

**Dissertation:**

**“What Makes a Successful Esports City”**

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***Introduction: Aims of the Project***

This study explores the concept of an Esports City; what classifies as one, and why they are important for the future of Esports Development. Throughout this dissertation, the primary question that is discussed is: ***“What makes a successful Esports City?”*** An ideal result of which being a developed framework for future Esports policy makers to better understand the requirements for Esports to carve out a similar niche as sports like Football do today. While Esports have been a staple of digital media such as Twitch.tv *(2024)* and YouTube *(2024)* their niche has been limited excluding events like the League of Legends World Championship. *(Ridsdale, 2023)*

This project has compiled a literature review on various authors related to esports cities and events tourism. Existing researchers such as McCauley et al *(2020)* from Jonköping University, along with Patryk Masłowski and Tomasz Karasiewicz *(2021)* Polish experts on Events Tourism have written detailed Case Studies on Jonköping and Katowice; focusing on domestic tourism industries. Additional authors discussed are Thomas Newham’s PHD *(2022)* discussing the classification of Esports Events and authors on Events Tourism such as Cuffy, Bakas and Coetzee *(2020)* and Ormerod, and Wood. *(2021)* Where these writers coalesce is in their thoughts on the impact on Mega Events and why such events are important in fostering a healthy society. The Literature Review aims to dissect each individual study to come to a consensus on where Esports Events Management should proceed.

Research has also been conducted to evaluate why locations like Jonköping and Katowice have thrived as Esports Cities compared to their respective capitals in each country. Interviews such as the one by RedBull *(2018)* provide a first person perspective; outlining the mayor of Katowice: Marcin Krupa’s thoughts are on Esports Infrastructure in his city, and what he envisions the development of Esports to look like. Sadiq Khan gave his own support for events such as the League of Legends World Championship in London *(Sacco, 2023)*, stating that he: ***“Wants to bring the biggest and best tournaments to London, and MSI is one such way to showcase our ambition.”***  As well as other organisations such as London & Partners *(2024)* who are tasked with developing the narrative of Esports development in London.

Lastly, this study will examine Esports in relation to other mega events from a post-event perspective. Such as the London Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park *(2021)* after the Olympic Games took place as an example for Esports Events and Infrastructure to draw upon. By doing this in tandem with establishing a framework of a successful Esports City, this study aims to craft a formula that other cities can utilise when adopting Esports in the future while simultaneously allowing the Esports events planners of the present to understand what will be necessary to ensure sustainable development beyond the whims of venture capitalists.

***Introduction: Case Studies Overview***

The development of Jonköping into an Esports Centre in Sweden is linked with the rise of Dreamhack as an organisation. Starting in the early 1990’s *(LanParty, 2021)* Dreamhack grew from a school passion project in a Swedish town to the largest digital festival in the world.

After receiving enough investment, the event is currently being hosted in the Elmia Convention Centre. Elmia has been host to business events and conferences since 1961; *(2023)* its central location relative to the other nordic states increasing the venue’s value not just for Dreamhack but many other events that Jonköping hosts each year.

McCauley et al’s evaluation of Jonköping as a regional Esports cultural centre places a high emphasis on community and voluntary involvement as the basis for its success. As a researcher working in Jonköping, Brian McCauley has written first hand knowledge on Esports in this region. By examining this Case Study, this dissertation aims to reveal the impact that Dreamhack and Esports have had on the city and vice-versa. As well as what can be done to ensure further successful integration of the sector into the local economy.

Katowice comparably was a city that rose through bureaucratic and community driven incentives. Post-Communist industrial cities like Katowice needed a way to modernise their economies to catch up to western cities that were close by. The mayor of Katowice; Marcin Krupa set up a meeting with the head of ESL, Michal Blicharz to establish the first IEM event in Katowice in 2014. *(ESL, 2022)* In their documentary Sillis *(2018)* reported that after its success, demand for Esports related locations in the city was high enough to where individuals such as Rafał Trybus established Gaming Houses for teams to utilise ahead of IEM Katowice each year.

Polish academics such as Masłowski and Karasiewicz *(2021)* focus their studies around Events Tourism. In Katowice this is clearly demonstrated in a much different way than Jonköping which has a more community driven focus to its events taking place in Elmia. This Case Study will aim to explore how the growth of Katowice as a centre for Esports has influenced the rest of Poland, if at all. Of particular note will be cities such as Warsaw and Gdansk as well as any societal implications for Polish citizens outside of Katowice.

***Literature Review: Comparing Masłowski and McCauley***

Esports as an industry has historically attracted a mixed reputation. The BBC for example has reported both that *“Esports has endless opportunities for growth”* when discussing Esports development in Dundee, *(Swash, 2023)* but also that larger events such as the Commonwealth Games will not be utilising Esports in the 2026 event. *(Freeman, 2022)* This mixed reputation for the industry makes finding sources removed from bias difficult when objectively studying the viability of Esports Infrastructure. As such, the primary Case Studies this dissertation employs: McCauley et al and Masłowski & Karasiewicz were chosen for their focus on individual locations and peoples, instead of casting a wider net on Esports as a whole.

McCauley et al in their journal focused on the city of Jonköping due to its success in both the online and offline Esports Ecosystems. In effect, the question posed was: ***“What offline actions do actors engage in to facilitate and shape the local Esports market?”*** Drawing upon over a dozen interviews with the local players and governments to use as primary data sources when crafting the narrative of Jonköping’s success as an Esports City. McCauley et al believed that these findings would prove useful for future studies interested in furthering regional Esports development from a management perspective.

Contrastingly Patryk Masłowski and Tomasz Karasiewicz’s journal was focused less on Katowice as an individual location, but rather placed its emphasis on the role that Esports could play as part of Poland’s domestic tourism industry. One of the goals their study held was to create a hypothetical *“Esports Tourist”* and demonstrate what such an individual would be looking for in an Esports centric location: using terms such as ‘active’ and ‘passive’ tourism to describe the difference in motivation for different individuals. To assist in this, their primary data was a Digital Survey designed to illuminate thoughts on what people interested in Esports would want to see in the events they engage in.

Notably, each journal approaches the interests of Esports Participants differently. While McCauley et al *(Fig.1)* notes in their table of interviewees that they asked business owners and project managers, none of the individuals listed have direct involvement as a participant. Most of the ages of the people involved are above the age of 25, and most Esports Players retire before the age of 25; *(Cobb, 2024)* calling into doubt the effectiveness of the sample from a player’s perspective. The data from Masłowski and Karasiewicz *(Fig.2)* however delved deeper into exactly what interest their interviewees had, and whether they had participated in Esports events prior to being questioned; producing a wider comprehensive sample as a result.

For this essay, each Case Study will be utilised for how they build a successful Esports City based on the examples Jönkoping and Katowice have demonstrated through their policies. McCauley et al’s focus on local infrastructure vis-a-vis Dreamhack will showcase how local actors can influence wider perceptions regarding Esports. While Masłowski and Karasiewicz demonstrate how governmental attitudes and corporate interests can be used to craft a sustainable Esports Economy in developing cities like Katowice. This essay intends to prove how for a city like London, both attitudes will be required for its development into a successful Esports City.

***Literature Review: Events Tourism Perspectives***

Events Tourism is a continually evolving industry sector with varying definitions. In the case of Coetzee et al, they cited Getz’s *(2008)* logic for the sector being revolved around the development and integration of planned events. Coetzee et al looked to cover existing literary gaps in their work, believing that they would reveal ways to solve issues in how Events are planned. Ormerod and Wood meanwhile dissect current Events Tourism practises regionally, and outline policies for governments of the future to pursue. They cite several sources including the aforementioned Getz, as well as Pastras and Bramwell *(2013)* to *“fully understand the decision processes involved in Events Tourism”* to craft their theory.

After defining their research question, each journal is split into various subheadings. Coetzee et al has four different chapters in their book: *“Fundamental Concepts, Contemporary Perspectives, Planning Frameworks, and the future of Events Tourism”*. Each chapter focused on different aspects of the Events Tourism sector, but the two that influenced this essay are Contemporary Perspectives and future plans for Events Tourism. In Chapter Two, they reference a theory by Bäckström and Johansson (2006) on “Destination Shopping Centres” [DSC’s]. Locations designed to retain customers through putting on events while they were there. Coetzee references the Trafford Centre, Manchester and Meadowhall, Sheffield as British DSC’s. In Chapter Four, they explore the concept of User Generated Events [UGE’s] in tourism through social media and online communities in creating such events. Coetzee does not mention Esports Events in this chapter, and Dreamhack would be a key example of a UGE.

Ormerod and Wood meanwhile split their research into a chapter on Event Tourism Strategies and a chapter on how Events are and should be funded in the future. Throughout their journal Ormerod and Wood debate between a number of existing outlooks for Events Tourism policy across various nations (Fig.3) and develop a flowchart for how a policy is developed. *(Fig.4)* By doing this they found that the role of Events Tourism from a governmental perspective would vary based on the location. China most notably used the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing as a way of attracting investment into the nation, *(Dou, 2022)* but also noted that this approach can backfire when events expose underlying tensions. An example of which being the Qatar World Cup in 2022 *(Sullivan, 2022)* that shone a spotlight on corruption and inhumane practices taking place in the country that tarnished the events’ reputation ever since.

Each journal's relevance to this essay is based on the academic theory they bring to Esports Infrastructure from an outside perspective. DSC Theory for example will be used to expand on Masłowski and Karasiewicz’s previous theories on Esports Tourism, while UGE’s acts an example that the Esports Industry has already adopted and can refine. The queries that Ormerod and Wood elaborated upon will be utilised when extrapolated onto what policies London can utilise when moulding itself into a successful Esports City, with McCauley et al’s existing framework acting as a point of reference on how to streamline Ormerod and Wood’s ideas.

***Literature Review: Esports Event Models***

The final researcher that has influenced this dissertation is Thomas Newham’s PHD surrounding Esports Event Classifications. Newham’s aim was to *“explore the classification of Esports Events based on size, analyse the impact of business models on Esports, and examine possible alterations”* using Overwatch as a Case Study example. Newham’s research distinguishes much of the influence of Esports being through ‘Soft Power’ a term coined by Nye *(1990)* that defines a nation's ability to achieve influence without the use of force, unlike ‘Hard Power’ such as coercion or warfare. South Korea for example utilises Esports in its ‘Hallyu’ or Korean Wave strategy when promoting its culture abroad to gain Soft Power on the international stage. *(Hyun, 2020)* Newham expanded on the value of Soft Power to Esports by comparing it to examples where it has been applied in sporting events such as the Qatar World Cup.

Newham refers to events like the Qatar World Cup as ‘Sporting Mega Events’, [SME’s] and focuses much of their research refining the ideas of Müller *(2015)* by analysing them through the perspective of Esports. Müller placed four factors on conventional events: ‘Visitor Attractiveness’, ‘Cost’, ‘Mediated Reach’, and ‘Transformation’, and Newham used these as a baseline for what a successful Esports event looks like.

1. VisitorAttractiveness is based upon similar metrics that authors such as Coetzee et al and Ormerod and Wood study: The value a location has from a tourism perspective.
2. MediatedReach considers the value of broadcasting as a contrast to attractiveness focusing on the in person reach an event holds.
3. Cost refers to the inputs and spending required on Events Infrastructure. An SME would naturally have a higher cost if placed in a City Centre rather than a rural location for example.
4. Transformationevaluates the long term impacts that an event has on its environment. Müller refers to external definitions including Hiller *(2000)* who argues that mega events should have a “significant and/or permanent urban effect.”

 Newham argues that these definitions lack clarity for Esports, and require updating for the modern events landscape. This can be seen with the transition to mostly digital events that took place during the COVID-19 Pandemic and subsequent lockdowns leading to only three of the 217 recorded events on EsportsEarnings *(2024)* being held physically with the remainder being hosted online. Of particular note is Transformation which holds little relevance to Esports. Using the Esports events held in the UK *(EsportsNet, 2024)* as an example, all of them are held in prebuilt locations, and therefore do not impact the “Urban Effect '' that Müller believes important for SMEs to have. Later in the study *(Fig.5)* Newham crafts a table showcasing the modifications they would make to Müller’s four factors, dropping Transformation as a factor entirely.

This Study adds metrics that can be applied to the aforementioned factors discussed by Coetzee et al and Ormerod and Wood. These metrics will be employed later in the essay as guidelines that can be employed by the development of London as an Esports City. Visitor Attractiveness, showcases London’s value as a tourism destination for Esports. Mediated Reach examines London’s capacity for broadcasting high profile Esports events such as the League of Legends World Championship. Cost examines whether there is a feasible Return on Investment possibility for people like Sadiq Khan when introducing Esports Infrastructure into London. Newham’s PHD demonstrates a system of classification for Esports Events which will be useful when evaluating the types of events that will be necessary for London’s development into a successful Esports City.

***Literature Review: Final Evaluation***

Each of the five primary sources cited in this literature review have converging and diverging perspectives. A primary link between the five is their focus on the impact that Events can bring to their communities, whether that is through McCauley et al’s examination of Jonköping’s economic structure via Esports, or Coetzee’s focus on DSC’s. Simultaneously they have disparate focuses; from Event Structure, to Tourism, to Governmental Policy. These sources have been cited to add additional perspective to the original question posed in this essay: “***What makes a successful Esports City?***”

Coetzee et al’s work makes it clear that a robust policy cannot be established without local support. This can be seen in Marcin Krupa approaching Michal Blicharz in developing the framework for IEM Katowice in 2013, and in Jonköping after Dreamhack and Elmia agreed a renewal on their partnership in hosting events recently. *(Hollingsworth, 2019)* The CEO of Elmia exemplifies this perspective, arguing that it is *“The security that Jönköping represents for parents that has allowed it to thrive.”* Meanwhile Ormerod and Wood’s framework for Events Policy is a useful guideline for developing cities to examine when evaluating their own policy surrounding Esports. But as Newham’s evaluation and critique of Müller’s Event Development Theory has demonstrated: Esports cannot be a direct copy of the sports industry. It has its own strengths and flaws, and Esports Event Policy must reflect that.

Adapting each of the perspectives these journals have provided into a coherent strategy a city can adopt and find success in is the goal of this essay. London already follows several of the steps outlined in these reports, with Sadiq Khan’s public advocacy of the sector and London & Partners pushing similar messaging for the cities’ Esports sector. However notably, there is not a single location in London that Esports is centred around. Locations such as the RedBull *(2024)* Gaming Sphere, and the London Campus for Staffordshire University *(2024)* exist but are both in the east of the City, and events such as the League of Legends World Championship are held in pre-existing stadiums without long term plans set in place such as the deal with Elmia. Without such agreements or the other listed factors, it is hard to envision London as an Esports Capital of the future.

***Case Study: Jonköping***

Located near the centre of Sweden, the city of Jonköping sits on the second largest lake in the country: The Vättern. This freshwater lake surrounds the city in a bowl-like shape, and has shaped its infrastructure including the Elmia Exhibition Centre. Jonköping has a domestic airport, however it serves a limited number of flights for exotic tourism. *(Jonköping Airport, 2024)* Visitors to the city therefore usually arrive through connecting bus and train links via Gothenburg to the west or the capital Stockholm to the east, a process that is usually at least two hours long. Crucially for this essay, Jonköping also hosts a University within the city centre.

As mentioned previously, McCauley et al *(2020)* focused their journal on researching the value of Jonköping from both an online and offline perspective for Esports. McCauley et al wished to grasp a deeper understanding of which factors shape the Esports market, and how it is evolving. This Case Study aims to further that research and intends to evaluate the factors that allowed Jonköping and by extension Dreamhack to be successful ventures into Esports, since people like Tomas Lyckedal the ex Chief Strategy Officer for Dreamhack believe the two are synonymous: *“Wherever you go in the world, you get the direct reply when bringing up Jönköping, the city where they host DreamHack”,* and it became part of the cities’ official tourism messaging. *(Hakeberg, 2018)*

As part of their research, McCauley et al crafted a sample of seventeen local actors in the Esports scene of Jonköping *(Fig.1)* and interviewed them on their involvement with the Esports sector. After clarifying the methods employed, McCauley et al came to four themes for shaping the local Esports market that people engage in:

1. **Building Culture and Values**

McCauley et al’s interviewees were focused on providing opportunities for the local community to get involved in Esports such as developing social spaces that children can feel comfortable playing in person with, rather than at home.

1. **Advocating and Legitimising**

Taylor *(2012)* advocates the value of Dreamhack as a legitimising platform for Esports on both the grassroots and commercial scales. Other advocates include locations like the Kappa Bar *(2024)* that explicitly support Esports and dispel negative stigma members of the public may have.

1. **Institutional Development**

Through the legitimisation process local infrastructure such as the ‘Spelarena’ (Games Arena) were developed. Additional lobbying to the local government have provided clubs with public funding and have authorised Esports as an official school curriculum subject within the region.

1. **Co-creation of Value through Socialising and Practice**

McCauley et al asserts that Esports Audiences are also active participants in the sector. They developed a table *(Fig.6)* showcasing what an Esports Ecosystem looks like from the audience perspective to the stakeholder perspective. This table alongside the interviewees report on initiatives on both the active and passive consumption of Esports via shared offline social spaces. McCauley et al asserts that these social spaces advance Esports Culture and strengthen social bonds between Esports fans.

McCauley concludes their journal by arguing that local factors that brought about the rise of Jonköping and DreamHack, noting the counterexamples of Katowice and Cologne as Esports Cities that were built through professional deals such as the negotiations Marcin Krupa and Michal Blicharz had *(2018)* to develop IEM Katowice as a yearly event. Due to Dreamhack hosting events twice a year in Elmia, it created a focal point for local stakeholders to invest in Esports for the past fifteen years, and argues by extension that any future regional Esports Infrastructure will need a grassroots movement to be successful.

The Jonköping Case Study showcases the potential of Esports to grow from the perspective of a regional market. The four themes they established in their journal are frameworks that any future project manager can look to for inspiration when pitching how to develop Esports Infrastructure for their local area. In capital cities such as London or Paris, the advocacy of Esports is already present with events like the League of Legends World Championship taking place in multiple capital cities and famous venues. *(Tuting, 2024)* The remaining values however are where cities like London are falling behind, particularly in building a culture and institutions that are friendly to Esports beyond merely hosting events.

Unlike in the case of the Katowice Case Study, there is no single Esports title that Jonköping is known for, and Dreamhack is as much an expo as a tournament host for Esports events. This is in contrast with London which hosts events like the Apex Legends Global Series *(British Esports, 2023)* but does not have consistently repeating events each year. The closest comparison would be the ExCeL Convention Centre *(2024)* hosting events such as MCM Comic Con *(2024)* or the Pokémon European International Championship. *(2024)* However such events have little coordination with the local Esports Infrastructure and are in service to their own communities, rather than for Esports or London as a whole.

Jonköping as a case study therefore exemplifies how if cities such as London wish to organically develop their Esports Infrastructure, there needs to be grassroots movements established and strengthened for long term success. Venues such as ExCeL need to be given incentives to support Esports, rather than viewing it as one of the hundreds of event opportunities London is host to each year. Finally, Esports events that are hosted must be hosted with an endgame in mind rather than exclusively for prestige or reputational purposes.

***Case Study: Katowice***

Located near the Czechoslovak border(s), the city of Katowice has had a lengthy history as part of Poland’s industrial heartland during the Soviet occupation after the second world war. Today it holds a special place in the hearts and minds of many Esports fans as the birthplace of IEM Katowice; an event that has captivated CounterStrike fans since 2013. *(ESL, 2022)* This Case Study will be from the perspectives of Patryk Masłowski and Tomasz Karasiewicz, *(2021)* two Polish academics studying the Polish Esports Industry and an interview given by the outgoing head of ESL: Michal Blicharz to the current mayor of Katowice, Marcin Krupa. *(2018)* This is intended to produce additional perspectives that were unavailable in the Jonköping study.

As mentioned in the literature review, Masłowski and Karasiewicz’s work focused primarily on Sports Tourism rather than Katowice itself. Using the impact of the COVID Pandemic as a basis for their exploration into Esports. Data is still being collected on the impacts of COVID on the events industry, but according to Clawson *(2023)* over 125,000 jobs in the sector were lost in 2020 due to the pandemic. In 2021 the Polish Tourism Organisation *(2021)* published that during the height of the pandemic, the amount of events taking place in cities such as Warsaw and Kraków decreased by over 80%. For Esports the impact was felt most acutely for the organisers of the Major events such as IEM Katowice which had to be cancelled during the pandemic.

IEM Katowice is held in the Spodek Arena. A marvel of engineering built in 1971 as a cultural symbol for the city, *(Spodek, 2024)* that can hold over 100,000 people at any given time. IEM Katowice has consistently had attendance surpassing that figure (*Bräutigam, 2018)* to the point where Masłowski and Karasiewicz noted that the event had to be divided across multiple weekends to avoid overcrowding of the venue. Additionally noting that the event itself is a major contributor to the cities’ tourism industry and the pandemic by contrast was a major drain on the city's finances. From a legislative perspective Masłowski and Karasiewicz identified the government's supplementation to sports as: “Competition based on intellectual activity to achieve a sporting outcome.” They argue that the current legal framework in Poland creates an ambiguity that will need to be addressed in the near future.

The survey that Masłowski and Karasiewicz conducted *(Fig.2)* was comprehensive in its questioning of the respondents. It asked of their interest in Esports, transportation used to reach events, and opinions of Sports Tourism among others. There were 172 people who completed the survey, which was distributed by 165 men and 7 women which as McCauley et al *(2020)* noted in their own Case Study is a lamentable gender gap that needs to be addressed across the wider Esports industry. These results also highlight in a similar manner to McCauley’s study, the local bias that came with the questioning. Most respondents liked IEM Katowice and PGL Krakow as their favourite Esports events, alongside 48% of respondents travelling by car as their primary means of transportation.

While Masłowski and Karasiewicz’s respondents were mostly Polish, RedBull interviewed Michal Blicharz: the former head of ESL Pro Gaming, on his decision to bring the IEM series to Katowice. Blicharz recounted that the event came to be through a connection with the political establishment of the city and subsequently asserted that through this event Katowice formed a new industry. The mayor, Marcin Krupa, concurred; they wished to bring the city into the 21st century by adopting new technology and expertise through industries like Esports. The introduction of IEM Katowice has allowed individuals such as Rafał Trybus to establish the Katowice Gaming House, a location for teams to practise ahead of tournaments taking place in the city, and has become a staple for teams such as Dignitas over the years. Trybus’ success was replicated by industries such as hospitality, journalism, and tourism all looking to tap into the newly forming market after 2013. *(Frascarelli, 2022)*

A consistent trend across surveys conducted for Esports Audiences is their heavy Gender Bias in favour of men, which Masłowski and Karasiewicz little more than a passing reference to in their work. They instead emphasise the good that Esports has done for not only the tourism industry, but the sectors alongside it. People like Rafał Trybus exemplify the transformation that Katowice went through after Polish Independence in the 1990’s, and Masłowski and Karasiewicz concludes their study by proclaiming that despite the impacts of COVID, Katowice and Esports are still growing and there will be a sharp increase in demand for live events; an opinion which would prove to be correct after the journal’s publication. *(Bloom, 2022)*

When examining Katowice in relation to the research question, the factor that sets the city apart is its top down perspective for reform. While Jonköping was a study on how local actors influenced venue planning on policy, Katowice as a location and event was designed by its mayor and the head of the biggest events organiser in Esports. These factors in the modern ‘Esports Winter’ *(Maas, 2023)* will be difficult to replicate for any future city looking to implement Esports Infrastructure on the same scale. While Sadiq Khan has expressed his support for the League of Legends World Championship, it is an event hosted by a publisher and not an events organiser. If cities like London wish to grow into ‘Esports Cities’ then the Katowice Case Study proves definitively that there must be a relationship between both the organisers and the political leadership to ensure an event’s success.

***Is London a successful Esports City?***

In the process of crafting infrastructure for a city, planners often require years of notice to establish new buildings and communities. For example, the London 2012 Olympics required an extensive bidding process that concluded in 2005. *(BBC, 2005)* Once the main event concluded, additional regulations surrounding what would be done with the former Olympic Park. *(2021)* The Jonköping and Katowice case studies similarly exemplify this with the Elmia and Spodek arenas both having alternate uses outside of purely Esports. Therefore, when considering how to build Esports Infrastructure in a city it is more prudent to look for existing locations to renovate rather than building something completely new.

After each mayoral election, the London Mayor crafts a “Spatial Development Strategy” on how they intend to develop London over the next 20-25 years. *(London Mayor, 2021)* This plan covers several chapters worth of project planning, but this essay will focus on Policy HC5 which covers London’s culture and creative industries. In this section, it reiterates the reuse of existing cultural venues while developing new opportunities for growth in the arts. While not specifically outlined, Esports as a creative industry would fall under the lens of Policy HC5. With the 2024 London Mayoral Election on the horizon, Sadiq Khan has set out his aims of supporting London’s visitor economy alongside London & Partners. *(London Mayor, 2024)* A vision which aims to improve visitor knowledge and accessibility, as well as increasing the funding for the events and hospitality industries to meet the increasing demand London has as a Events Tourism destination.

Upon evaluating the Spatial Development Strategy, the lack of any mention of Esports makes it clear that this is not a policy area that Sadiq Khan or his staff deem important enough to devote campaigning time towards. As seen in his support of the League of Legends World Championship *(Sacco, 2023)*; he is willing to support Esports but currently unwilling to devote resources into assisting its development further as an industry. The Jonköping Case Study previously demonstrated that while local actors can develop from a localised perspective, that localised perspective needed to be assisted through legitimising Esports as a profession and creating opportunities for younger audiences to be able to engage with it to begin with. Organisations like the BBC regularly endorse Esports *(2024)* but there is little consistency provided, and would fall short of the four themes McCauley et al *(2020)* addressed in their journal.

The primary source for Esports socialisation in London is found in Esports Bars. *(Waananen, 2023)* Bars chains such as Meltdown and Platform provide their patrons places to socially gather and engage in Esports in a public setting. Unlike Jonköping with the Kappa Bars, these pubs have little connecting them besides passion and are mostly disconnected from the wider Esports conversation in London. Larger Esports Events are held in the multitude of stadiums throughout the city; The Red Bull Gaming Sphere *(2024)* and Queen Elizabeth Stadium in East London *(2023)*, and Wembley Stadium *(EsportsInsider, 2023)* alongside Boxpark Wembley *(EsportsInsider, 2024)* to the west. These events similarly have little in common with each other, and do little to promote London’s image as an Esports City beyond merely a location to host major events.

While London does not fulfil McCauley et al’s framework, it has many of the properties that Newham *(2022)* deems valuable in their own study. Much of Khan’s electoral manifesto covers expansion to tourism, boosting its attractiveness to visitors. Areas such as the Queen Elizabeth Park are prime examples of how to use transformative elements to promote a venue’s sustainability, and thanks to the recognition of the capital it has easy access to broadcasting and other aspects of Mediated Reach. The only negative factor associated with London is the cost of hosting events relative to other parts of Europe due to how much demand the city already has from competing sectors; especially finance. *(London Business, 2018)*

Finally, Masłowski and Karasiewicz’s journal *(2021)* outlines the opportunities available to policy makers in charge of determining Esports ventures in London; the value that can be attained through events planning negotiations. IEM Katowice attracting over 100,000 visitors was not something that was achieved overnight: It required years of buildup and patience, alongside talented individuals willing to take chances to make something great out of nothing. The events that London has been able to acquire have been prestigious, but there have been little followup afterwards to ensure consistency. Until the higher ups decide to commit to smaller consistent Esports events rather than pandering to flashy one and done events, the future of London as a successful Esports City appears to be unlikely in the short term.

***Conclusion: What Makes a Successful Esports City?***

This essay has established several routes that have been taken to promote Esports as a primary industry for developing cities. From the localised model seen in Jonköping and Dreamhack, to the professional model seen in Katowice and the IEM Events it hosts. It has examined different theories of Events Tourism like Newham’s *(2022)* four factors of Events Modelling, Coetzee et al’s *(2021)* DSC and UGE Theories of Events Tourism, and Ormerod and Wood’s *(2021)* flowchart and forecasts of Events Development. Each of these resources have given clarity to what is required to create a successful Esports City, and whether London is on that pathway.

When moulded together, each of these sources give a single inflection point: *A successful Esports City is a City that both the citizens and officials believe to be the cornerstone of their identity.*Jonköping’s official tourism board advertises itself as the city of Dreamhack *(2018)*, and the growth of the cities’ Events Tourism has been directly linked to the expansion and development of that brand. Katowice’s expansion into Esports was promoted by its mayor, and in Michal Blicharz’s words: *“The City wanted to change its image and character to be more associated with youth culture”*; it wanted to promote Esports as a way to change and shape its identity in the future.

London by contrast is a city that already has a rich cultural history with various other sports: Especially football. Where the Esports sector does exist: it is in smaller pockets such as the local Esports bars, or venues such as the Red Bull Gaming Sphere. While London hosts events like the League of Legends World Championship, it does not have a consistent event and fanbase in the same manner that Jonköping or Katowice does that sees yearly returns and participation from their respective fanbases. Esports in London therefore has not yet been developed for the purpose of shaping the cities’ identity, but instead is a symbol to show more of what London already is: A place to do business in the centre of the global map.

Evaluating prospective Esports Cities of the future therefore will require one to look past the flashiness of the big events, and require a long term commitment to both the community and governance of the city in tandem with each other. Dreamhack began over twenty years ago as a small event that took place in a school as a passion project, and IEM Katowice originated from one governmental figure asking if their event could be held in Katowice in a similar manner. In the UK, events such as Insomnia *(2024)* or EpicLAN *(2024)* have developed in a similar manner to Dreamhack; events that are built for the community, by the community. The crucial difference however comes in their interactions with governing bodies.

The British Government’s policy regarding Esports has been one of slow integration with existing stakeholders *(DCMS, 2020)* but does not have any existing events that they wish to use to replicate the successes seen in the Case Studies this essay offers. If British Esports organisations wish to see their events succeed in a similar fashion to Jonköping or Katowice there must be as McCauley et al asserts, more institutional involvement to convince the government of the day to grow these events further. By extension, if governmental bodies wish to craft public development in line with Esports they must also evaluate what cities would benefit the most from such a transition. Katowice succeeded in this transition due to its desire to identify with youth culture, and any city looking to adopt Esports as its primary industry will need to do something similar due to the demographics involved with Esports as a whole.

Lastly, further studies need to be conducted to ascertain the role Esports should play in the eyes of society. While the insights of McCauley et al, and Masłowski and Karasiewicz paint a useful picture on what local Swedish and Polish stakeholders view of Esports, the individuals interviewed in their studies already had an inherently positive view associated with the Esports Industry. In order to craft a successful Esports City alongside the aforementioned factors, there needs to be an investigation into the feelings of the local population of any city looking to engage in this social experiment in order for it to be a success. Without the consent or desire of the local population, the supplementary industries such as catering or hospitality will be less willing to support Esports in their local economy in the way they have in Jonköping and Katowice.

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