

Increasing Spatial Scales: Olympic Agenda 2020 and Portugal as Olympic Host

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Abstract

Recent bidding cycles for hosting the Olympic Games have struggled to attract interested cities due to public opposition against the unsustainability of the event. To mitigate such problem, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has recently adopted the Olympic Agenda 2020 (OA), which has already driven important changes regarding the Games' urban concept, including the possibility of countries being hosts. This paper compares a previous academic study regarding a hypothetical case of Lisbon bidding to host the event with a new study considering the entire country of Portugal as bidder. It pays especial attention to the country's existing venues, facilities, infrastructures, and planned interventions, as well as to the national territory planning policies in force. Findings show that the OA can generate greater opportunities for the country's territorial development, namely regarding issues of migration patterns, territorial diversity and inclusiveness, polycentrism, and mobility, but requiring larger infrastructure investment.

Author Keywords. Olympic Games, Olympic Agenda 2020, Mega-Event Planning, Spatial Planning, Transport Planning and Territory.

1. Introduction

With modern societies increasingly aware of sustainability issues, the Olympics became seen as excessive and ungovernable, producing weak legacies that highlight the costs of the event and outweigh previous cases of successful urban regenerations (Theodoraki, 2009). Thus, public opposition against the Games increased, resulting in the withdraw of several bids that left few candidate cities to host most recent editions (Hiller & Wanner, 2018). Consequently, the IOC adopted, in 2014, the OA, aimed at adapting the Games' concept to the new sustainability paradigms (Lopes dos Santos et al., 2021). One of the changes regards the possibility of cities, regions, or countries jointly bidding (IOC, 2020).

Prior to the OA, Santos (2015) developed an analysis of Lisbon's urban resources in the case the city was willing to bid, aimed at matching the requirements of the event with the city's existing facilities and planned interventions, highlighting the lack of sufficient high-quality sports venues in the city. Theoretically, the possibility of the entire territory of Portugal bidding for the event would increase the offer of venues, reducing the event's direct capital costs, and potentiating a more spatially equitable distribution of benefits. Possibly, it would also better match the long-term territorial plans of the country and its urban areas. Thus, the objective of this research is to investigate urban opportunities that the OA brings for potential bidders, using a comparison between hypothetical bids from Lisbon and Portugal, and taking in consideration the country's National Program for Spatial Planning Policy (PNPOT).

2. Methodology

Considering the criteria below and the Olympic Programme for Tokyo 2020, Santos (2015, p.45-46) has identified the most appropriate existing and planned sports venues in Lisbon's Metropolitan Area for hosting Olympic events.

1. Dimension (field of play and spectator capacity)
2. Location (regarding Lisbon's city centre)
3. Relative location (to form clusters)
4. Competition history (national/international)
5. Uniqueness (stand-alone high-quality mono-functional venues)
6. Refurbishment opportunity (prioritizing renovation over new construction)
7. Surrounding spaces (for permanent/temporary works)

Regarding the changes induced by the OA, for the case of Portugal, criteria 2 and 3 are not relevant, making criterion 5 also irrelevant. Criteria 6 and 7 are not applicable, as this analysis aims to compare the case studies regarding existing resources or planned interventions. Both cases consider only stadiums, indoor arenas, exhibition centers, and specialized venues (swimming pools, special arenas, tracks, outdoor fields, and marinas), excluding routes for road events.

3. Results

Results for Portugal's case study are shown in [Figure 32](#). Most venues are located in the largest cities of the western coastal line of mainland Portugal. The metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Oporto (including Braga) hold the majority of the venues. The longest distance by car between any two identified venues is 654kms (5h50, but close to 9h by land public transport).

There is a relatively good scattering of venues throughout the Portuguese territory. In particular for indoor arenas, 6 of the 17 identified venues are outside the metropolitan areas (36% of the spectator capacity). Among the TOP6 with the largest capacity, three are in the interior of the country. Compared to the TOP10 arenas in Lisbon, the TOP10 in Portugal represent an increase of capacity of 40,5%.

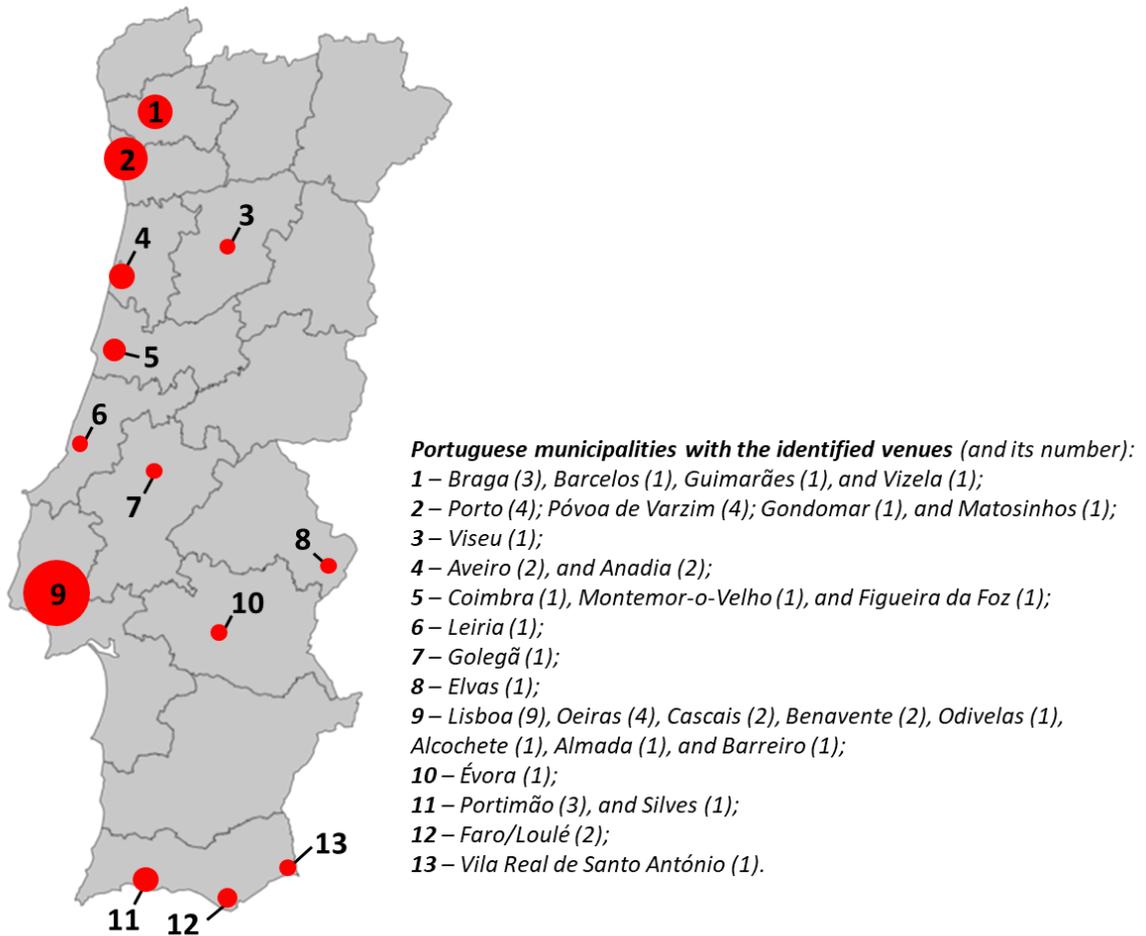


Figure 32: Map of municipalities with the most relevant venues to host Olympic Games events and media activities.

Comparing to Lisbon, the country’s list suppresses the necessity of building new arenas, also leaving Feira Internacional de Lisboa free to host media and broadcasting activities. High-quality exhibition centers exist in almost all the five main venue clusters (except Coimbra). Also, as a legacy of the UEFA European Championship in 2004, half of the 14 identified stadiums are outside the metropolitan areas (43% of stadium’s spectator capacity). 15 of the 21 specialized venues are too outside the metropolises.

4. The PNPOT

By analyzing the PNPOT (DGT, 2018, 2020), four strictly interdependent aspects with relevance for the context of this research prevailed, being described in [Table 8](#).

	Diagnosis	Strategy
Migration	Demographic disequilibrium between cities is justified by outer international migrations for job opportunities, and by internal migrations from lower to higher density areas.	Facilitate investment in local development to intensify the connectivity, offer, and accessibility to public services (health, education, social support, justice, culture, sport). Take advantage of weather conditions, security, and hospitality to attract foreign residents.
Diversity	Alternative and collaborative economies, grounded on territorial diversity of local/regional resources, can reinforce the interurban and rural-urban relations, and contribute to mitigate the loss of population in low density areas.	Develop strategies to increase social inclusion and general services, dynamize the uniqueness of local/regional natural and cultural patrimony/resources and promote the development of cross-border interrelationships. Promote a more balanced and polycentric economic dynamic that values the complementarities of regions and their diversified functionalities.
Polycentrism	Very low level of polycentric development, as most urban centers present low density, connectivity, and territorial cooperation.	Focus on the articulation between urban areas, promoting competitiveness and stimulating innovation, developing all regions rather than decreasing their differences. Cooperate to improve and capitalize the offer of facilities and transport to be distributed according to the specific needs and levels of specialization, promoting functional versatility and complementarity.
Mobility	Mobility is essential to attract residents and visitors, capturing investment and external income to develop polycentrism. It is necessary to reduce travel necessities and time distances, foster more sustainable modal split and integrated infrastructure networks.	Increase the network's sustainability, contributing for decarbonization, especially within metropolitan areas and in higher density coastal lines. Railways must play an important role and their integration with ports and airports has to be strengthened to enhance international economic dynamics and touristic attractiveness.

Table 8: Subjects in the PNPOT most relevant for the hosting of the Olympic Games in Portugal

5. Towards an Olympic country

The districts and municipalities of the identified venues account for more than 90 and 30%, respectively, of the country's population (INE, 2020), thus allowing almost the entire population to engage with, be part of, and benefit from the Olympics. That would contribute for the promotion of city culture, patrimony, and tradition, increasing site attractiveness for tourism, firm location, economic stimulation, job creation, and city competitiveness, mitigating 'glocalization' and potentiating desirable migration.

Many sports venues (especially outdoor) are outside the metropolitan areas bringing the opportunity for such territories to take advantage of natural resources, culture, and traditions to specialize and become the country's reference for outdoor activities. The territories with unique high-quality venues have the chance to enhance their offer for high-performance athletes.

A good mobility system is essential to mitigate undesirable migration, promote spatial diversity, allow efficient resource exploitation, improve territorial cohesion, inclusion, and polycentrism. It is

also vital for the delivery of the Games, especially if hosted at large spatial scales. With an event's transport demand between 1.5 and 2 million additional trips/day (Bovy, 2004), the country would have to develop some infrastructure projects planned for long and needed for the country's economic development and recovery, as the new Lisbon airport (see Costa Silva, 2020). Also, the high-speed rail (TGV) would decrease Lisbon-Oporto travel time to 93 minutes, with stops in Leiria and Coimbra (RAVE, 2009). Other planned TGV lines have stops in regions with identified venues (GIF & RAVE, 2004; RAVE & GIF, 2009), thus providing for a well-connected Olympic transport network (excluding only the venues in Algarve).

6. Conclusions

In comparison to Lisbon case study, Portugal case study provides the following opportunities:

- higher offer of facilities, in quantity and quality.
- increase cities and country's attractiveness, counteracting migration patterns.
- promote territorial diversity and sport specialization.
- improve the mobility system, accelerating planned interventions.
- increase polycentrism as a consequence of all the former.

The OA positively affects Portugal's potential to bid for the Games, allowing for a better match between the event's requirements and the country's resources and long-term plans. However, an increase in sustainability does not necessarily mean a decrease in costs, especially if interventions regard transport infrastructure. Nonetheless, these interventions have the potential for accelerating the country's economic, social, and urban development.

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