bring their families with them to take advantage of the British education. There are now 10,000 Gurkhas residing in Britain, with a notable presence in Plumstead and Stratford, east London. “Unfortunately we couldn’t employ them all,” Pandhak adds.

Over the past four years, G4S Gurkha Services has grown 30 per cent, year on year, primarily through providing pre-deployment training for the British Army. Ironically, this means that the Gurkhas play the role of the enemy during training exercises. Other roles include protecting power stations and supporting the Afghan army and police in Afghanistan. G4S is the only company in the UK to replicate the army structure within a civilian role.

Challenges

The Olympic Park provides a different challenge for G4S. It is focused on searching and screening, foot patrols and manning the security gates. “We all know there’s a threat [to the Olympics]. All our people have served in a hostile environment like Afghanistan,” says Pandhak. “A normal civilian would not

be able to identify a stripped down weapon, empty [gun] barrels or ammunition.”

There is even a coxswain (a person who steers a boat) with two boats under their command. Called “Vigilance” and “Rasham Gurung”, they navigate the Lea Tributaries that runs the perimeter of the Olympic Park. The name Rasham Gurung honours the memory of a Gurkha security guard who tragically died of natural causes last year.

Local recruits

As the clock ticks us towards 2012, the building work on the Olympic Park has been completed on schedule. The site is now the responsibility of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG). G4S has been asked to supply a staggering 20,000 security guards by June 2012 for the Games, twice as many as was initially planned.

According to Whitwam, 75 per cent of the security personnel have a London postcode, 50 per cent of whom have one in a host borough. The Gurkhas’ role will also shift to protecting critical national infrastructure like electricity substations.

“Some of our people had a dream to work on the Olympic site,” Pandhak reveals, which has come true, for some. But when asked if he has tickets for any of the sporting events at the Games, he laughs and says: “We will be looking out, not in.”

Visit: www.g4s.uk.com and www.securinglondon2012.com

Artistic response

Artists have been encouraged to be part of the Olympics’ cultural development and creative legacy, with mixed success. **Hackney Circuit** talks to local artists about the culture-led regeneration of Hackney.

Dubbed by media commentators as the “Regeneration Games”, the forthcoming Olympics and Paralympics are seen by some local artists as a textbook example of a culture-led regeneration.

As developers recognise the value of art and culture in helping to make an area more attractive, artists are often co-opted as gentrifiers.

Since London won the 2012 Olympic bid Hilary Powell, an interdisciplinary artist working in Hackney Wick, has witnessed many a landmark swept away in east London, turning Hackney Wick from an unregulated area to a “highly regulated” one.

Regeneration

Powell says that before the Olympic development there was a freedom within the landscape, one that was unmanaged, whereas now there is a form of regeneration also known as “gentrification”.

Hackney Council’s Hackney Wick area coordinator, Ian Freshwater, says: “Although it’s true that landmarks have gone from the Wick, including Victorian terraces, pre-fab buildings and seven tower blocks, new and exciting contemporary creative projects, places and jobs have arrived since 2005, like The Yard Theatre, Stour Space or the Olympic Park Legacy Company and Space Studios collaboration, The White Building.”

Cultural Olympiad commissions such as the Arts Council England’s flagship programme Artists Taking the Lead have been launched to generate excitement around the 2012 Games and “to use the UK as a blank canvas”.

Creative voices

In Hackney Wick, among the mixed fabric of artist studios, a host of critical creative voices



Wick Curiosity Shop/Picture by Leabank Square

have emerged. Local artists observe and question the changes taking place. Many are looking closely at the hidden histories of the area and are engaged in its potential future.

The Olympic Delivery Authority’s arts and culture projects appear to have good intentions by aiming to “honour the history of the past, capture the imagination of the present, and leave space for aspirations of the future”.

Wick Curiosity Shop, led by a Hackney Based art and architecture collective called Public Works, is an ongoing project that challenges the top/down approach to the use of public space.

This is no conventional shop. Skills and stories specific to Hackney Wick and Fish Island are exchanged. The shop operates as an event platform with an organically growing archive that includes local produce, memorabilia and oral histories.

Urban change

Andreas Lang of Public Works agrees with the urgency of such projects at a time of large scale urban change. Wick Curiosity Shop values local resources and highlights what already exists. Its archive can be viewed online while offline it exists as a forward looking event platform, open to proposals by anyone who wants to participate.

Hackney Wick local Laura Oldfield Ford is another artist who is chronicling the impact of regeneration on London. Her poetic and political collages and drawings result from walks or “drifts through the disappearing London”.

In her work the areas cleared by the Games become sites of social antagonism.



Hilary Powell in a still from her film ‘The Games’

Ford’s project 2013, Drifting through the ruins, forms fragmented narratives of time and space, imagining the prospect of a failed utopia of empty promises in 2013.

The critical creative responses, born out of the transformation of east London, highlight a key moment in London’s urban and political history. The responses have been collected and form part of a new book, edited by Powell and Issac Marrero entitled, The Art of Dissent: Intervening in the Olympic Dream, published in April.

Artistic revival

At the same time Powell is working on a series of tunnel and pop-up book inspired multimedia installations based on east London demolition sites. The revival of this unusual format benefits Powell’s desire to show “an entropic landscape in which structures are built and simultaneously collapse, at the turn of a page” in line with the changes.

“The creative community’s needs have been considered through public consultation and associated emerging planning policy, introducing conservation areas and studio space standards”, Freshwater explains. “Olympic-related public funding has also assisted the work of artists, collaborative projects and specific paid-for art commissions, including the Wick Curiosity Shop and talks from Laura Oldfield Ford.”

Meanwhile local artists such as Powell will continue to focus on the 2012 Games for at least a year after the event to see the real legacy of the Games unfold.

Visit: www.wickcuriosityshop.net

Young voices

When London won the bid to host the 2012 Games the enduring image was of culturally diverse children and young people celebrating the city’s success. **Neelam Shah** talks to Hackney 2012 Youth Ambassadors about the benefits for young people.

Back in July 2005, when London won the 2012 Olympic bid, the enduring image on our TV screens was of enthusiastic young people expressing joy at the decision. With the London 2012 Games only months away, are there greater educational and employment opportunities for Hackney’s young people?

The role

On the face of it, the answer seems to be yes. One example is the Hackney 2012 Youth Ambassadors, a group of local young people closely involved with the Games. Aged from 13 to 19, they come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds and different secondary schools in Hackney.

As ambassadors, one of their roles is to learn about the history of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, including the Cultural Olympiad. They are also learning about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly education, social mobility and equal opportunities for jobs.

The aim is to help the young ambassadors develop and enhance their skills in making presentations, communications, events management and leadership. These skills prove useful when they have to inform their peers at school about their experiences with the 2012 Games.

Speaking out

Alby Miller, 17, says: “As an ambassador you get invited to a lot of events. It helps develop your personality. It has improved my CV and built my confidence when applying for jobs.” Bertie Holloway, also 17, adds: “The Olympics is taught in PE lessons. We learn about the history and legacy of the sports and how the athletes train.”



Hackney 2012 Youth Ambassadors: (l-r) Shaniece Bailey, Alby Miller, Syllestina Meade and Bertie Holloway. Picture by Ian Buswell

The Hackney 2012 Youth Ambassadors have been showcasing their knowledge at a range of local information events. They have spoken to members of the International Olympic Committee, other young people at the House of Lords and have spread the word about Hackney Personal Bests, a health-based sports programme targeted at schools, at youth clubs.

A few of them even represented Hackney on the Legacy Now Youth Panel, a group of young people dedicated to ensuring that the changes generated by the Games benefit young people.

Opportunities

Sixteen-year-old ambassador Shaniece Bailey flags up the voluntary work, such as being part of disability open days and talking about the Paralympics. Syllestina Mead, 16, sees her role as a “great opportunity” and enjoys meeting the different companies involved with the Games. Mead believes that there are good internship opportunities available for young people.

A common theme among the young ambassadors is how “great” it feels to represent their schools, guide and assist other young people and increase their own understanding of leisure activities and sports.

Steve Herbert, Schools at the Heart project manager based at the Learning Trust, has been working with local schools involved with the Olympics and Paralympics Games. Herbert launched the Schools at the Heart project in 2008 to get children and young people to participate in activities connected to the 2012 Games - from

“As an ambassador you get invited to a lot of events. It helps develop your personality. It has improved my CV and built my confidence when applying for jobs.”

Alby Miller (17)

sports, citizenship, volunteering and the built environment to legacy, education and employment opportunities.

Legacy

Held once a year since 2008, Herbert points out that 3,000 children have been engaged with Paralympic sports and this helps in raising awareness of healthy lifestyles and exercise. “The aim is to show the value of the 2012 Games and to build on the current curriculum with the inclusion agenda at its heart. It is not about trying to change the current system but to keep adding to education opportunities available,” he says.

Another scheme established by Herbert last September is the Primary School Olympic Ambassador Scheme. He explains that “each primary school can nominate two Olympic champions to be the school’s 2012 Olympic ambassadors”.

Around 100 children in year six will be involved from all the borough’s primary schools, and will have signed up to the programme by the end of September.

As with the Hackney 2012 Youth Ambassadors, the feeling of enthusiasm about the Games among children and young people is still alive and well. They will just have to wait and see if their hopes of a long term change in their employment and educational prospects have taken root.

For more on the Hackney 2012 Ambassadors, visit: <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/schools.htm>

Food for success

During the 1948 Olympics, British athletes were on rations. Today, elite Olympic and Paralympic athletes have sports science, nutritionists and tailored menus at their disposal. **Thamasin Marsh** reports.

Sports nutrition is now a valuable tool in the training regime of the world’s top athletes, but it is still a relatively new science. David Dixon, a lecturer in sports nutrition at the School of Health, Sport and Bioscience at the University of East London, reveals that in 1948 sports nutrition was in its infancy and that most research at that point had been war-related and concentrated on issues such as hydration for soldiers.

Eating habits

However, the Ministry of Health was commissioned to interview athletes about their eating habits during the “Austerity” Games and discovered that most athletes had a high protein diet regardless of the event they participated in.

The ministry reported that “athletes were more likely to consume protein for sports performance probably because of its muscle building properties”. Dixon adds that this may no longer be the case as “most nutritional advice is based on the length of the event. As a rule of thumb, the longer the event, the more need there is to rely on the carbohydrate/fat burning energy system.”

Rations

In 1947, the minister of food John Strachey MP announced that foreign competitors at the Games could bring 25lbs of food allowance, but added that British competitors would be given no extra rations. British athletes complained of how difficult it was to train on basic food rations of 2,600 calories per day, though if they were selected for the Olympic team their rations were increased to 3,900 calories.

“Nobody knew anything about diet,” says Sylvia Cheeseman who ran in the 200 metres during the 1948 Olympics. “It was very hard



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to get hold of meat, though there was unrationed whale meat. It was horrible, but I was so intent on getting my protein that I ate it.”

Science

Dixon claims that as the science has developed, the role of sports nutrition has completely changed. “Today’s nutritionist has a number of roles on top of advising athletes about what to eat to optimise their performance. These could include liaising with the food providers and making sure a mixed and nutritional meal is provided.”

This trend is reinforced by Martin McElhatton, chief executive of WheelPower

With the 2012 Games, the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) has issued its own “food vision”, a sign of how important food is to the Games, for athletes and visitors alike.

at Stoke Mandeville Stadium, the host venue for many 2012 Paralympic Games pre-Games training camps and events. McElhatton says that the competing teams have their own nutritionists who coordinate with the head cook.

Menus are designed to meet the individual requirements of athletes. “The



Athletes are always looking for ways to optimise their performance.

needs of a power muscle sport are different to those of an athlete who requires fine muscle skills”, he explains.

Also under consideration are the dietary requirements for different religions among the teams along with potential problems such as food allergies, including gluten intolerance.

Taking care

After speaking to Stoke Mandeville Stadium’s head cook, it is clear that although the science of nutrition is vital, there is a lot of love and care in the preparation of the food the athletes are already familiar and secure with.

McElhatton adds that Olympic and Paralympic athletes take great care over their vitamin supplements and prescription medications, with nutritionists ensuring that they don’t fall foul of the International Olympic and Paralympic Committees’ regulations in the World Anti-Doping Agency code.

However Joseph “Joe” Birrell, a 110 metre hurdler with the 1948 British Olympic team, remembers how “times were different”. He explains: “We ate Horlicks’ tablets by the handful. With no sweets available, they were a real treat.”

He is not alone in his cavalier attitude to nutrition. In 2008, the Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt claimed that chicken McNuggets were the key to his success in Beijing.

Sports nutrition is an evolving science, one that changes with the beliefs, practicalities and attitudes of the time. French lawyer and gastronome Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin wrote in 1825: “La destinée des nations dépend de la manière dont elles se nourrissent.” Roughly translated, it says “the destiny of a nation depends on how they are fed”. The 2012 Games is no exception.

Speaking their language

With 205 nations being represented at the London 2012 Games, it is important for local businesses to meet the diverse language needs of tourists, says **David Russell**.

William Shakespeare as a foreign language teacher? That would be an original yarn befitting of The Globe Theatre’s decision to perform 37 of the bard’s plays in 37 different languages in the build up to the London 2012 Games.

Imagine watching King Lear in Aboriginal, The Tempest in Arabic or Love’s Labour Lost in British Sign Language. With French as the official co-leading language of the Olympics alongside English, the cultural benefits being presented by the Games are hard to ignore.

Customer service

With over 300 languages spoken in London, and around 100 in Hackney, the borough is well placed to deal with the flow of tourists coming to watch the Games at Hackney-based venues.

As such, it makes good business and cultural sense to tailor services to meet their needs, including speaking their language. With a range of products and services on offer, from ice cream to hotel accommodation, what better way to enrich the tourist experience of the Games by having familiar services advertised and translated into their native language.

A recent survey of 2,000 adults by People 1st Training and YouGov revealed that almost three out of four Britons believe that the quality of customer service needs to improve in time for the 2012 Games. According to the survey, if this was achieved, sales could increase by up to 10 per cent.

Multilingual

Language schools also have a key role to play in highlighting multilingual awareness. Their services are a valuable investment for the Games by providing businesses and customers with added value as well as raising cultural knowledge and understanding.



Meeting the expectations of Olympic visitors: It makes good business and cultural sense to tailor services to meet their needs.

Caroline Rowe, a French tutor who works with individuals and businesses at La Jolie Ronde, a language school in Hackney, says: “There is more interest in [learning] French and young children definitely want to learn.”

Rowe believes that the London 2012 Games will be a great motivator for young people and adults to learn new languages. She sees new commercial developments such as Westfield Stratford City as important hubs for language learning alongside the job opportunities created around the 2012 Games.

Benefits

Despite the obvious educational and business benefits of learning another language, Britain still has one of the poorest records of learning foreign languages in Europe. So how can multilingual awareness be raised among those who are still unsure of the benefits?

Encouraging local people to use everyday greetings, from hello to goodbye, or to comment on the weather in another language is a start. For those working in shopping malls or in catering, explaining about seasonal fruit or fashion tips when selling shoes could make a difference to the profit margin and customer experience.

Tourists appreciate how much care is taken over them, not only during the

Olympic and Paralympic Games, but long afterwards. The 2000 Sydney Olympics boosted tourist numbers by 15 per cent and increased the annual tourism total by 11 per cent. Barcelona’s 1992 Olympiad led it to be the third most popular destination for short holidays in Europe.

Opportunities

On the face of it, this isn’t really a great challenge as many local shop keepers and stall owners already speak to culturally diverse customers in different languages daily. As a result they gain customer loyalty.

Businesses also learn new terms from their customers which they can speak with more confidence to another customer from the same country of origin. The words learned can also be helpful in identifying new customer needs and business opportunities.

Multilingual awareness enriches any commercial relationship and the 2012 Games is no exception. It also has the potential to create local business ambassadors whose services are so good that when the visitors return home their memories of Hackney are shared positively with other future tourists.

William Shakespeare would be proud.

Visit: <http://www.lajolieronde.co.uk/>

History in mind

With the 2012 Games only months away, **Keith Mahon** scans the history books to discover what Hackney residents can learn from the last five cities to host the Olympics.

2008 – Beijing, China

The predecessor to the forthcoming London 2012 Games was considered an opportunity for China to promote the development of the nation, and reinforce Beijing's position as a vital global economic centre. Hosting the Olympics provided tangible benefits to the people of the Chinese capital, with vast investment in improving air quality, public hygiene, education and public transport, including three new subway lines. The Olympic year also saw significant gains in employment, with volunteers and staff receiving high level training in hospitality, media, and information technology among others. Olympic-related investment attracted new businesses, protecting Beijing from the looming global recession. However, its Olympic sites have suffered from a lack of public use ever since, and are in danger of falling into disrepair at a cost of £9m a year to maintain.

2004 – Athens, Greece

Billed as a spiritual homecoming, the Athens Games became a cautionary tale for any city hosting the Olympics as Greek taxpayers continue to pay the cost. Operational spending ballooned from the planned £611m to £2.5bn, with the total cost escalating from £10bn to £15bn. Immediately after the Olympics, Greece lost 70,000 associated jobs, the majority in construction which forms a significant portion of Greece's gross domestic product. Although the infrastructure and public transport systems of Athens improved, proposed urban renewal to improve the poorer areas of the city stalled as the economy contracted. By 2006, 21 of the 22 Olympic venues were no longer in use, with many simply abandoned, although most have since been restored.



Opening ceremony at the Athens Games in 2004.
Picture credit: Theodora.com

2000 – Sydney, Australia

The first Olympics of the new millennium rebranded Australia as a desirable travel destination and an attractive place for new businesses. Employment nationally gained from the improved tourism market and overseas investment, while previously neglected areas of the city were revitalised in time for the Games. The purpose built stadiums, initially underused, have benefited from national sporting leagues, and in

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2003 were used as venues for the Rugby World Cup. The Australian government attempted to engage the views of local Aboriginal and Pacific Island communities in the lead up to the Games. However, by

the summer of 2000, several protests took place at Olympic sites regarding the poor treatment of indigenous Australians.

1996 – Atlanta, United States

Although the event itself was considered a logistical success, the Atlanta Olympics have been criticised for being overly commercial. Development favoured new space for business opportunities as opposed to the urban renewal of some of the city's most deprived districts. This created some dissatisfaction among the local people who believed an opportunity to improve these areas was missed. Today, Atlanta has one of the largest city-suburban income gaps in the US as property prices and the cost of living have risen. That said, initial investment in business development has, to some extent, paid off. The Olympic stadiums have been converted into permanent homes for valuable sports franchises in baseball and American football. Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, which saw significant investment prior to the Games, was named the world's busiest airport in 2010.

1992 – Barcelona, Spain

The 1992 Olympics is one of the key reasons that the Cataluña region is a now one of the most popular European travel destinations. Funding made available through the Spanish government and private companies allowed the city to implement ambitious plans to improve the infrastructure, which cost three times more than the event itself. This redevelopment insulated Barcelona from the economic downturns of the early 1990s, and had a positive impact on unemployment and skilled labour in the region. The tourism industry, supported by high speed rail to the nearest airport, saw new arrivals doubling in the three years following the Games. Local sports activities also benefited with increased participation from all ages in the community. This in turn had a long term impact on grassroots football, tennis and basketball which significantly benefited local and national professional teams.

For a brief history of the Olympic games visit: <http://www.nostos.com/olympics/>