Legacy creation strategy in Olympic cities
The path towardssustainable development?

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Abstract: Mega-event strategies and their impact on the development of host cities have drawn increasing interest as they have become part of wider city development strategies. However, many city leaders are challenged by a gigantic and complex task after the events: how to deal with the post-use of large event venues and facilities? How to use the events as a catalyst to facilitate urban development? Mega-event strategies may provide a stimulus for wider urban investments and change. They help to provide host cities an engine for economic growth, facilitating city revitalisation and even urban physical restructuring, enhancing city image, and transforming a city into a globally competitive city. Whereas every host city expects to experience some form of short- and long term impact, the so-called ‘legacy’, it is however difficult for most host city organisers to think beyond the Games in any systematic fashion due to the pressing nature and planning complexities involved. Therefore, although the post-Games period is by far the longest period that stretches for decades after the Games to affect a host city, it is “clearly the least-planned period”. Due to time pressure, poor consideration of the long-term impact may make Olympic venues ‘white elephants’ after the Games have taken place, isolated in their city landscapes. These possible negative impacts raise the following questions: 1) how can a host city improve post-event usage of event-related facilities? 2) What strategy should a host city follow to facilitate post-event development in a more sustainable way? Based on the examination of legacy creation strategy of a number of Olympic host cities, the research aims to identify what urban strategies lead to the improvement of the post-event usage of event-related facilities and long-term benefits for the city development of host city.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Olympics is one of the world’s great ‘mega-events’. The Games’ five-ring symbol alone can be recognised by approximately 90% of the world’s population. Given the event’s significance, studies have paid increasing attention to the Olympics in recent years. A large-scale undertaking such as the Olympics can act as a catalyst for local – and even regional – economic development, attracting mass investment, tourists and the global media to the host city. Indeed, host cities generally attach great importance to factors such as the Games’ economic implications, event-related income, and the development of tourism. Consequently, many studies have looked at the
economic implications of staging mega-events for host cities. Most studies attempt to identify the economic benefits, measuring either the extent to which such benefits offset the costs or the extent to which such benefits can be sustained in the long term (Preuss 2004; Kasimati 2003; Gratton et al. 2006). Meanwhile, others focus on the development of event tourism (Higham 2004; Gotham 2005; Weed 2008). In addition to the economic implications, a number of studies have drawn attention to the event’s likely socio-cultural and environmental impact, such as the local community’s sense of self-worth. However, there may also be negative social effects, particularly on housing and tenants’ rights and processes of social gentrification (Jones 2001; Olds 1998; Waitt 2003).

There is a growing awareness that mega events can also be a vehicle for some form of urban transformation (Hiller 2000). Mega event triggered the erection of landmarks, the development of infrastructure, and urban renewal processes frequently transform an urban space (Chalkley and Essex 1999; Roche 2000; Gold and Gold 2008). Use of mega events such as the Olympic Games to reinvigorate sluggish or declining urban economies arose from the late 1970s, when growing awareness of the pervasiveness of deindustrialization led city planner to take action to stimulate new sources of economic engines, investment, and employment (Gold and Gold 2007: 4).

In recent years, the Olympic Games have increasingly been viewed as a means of stimulating urban development processes, on the grounds that the erection of landmarks, the development of infrastructure, and urban renewal processes frequently transform an urban space (Chalkley and Essex 1999; Roche 2000; Gold and Gold 2008). The Olympics’ role as a catalyst for urban development and regeneration was first identified in a bidding document in 1992, when Barcelona was preparing for its Olympics. Owing to its use of the Olympic legacy, increased capital flows and its improved attractiveness as a city, Barcelona was able to boost its economic growth, enhance its image, and transform itself into a globally competitive city. Barcelona’s success is one indication of the significance that the Olympic Games can have for urban development practices and urban policy in host cities, and equally, the importance of understanding the Olympic Games from an urban development perspective.

While every host city expects to experience some form of legacy, it is however difficult the host city organisers to think beyond the Games in any systematic fashion due to the pressing nature and planning complexity. Therefore, although the post-Games period is by far the longest period that stretches for decades after the Games to affect a host city, it is “clearly the least-planned period” (Cashman 1998). However awe-inspiring during the Games, many of the venues created or modified for the Olympic Games later falls into disuse or are used sporadically without generating a profit and many Olympic Parks remains largely empty and unused. These possible negative impacts raise the following questions: 1) how can a host city improve post-event usage of event-related facilities? 2) What strategy should a host city follow to facilitate post-event development in a more sustainable way?

This paper is to examine cities that have hosted the post-event legacy of Summer Olympic Games host cities, from the perspective of urban development. The paper begins with a brief review of past studies on legacy creation. This will be followed by characterizing the development strategies of previous host cities regarding the post-event legacy in different levels and tiers. Findings and discussion on how host cities use program definition, organisation structure and development process to increase the leverage of positive legacy are presented. Finally, conclusion remarks highlight the
contrasts and contradictions provoked by the strategy of using the Summer Olympic Games as a catalyst for stimulating positive legacy in host cities and, ultimately, sustainable development.

2. OLYMPIC LEGACY:

The understanding of legacy cannot separate from the historical revival and development of the modern Olympics. Preuss (2006, p.86) defines legacy as “all planned and unplanned positive and negative, intangible and tangible structures created by and for a sport event that remains for a longer time than the event itself”. Although there has been much discussion of legacy from the time of Coubertin, the term legacy remains a neglected area (Cashman 1998). The IOC congress on legacy recognized different meanings of legacy across different cultures and in different languages, and therefore encourage each host city to “reflect its own goal right from the beginning of the bidding process and to look at how the Games can be a catalyst for development” (International Olympic Committee 2010). Therefore host cities need to consider the sustainability of the facilities and projects of the host cities, maintaining the quality of the facilities for the athletes, but avoiding any form of luxury and the investment that cannot be justified in the long-term benefit of local citizens. Since organizing the Games involves both opportunities and risks, it is recommended to establish post-Olympic planning, taking into consideration of legacy in the context of sustainable development and the Games as a community project. The symposium suggested the host cities to realise the difference and importance of tangible and intangible legacy aspects. Tangible aspects include architecture, urban planning and sports infrastructure. Intangible aspects include production of ideas, cultural values, education, voluntarism, experience and knowhow (International Olympic Committee 2002). These tangible and intangible aspects are operated on social-cultural, financial-economic and spatial-environmental levels.

Economic legacies
Among the various legacies that are listed in the literature, economic benefit is considered to be the prime motivation for those parties with an interest in hosting the Games. This factor therefore accounts for perhaps the largest set of studies on sport and cities. Host cities can expect tangible economic results that are directly related to the Games. Preuss (2004) and Gratton et al. (2006), for example, identify several important economic aspects of holding the Games, such as those relating to employment, revenue, investment, real estate, tourism and the Organising Committee’s expenditure. Increasingly, host cities are gearing themselves towards more long-term, more intangible economic approaches that are intended to sustain such cities after the Olympics have taken place. A substantial number of studies, meanwhile, focus on the development of Olympic tourism and the creation of new business opportunities (Andranovich et al. 2001; Kasimati 2003; Weed 2008).

Spatial legacies
The very tangible physical results of hosting the Olympic Games are linked to cities’ spatial and environmental strategies. Sakai (2006) suggests that hosting mega-events stimulates governments to invest heavily in the construction of event venues, tourism facilities and other forms of
infrastructure over short time periods. In recent years, the construction of Olympic venues and facilities have been seen as a process of forming urban spectacles, through the creation of new, iconic stadiums and the construction of landmarks (Gotham 2005; Coaffee and Johnson 2007). Furthermore, at the urban level, the Olympic project is increasingly used to facilitate the creation of new urban centres with service, leisure, business and residential functions. As we explain in the next section, this has resulted in a form of comprehensive strategic planning that combines Olympic site development with the provision and improvement of infrastructure, tourism facilities, the creation of high-quality public spaces, tourism planning and general urban regeneration programmes, so as to maximise urban impact.

One related issue is the re-branding and marketing of a city or location. Sports events such as the Olympic Games are a powerful tool for developing a city as a ‘brand’ (Waitt 1999; Smith 2001; Hall 2001; Van den Berg et al. 2002; Surborg et al. 2008) The development of sports facilities may provide a city with important visual symbols that create memorable and positive images in tourists’ minds (Smith 2001, 136). The global media and the general publicity surrounding the Games can be used to highlight improvements in a city’s urban environment, transportation system, and organisation, attracting both sports tourists and a more general audience, such as companies, investors and conference delegates.

Social legacies
Although the Olympic Games are often viewed primarily in economic terms, in almost every case, the Games have a significant social impact. Much of the concern expressed in the literature is related to the Games’ effects on local communities. This is due to the fact that not only is community support an essential aspect of a successful mega-event, but also that community groups tend to be more vulnerable to, and more affected by, Olympic-led development. Long and Sanderson (2001, 189) list a number of community benefits that may motivate host cities, including: enhanced confidence and self-esteem; empowerment of disadvantaged groups; improving a community’s capacity to take the initiative; increased social integration and co-operation; the promotion of a collective identity; and increased cohesion. Jones (2001) suggests that hosting the Olympics leads to wider participation in sport and greater community access to improved sports facilities. Olds (1998), meanwhile, draws attention to the importance of guaranteeing housing and tenant rights, particularly for low-income groups, through specific, target-oriented housing programmes.

3. PLANNING THE GAMES AND BEYOND

3.1 Olympic-led regeneration

The earliest Olympic preparation emphasized mainly the construction of gigantic sport facilities and urban infrastructure but later evolved to take into account of a much broader urban regeneration and urban restructuring program using Olympic Games as a catalyst. Host cities such as Berlin (1936), Rome (1960) and Tokyo (1964), reconstructed and expanded existing facilities, added new landmark constructions and made more general infrastructural improvement to achieve urban upgrading. Some early attempt to combine Olympic preparation and urban restructuring program to supply long-term demand was explored in Montreal (1976) and soul (1988). In
Barcelona (1992), not only had the urban structure of Barcelona been modified through the development of four Olympic sites in four different types of locations (like low quality neighbourhood, declining industrial site, waterfront area) but many earlier proposed program, such as the creation of public open-space, the general improvement of public transportation, the opening of the city to the sea, the renovation of the city’s cultural infrastructure and the landscaping of squares, commissioned new sculptures, were able to realize which might otherwise have been long delayed or even cancelled (Chalkley and Essex 1999; Marshall 2000 and 2004; Monclú 2007; Coaffee 2007) Another Olympic host city followed similar scattered model is Athens (2004). 20 different locations were chosen for Olympic development. These sites were owned by the public sector and were predominantly greenfield sites. The focus of the developments was put on the historical values of ancient Greece and stressed even more on the spatial improvement for the infrastructure. Nevertheless, the intention to use different location to facilitate the development of the whole city did not realised. Research has indicated the problems in the implementation process arise from conflicts between agencies as well as between different parties, time-consuming planning procedure and archaeological findings on the chosen sites (van Prooye 2010). The scattered model was not adopted since Athens. Sydney, Beijing and London have all adopted a more concentrated model.

Since 2000, sustainability became a new focus for Olympic preparation. Both Sydney and Beijing adopted the International Olympic Committee (IOC)’s environmental agenda and produce a ‘Green Olympics’. In Sydney, Homebush, a derelict 760 hectare former industrial site that had housed the city abattoir and a rubbish dump, some 19 kilometres from the city centre, was cleaned up and regenerated to accommodate an urban core with sporting, entertainment, exhibition and commercial facilities, an Olympic village and a metropolitan park. Beijing, on the other hand, developed the Olympic plan attempt to integrate the main ideas from the pre-existing tenth Five-Year Plan as well as the major urban regeneration projects and infrastructure projects proposed in Beijing Master Plan (2004-2020). About 200 polluting factories inside the fourth ring were moved out to Beijing’s suburbs or even to neighbouring provincial cities (Chen 2012). Besides, Beijing cleaned up 40 km river, planted one million new trees and 83km of greenbelt. To improve accessibility, Beijing completed two new Ring Roads, eight new subway lines and extended new airport terminals. In this way, Beijing could use OAP to realize both its urban restructuring strategy with the city’s economic restructuring strategy, environment improvement measures and infrastructure development plan.

Legacy creation has become the newest focus for host cities in preparing Olympics since London 2012. The Lower Lee Valley, a location surrounded by the most deprived neighbourhoods, was regenerated to become a new sub-centre of London. What worth mentioned is the way how London incorporate legacy plan in existing master plan. The master plan of the whole area was the first vision for planners before Olympic venues and facilities were incorporated in the site.
3.2 Olympic sites and venues

A common problem occurring after the Olympic Games is the creation of the so-called “white elephants”. Barney suggests that a “white elephant” is a facility that is built at great cost and after its initial use for a particular event become less and less used and therefore the cost of it out-scales what it give back to society. When host cities deliver venues or urban areas that are not or under-used after the Game, host cities usually face major financial difficulties in maintaining the operational cost, as is in the case of Montreal, found difficulty in connecting Olympic facilities with its surrounding urban functions.

There are several strategies that Olympic host cities explore to improve post-event usage of event-related facilities.

First, most host cities attempted to reuse as much as possible existing or temporary faculties. In Barcelona, the stadium of Montjuïc that was built in 1929 was renovated to become the main stage of the Olympic Games of 1992. In Athens, 75% of the venues already existed. Beijing utilized 32 venues, with only 12 newly-built venues. The rest 20 venues are either renovated existing venues or temporary venues. In London, only six venues were newly constructed. London made extensive use of temporary facilities. Basket ball stadium and hockey stadium were dismantled after the Games so they can be resembled and used in future competitions while the rest venues are either temporary buildings or existing venues. Using existing venues does not necessarily reduce cost. In Athens, many existing venues required extensive renovation, which led to intensive investment. Nevertheless, such strategy does not over-supply in post-event period.

Second, some host cities tend to locate newly built sport venues in areas that provide easy accessibility to potential local users. In Beijing, besides the Olympic Green as location for new venues, the rest of the Olympic facilities are located mostly in university campuses or concentrated residential areas. In London, most of the venues were aiming at community need in post-usage
To further facilitate the post-event usage of the sports venues by local communities, it is essential to improve the accessibility of these venues with good public transportation such as metro line and bus system.

Third, the Olympic villages and venues need to integrate other urban functions such as commercial, residential and retail functions to ensure the Olympic sites are well used and attract inhabitants after the Games. An active sub-centre can gradually integrate with other urban fabrics in host cities and not stand alone after the Games. In Barcelona, the program of Parc de Mar - one of the four Olympic site in the former harbour area include a commercial centre for leisure and retail, with temporary function as Olympic Port for sailing and surfing activities. After the Games the area was transformed into nightlife and restaurant functions, creating a mix of functions in the area.

Fourth, Olympic venue design aims at post-usage and reduction of maintenance cost may include flexible concepts that address adaptation. Related design concepts like downsizing, flexibility and multifunctional design were integrated to facilitate the transformation process. The seat number in London Bowl was reduced from 80,000 to 25,000 after the Game. The Olympic stadiums in Barcelona, Sydney and Beijing have all adopted similar measures to reduce the size of their venues. Furthermore, adopting advanced technology helps sports venues sustain in long-term. In the design and construction of Olympic venues in Sydney, the Olympic village was intended to be a model of eco-sensitive design, which was undertaken jointly with Greenpeace, incorporating solar power, water recycling and passive heating and cooling. A detailed set of ‘green’ guidelines that were intended to govern the design, layout and construction of Olympic facilities was published by the Sydney Organizing Committee. Some 90 ecologically sustainable development (ESD) principles were included, with statements on recycling, renewable energy sources, public transport, derelict land and protection of threatened environments and endangered species (Chen and Marjolein).

Fifth, securing post-event users is important for the sustainable usage of the sports venues. In Barcelona, the Olympic stadium has been used by a local soccer club. In Atlanta, the Olympic stadium was transformed to become the new baseball stadium for the Atlanta Braves. In Athens, the stadium managed to get users as the Greece National Football Team, Olympiacos Piraeus, Panathinaikos and AEK Athens after the Games. Panathinaikos was the last user of the stadium but have returned to their home grounds. Football is a sport that can pull large crowds besides the Olympic Games that able to use the large capacity Louis Spiros Stadium has. Only athletics stadiums are not fully suitable for football caused by the 400m track around the pitch, creating a large distance between the field and the spectators.

3.3 Olympic legacy planning

Although most ambitious Olympic hosts use the Games as an opportunity to bring forward long-term plans, accelerate the pace of change, or introduce new planning concepts, using major events to achieve long-term urban goals is a task that has proven difficult to manage and implement. In most host cities, a main strategy for legacy planning is to integrate the Olympic plan as much as possible with host cities’ master plan. In the city development strategies of Barcelona, its long-term and short-term goals were combined. Firstly, the most essential experience of Barcelona involves its emphasis on
a long-term vision towards urban revitalisation and the continuity in city development strategies. Many plans and projects associated with the 1992 Olympics had already been generated in the 1960s and the 1970s – they were thus not the result of new proposals that had been developed purely for the Games (Chen et al 2013). The Olympic plan in Beijing (2008) was an attempt to integrate the main ideas from the pre-existing tenth Five-Year Plan as well as the major urban regeneration projects and infrastructure projects proposed in the Beijing Master Plan (2004–2020). Beijing used Olympic Action Plan to realize both its urban restructuring strategy and its economic restructuring strategy, environment improvement measures, and infrastructure development plan (Chen 2012). During the preparations for the Olympics, about 200 polluting factories inside the fourth ring were moved out to Beijing’s suburbs or even to neighbouring provincial cities. At the same time, eight new subways, two ring roads, and more than 200 kilometers of new highways that were part of a long-term plan for the city were realized within a decade. In London’s Olympic Games, creating legacy for its citizens after the Games was focussed very early in the process. The master plan was created to define what will be permanent in 2030 and what should be temporary in 2012. In this way, London could ensure the transition from Olympic event to post-event period is according to the demand of the time. Beside, the London Legacy Development Corporation was established and given the mandate to continue developments on the Olympic site after the event.

Figure 2. Olympic plan of London in 2012, 2014 and 2030 (source: Rombouts 2013)

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Sport is increasingly seen as a central strategy for cities to promote their image and global position, undertake regeneration and tackle problems of
social exclusion” (Herring 2004). The Olympic Games are particularly attractive to cities, due to the unique impact that the intense media interest associated with the Games can have on a global audience. Whilst much is known about the event’s impact, there are considerable gaps in our knowledge about the event’s strategies in creating post-event legacy. Can the efforts city made before the Games lead to sustainable development of cities? This paper attempts to fill the gap by examining what kinds of strategies host cities have explored that can lead to a comprehensive impact on buildings, districts and cities in post-event era in term of economic, spatial and social development. From the trend of Olympic-led regeneration, we can see host cities not only use the opportunity to improve existing facilities and construct new venues, but also upgrade the cities’ urban structures by developing difficult urban locations, such as brownfield or deprived neighbourhoods. These areas, if developed properly and connected with fast transportation system, can become new urban sub-centres. It is also visible the focus of sustainability, especially from an environmental perspective are high on the IOC’s agenda since 2000. The introduction of the Green Olympics concepts leads to the adoption of advanced environmental technology in building design, construction, planning and Olympic site management. From the perspective of Olympic site preparation and venues construction, host cities can enhance post usage by introducing concept that increase the flexibility of adaptation. Existing facilities should be made use of. The location of new facilities located next to potential users and easy to be accessed by public transportation increases the chance of re-use. From the perspective of legacy planning, it is not only important to consider how to combine all urban visions and (existing) planned urban projects, but more significant to have a vision how the urban locations for Olympic preparation should be developed in the long-term. The long-term vision should include its economic function, spatial structure as well as social improvement. In this way, London case provides a useful example to test how host cities can put sustainability and post-event legacy in the whole preparation at building, district and urban scale, and how a host city can develop its strategy in term of spatial, economic and social development. Whether London has reduced unnecessary construction and reduced the chance of underused facilities need to be further tested in the next decades.

REFERENCES


