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**EDUCATIONAL OLYMPIC LEGACY: THE PUBLIC
USE OF SPORT FACILITIES AFTER THE GAMES**

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Abstract

One of the important issues of the Olympic Games is the legacy created for the hosting city. Olympic legacy can be defined as positive impacts on the hosting city and its people, lasting for a long time. Since the beginning of the 20s Olympic legacy became an Olympic demand for hosting the games. One of the social impacts has an educational aspect of reusing the Olympic sport facilities. The assumption is that construction of new sport facilities and reusing the Olympic sport facilities after the Games can bring significant increase in the sport activity of the people that will utilize the improved conditions. The educational idea of physical activity as a life style that can promote quality of life and helps in improving mental and physical health, point to the importance of the public reuse of Olympic sport facilities after the Games.

The aim of this paper was to analyse the educational issue of public reuse of Olympic sport facilities after the Games in four hosting cities, two cities hosting summer Games (Athens 2004, London 2012), and two cities hosting winter Games (Salt Lake City 2002, Vancouver 2010). In order to achieve its purpose, a qualitative approach (four cases) was used in this paper. Results and comparison of the four cases were discussed, while examining the factors influencing the public reuse of Olympic sport facilities.

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Keywords: Olympic Legacy, hosting cities, Reuse of Olympic facilities.



1. Introduction

The Olympic Games include three main international events that are taking place regularly every four years, each time in a selected town: The Summer Games, the Winter Games and the Paralympic Games. One of the important issues of the Olympic Games, is the legacy created for the hosting city. Olympic legacy can be defined as positive impacts on the hosting city and its people, lasting for a long time (Nunan and O'Brien 2012). Since the beginning of the 20s Olympic legacy became an Olympic demand for hosting the games (Leopkey and Parent 2012). Impacts created by the Olympic Games and affecting the host city, can be categorized into three major areas: Environmental, Social/Cultural and Economic (IOC, 2015). One of the social impacts has an educational aspect where the assumption that construction of new sport facilities and reusing the Olympic sport facilities, can bring significant increase in the sport activity of the people that will use the improved conditions (Homma & Masumoto 2013). Physical activity as a life style can promote quality of life and helps in improving mental and physical health (Malfas, Theodoraki, & Houlihan, 2004). Those educational ideas point to the importance of the public reuse of Olympic sport facilities after the Games.

The Winter Olympic Games containing winter (snow and ice) sports. Considering the issue of sport facilities legacy, it has to be mentioned that winter sports are characterized by highly specialized facilities like ski jumps and sliding tracks.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the issue of public reuse of Olympic sport facilities after the Games in four hosting cities. Two cities hosting summer Games, and two cities hosting winter Games. The differences in facilities characteristics between summer and winter Games will be described and some conclusions will be presented.

2. Methodology

In order to achieve its purposes, a qualitative approach was used in this paper. The method used included the collection and analysing of qualitative data on the issue of public reuse of Olympic facilities in hosting cities. That method relies primarily on the collection of qualitative data, and examination of that knowledge in a descriptive/commentary way for getting conclusions (Johnston, Christensen, & Turner, 2014). The concentration in the paper was on four hosting cities. Results and comparison of the four cases were discussed.

3. Literature review

3.1. Aspects of Olympic sport facilities legacy

Quality of the Olympic sport facilities legacy depends on a number of factors. The use of existing sport facilities in the hosting city, the creation of new facilities and the characteristics of the used facilities can influence that legacy. When existing sport facilities in the hosting city are used, costs of staging the Games can be decreased but the hosting city does not obtain new facilities, so that impact is minimal (Eaax and Chalkley 1998). New sport facilities constructed for the Games, can become a positive Olympic legacy when used after the Games. Those new facilities can be offered for the general population, gaining the social educational legacy of improving of public sport participation. Also, it can provide better sites for training and competition for top athletes. The characteristics of the facilities can cause a problem when

being too large or too specialized to be used after the Games. Other possibilities for success in reaching that legacy, is by adapting the sport facility to post Olympic use, or when the facility was planned in a multifunctional way and not for a highly specific use only because of the Games (Alberts 2011).

3.2. Characteristics of summer and winter Olympic Games

Some differences exist between Summer and Winter Olympic Games concerning their infrastructures. In Summer Games, most of the competitions are held in the hosting city itself. By contrast, in the Winter Games more sporting events take place outside the hosting city. The overall costs for Summer Games is higher because of the large number of different sports, while in the Winter Games the cost for per one sport can be higher due to the need for highly specialized facilities. The reuse of sport facilities after the Games, can be achieved in some facilities in the Summer and Winter Games when being multifunctional enabling their use by the general population and by top athletes (Alberts 2011; Essex & Chalkley 2004).

3.3. Winter Olympics sport facilities and hosting cities

The early winter Games (begun in 1924) could be held in small cities, but with the increasing number of athletes and the higher demands on sport facilities, larger cities were needed to host the Games. Specifics of sport facilities in the winter Games, caused some limitation in hosting the Games. A high mountain environment and a region with reliable snowfall are needed for the skiing competitions. Also because of the high costs for those infrastructures, only richer nations can afford to host the winter Games (Essex & Chalkley 2004).

3.4. Reuse of Winter Olympic sports facilities

Newly constructed or upgraded Winter Olympic facilities have the possibility of reuse after the Games. Upgrading of existing ski resorts for the Olympic competitions make possible for using those improved facilities by recreational skiers as well as competitive athletes. Other facilities like ice rinks, can be used after the Games by the general public for recreational purposes such as sport programs of schools or clubs, and by athletes for training. Some of these facilities are multi-functional, so it is possible to use them for other public cultural events (Alberts 2011).

4. Four cases in the public reuse of Olympic facilities after the Games

4.1. Salt Lake City, 2002

Like in every Olympic Games, the educational challenge of public reuse of the sport facilities is to achieve lasting benefits for the host community. For that purpose, the Utah Olympic Legacy Foundation was created to carry on the positive impacts of the 2002 Winter Games. The Utah Olympic Legacy Foundation is a non-profit body responsible for maintaining the Olympic facilities at world-class levels and to provide their usage opportunities for people of all ages and abilities. The foundation has stated its missions in five major points:

- Maintain, operate, and enhance Olympic Legacy Facilities. -
- Engage and involve more people – especially Utah’s youth – in winter sport. -
- Inspire, educate, and entertain the public through unique & exciting public offerings. -

Improve the quality of youth sport and physical activity programs in Utah. -

Ensure long term viability & relevance of Utah's Olympic Legacy efforts.

When bidding for the XIX winter Olympic Games held in 2002, Salt Lake City announced that existing recreational areas will be used for the games and then will be return to their original use after the Games. Some existing sporting facilities needed only minor alteration, but other facilities had to be built. A new ski jump site was build because of the new demands for that sport. A new ice arena was also built for the Games.

Realizing the bidding statement of public reusing of the Olympic facilities, the Salt Lake City Ice Arena and the Utah Olympic Park (UOP) became multipurpose recreational sites, open to public users and athletes (Alberts 2011; Utah Olympic legacy foundation, 2017).

4.2. Athens, 2004

After the 2004 Games were won for Athens in 1997, Athens organizers wanted to leave a positive legacy to the city. But the results in that aspect were limited mainly to some important transportation constructions. With the area of public reuse of Olympic facilities, results were even poorer. One problem in the legacy issue was Athens approach towards the concept of legacy. The planners were more focused on the historical sides of the Games, instead of thinking about legacy in the meaning of what the present can do for the future. Another difficulty was the political disputes that Athens had which prevented them from leaving the most positive legacy possible. In those circumstances Athens did not plan for the post-Games period as well as they could have (Nunan & Obrien, 2012).

In 2002 a state company, the Hellenic Olympic Properties (HOP) was formed by the government, but practically started to act in 2005. The HOP was entrusted to organize the post Olympic use of the Olympic venues. Ten years after the Games, most of the Athens sport venues were given to non sporting bodies. From the seventeen sport venues only seven were granted to sporting federations or clubs. None of the sporting venues have been reused by the Athens citizens. Two of Athens sporting venues continued to be used for sporting events. The Markopouli Equestrian Centre hosted the Modern Pentathlon World Cup in 2005, and some other international competitions in 2008. Another venue, the Schinias Olympic Rowing and Canoeing Centre is being used for training and competitions. The 2008 European Rowing Championships were held in these facilities (Kissoudi, 2008; Souliotis, Sayas, & Maloutas, 2014).

4.3. Vancouver, 2010

The planners of the Winter Games in Vancouver have decided to use many existing sport facilities for the Games. Those facilities have been upgraded to meet or exceed the standards of the International Federation. The existing facilities included the Richmond Curling Club, The ice rink at Hastings Park, two ice hockey arenas in Vancouver, and two alpine skiing areas in Whistler. All those facilities have been returned to their pre-Games uses, commercially open to the public as sporting sites. Some new facilities were built for the Vancouver Games. The organizers of the Games have stated that they want to ensure the achievement of sustainable sporting legacy for the local, national and international sporting communities (VANOC 2010).

Those new facilities built for the Games, include Hillcrest Stadium Park for curling, the Winter Sports Center for ice hockey in the University of British Columbia, and the Oval for speed skating in Simon Fraser University. Those sites are used by the community, especially the students of the two Universities. In Whistler two new facilities were built. One is the Whistler Nordic Center used for some winter sports. The goal for the Whistler Nordic Center included the statement of maximizing year-round use of compatible outdoor recreational and sporting activities. Another new site built in the Whistler was the sliding center. That site was reconstructed to adapt it to post-Olympic uses (Alberts 2011; VANOC 2010).

4.4. London, 2012

The organizers of the London 2012 Olympic Games had a major concern of benefiting the local communities by securing the legacy of the sporting venues. Their decision was to use some different categories of venues, and to decrease the number of new sporting venues to be built for the Games, trying to avoid the phenomenon of unused venues after the Games. Most of the sites used in the London Games were existing sporting and non-sporting venues. Some of them had to be adapted for the events, mostly for their capacity. Some facilities were temporarily located in non-sporting sites, and two temporary venues were built and entirely dismantled after the Games. Seven venues, including the Olympic Stadium, were built new for the Games (City Mayors, 2011; Gold & Gold, 2011).

From the ten sport venues in the London Olympic Park, five will be reused by professional sport competitions (Olympic Stadium, Velodrome, Copper Box, BMX track, and Eton Manor). The two sport venues that have been dismantled are the Basketball Arena and the Water Polo Arena. One venue, the Riverbank Arena has been transferred to Sheffield Hallam University. Only two sites were opened to community use. The Aquatics Centre venue was adapted (reduced seats capacity), and the Athletic warm-up track (Metro News, 2013).

5. Conclusions

Although securing the Olympic legacy is a demand of the IOC, and hosting cities have the aspiration to go for it, the achievement is usually a complex task. Achieving the educational legacy of public reusing of the Olympic facilities is influenced by some variables. When looking at the four cases described in this paper, it seems that the most important variable is the early planning for that legacy. As can be seen in those four Olympic cities when a proactive approach was taking place, like in Salt Lake City 2002, Vancouver 2010, and London 2012, a notable public reuse of Olympic facilities has taken place. The negative result can be noticed in Athens 2004, where political and bureaucratic disputes prevented an efficient legacy treatment before the Games.

The second variable that influence the legacy of public reuse of Olympic facilities, is the different characteristics of the sport facilities in the winter and the summer Games. The sport venues in the summer Games are usually bigger having large seats capacity, making it difficult to be used by the city community. Most of the winter sport facilities are smaller and it is easier to reuse them by the community.

Another variable is the size of the hosting city. The winter Games are usually hosted in smaller cities, in which the availability of public reusing the Olympic sport facilities is greater.

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