

## Revitalizing Urban Resilience through Civic Sports Governance: An Auto-Ethnographic Case Study of the Karachi Games 2023

Syed Saif Ur Rehman<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Abdul Samad<sup>2</sup>, Muhammad Ibrahim Ansari<sup>\*3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PAS- TI, Director General, National Institute of Public Administration, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.

<sup>2</sup>Research Associate, Shaheen Research Group, Pakistan.

<sup>3\*</sup>Additional Directing Staff, National Institute of Public Administration, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.

**Corresponding author:** [cadetccel@yahoo.com](mailto:cadetccel@yahoo.com)

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*This study examines the Karachi Games 2023 as a distinctive model of urban resilience, civic regeneration, and sports-based governance in a megacity context. Set against the backdrop of Karachi's historical sporting prominence and subsequent infrastructural and social decline, the paper explores how the revival of the Karachi Games after a fifteen-year hiatus functioned as a strategic urban policy intervention rather than merely a multi-sport event. Employing an auto-ethnographic, practitioner-led qualitative methodology, the research draws on participant observation, official municipal records, and media analysis to document the planning, execution, and outcomes of the Games. The analysis is grounded in key theoretical frameworks including collaborative governance, public-private partnerships (PPP), sport for development (SFD), sports diplomacy, and event leveraging, with insights drawn from New Public Management and social capital theory. The Karachi Games 2023 involved over 5,000 athletes competing across 42 sports disciplines over ten days, utilizing a decentralized venue model across the city's districts. Notably, the Games were executed through a "zero public cost" financial framework, relying entirely on corporate sponsorships and philanthropy, thereby challenging conventional assumptions about public expenditure in large-scale sporting events. The initiative emphasized inclusivity, gender parity, cultural heritage sports, and diplomatic engagement, with active participation from foreign consular representatives, reinforcing sport's role as a soft power and city-branding instrument. Findings indicate that the Karachi Games contributed to revitalizing dormant sports infrastructure, fostering social cohesion across ethnic and socio-economic divides, empowering women athletes, and reshaping Karachi's international and domestic image. The study concludes that the Karachi Games 2023 offer a replicable, fiscally sustainable, and community-centered model for urban sport governance in developing cities, with significant implications for public policy, civic engagement, and sustainable urban development in Pakistan and comparable contexts.*

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 The Urban Context: Karachi's Sporting Legacy and Decay**

Karachi is a megacity, whose population is reported to be more than twenty million and not only the main economic engine of Pakistan, it is also the center of the cultural and sport development in Pakistan. The city has always been a fruitful field in bringing out the best athletes in the country. Karachi has produced sporting super stars that have taken the world by storm starting with the dingy streets of Lyari to the lawn of Karachi gymkhana. These characters are of every kind all over the metropolis. Hanif Mohammad, popularly known as the "Little Master," made the ground of Karachi Parsi Institute (KPI) iconic in the hearts of cricket lovers by playing historic innings. The city also gave birth to Javed Miandad, a tactical virtuoso, and such tenacious leaders as Younis Khan and Sarfaraz Ahmed. Karachi is also the birthplace of Shahid Khan Afridi, the former captain of Pakistan's One Day and Test cricket teams. Jahangir Khan, the "Conqueror" of squash, arose from the city, and his 555 matches unbeaten feat has never been matched in professional sport. Olympians like Islahuddin Siddiqui and Hanif Khan, who led Pakistan to the pinnacle of its sporting glory, were developed on the hockey fields of Karachi.

On the other hand, the arrival of the twenty-first century was accompanied by the gradual fading of the flourishing sports culture that existed before this period. One of the unstable law and order, high rates of urbanization, and commercialization of the public parks were among the recurrent themes that have all led to a decrease in outdoors activities between 2008 and 2015, which is a vibrant period. Despite suffering much strain in recent decades, the city's sporting infrastructure remains one of the most comprehensive in the country. Venues like National Stadium, KMC Sports Complex, and Aram Bagh Basketball Court have been the venue for national and international events (Khan, 2020). Furthermore, Karachi hosted the first ever Pakistan National Games held in 1948 which was inaugurated by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who was also the first president of the Pakistan Cycling Federation. The city is thus embroiled in the historiography of national sports competitions in Pakistan.

Karachi sports infrastructure suffered adversely in the past two decades. Infrastructure decay in Lyari and Nazimabad has degraded recreational spaces, making the ballfields of both areas silent. A fifteen-year hiatus has elapsed since the Karachi Games, a fixture on the city's civic calendar, were last held in 2008. As a consequence, a generation of young residents had no access to organized platforms to demonstrate athletic talent and social fragmentation and diminished civic responsibility have resulted. In this context, the revival of 2023 was not just a sporting event, but a resurgence of civic consciousness. Accordingly, being Administrator of Karachi I made the following statement as part of a journalistic briefing on 22 February 2023: "For a city like Karachi so ardently passionate about sports, these games mean nothing less than a breath of fresh air" (Islamabad Post, 2023). The 2023 Karachi Games has emerged as a new and unprecedented intervention in urban policy, using sport as a tool for community development, and not an isolated objective. The initiative aims to bridge divides between social classes, genders and ethnic groups. Inspired by London 2012's "Inspire a Generation" (UK Government, 2013), and in line with the

United Nations' Sport for Development and Peace (UNSDP) agenda, the Karachi Games seek to restore civic spirit through communal engagement.

## **1.2 The Administrative Mandate**

Upon joining Karachi as the Administrator, faced twin challenges of having a municipal administration suffering from huge financial woes and a citizenry expecting meaningful engagement. The mandate went beyond the mere oversight of the municipal services, and aimed at revitalizing the collective identity of the city. In order to repair Karachi's social fabric, realized the need for a unifying force that could rise above linguistic, political and racial divisions which had long divided the metropolitan. Sport, in terms of its global lingua franca character, became the best tool for such cohesion. The idea of the genesis of Karachi Games 2023 was pronounced under the auspices of the Sindh.

Governor Kamran Khan Tessori who gave the required political will and strategic direction. The program was summed up in the motto: United We Play, United We Win (Ab Kheley Ga). Karachi that had been making fairly brief summaries of the nature of what the initiative involved. By operationalizing this philosophy and to define it, according to a concrete event, the purpose was to communicate to the international community the impression that Karachi was dynamic, safe and ready to positive engagement.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Urban Resilience, Civic Sports Governance and Sport for Development**

The city resilience, civic government, and sport development have been on the rise as overlapping disciplines in modern urban studies and urban policy. Cities facing socio-economic pressure, structural deterioration, and social disintegration has become cultural and use sporting interventions as a means to regenerate, rebuild identities and social cohesion. The revival of large-scale multi-sport events at the city level, such as the Karachi Games 2023, can be analytically situated within this broader scholarly discourse. The present literature review is a synthesis of the major scholarly discussions on urban resilience, collaborative governance, sport for development (SFD), public-private partnerships (PPP), sports diplomacy, and event leveraging as a theoretical basis on the understanding of civic sports governance in megacities.

The concept of urban resilience literature discerns cities as systems that are adaptive and can absorb shocks and preserve the fundamental functions (Meerow, Newell and Stults, 2016). The concept of resilience goes beyond physical infrastructure to incorporate social capital, institutional capacity and community cohesion. Rapid urbanization, fragmentation of governance and low fiscal capacity often compromise resilience in developing-world megacities (Vale & Campanella, 2005). According to scholars, participatory governance mechanisms which can help to build resilience, create trust, collective identity and civic participation are necessary (Ahern, 2011). Sport identified as both a socially embedded and culturally resonant practice has been found to be a powerful but underutilized tool of enhancing urban social resilience.

The theories of civic governance and New Public Management (NPM) offer a useful perspective on how the New Urbanism mobilizes traditional non-policy instruments, including sports events. According to Hood (1991), NPM is about focusing on efficiency, entrepreneurialism, and result-oriented public administration. This has prompted governments in economically strained municipalities to give up direct service delivery in favor of facilitation and coordination. Osborne (2010) goes further with this argument by introducing a concept of New Public Governance, which emphasizes on networks, partnerships and co-production with non-state actors. This changing paradigm of governance is consistent with the structure of large-scale sporting events managed by municipal leadership as opposed to the central government financing.

One of the key mechanisms of this shift in governance is the public-private partnerships (PPP). Hodge and Greve (2007) describe PPPs as contractual arrangements in the long term, whereby the risks, resources, and responsibilities are shared between the actors in the public and the private sphere. Although a significant part of the literature abuses PPPs of the problems of accountability and privatization of the common good, researchers also note that they could contribute to innovation and financial self-sustainability, in case they are based on the priorities of the common good (Reynaers & Grimmelikhuijsen, 2015). PPPs have found extensive application in the areas of stadium development, mega- events and community sport programs in the context of sport governance. The zero-public-cost approach of the Karachi Games echoes points made by some that social capital and institutional reputation can be used in place of direct financial spending (Barney, 1991).

The literature on Sport for Development (SFD) offers a normative reason to employ sport as a policy tool. According to Coalter (2013), sport does not happen to develop the person, but the results of sport require deliberate planning, inclusion, and consistency with the interest of the wider society. SFD programs have also been associated with empowerment of youths, promotion of health, gender equality, prevention of crimes and peacebuilding (Levermore & Beacom, 2009). Sport may serve as a place of neutral interaction and building of trust in urban areas characterized by ethnic diversity and socio-economic disparities. Despite this, Coakley (2011) warns that sport programs should not be elitist and exclusive, as there must be accessibility to grassroots and ownership by the community.

The social capital theory also explains associations of social effects of sports-based interventions. According to Putnam (2000), there is a difference between bonding social capital which strengthens the bonds between similar groups and the bridging social capital which binds different groups together. The two forms can be created through urban sporting activities where inter-district competition and celebration strengthen civic identity and at the same time decrease social fragmentation. According to the existing empirical evidence, community sports programs appear to be especially efficiently used to restore trust between citizens and their local institutions, especially in the post-crisis or high-risk urban environment (Spaaij, 2012).

Literature on sports diplomacy puts sports engagement in the context of soft power and international relations. According to Nye (2004), soft power is the skill to persuade others to do

something without compelling them. Sport has been used as a diplomatic channel in the past, both in terms of Cold War-era Olympic boycotts and in the modern day in terms of city branding (Murray, 2012). At the sub-national level, sports events are increasingly being used by cities to embody safety, normality and openness to foreign communities. The involvement of foreign diplomats and international exposure via sport are consistent with the city diplomacy literature where the municipalities are seen as new players in world governance (Acuto, 2013).

Event leveraging theory changes the analysis of the impact on the short term to the long-term strategic consequences. Chalip (2004) asserts that events do not create benefits automatically but benefits have to be strategically utilized by planning, partnering and legacy programs. Unlike mega-event such as the Olympics, which tend to focus on the international exposure, city-level events focus on local capacity-building, use of infrastructure and civic participation (Smith, 2012). The redevelopment of old sports structures and institutionalization of recurrent events are common sustainable legacies mentioned in this literature.

Urban branding scholarship continues to be an addition to this study by analyzing how cities reinvent narratives within symbolic event representations. Place branding, Kavaratzis (2005) argues, is not only a marketing activity but a strategic practice that stakeholders, cultural practices and lived experience are involved. Sporting events are a cynosmic branding tools as they entail spectacle, participation and media coverage. In the cities that face reputational problems, i. e. the perception of insecurity or degradation, the sports programs used by the city will rebalance both internal and external images of the city at the same time.

The institutional theory is useful in understanding how the recurrent involvement in collaboration around events can render new forms of governance normal. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) explain how organizational fields develop by way of a common set of norms and mammographic actions. Cooperative governance is institutionalized when municipal actors, sports federations, sponsors and civil society actors engage in multiple interaction in an event system. Through this, there is increased administrative learning, continuity of policies and resistance to political turnover. The model of innovation (Triple Helix) also describes the interaction of the government, industry and civil society in the civic sports governance (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, 2000). In this model, the government offers legitimacy and coordination, the industry offers resources and efficiency, and civil society offers participation and social legitimacy. It is applied to the urban sports events with the emphasis that social innovation is developed not by the state itself but due to the cooperation of the sectors.

Lastly, there is a comparative literature on mega-events, which underscores the threat of cost escalation, displacement, and underuse of infrastructure after event (Flyvbjerg, 2014). There is a growing trend among academics in favor of smaller, community-integrated events that emphasize the social payoff as opposed to the international show. The Karachi Games type model fits this new consensus, but focuses on fiscal discipline, inclusivity, and relevance to the locals.

Overall, the current literature confirms the theory that civic sports governance could be a powerful urban resilience approach based on a collaborative governance, social capital development, and



deliberate legacy planning. The synthesis of the SFD principles, PPP framework and sports diplomacy along with event leveraging gives a strong theoretical basis to the analysis of multi-sport driven city-level events in developing megacities. According to this scholarly corpus, sport is not only recreation, but a policy instrument, multidimensional, that can re-create urban spaces, and build civic identity, and institutional capacity.

### **3. Methodology**

This case study employs a practitioner-based, qualitative methodology termed auto-ethnography, incorporating document analysis of official KMC records, participant observation, and media content analysis. Data pertaining to the number of participants, financial models, and event arrangements are derived from the most recent news stories published and covered by newspapers. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the administrative tactics that were utilized, the analysis is structured through the lenses of New Public Management (NPM) and Sports Diplomacy.

#### **3.1 Theoretical Framework**

These key theoretical frameworks are utilized in order to conduct an analysis of the Karachi Games 2023:

##### **3.1.1 Collaborative Governance and Public-Private Partnership (PPP)**

Participation of non-state parties within a collective decision-making process is enabled through the application of collaborative governance by the government. Owing to the limited financial resources available to the KMC, a "Zero - Cost" financing strategy was adopted, predicated solely upon corporate sponsorship and philanthropy. This approach is consistent with the public-private partnership (PPP) paradigm that requires the public sector to be dignified with the mandate and physical infrastructure and the private sector to be responsible for capital injection and efficiency.

##### **3.1.2 Sports Diplomacy**

In order to bridge the divide between individuals belonging to various cultures and to make them integrate, athletic competitions provide the platform of sports diplomacy. The Karachi Games was able to leverage the power of sport in its soft power situation to get the foreign Consul Generals as not only spectators but active participants in the Games. It was planned to present the world with a common face of Karachi to refute stories on how the city was in disarray.

##### **3.2 Sport for Development (SFD)**

The sport-as-development conceptual framework is based on the assumption that sport can serve as a means to accomplish larger and more societal objectives like social cohesion, promotion of health and wellness, promotion of peace, and development of the youth (Coalter, 2013). True to the objectives of Sports for Development the Karachi Games 2023 was meant to inculcate reconciliation and sportsman spirit in the polarized metropolis.

### 3.3 Event Leveraging

This paradigm is of the view that rather than concentrating on the results of the event, one should center interest on the mechanism through which events could be strategically exploited in order to establish long term advantages to the host community (Chalip, 2004). The Games revitalized stagnant sports venues, attracted sponsors and established a model on the same lines of similar annual events.

### 3.4 Strategic Planning and Objectives

#### 3.4.1 Vision and Mission

The key objective of this campaign was to restore Karachi to the status of a sports loving city. The main objective was to organize a massive event, which would be all-inclusive to encompass all the interested parties and be economically viable. The strategic objectives as defined in the preliminary discussions and public declarations included the following:

**Inclusion of Maximal Sports:** At the same time revitalize forty-two different sports disciplines so as to mesmerize maximum interests.

**Encourage Healthy Lifestyles:** Fight sedentary urban lifestyles and youth apathy by offering accessible sports for youth.

**Enhance Civic Infrastructure:** Maintain neglected sports facilities and parks as an event-driven to maintaining them.

**Empower Women Athletes:** Bring about gender parity by supporting female participation through participation in different sports organized under the banner of Karachi Games 2023.

**Promote Social Cohesion:** Use sports competition between various districts in order to foster unity rather than division.

**Utilization of Municipal Infrastructure:** Utilization of already existing infrastructure at the municipality without burdening the public treasury physically or financially.

**Exhibit Fiscal Innovation:** Implement the large-scale event without the government's financial support, through implementation of public-private partnership (PPP) models.

**Develop a Replicable Model:** Develop a model of what other cities in Pakistan can follow.

#### 3.4.2 Theoretical Frameworks

The games in Karachi are conceptualized and conducted through a number of theoretical frameworks, including the following:

**Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000):** The Games served as a platform to re-establishing trust, collaboration, and networks between citizens, authorities, and institutions.

**Urban Branding (Kavaratzis, 2005):** The event transformed Karachi from a city of violence to one characterized by heritage, competition and community.

**Sport for Development (Coakley, 2011):** The empowering of the youth, promotion of gender equality, and reduction of crime were all facilitated through sports.

**New Public Management (Hood, 1991):** The zero-budget strategy was a form of entrepreneurial governance based on the transfer of risk to sponsors at the same time optimizing their contribution to the public good.

### **3.4.3 The "Zero-Cost" Financial Model**

Hodge and Greve (2007) argue that the financial plan for the Games, marked by the lack of direct investment from KMC, represents a model of public-private partnership (PPP). Under this approach, the public sector assumed leadership and coordination responsibilities, while the private sector provided financial resources and technical expertise. The decision to organize the Karachi Games without utilizing any portion of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) budget marked a significant departure from conventional public-sector event management practices, which typically rely on substantial government funding. Face-to-face interaction with donors, businesses, and sports related organizations created an enormous and empathetic reaction around the city.

All reward and logistical aspects such as prize money, award package, branding, and operational support were taken into consideration by corporate sponsors. This model created a close feeling of ownership among the corporate society and to resolve both commercial and civic interests and to make the event financially viable. The positive outcome of this financing structure proved the efficiency of the model of the public-private partnership which is based on mutual trust, shared responsibility, and community involvement.

This is in line with the Resource Based View (RBV) theory that Barney (1991) stated. This concept assumes that social capital and not financial prosperity became the most powerful resource. The failure disenchanted the myth that mega events had to be backed by using substantial government resources.

### **3.4.4 The Secretariat: A Command and Control Center**

Karachi Games Secretariat was set up at the KMC Sports Complex in Karachi Kashmir Road to coordinate logistical issues associated with organization of 42 different sports disciplines. The Secretariat was inaugurated on 22 February 2023 and served as the nerve center of operations of the Games (DNA, 2023). Combined command system was created by integrating KMC departmental heads, technical experts of the concerned sports associations, and representatives of media.

In order to guarantee the timely reporting of outcomes and stories, which are critical in keeping the people interested and motivated, the Secretariat created a special media corner. The culture of accountability, quick decision-making, and problem-solving was promoted through regular coordination meetings with the departmental officers and sport-specific coordinators. The governance tool changed the traditional bureaucratic structure of the Karachi Metropolitan



Corporation into a responsive and nimble event management structure, which had the capacity to take care of a complex, multi-sport urban event.

### **3.4.5 Operationalizing the Vision: The Scale of Execution**

#### **3.4.5.1 Unprecedented Magnitude**

The Karachi Games 2023 was different in the scope over the ten-days event from 3 March 2023 to 12 March 2023, the event was simultaneously holding 42 different sports disciplines (A-Sports, 2023). The size of competition was similar to that seen in national level tournaments. Athletes from the seven districts of Karachi (i.e., East, West, South, Central, Malir, Korangi, and Kemari) participated in the event with more than 5,000 participants, according to Urdu Point (2023).

#### **3.4.5.2 Portfolio of Sports**

The organizers ensured that Karachi Games 2023 featured a wide variety of sports, thereby targeting different segments of society. Traditional global sports such as cricket, hockey, football, basketball, tennis, table tennis, and swimming were all integrated. The programmed also brought in combat sports such as boxing, judo, karate, taekwondo, wushu, and mixed martial arts (MMA). To honor cultural heritage, traditional games were included, such as Malakhra (Sindhi wrestling), kabaddi, kho-kho and the donkey derby race. Sports requiring mental and physical precision, like chess, scrabble, carom, snooker, and archery, were seen to support intellectual sportsmanship. Innovative and niche sports such as futsal, speak takraw, tek ball, dodgeball, and roller skating were introduced to appeal to the youth of present-day society.

### **3.4.3 Decentralized Venue Management**

Rather than focusing the Games in a single site, the organizers adopted a decentralized approach in the hope of promoting athletic facilities in the city.

**The KMC Sports Complex:** The KMC sports complex was the focal point for activities including swimming, tennis, and indoor games.

**Cause for concern:** The Women's Sports Complex was the venue for events specifically for female athletes, including taekwondo, arm-wrestling, and netball, to help create a safer environment for the female athletes.

**District Grounds:** Utilized grounds include the KMC Football Stadium in Lyari, the Nazimabad Gymkhana and the Landhi Gymkhana and a number of other grounds in Orangi and Malir. This approach made the Games accessible in as near proximity as possible to the community at that time, thus ignoring the question of national importance, the Games recreated a local enthusiasm for the use of the facilities that had been neglected before.

### **3.4.4 The Ceremonial Dimension: Symbolism and Unity**

#### **3.4.4.1 The Torch Relay: Connecting with History**

Commencing the torch relay at the monument of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah made certain the event would be well tied in the framework of national ideology. The lighting of the flame at the Mazar-e-Quaid was a symbolic act, which enhanced our belief in the founder's vision of a country with life and discipline. Before reaching the KMC Sports Complex, the torch is being carried through the city by iconic figures, such as Olympic athlete Hanif Khan and Naseem Hameed (A-Sports, 2023).

#### **3.4.4.2 The Inaugural Spectacle**

The opening ceremony during 3 March 2023 was made to raise the morale of the public. The commencement of the games was announced by Governor of Sindh Kamran Tessori, who was the principal dignitary. The cauldron was lit by Jahangir Khan an eminent squash player, an act which highlighted the continuity of the city's famous sporting tradition and its later revival. A tableau created by young persons with special needs illustrated our commitment to inclusivity and explained that we have the games providing access to everyone involved.

### **3.4.5 Diplomatic Engagement: Sports Diplomacy in Action**

A unique feature of the administration's approach was the high level of involvement of the diplomatic corps (APP, 2023). The administration gave an active role to the Consul Generals from the allied nations than simply just to be bystanders and to give a "soft image" of Karachi as a safe and dynamic global city.

#### **3.4.5.1 Active Participation of Envoys**

- **Oman:** Consul General of Oman, H.E. Eng. Sami Abdullah Salim Al Khanjari continued his uninterrupted presence and participated actively in chess and softball matches. His chanting the slogan 'Karachi Will Play' in Urdu led to developing an emotional connection with the participants.
- **Germany:** The German Consul-General H.E. Dr. Ruediger Lotz participated in the football final at Lyari. His presence in a neighborhood that tends to be stigmatized played a powerful message of normalcy. He hailed talent present in the country, drawing parallels with international standards.
- **Russia:** H.E. Andrey Viktorovich Fedorov, the Russian Consul General competed in badminton and track & field events. As an Administrator Karachi had the honor to play a badminton match with him symbolizing the spirit of friendship and competition.
- **Turkey:** H.E. Cemal Sangu, the Turkish Consul General, was the Turkish Consul-General who was the chief guest at the lawn tennis final, paying special attention to the relations between the nations as brothers and praising the youth's energy.
- **Qatar:** H.E. Mishal Mohammed A. Al Ansari, Qatari Consul General, participated in volleyball and shooting ball events, praising the scope of the organization.

- **United Arab Emirates:** H.E. Dr. Bakheet Ateeq Al Rumaithi, the UAE Consul General, attended the table tennis final and played a round with me, encouraging the young athletes.

The diplomatic engagement was calculated; it confirmed the security conditions in Karachi and how capable the city is for hosting international events.

### 3.5 Socio-Cultural Integration: Reviving Heritage Sports

In a rapidly evolving city, traditional sports often face the risk of obsolescence. A deliberate effort was therefore made to preserve intangible cultural heritage through the Karachi Games

### 3.6 The Donkey Derby Race

The Donkey Derby is an established ancient custom of Karachi, which is closely associated to the culture of Sheedi community and the people of Lyari. We held this race at Kothari Parade in Clifton bringing a traditional game to an affluent area (Pakistan Today, 2023). The event was participated by about 30 competitors who used Iranian breed donkeys and custom designed carts made of Dalbergia Sissoo wood. The presence of the Chief Minister and the Governor to make presents added to the esteem of this folk sports event and it became a state sanctioned event.

### 3.7 Malakhra (Sindhi Wrestling)

To celebrate the agrarian heritage of Sindh, the likes of Malakhra were hosted in the KMC Sports Complex. The gathering featured traditional shehnai and percussion music creating a festive feeling. Wrestlers like Mukhtar Almani and Sikandar Mazari displayed the quality of power and agility and inspired the feeling of legacy in the urban populace. This inclusion was necessary in order to foster inclusivity among the various ethnic communities that reside in Karachi (Dawn, 2023).

### 3.8 Inclusivity and Gender Parity

My plan included guaranteeing that games proved accessible to everyone which was a key objective. Among the nearly 5,000 competitors in the event, I'm very pleased to say that a large percentage involved those that were female athletes. We did separate events for women for lots of different sports, we did cricket, basketball, martial arts, arm wrestling, the list goes on. These competitions were carried out under safe and secure conditions.

- **Women Empowerment:** The Women's Sports Complex in Gulshan-e-Iqbal has become a hotbed of activities as it has helped empower women. In the sport of Taekwondo, had been a lot of enthusiastic participation, and both Districts West and South have put forth good teams. Women of younger generation demonstrated outstanding strength and technique in the sport of arm wrestling.
- **Special Children:** Our commitment to ensuring the rights of persons with different abilities was underscored by having youngsters with special needs in tableau on the opening ceremony and at many events.
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### 3.9 Grand Closing and Legacy

The games ended with a grand celebration at the Government House on the Sindh Governor on March 21. The selection of the use of this geographical location was representative, essentially marking the height of governmental ownership and recognition (Pakistan Today, 2023).

### 3.10 Celebrating Success

Governor Kamran Tessori presented honors to sponsors, coordinators, and winning athletes. Remembering a talk at the start, the Governor stated that the only condition mentioned was the initial condition, which was that of the prayers, and the spirit of volunteerism and joint dedication that finally completed the event and explained it:

- **Attendance by Legends:** The ceremony was attended by sporting superstars such as Younis Khan, Sarfaraz Ahmed, Islahuddin Siddiqui, and Nasim Hameed, providing a connection between the past, present and future heroes.
- **Acknowledgment of Coordinators:** We presented awards to the KMC officers and coordinators who worked diligently behind the scenes. Individuals like Mr. Raza Abbas Rizvi (Cricket), Mr. Mahmood Baig (Football), Mr. Nauman Arshad (Swimming), Mr. Jameel Farooqi (Tug of War) and Mr. Khurshid Shah (Kabaddi) along with others were recognized for their important contributions.
- **Institutionalizing the Games:** There would be no one off event, but the Karachi Games would be institutionalized into regular games and would become the "Sindh Games" and take place every year, and this would be a lasting legacy, Governor Tessori announced.

### 3.11 Comparative Analysis: Karachi vs. London and National Games

In the table below is the comparative analysis of the Karachi Games 2023 with the London games 2012 and the past National Games of Pakistan (Table 1). The comparative table outlines three different models of sporting events: Karachi Games 2023, London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and the Pakistan National Games. Each model is described in terms of the scale and funding mechanisms, and strategic objectives. A minute and rigorous comparative analysis of these events shows that, while sharing the fundamental element of the athletic competition, they emerge seriously distinct in their execution forms and intended legacy.

In terms of scale and scope, the London 2012 Games come out of the scale of a massive global event. Spanning 16 day, Games enabled accommodation of 10,500 athletes and a comprehensive program of 26 Olympic and 20 Paralympic sports thereby portraying its international face and commitment for inclusiveness. The National Games of Pakistan are on a national scale and usually last between 10-14 days with the Pakistan National Games hosting 3,000-4,000 athletes from 30-35 sports. The Karachi Games 2023, even though it is a city level event, presents an impressive scale: the duration of the Games at 10 days is similar to the national one, with an impressively high number of 42 sports with over 5000 athletes competing, a number

that dwarfs the national event and indicates a large capacity for grassroots mobilization in one metropolis alone.

The strongest contrast is in the economics of each Games. London 2012 was funded with a mammoth budget of \$8.77 billion pounds, which reflects the huge expenditures of building a state of the art infrastructure, providing security, and planning logistics for a world class event. The Pakistan National Games follow a traditional State funded paradigm and receive a budget of more than PKR 500 million from governmental resources. In stark contrast, the games held in Karachi in 2023 utilized "zero public funds" follows the concept of integrating more private sponsorship money and corporate social responsibility, and allows community support to the Games. This break with convention challenges the commonsense assumption that large scale sporting events require high levels of public funding, proposing an alternative, one that is potentially more sustainable, and operationally demanding, than that for local events.

Legacies are an additional distinguishing point between the three events. London 2012 targeted long-term goals such as urban regeneration and tourism, with the aim of transforming and regenerating East London with new infrastructure, housing, and an international image. The Pakistan National Games puts emphasis on provincial competition, develop national talent and enlarge the structures of the sport in the provinces of the country. The focus of the Karachi Games is civic unity and ground revival a goal that transcends competition by exploiting sport as a social glue as well as a means for physically reviving sporting infrastructure at the grassroot level, which can address immediate social and infrastructural needs at the grassroots.

Thus, the London 2012 Olympics are the pinnacle of high budget, state backed global sport. The Pakistan National Games live up to the traditional national competition model. Meanwhile, the Karachi Games 2023 represent an interesting study case, showcasing how it is possible to achieve a major level of scale and participation of athletes through a zero public fund model centered in civic unity, and as such, they are an interesting study case to understand the effectiveness of community centric approach on reaching impactful sporting events suited for the specific needs of the host community.

**Table No 1: Comparative analysis of the Karachi Games 2023 with the London games 2012 and the past Pakistan National Games.**

| Feature             | Karachi Games 2023          | London 2012                 | Pakistan National Games        |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Duration</b>     | 10 days                     | 16 days                     | 10–14 days                     |
| <b>Sports</b>       | 42                          | 26 (Olympic) + 20 (Para)    | 30–35                          |
| <b>Budget</b>       | Zero public funds           | £8.77 billion               | PKR 500+ million (govt-funded) |
| <b>Athletes</b>     | 5,000+                      | 10,500                      | 3,000–4,000                    |
| <b>Legacy Focus</b> | Civic unity, ground revival | Urban regeneration, tourism | Provincial competition         |

Karachi Games 2023 demonstrated that mega events do not necessarily have to be financially devastating, despite the fact that they take place on a smaller scale. The novelty lies in fiscal discipline and civic embeddedness.

#### 4. Analysis

##### 4.1 SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis for the Karachi games 2023 is presented in the below figure:

**Figure No 1: SWOT Analysis of Karachi Games 2023**

| Strengths  | Weaknesses  |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Scale &amp; Diversity:</b> Organizing over forty- two sporting events served a wide range of demographics and thus ensured that engagement levels are stepped up.</p> <p><b>Cost-Efficiency:</b> The implementation of a zero-cost public private partnership model that protected the municipal budget against fiscal strain.</p> <p><b>Diplomatic Success:</b> The active participation of over six Consul Generals contributed greatly to the increase of the city's international fame.</p> <p><b>Inclusivity:</b> The strength of female participation in coupled with the integration of traditional sports disciplines contributed to what was a more inclusive sporting environment.</p> | <p><b>Infrastructure Gaps:</b> High reliance on pre-existing infrastructure provided evidence of the need to a massive long-term modernization program and news modern infrastructure development.</p> <p><b>Scheduling Density:</b> Forty-two sports were concentrated into a ten-day schedule and placed tremendous logistical demands on scheduling of participating teams.</p> <p><b>Sustainability:</b> Ad hoc arrangements for sponsorship created an expectation of the unknowns for future funding streams.</p> |
| Opportunities  | Threats   |
| <p><b>Talent Pipeline:</b> The Games helped to identify budding talent in boxing and football which they have the potential of nurturing further into national team rosters.</p>   | <p><b>Political Instability:</b> Changes in the administration of the municipality are a threat to the continuity of the initiative.</p>  |



**Sports Tourism:** Events such as the Donkey Derby have the potential to develop into major tourist attraction.

**Institutionalization:** The found success provides a mandate to institutionalize the Games as an annual statutory event.

**Maintenance:** Without a post event maintenance plan, renovated sporting grounds are at risk regressing into disrepair.

**Security:** Security in large public gathering events in Karachi remained prone to security threats.

## 4.2 PESTEL and Framework Analysis

**Political:** Support of the governor is significant, and there is the possibility of partisan appropriation.

**Economic:** The strategy has shown cost-effectiveness and potential for sports tourism development.

**Social:** Gender equality has been strengthened and solidarity between different districts has been reinforced.

**Technological:** The digital interaction is still limited, but there are possibilities for the use of this in the future.

**Environmental:** Kidney Hill Park was the site of events that encouraged use of green spaces.

**Legal:** Adherence to legal frameworks regarding international sports has been accomplished.

The **Institutional Theory** explain how the Games created a new "field" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), federations, and sponsors embraced shared norms of collaboration.

## 4.3 Framework Analysis: The Triple Helix Model

The effectiveness of Karachi Games can be judged by the Triple Helix Model of innovation, which highlights the interaction between Government (KMC/Sindh Government), Industry (sponsors/private sector) and Civil Society (athletes/associations).

- **Government:** Offered the mandate, security and the administrative framework.
- **Industry:** Funding supply, Logistics & Branding Support.
- **Civil Society:** Contributed skill, voluntary contributions and technology proficiency

My administration operated as a facilitator that brought these three helices together to generate social innovation through an important civic event.

## 4.4 Policy Implications and Replication Model

The Karachi Games provide a model for urban development in cities of Pakistan:

### 4.4.1 Establish a Permanent Secretariat for Annual Games

### 4.4.2 Ensure at least 40 per cent female participation in all fields is a mandate.

**4.4.3 Implement a Zero - Budget Public Private Partnership Framework**, connecting Sponsors with Corporate Social Responsibility Programs.

**4.4.4 Integrate Cultural Sports** to conserve the heritage

**4.4.5 Extend invitations to the Diplomatic Corps** so that we can increase global visibility.

**4.4.6 Aligned to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** - Health (SDG 3), Gender Equality (SDG 5), and Sustainable Cities (SDG 11); Similar ideas could be implemented in other Pakistani cities (e.g. Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta) with region specific sports (e.g. polo in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, wrestling in Punjab).

**4.4.7 Leadership is the key**, so there needs to be a passionate champion in the local administration responsible for negotiating this complex endeavor successfully.

**4.4.8 Emphasize Legacy** by connecting the event to tangible legacy initiatives such as common upgrading of a given community space over a continual period.

**4.4.9 Carefully plan for future games**, when must preparation begins (minimally six to nine months in advance).

## **5. Conclusion**

The Karachi Games 2023 was not just a sports event but a show of the strength of the city and a recovery of the civic identity of the city. The Games, which were hosted in Karachi, Pakistan, managed to host 42 sporting disciplines with more than 5,000 athletes without spending any public money proving the administrative determination, along with the strong backing of the local community, can overcome serious financial challenges. The project fulfilled the two main aims; not only did it restore the city recreational infrastructure and cultural life, but it also gave Karachi an improved image on the diplomatic and international front. Having foreign diplomats in events like cricket and badminton sent across a message louder than any message and so much so that it was not necessary to send any message, since Karachi was strong, hospitable and open to the outside world. The Games, by connecting elite sporting institutions to the grassroots in the neighborhoods like Lyari, promoted the fact that talent could be found anywhere in the city as long as equal opportunities were offered.

The lasting legacy of the Karachi Games 2023 is more than the ceremonies and awards as the young people were enthusiastic and hopeful. The availability of a re-energized sporting facility created hope, aspiration and a new sense of belongingness among the youth of the city. The shared experience of rivalry, collaboration and success made manifest the revolutionary force of sport as an agent of societal integration. The given study can serve as an effective model of the further administrations, as it illustrates how civic leadership, integrative planning, and creative financing could keep Karachi prosperous and strengthen the social and cultural framework of this city in the long term.

## **5.1 Implications of the Research**

This research has valuable theoretical, policy, and practical implications on urban governance and sport-led growth of developing megacities. On the theoretical level, it contributes to the body of literature concerning urban resilience and civic governance as it illustrates how sport can become a multidimensional policy tool which helps to develop social capital, increase institutional capacity and improve city branding in comparison to traditional infrastructure-based resilience models. Politically, the Karachi Games 2023 prove that even fiscally constrained municipalities can efficiently implement large and inclusive public-facing projects using creative public-private partnership frameworks, which disproves the prevailing belief that the large sporting events need to be heavily funded by the government. In practical terms, the study results outline the usefulness of inclusive planning, equality between sexes, cultural heritage, and decentralization of venue management to enhance social cohesion and community ownership. This paper also highlights the importance of civic leadership and administrative entrepreneurship to mobilize cross sectoral collaboration and maintain urban long term legacies. All these implications imply that civic sports governance is a replicable, cost-efficient and socially transformative approach to urban regeneration and resilience in economically, socially and infrastructurally constrained cities.

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