

MEGA SPORT EVENTS AND SUSTAINABILITY

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ABSTRACT

The governance sustainability of venues post Games is a complex response that requires the input and commitment from several levels of government, stakeholders and NGO's. Due to the support of the Olympic movement 2020, the IOC will most certainly be in line with the objectives of the 2030 agenda for Olympic sustainable development. The "sustainability issue" had become a great challenge for the IOC as early as 1992, when the IOC worked with the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and developed the "Agenda 21", environmental sustainability guidelines, to encourage sustainability among IOC member nations and sport governing bodies (United Nations Sustainable Development, 1992). The notion of sustainability has been highly recognized from this point on as very important and has been not only incorporated in the IOC agenda, but also embedded in the organization of Mega Sport Events discourse as a valuable concept (United Nations Sustainable Development, 1992).

KEYWORDS: Mega Sport Events; Sustainability; Governance.



RESUMO

A governança da sustentabilidade dos locais de pós-Jogos é uma resposta complexa que exige a participação e empenho de vários níveis de governo, atores e ONGs. Devido ao apoio do movimento olímpico em 2020, o COI irá certamente estar em consonância com os objectivos da Agenda 2030 para o desenvolvimento Olímpico sustentável. A “questão da sustentabilidade” tornou-se um grande desafio para o COI já em 1992, quando o COI trabalhou com o Programa Ambiental das Nações Unidas (UNEP) e desenvolveu a “Agenda 21”, as diretrizes de sustentabilidade ambiental, para incentivar a sustentabilidade entre os países membros do COI e órgãos desportivos governamentais (Desenvolvimento Sustentável das Nações Unidas, 1992). A noção de sustentabilidade tem sido altamente reconhecida a partir deste ponto como muito importante e foi incorporada não só na agenda do COI, mas incorporada no discurso da organização de megaeventos esportivos como um conceito valioso (United Desenvolvimento Sustentável Unidas, 1992).

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Megaeventos esportivos; sustentabilidade; governo.



RESUMEN

La gobernanza de la sustentabilidad de Sedes pos Juegos es una respuesta compleja que hace que se exija la participación de distintos niveles de gobierno, grupos de interés y actores de varias ONG. Debido al apoyo del movimiento olímpico sustentable en el 2020, el COI ciertamente ira a estar en consonancia con los objetivos de la Agenda 2030 para el desarrollo olímpico sustentable. La "cuestión de la sustentabilidad" se tornó un gran desafío para el COI ya en 1992, cuando trabajó con el programa Ambiental de la Naciones Unidas (UNEP) y desarrolló la "Agenda 21" las directrices de sustentabilidad ambiental, para incentivar la sustentabilidad entre los países miembros del COI y órganos de gobierno deportivo (Desarrollo sustentable de las Naciones Unidas 1992). La noción de sustentabilidad ambiental ha sido altamente reconocida a partir de este punto como muy importante y fue incorporado no solo en la agenda del COI, mas también incorporado en lo discurso de la organización de mega-eventos deportivos como concepto valioso (Desarrollo sostenible de las naciones unidas, 1992).

PALABRAS-CLAVE: Grandes eventos deportivos; sostenibilidad; gobernanza.

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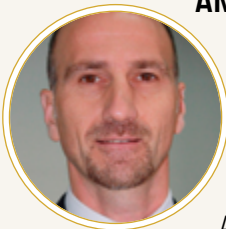


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1. INTRODUCTION

At a recent United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, Thomas Bach, President of the International Olympic committee (IOC), praised the inclusion of sport in its sustainability goals (Bach, 2015). Bach stated that, “for the international community, the 2030 agenda for sustainable development addresses future social and economic progress.” Bach continued to state that the Olympic agenda 2020 addresses progress being made towards sustainability, credibility and youth in concert with the Olympic movement. Due to the support of the Olympic movement 2020, the IOC will most certainly be in line with the objectives of the 2030 agenda for Olympic sustainable development.

2. DISCUSSION

The “sustainability issue” had become a great challenge for the IOC as early as 1992, when the IOC worked with the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and developed the “Agenda 21”, environmental sustainability guidelines, to encourage sustainability among IOC member nations and sport governing bodies (United Nations Sustainable Development, 1992). The notion of sustainability has been highly recognized from this point on as very important and has been not only incorporated in the IOC agenda, but also embedded in the organization of Mega Sport Events discourse as a valuable concept (United Nations Sustainable Development, 1992). DaCosta argues that the Modern Olympic Games are becoming a, “model of environment and sport interplay” and according to him, the value of sustainability might be, “a central one for educational, ethical and environmental friendly purposes as well as for the future redefinition of Olympism” (DaCosta, 2002).

Despite the wide acknowledgement of the significance of sustainability practices and policies, DaCosta also pointed to some discouraging facts due to the gigantism of the Olympic Games, such as cost overrun. According to DaCosta, “cost overrun may increase negative impact on local environment, local society and local economy”. Flyvbjerg & Stewart point to a discouraging figure of the average cost overrun of the Olympic Games which in real terms is staggering (Flyvbjerg & Stewart, 2012). They discovered that the Games consistently stand out in two distinct ways compared to other megaprojects: 1) The Games overrun with 100% consistency; 2) With an average cost overrun in real terms of 179% and 324% in nominal terms. No other type of megaproject is this consistent regarding cost overrun. Other project types are typically on budget from time to time, but not the Olympics.

Taking into consideration these critical voices and acknowledging the importance of the sustainability notion, in December 2010, the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) announced the new CSA Z210-10 Requirements and Guidance for Organizers of Sustainable Events. The standard was built on the work of the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (VANOC), the VANOC Sustainability Management and Reporting System (SMRS), and the International Academy of Sports Science and Technology (AISTS) Sustainable Sport and Event Toolkit, which was itself developed in collaboration with VANOC (Canadian Standards Association, 2010). The principles of sustainable events, according to CSA Standards as summarized by Hall, include ethical behavior, accountability, and transparency; engagement of the community and local stakeholders; positive benefits for the environment and society; accessible and inclusive setting; safe and secure atmosphere and facilities for spectators, participants, and workers; excellent customer/client experience; and a positive legacy (Hall, 2012).

Fiona Pelham, managing director of Sustainable Events Ltd. and voluntary Chair of ISO 20121, a management system for event sustainability inspired by London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, argued for the need of a future ISO standard which according to her, “will make a great difference to the event industry. Just imagine the change in thinking that could follow as the international event industry starts to systematically address their negative social, economic and environmental impact” (International Standards Organisation, 2010).

3. FOOTPRINTS

Until now, multiple stakeholders involved in mega-sport events have not succeeded to adopt a common standard system which could indicate the weak links between the organizer of the event and the realization of mega-sport events. The principles of a common standard system could help National members of IOC and other stakeholders to use the data to create a “modus operandi”, an example for other city bids that would ensure the sustainability of the Mega-event, of the venues and infrastructures post-Game.

Another difficulty to be solved in order to come closer to a sustainable development at a global level is to find a common approach to the definition of “sustainable development”. According to the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), 1987). An additional definition states that sustainability is, “Improving the quality of human life, while living within the carrying capacity of its supporting ecosystem” (IUCN/UNEP/WWF, 1991). New definitions and new sustainability approaches

have been developed in almost all the beginnings of any mega sport event. Due to these developments, the various approaches to sustainability affect the capacity of public policymaking and the cooperation between the collaborators of the public-private partnership. According to van Marrewijk et al., there is not only one-project culture but different cultures operating at the same time, “Megaprojects clearly bring together, under various contractual arrangements, differing and competing partners, interests, values and modes of rationality (ways of doing and thinking)” (van Marrewijk, Clegg, Pitsis, & Veenswijk, 2008). It is only natural that these different worldviews and global vantage points will create intersections for ongoing challenges, as well as potential opportunities.

Sports events can become the common place where all stakeholders can fulfill their needs and expectations. Nowadays, the research of higher educational institutes and their respective experts can provide to local society many tools; the standards, the experience to plan and execute successfully and on budget, and the ability to predict any consequences, positive and negative, of any sport event, including mega-events. Common standards could be adopted, such as those that have been described above. In addition to those that are already in use in the field, having a common definition for “sustainable development” would help all future events to succeed, to reduce uncertainty and improve the understanding and cooperation between partners.

One final consideration of host cities to improve sustainability includes the obligation of the city to have the organizer of the event prepared by having most of the infrastructures and venues necessary available and built four years before the bid (i.e. around 90 %). Having true and accurate operating data and cost depreciation data in the local economy, the local community and the environment, we may avoid what Flyvbjerg et al. describe as a common practice for a project approval:

“This approach of cost underestimation and benefit overestimation has been used as a *modus operandi* for project approval. The scenario of bias and inaccuracy both for demands and costs is the same order for at least 30 years and is not restricted to mega projects, it also occurs in smaller ones” (Flyvbjerg, 2003).

4. FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

In conclusion, sustainability and inclusion of sport towards 2030 will continue to be considered as the global Olympic community persists to continue working towards creating standards of planning and practice, values towards common good, and ultimately, a positive impact on the host cities. As Bach stated, the focus in the international community is on sustainable development, but this needs to be done collaboratively in order to address our future social and economic progress as well (Bach, 2015).