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Alexandre Faure

(Fondation France-Japon de l'EHESS, EHESS)

May 2021

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Abstract

The simultaneous and uncontested election of Paris and Los Angeles to host the 2024 and 2028 Games, respectively, highlights the diminishing attractiveness of the Games. Considered too costly and disproportionate, a part of public opinion, particularly in the major candidate cities, is opposed to their city's bid. This criticism of the Games has affected the bids. Since the 2000s, the bids have become increasingly detailed, including particularly comprehensive information on the city, the Olympic urban project and its legacy. The fear of the "white elephants" in Athens in 2004 counterbalances the image of the Games of Sydney in 2000 and "Barcelona model" in 1992.

The Paris bid for 2024 was defined by its objective of budgetary restraint. This objective, shared by the bids for Tokyo 2016 and 2020, as well as Los Angeles for 2024 (elected for 2028), suggests that the values attached to the Olympic Games and the urban project have changed. Paris 2024's budgetary restraint is justified by an urban project that is fully integrated into the city, limited investment in sports facilities (most of which already exist), and an apparent lack of investment in transport infrastructure. Yet, in Paris's bid, transport is at the heart of the urban project.

The aim of this article is to understand how the organisers are able to present the Paris Games as modest in terms of budget, considering their ambitions include the regeneration of the northern suburbs of Paris, thanks to massive investment over several decades in urban renewal around the Stade de France, and new transport infrastructure. Taking into account the Grand Paris Express, and the importance of its construction for the Paris 2024 Games, how and why did the bid's sponsors omit the cost of the GPE (which include stations close to the Olympic venues) from the budget for Paris 2024?

Keywords

Olympic Games, Transport policy, Grand Paris, Costs, Paris 2024.

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Introduction

The simultaneous and uncontested election of Paris and Los Angeles to host the 2024 and 2028 Games, respectively, highlights the diminishing attractiveness of the Games. Considered too costly and disproportionate, a part of public opinion, particularly in the major candidate cities, is opposed to their city's bid (Fabry & Zeghni, 2020). This criticism of the Games has affected the bids. Since the 2000s, the bids have become increasingly detailed, including particularly comprehensive information on the city, the Olympic urban project and its legacy. The fear of the white elephants in Athens in 2004 counterbalances the successes of Sydney in 2000 and Barcelona in 1992.

The Paris bid for 2024 was defined by its objective of budgetary restraint. This objective, shared by the bids for Tokyo 2016 and 2020, as well as Los Angeles for 2024 (elected for 2028), suggests that the values attached to the Olympic Games and its urban project have changed. Paris 2024's budgetary restraint is justified by an urban project that is fully integrated into the city, limited investment in sports facilities (most of which already exist), and an apparent lack of investment in transport infrastructure. Yet, in Paris's bid, transport is at the heart of the urban project. The Olympic Village, which will be built in the suburbs, will be served by a new metro line as part of a very ambitious project called the Grand Paris Express (GPE), comprising 4 new lines and about 60 new metro stations. This project, approved a few years before the bid for the Games, has been substantially modified to fit France's various bids to host mega-events. However, the budget for the Paris Games remains low, with less than €4 billion in planned expenditure, of which €1,265 billion from public authorities, and no mention of the GPE expenditure whatsoever. The aim of this article is to understand how the organisers are able to present the Paris Games as modest in terms of budget, considering their ambitions include the regeneration of the northern suburbs of Paris, thanks to massive investment over several decades in urban renewal around the Stade de France, and new transport infrastructure. Taking into account the Grand Paris Express, and the importance of its construction for the Paris 2024 Games, how and why did the bid's sponsors omit the cost of the GPE (which include stations close to the Olympic venues) from the budget for Paris 2024?

Our hypothesis is that the Olympic and Paralympic Games are, in fact, a source of additional cost for the Grand Paris Express project. However, this cost has not been properly estimated in order to avoid harming the Paris 2024 bid. The Paris bid for the 2024 Games transfers the cost of adapting the Grand Paris Express transport project for the Games to the *Société du Grand Paris* (the public company in charge of building the Grand Paris Express metro), without including this expenditure in the Olympic urban project or in the Olympic budget. This transfer of cost has double aims: first, convincing the IOC members of the viability of the Paris bid; and second, artificially reducing the budget of the bid in order to improve the inhabitants' acceptance of the organization of the Games, thus forestalling anticipated local criticisms. Thus, while the GPE is not part of the Olympic project, this infrastructure project benefits from the resources allowed for the Games. Furthermore, we hypothesize that the doubts about the method of financing the Grand Paris Express that were raised in 2017 conflicted with the schedule of the submission of the Paris bid file and its evaluation by the IOC, which both took place just as the Cour des Comptes de la République was proposing a reform of the GPE's governance (Faure, 2020). The context of the Paris 2024 bid, a combination of the Games' new image (thanks to global cities) and changes to the local urban project, made Games with a reasonable budget possible.

This article will explain the context behind the emergence of the Grand Paris Express transport infrastructure project, the result of both the political reshuffling of the institutional landscape in

the Paris region and the congestion affecting all modes of transport in this region. It will also outline the series of bids Paris made to host the Games for 2008, 2012 and 2024, all of which took place parallel with the construction of the Grand Paris Express project. These bids present a similar project, particularly in terms of geography, but their budgets are radically different, partly due to the Grand Paris Express project. Finally, the article will examine the doubts raised about the method of financing the Grand Paris Express just as Paris was elected host city for 2024.

1. The Grand Paris Express: a major new infrastructure

1.1. 2004-2010: A long process of implementation

In the early 2000s, the main focus of development and urban planning in the Île-de-France region was the fight against traffic and public transport congestion. Congestion increases pollution, which in turn threatens the well-being of city dwellers. It also presents an economic problem due to the decreasing efficiency of infrastructure. These problems harmed the Paris region's attractiveness and competitiveness, and reinforced a negative image of living in the region. Congestion was a result of the concentric development of the city, which is served by a hub-and-spoke transport network that forces people to go through the centre of Paris to travel between suburbs. This organisation was therefore strongly criticised at this time (Gilli, 2014).

The political response to the congestion issue was made more complicated by the structure of government in Île-de-France. Before 2000, the state was the main player, but this structure was profoundly transformed by the decentralisation laws passed under the Jospin government (1997-2002). A transport organisation authority was created in 2000 called Syndicat des Transports d'Île-de-France (STIF), the management of which was transferred to the regional council in 2006, at which point STIF became the main institution for transport infrastructure investment and governance. The regional council shifted to a left-wing majority in 1998, which proceeded to reduce investment in road infrastructure to promote public transport. However, the comprehensive plan needed to be modified before investment could be massively redirected, and this modification only started in 2004. Thus, there was a relative government standstill in this matter at the beginning of the 2000s (Orfeuil & Wiel, 2012).

This fragmentation of authorities and players led to a multiplication of infrastructure projects around Paris (see the following four figures) between 2004 and 2007. Four projects were particularly noteworthy (Faure, 2018). The first was a project presented by the RATP (the public company in charge of operating the Paris metro) to build a metro "ring road" around Paris in order to relieve the hub-and-spoke network (2004). A second project was presented by the Val-de-Marne department, a department southwest of Paris led by the Communist Party, for a metro line crossing the most urbanised area of the department and connecting the various last stops of existing lines going into Paris (2006). A third project was presented by the regional council, the design of which was partly based on the first two projects (2007). Finally, a fourth project (Grand Paris Express - GPE) was initiated by the President of the Republic to create a complete loop connecting major economic centres and airports in the region.

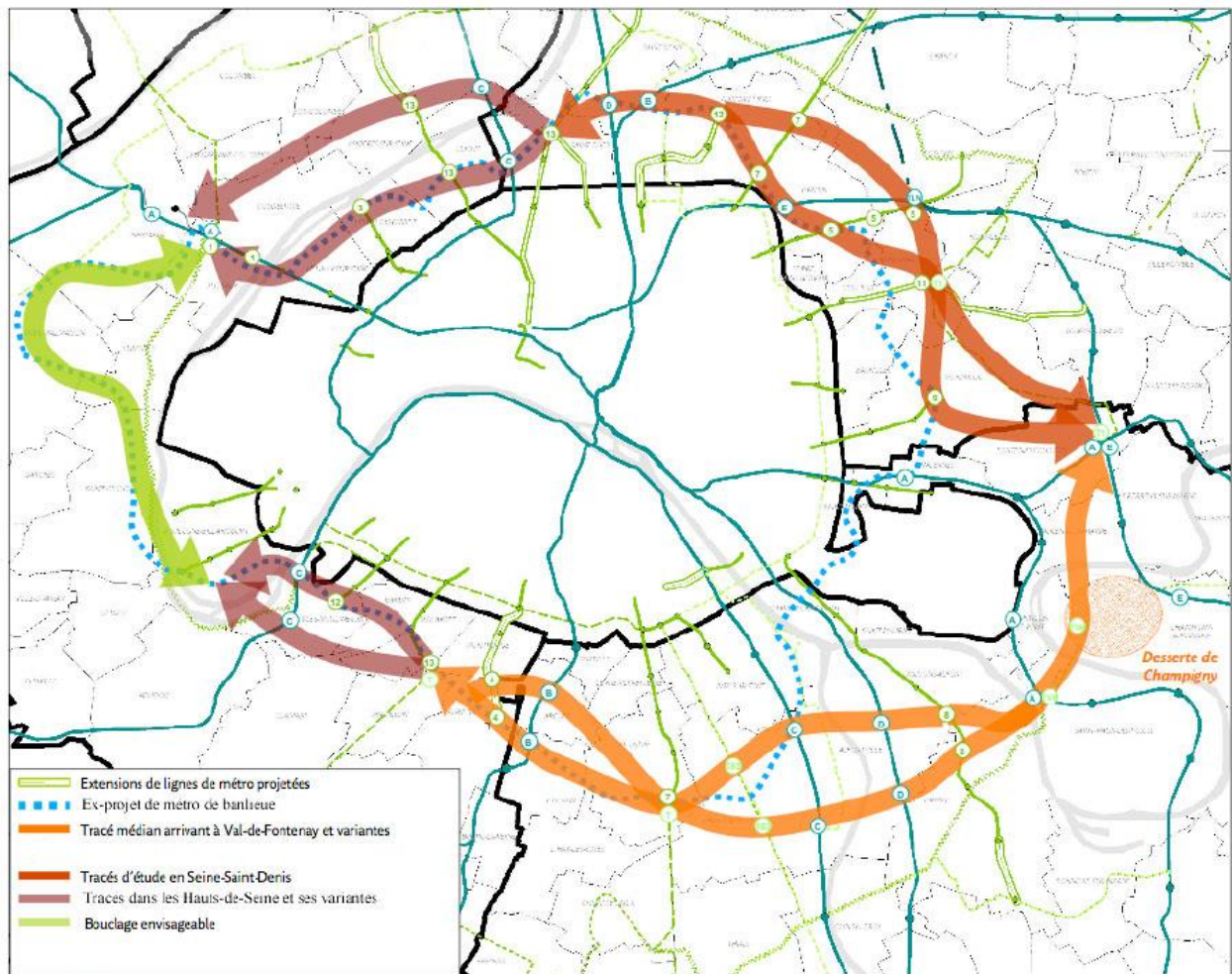


Figure 1 - RATP project – RATP, 2004

Projet de tracé Orbival



Figure 2 - Orbival project – Conseil Général du Val-de-Marne, 2006

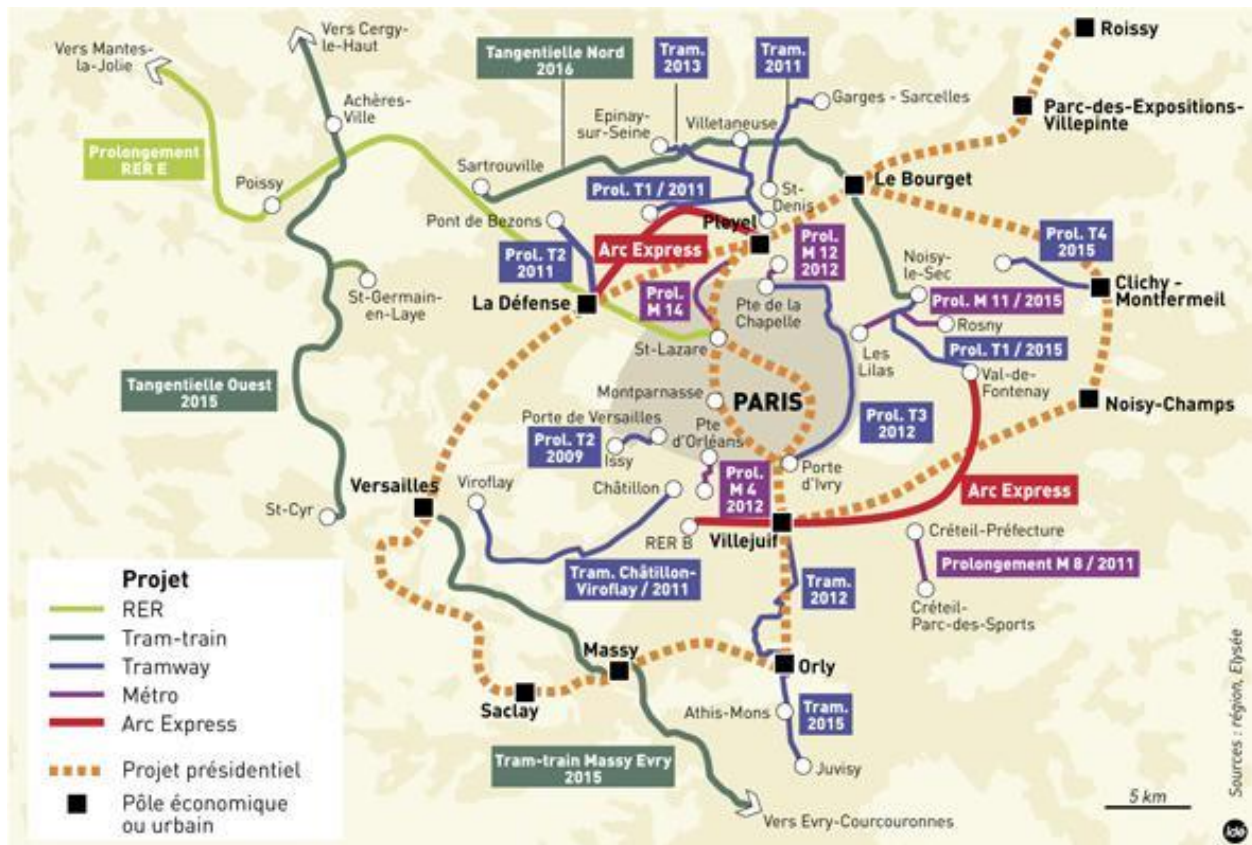


Figure 3 - Arc-Express project – Conseil Régional d'Ile-de-France, 2007

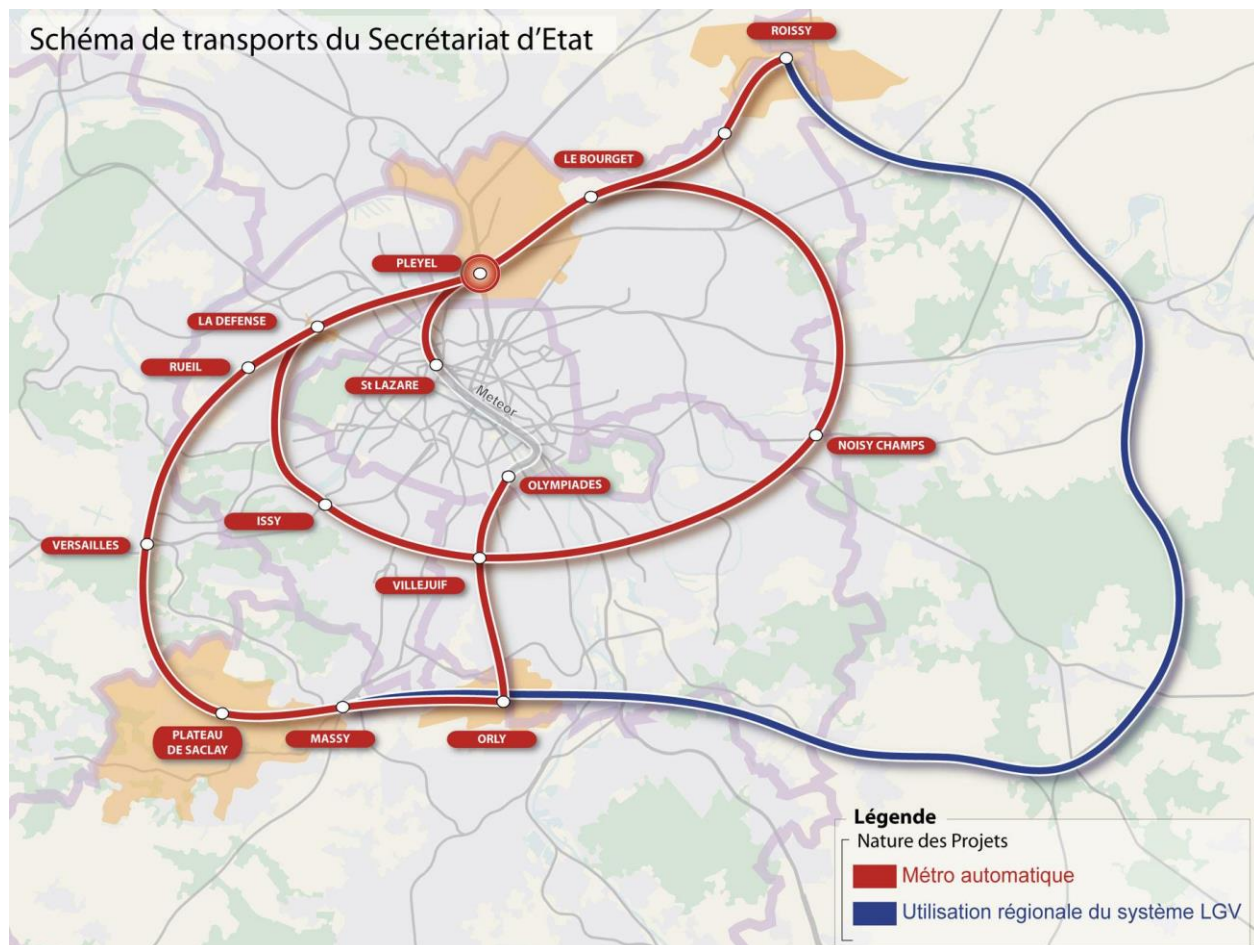


Figure 4 - Grand Paris Express project – Rapport Carrez, 2009

Ultimately, it was the GPE that became the main project. The President of the Republic appointed a Secretary of State in charge of its development (Christian Blanc). A law was voted in 2010 specifically to outline the project. Finally, a parliamentary report was commissioned to find a way to finance the project (*député* Gilles Carrez).

1.2. 2010-2017: A regional tax system to finance a national project

Transport infrastructure funding is often the most crucial issue for decision makers (Flyvberg, 2008). Since the 1990s, public transport in the Paris region has been financed through four mechanisms: ticketing, a payroll tax (transport payment), state investment (five-year plan) and investment by local authorities (municipalities, departments and region).

This method of financing is insufficient for the GPE. The cost of the GPE was estimated at more than €28.9 billion over the period from 2010 to 2025, and about €24 billion in additional operating costs. In his 2009 report on financing the GPE, Gilles Carrez, *député* and mayor of a municipality in the eastern suburbs of Paris, recommended finding new sources of revenue.

To finance the project, the report suggests borrowing and an initial contribution from the central government. These loans and their interest would then be reimbursed by regional taxes: a tax on office property (Taxe sur les bureaux), a tax on public and private companies using existing railways (Impôt Forfaitaire sur les Entreprises de Réseau - IFER; taxes mainly paid by two public companies: RATP and SNCF), and a tax on households (Taxe Spéciale d'Équipement - TSE). In

addition, project funding includes a small European subsidy, miscellaneous contributions, and, since 2019, a tourist tax on hotel nights (see the breakdown in the Figure 5 below).

A public company (Société du Grand Paris - SGP), created by the Grand Paris law voted in 2010 and run by the state, is in charge of financing and building infrastructure. Once this infrastructure has been built, RATP will be responsible for its operation.

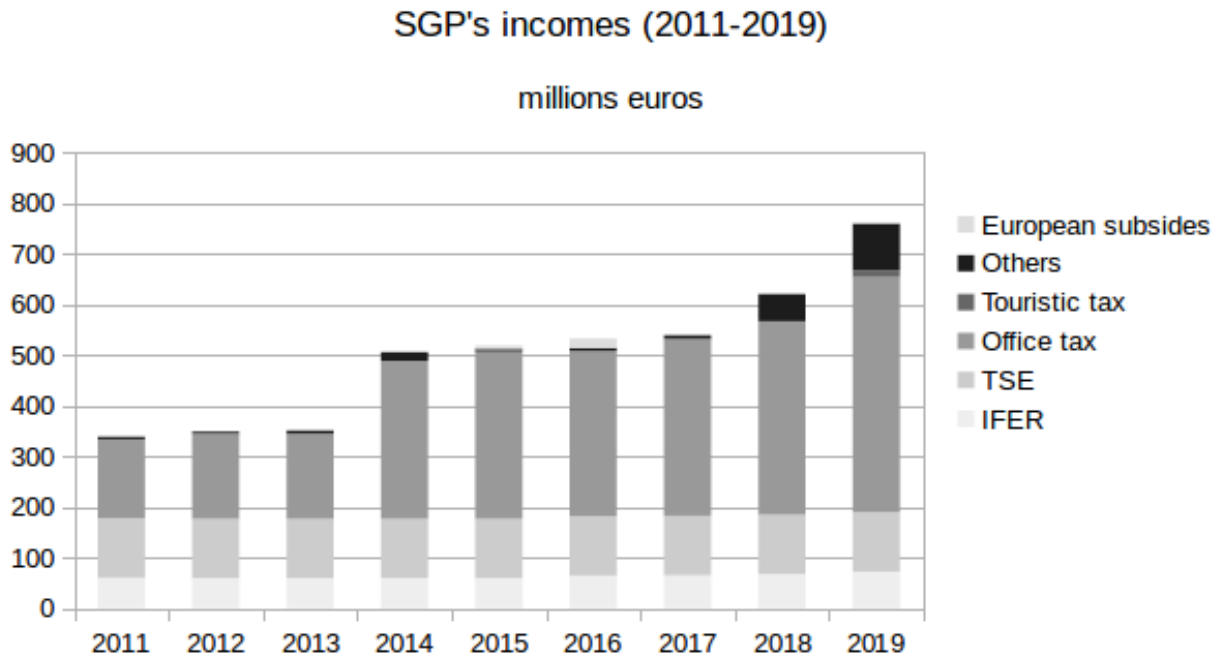


Figure 5 - SGP's income – Alexandre Faure, 2020

Two important elements for the evolution of urban planning in Île-de-France are made clear in this institutional and financial set-up. First, unlike other French regions, the state and central government remain major players in planning and transport policy. Decentralisation, which would mean transferring responsibilities to the regional council or to the departments, has not taken place in the Paris region. Secondly, the financial package shows that the central government and parliamentarians want the GPE to be paid exclusively by local taxes. As a result, any debate on the significant resources allocated to the Paris region compared to other regions is not reopened. In fact, the GPE project's legitimacy is only reinforced by concentrating taxation on the Île-de-France region.

The election of Paris as the host city for the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games took place in 2017 in this context of rethinking the way in which the Grand Paris Express is financed.

2. 2001-2017: Evolution of the Paris bids for the Games

2.1. Shift in the objectives of the Games' organisers and the International Olympic Committee (IOC)

The selection of Paris as host city for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2024 is characterised by a new challenge for Olympic habits. Nowadays, the Olympic Games have a relatively negative image due to various scandals surrounding figures from the national and

international Olympic institutions, as well as the high financial, social and environmental costs of equipment and infrastructure. In this context, Paris 2024 confirms a positive trend for so-called "sober" Games. This trend dates back to the 2012 Games in London, which had a limited Olympic urban project, prioritising instead quality improvements and the use of existing equipment. The urban regeneration that was carried out by the London Games was presented as respectful of social and environmental issues, a far cry from the white elephants of Athens and Sochi or the brutal urban changes of Rio and Beijing. In many ways, the bids of Paris (2008, 2012, 2024), Tokyo (2016, 2024) and New York (2020) all had similar approaches to the Games. This circulation of bid models led to a transfer of knowledge and skills. This knowledge increase was accompanied by the improvements made by successive bids from a city or a country (Süborg *et al.*, 2008; Robert, 2011; Lauermann, 2014). London was awarded the Games after only one bid. France, on the other hand, made multiple bids before the success of Paris 2024 (Lille 2004, Paris 2008, Paris 2012) (Gouguet *et al.*, 2017), as had Japan (Osaka 2008, Tokyo 2016) before Tokyo 2020. The scientific literature on the influence of Olympic bids on urban public policy remains limited (Salisbury *et al.*, 2017). Many authors have produced monographs to study the link between a city's urban strategy and the bid for the Games, notably the cases of Cape Town (Hiller, 2000), Toronto (Oliver, 2003), and Tokyo (Appert and Languillon-Aussel, 2017). The objective in these studies has been to show how bids are used to mobilize public and private actors in order to promote the economic growth of the city and encourage development (Surborg *et al.*, 2008). In the recent case of Toronto, the abandoned bid for 2024 was marked by a great difficulty in taking into account the elements of previous bids to improve it and to meet the IOC criteria (Kassens-Noor, 2019). The study of the evolution of the bids has also revealed the great continuity in the case of Istanbul from the interwar period until the recent bids, even though the city has never been elected host (Bilsel and Zelef, 2011). A failed bid is of great interest to understand how a city's leaders diagnose the urban problems they face and propose solutions that could be implemented if the city is elected. But more generally, these studies show that a failed bid can also present a legacy that is sometimes tangible, whether by creating coalitions of actors (Mowatt et Travis, 2015), by initiating development projects (Benneworth, 2010), or by encouraging the investment of private actors (Lauermann, 2014). More critically, studies of the link between Olympic bids and urban strategy have focused on the implementation of neoliberal policies that sometimes brutally transform the city (Spirou, 2013; van Wynsberghe *et al.*, 2013; Viehoff, 2015). These transformations are both the result of the work carried out in preparation for the event, but also of a range of development and urban renewal policy instruments leading to gentrification, exclusion of the most disadvantaged populations, and changes in public and commercial spaces that are in conflict with existing social patterns. The criticisms also concern the cost of the event, both in terms of infrastructures and organization. The increase of the budgets and the opacity of the organizing committees, as well as the guarantees brought by the public actors for the private partners, enable to foresee important contradictions, which this article treats partly (Flyvbjerg, 2008; Smith, 2012;).

Studies from the 1980s and the 1990s have highlighted the power of cities in the global economic competition and the inequalities that this competition generate domestically (Rimmer, 1986; Sassen, 1991 and 1994; Drennan, 1996; Machimura, 1998; Brenner, 1999). Therefore, it seems particularly interesting for the field of urban studies to note that, of recent and forthcoming Olympics, three leading global cities have hosted or will host the Games (London, Tokyo, Paris).

Global cities have a singular application pattern. The objective of these cities' leaders is to prove the possibility of organising the Games at a lower cost, using the many pre-existing

infrastructures (Lauermann, 2014; Salisbury *et al.*, 2017). The strength of the global city lies in its capacity to host both the essential functions of modern urban economy (finance, research, technology, networks, qualified labour) and major diplomatic, political and sporting events (events, symposia, international conferences, mega-events). Thus, the impact of the Games is limited to a few new or improved facilities rather than a vast urban planning programme.

2.2. The fluctuating importance of transport in the Paris 2008, 2012 and 2024 bids

According to some economists and geographers, the 1990s and 2000s were a period of stagnation for the Paris region (Davezies, 2008; Orfeuill and Wiel, 2012; Gilli, 2014). The successive bids aimed to support political efforts to increase the region's attractiveness and to expand the urban public transport system. In every bid, the Olympic Village is located in areas under renovation where it is possible to accelerate work without changing the nature of the original project.

The 2008, 2012 and 2024 bids share common objectives: regenerating the north of Paris and enhancing the architectural heritage of the centre of Paris. All three bids were built around two geographical centres, one at the heart of the capital along the banks of the Seine, the second around the Stade de France in Seine-Saint-Denis.

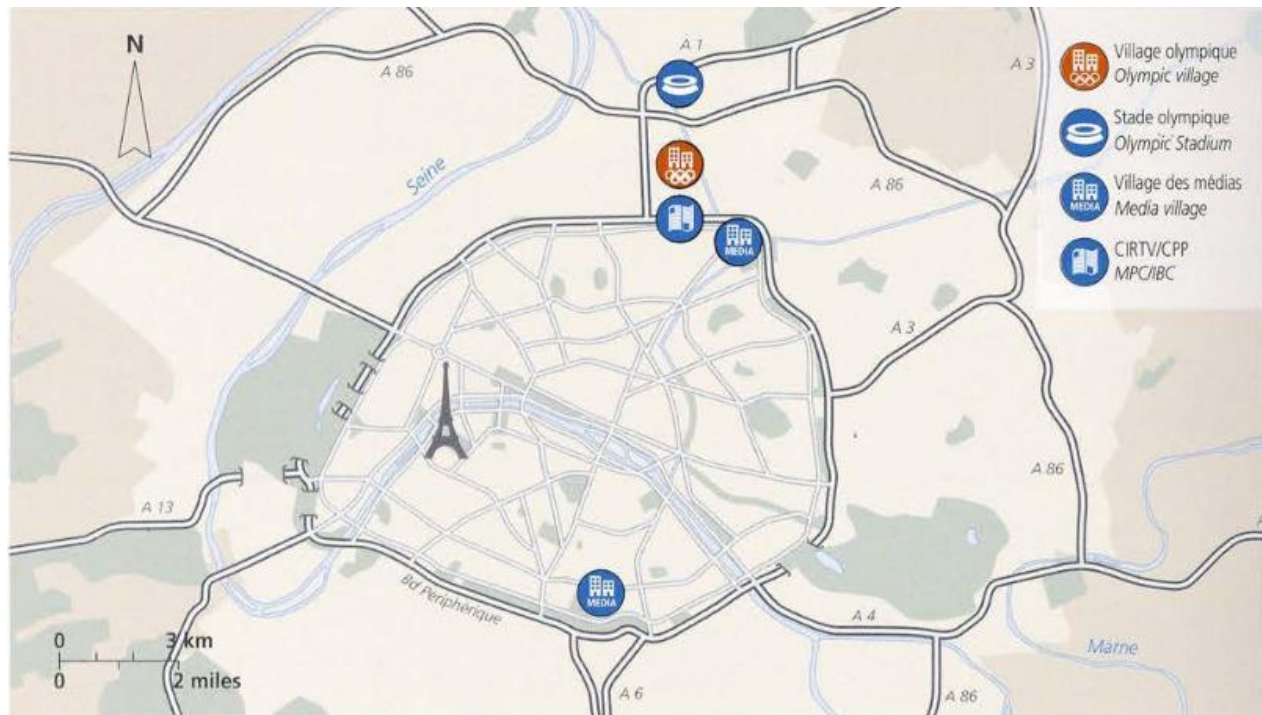


Figure 6 - Bid map 2008 – Paris 2008 Bid



Figure 7 - Bid map 2012 – Paris 2012 Bid



Figure 8 - Bid map 2024 – Paris 2024 Bid

The differences between the three bids become apparent, however, when analysing their respective budgets. This analysis is based on the budgets included in the bid files, divided into the budget for the Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (OCOG) and the budget for other expenses not supervised by the Committee (non-OCOG). The OCOG budget includes organisational costs, delegation travel, security and labour costs. It does not take into account the cost of the bid itself or any studies carried out for it. The non-OCOG budget includes the construction costs of the Olympic Village, sports facilities, transport infrastructure, urban development, etc.

The graphs below (Figures 9 and 10) show that the budget allocated to the OCOG increases with each application, from approximately \$1,877 million for 2008 to \$4,083 million for 2024. Conversely, the non-OCOG budget decreases by half over the same period, but with a very significant fluctuation for the 2012 bid (3 times higher than for 2008 and 6 times higher than for 2024). This fluctuation is partly explained by the budget allocated to transport infrastructure,

urban development and sports facilities. Indeed, the budget for transport infrastructure is 28 times higher for the 2012 bid than for the 2024 bid.

This reduction of the non-OCOG budget should be considered in the context of the Grand Paris area. Indeed, the bid for 2012 was submitted at the beginning of the 2000s when a new ring road transport infrastructure around Paris was not yet on the table and regional governance was being reshuffled. The bid for 2024 took place between the 2013 state-region agreement establishing the map of the New Grand Paris and the 2017-2018 overhaul of the financing method.

In the 2024 bid, the Grand Paris Express project is presented as fundamental to the preparations for the Games. But the budget for the 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games does not include the construction of the GPE. The narrative of the bid is therefore arranged so the GPE is included as part of the Games project, while not dependent on the Games for its existence or execution. This argument is based on Paris' status as a global city. The leaders of the Parisian metropolis argues they does not need the Games to bring about urban change, but the Games need a global city to break away from the image of a spendthrift and oversized event (Faure, 2020b).

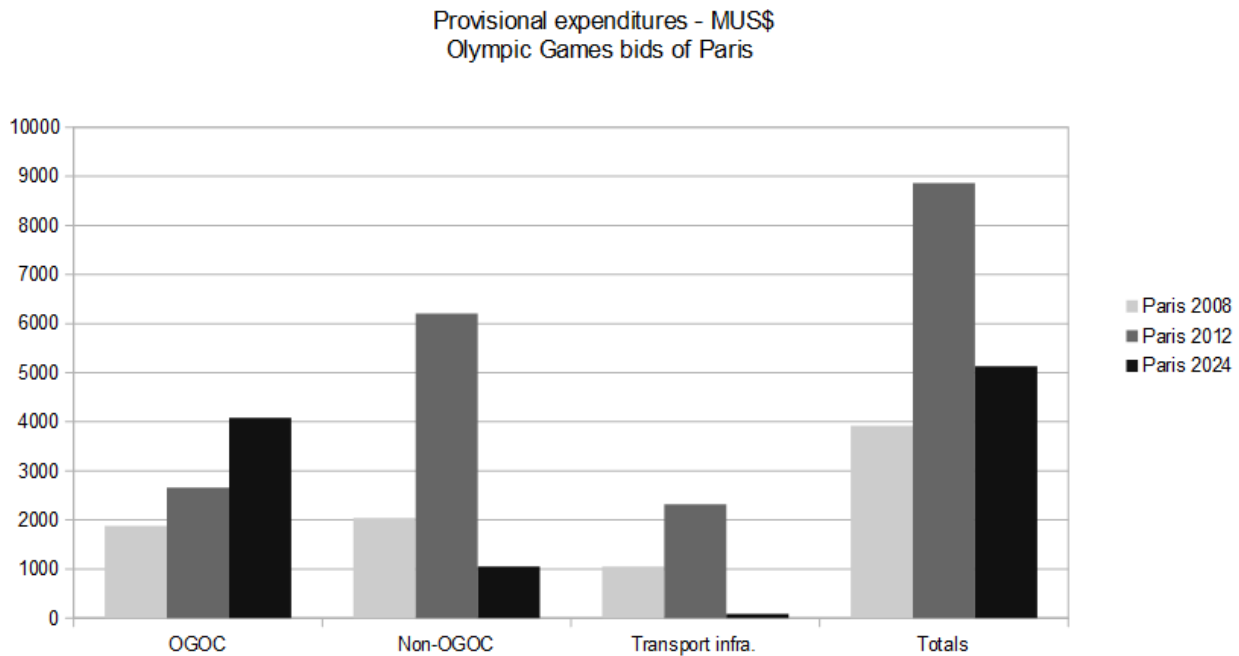


Figure 9 - OCOG and non-OCOG provisional expenditures for Paris 2008, 2012, 2024 – Alexandre Faure 2020

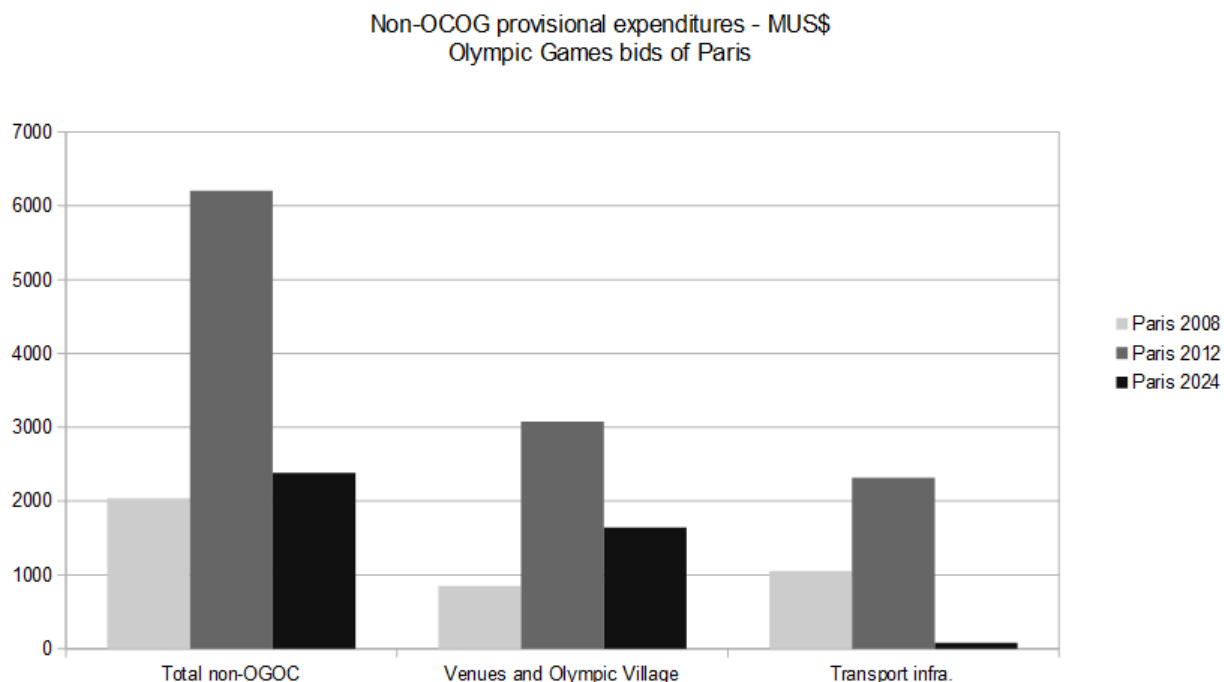


Figure 10 - Non-OCOG provisional expenditures for Paris 2008, 2012, 2024 – Alexandre Faure

3. The Grand Paris Express and the bid for the 2024 Games are bound together by the same narrative framework

3.1. Urban regeneration of the Seine-Saint-Denis department

In one of the Games' promotional films ("Paris 2024 = Passion & Purpose"), the organisers show the Olympic venues: the temporary sites in the Paris Centre district, on the one hand, and the permanent facilities in the Grand Paris area, on the other. The latter area concerns Seine-Saint-Denis in particular, a department that cuts across the northeast of the dense Parisian conurbation. The video shows that this department is both the youngest and the most cosmopolitan in France. However, it fails to say that it is also the poorest. This poverty is directly linked to the department's inadequate public services, as well as a deindustrialization process that has left large tracts of disused industrial land and railway north of Paris. The area hosting the Villages for the 2008, 2012 and 2024 bids is characterised by a large number of industrial wastelands, poor quality housing, relatively poor local authorities and major urban disruptions (canals, motorways, railways, major public facilities). The 2012 bid is rather unique, as the Village was planned in Paris, but on its northwestern edge, in a district that is being regenerated, with a large railway wasteland. The 2008 and 2024 Villages were planned to be built on industrial wasteland outside Paris. In all three applications, the Village is a tool for urban regeneration already underway in this northern area.

Urban regeneration is set in motion by two important city players: the state and private developers. Land and real estate pressure in the centre of Paris is pushing many investors to choose more distant locations, particularly in this area, which remains relatively affordable compared to other suburbs in the west and south of Paris. For several decades now, the state has been investing in this urban area by relocating government agencies or creating new facilities, the

most symbolic of which is the Stade de France built for the 1998 FIFA World Cup. This sports facility is considered one of the great success stories of Seine-Saint-Denis, brought to attention especially during major football, rugby and athletics events. This stadium will be the Olympic stadium in 2024.

Thus, the bid highlights the benefits of the Games for this department's image and how they will help integration for young people not only through job creation and economic activity, but also through the improved public transport service provided by the Grand Paris Express. The 2024 Olympic urban project is part of a long-standing effort to upgrade the north of Paris by turning industrial wasteland into land opportunities for sports facilities and the Olympic village. The Contrat de Développement Territorial (Territorial Development Contract – CDT) signed between the municipalities in this area and state services is in line with this effort, making Plaine-Commune the cultural and events hub of Greater Paris. This argument is also linked to the image of the global city, as mega-events need to be fully integrated into the city, while also requiring unique facilities.

3.2. Paris 2024: Enhancing the discourse and image of the Grand Paris project

Thanks to the CDT, an urban planning tool for the Grand Paris project, the government has defined this area of Seine-Saint-Denis as a space for cultural creation (cinema, music, urban arts). It is also, since the inauguration of the Stade de France and the development of exhibition spaces around Le Bourget business airport, a venue for major sporting, cultural and sometimes diplomatic events (e.g., COP 21 in 2015).

« L'ampleur des transformations à l'échelle mondiale, la montée en puissance du fait urbain, son rôle dans les logiques économiques mondiales actuelles, les défis écologiques, rendent aujourd'hui plus aiguë la réflexion sur la place et le rôle des grandes métropoles, dont la métropole parisienne fait partie. [...] C'est là l'enjeu du projet du Grand Paris, projet de développement porté par l'Etat qui vise à renforcer le dynamisme de la région capitale et son attractivité au plan mondial, par la définition et la mise en œuvre d'une stratégie urbaine, économique et sociale, soutenable et solidaire pour ses territoires. » (CDT of Plaine-Commune, 2014).

Fundamentally, Paris' bid for the 2024 Games faces a problem of the level of authorities in charge, as shown by this quotation from the CDT of Plaine-Commune. First of all, it should be noted that the bid bears the name of the city of Paris, but includes Olympic sites spread over 13 Paris region municipalities (excluding water sports, handball and football) in 5 different departments (Paris, Seine-Saint-Denis, Hauts-de-Seine, Yvelines and Seine-et-Marne). The Olympic Village will be built in Seine-Saint-Denis in 3 municipalities (Saint-Denis, Saint-Ouen, Ile-Saint-Denis). Île-de-France is a region made up of more than 1,250 municipalities, 8 departments and around 50 inter-municipal bodies. That being said, the IOC does not require applicants to be a single municipality. Bids are made by a city in theory, but by any public institution in practice (Faure, 2020). It would thus have been possible for Paris to be officially endorsed by the regional council, or by a conglomerate of municipalities. However, this is not the case and this has a negative impact on the image of the region given by the Games. Indeed, although Seine-Saint-Denis is highlighted in the videos and hosts most of the infrastructure, the department is sidelined from symbolic representation. The images used for promotion are above all symbols of Paris, and not of its suburbs. The CDT, however, indicates that it is not Paris that is a global city, but the greater Paris area. Even the Grand Paris Express, designed for the development of suburban communities, is named after the city they orbit: Paris. The scale of the

Olympic Games and the scale of the Grand Paris Express correspond to the global city to which Île-de-France and Parisian leaders refer, but the symbolism of Paris 2024 does not represent it.

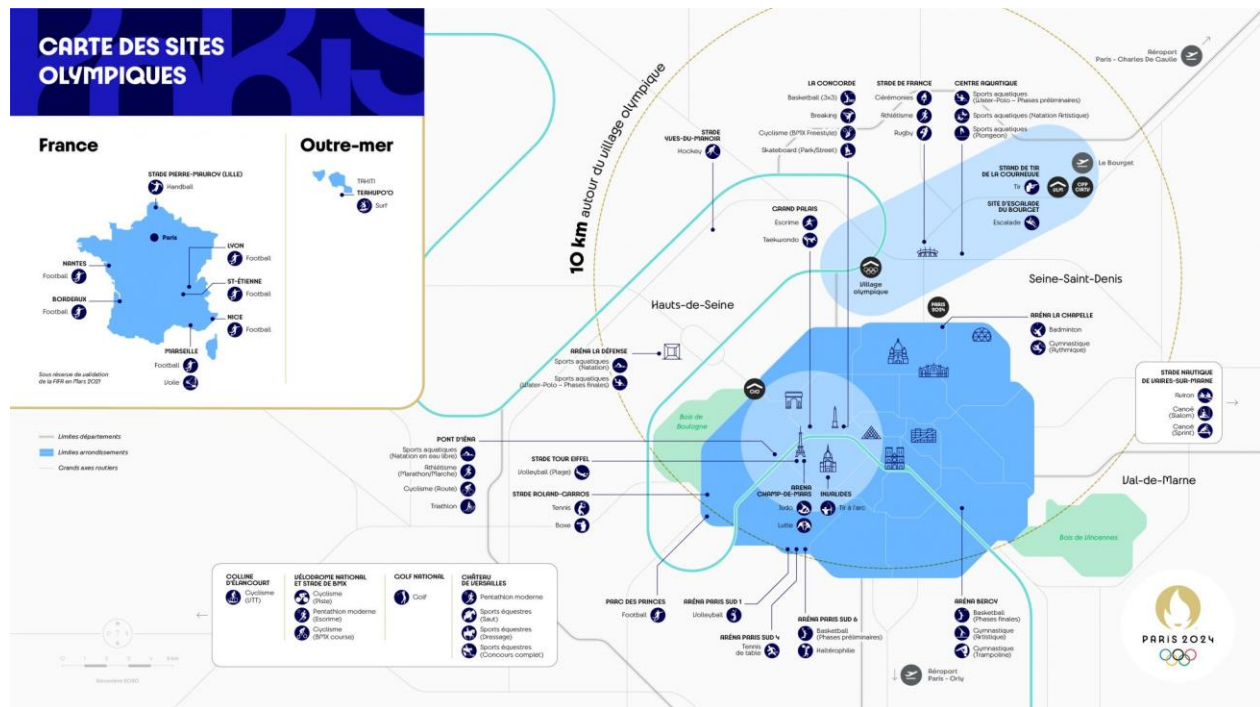


Figure 11 - Site venues maps – COJO Paris 2024 – 17/12/2020

4. Doubts about the financing of the Grand Paris Express and project setbacks

4.1. 2017-2018: The Cour des Comptes criticises the accounts of the Société du Grand Paris

In December 2017, the Cour des Comptes (an institution that audits public accounts) questioned the financing model of the Société du Grand Paris (SGP). The court's concern was that there were not enough employees to manage the finances and that the borrowing system was too precarious. The conclusion of its report called for an increase in revenue to compensate for a possible increase in interest rates. Indeed, the Cour des Comptes observed that the estimated cost of the GPE increased from 19 billion euros in 2008 to 38.5 billion euros in 2017. The Olympic Games are central to its analysis, since it is partly the commitments made for 2024 that have led to this increase. The report considers, for example, that the SGP would have focused more on keeping to schedules than on costs because of the Games (page 13, Court of Audit' report, December 2017).

Special focus is given to the 2024 Paris Games in the report, occupying some ten pages in Chapter 1 on cost drift. The Games are not the only issue under scrutiny; France's bid to host the 2025 Universal Exhibition in the Paris region led the government to make unsustainable promises for 2014. In fact, most of the metro lines under construction have seen their schedules drastically reduced. The main lines, and in particular those concerning the Games and the Universal Exhibition, have been brought forward by a few years (between 1 and 6 years ahead of schedule),

while the rest have been postponed (sometimes 10 years behind schedule). Based on a study by the Centre for Tunnel Studies (CETU), it appears that the acceleration of the construction schedule linked to the Olympic Games could lead to an increase in expenditure of around €625 million.

The CETU study dates from 13 July 2017. The IOC Commission in charge of evaluating the Paris bid was delivered on 5 July, which means this supplement was not considered. The fact that this significant increase in the Paris project transport budget was not taken into account in the final result shows that the objective of producing low cost Games is set against the schedule of the others urban and transport projects in the region. Indeed, the impact of the Games on the cost of the Grand Paris Express was not officially published until a few days after the Paris 2024 bid file was examined.

The following year, in 2018, Gilles Carrez (*député* and author of the first report on financing the Grand Paris Express) submitted a second report and proposed an increase in taxation on offices, as well as a second increase in transport payments ("versement transport"). These suggestions were adopted by the government and by parliamentarians. Figure 5 shows the impact of this increase on the SGP's revenue. In addition, this report, while criticizing the tight deadlines, approved of the government's schedule, including the acceleration of work for the Paris Games (page 5, Report on the resources of the Société du Grand Paris, Gilles Carrez, July 2018). The funding was adapted using regional tax resources, without any contributions from the Games' organisers.

4.2. The CDG Express too complicated to build before the Games

In the 2010s, French local and national authorities, both sporting and political, started the bidding process for numerous mega-events (2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, 2025 Universal Exhibition, 2023 Rugby World Cup, 2020 European Athletics Championships). For the Universal Exhibition, public authorities declared their interest in 2016, but finally withdrew the bid in early 2018 following delays and doubts on the capacity to finance the Grand Paris Express and the Universal Exhibition, as well as the Games. This withdrawal of the bid, for an event that also depended on the construction of the Grand Paris Express southwest of Paris, was a unilateral decision by the central government against locally elected officials.

Earlier, in 2014, the Prime Minister announced that the construction schedules for the CDG Express and 17 lines, linking Roissy Airport to the centre of Paris and the Olympic sites, would be accelerated. At the same time, the regional council launched new public transport investment programmes: electrification of the RATP bus fleet before 2025, complete renewal of vehicles before 2030, and renovation of RER lines B and A. Some of these investment programmes are being carried out jointly by the regional council and the SGP. The main problem highlighted in the 2017 and 2018 reports is that these investments and accelerated work schedules clash with one of the major lines planned for the Paris Games: the CDG Express, which will use part of the RER B tracks. Due to the large number of construction sites involved, the regional council opposed the government on the timetable for opening the line and finally announced a postponement until 2025, after the Olympic Games.

Conclusion

It is difficult to measure the impact of the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games on the Grand Paris Express. First of all, the Grand Paris Express project was initially launched independently of any mega-event bid. The choice of route, the number of stations, the gauge of the metro trains and the layout of the stations were the subject of numerous national and regional political decisions between 2007 and 2013. It was only once the government had made those decisions, and the financing method has been approved, that work on the project began in 2016. Between 2013 and 2016, the state authorities in France and the Île-de-France region announced France's bid to host the XV Rugby World Cup, then Paris' bid to host the 2024 Olympic Games, and, finally, the 2025 Universal Exhibition (finally abandoned). Between 2016 and 2018, the financing method for the Grand Paris Express and the Société du Grand Paris were modified to take into account the new cost estimates for the project, as well as cover the extra cost of the growing number of investment programmes and the modified schedule for the 2024 Games.

Meanwhile, the organisers of the Paris bid for the Games removed the cost of transport infrastructure from its content, but the situation has clearly changed. In 2003, when Paris announced its bid for the 2012 Games with an Olympic Village on the outskirts of the Paris municipality, the Games were used to promote urban development, as exemplified by London's bid. Investment in urban development and infrastructure was high at the time and was justified by the lack of a regional transport development programme. In 2015, when Paris's bid for 2024 was announced, the context was fundamentally different since the Olympic Village was part of urban development that was supported by investment in the Grand Paris Express. In 2017, there was no need for the Parisian authorities to use the Games to promote investment in public transport.

As a result of this change in the context of the bids, the organisers of Paris 2024 are able to build a narrative of the Games that is modest in terms of budget and ecology. Indeed, the cost of the Games is much reduced (€3.8 billion estimated in 2020) simply by removing the expenses related to Grand Paris Express.. The €625 million estimated in the Cour des Comptes' report, representing the additional cost of accelerating the construction schedule for the Games, would increase the Olympic budget by 16.5%. This additional cost will be even greater if the timetable is not respected. This will result in significant extra costs to catch up any delays, and, in the worst case scenario, temporary resources will have to be deployed to transport athletes and spectators to the venues. The evidence for budgetary restraint in the 2024 Paris Games is not overwhelming.

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