

Framing Olympic Legacy: Newspaper Coverage of the Vancouver Winter Olympic Games

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Many cities have incorporated mega-events into their development strategies and as a result aggressively compete for the opportunity to host major international sport events such as the Olympics Games. City officials and event organizers cite a range of potential benefits of hosting these events such as increased employment, tourism, and improved city image. These benefits are often used to justify the significant costs associated with bidding for and hosting these events which include bid applicant fees, security, marketing and promotion, as well as building facilities and related infrastructure (Hall, 2006; Girginov & Hills, 2008). Although bid proponents continue to use these benefits to gain social support for sport event bids, the literature has shown that the benefits projected are often unrealized (Ritchie, 1984; Crompton, 1995; Mules & Faulkner, 1996 ; MacAloon, 2008). Bidding for the rights to host mega sport events has therefore become a highly contested process.

Researchers have recently begun to focus on the long-term impacts of these events on host cities (Essex & Chalkley, 1998; Heinemann, 2003) which are often referred to as event 'legacies'. Although several scholars have attempted to define and conceptualize legacy (cf. Preuss 2007a, 2007b; Gratton & Preuss, 2008; Cashman 2003, 2006; Chappelet, 2006), it is important not to regard current conceptualizations of 'Olympic legacy' as fixed; rather as a concept that is continuing to be shaped by practice (Gold & Gold, 2009). The meaning of legacy is therefore created in the context of the city bidding for the Games. Despite the lack of agreement on the meaning and use of the word 'legacy', it has become a focal point in the discourse in bidding for and hosting mega-events (Allen, O'Toole, Harris & McDonnell, 2008). There have been various studies that provide an overview of the legacies found in Olympic cities (e.g., Kaplanidou, 2010; VANOC, 2007); however, few studies have attempted to explore how the meaning of legacy is created in a single host city. In addition, research has not widely examined how legacy has been articulated in the debates over the benefits of hosting major sport events such as the Olympic Games. With this in mind, this paper explores how legacy has been framed in media coverage of the bid process leading up to the awarding of the 2010 Olympic Winter Games to Vancouver, Canada in July 2003.

For this study, the theoretical framework of media framing is used. Tuchman (1978) proposed the following definition for a media frame: "the news frame organizes everyday reality and the news frame is part and parcel of everyday reality" (p. 193). Media frames are therefore considered to be a crucial component of the news process as it allows journalists to organize information and present it to audiences. News makers often repeat certain keywords and visual images that highlight some ideas rather than others, thereby making these ideas more salient in the text. These constructed frames in turn help the 'receiver' to interpret the events, thereby influencing public opinion (Entman, 1991). A framing analysis therefore provides insight into how issues and events are presented to create meaning.

Newspaper articles from The Vancouver Sun and The Vancouver Province were obtained for the period January 1, 1998 to July 2, 2003. The articles were analyzed to explore how the print media in Vancouver created meaning of the concept of legacy for the public. In other words, how has legacy been discussed, and how has it been used to debate the merits of hosting mega sport events? How prominently do the frames feature in media coverage of the benefits of hosting the event? A modified content analysis (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005) examining both manifest and latent content was employed. Building on the work of Thomson, Leopkey, Schlenker, and Schlenker (2010) the data were coded based on the following legacy themes: terminology (use of legacy as opposed to another term); planned or automatically bestowed; the temporal nature of legacy; legacy as positive and/or negative; legacy as local and global concept and, legacy categories (such as economic, social, infrastructure etc.). The study also draws on the work of Buist and Mason (2010) and uses an inductive approach to determine if any additional legacy themes existed. The main product of this analysis is a frame matrix (Van Gorp, 2010).

Preliminary results suggest that the main legacy frames include infrastructure development, economic development,

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and enhanced international profile. These frames were prominent in the lead up to the Olympic Plebiscite in February 2003. This study contributes to future bid hosts' understanding of how legacy is conceptualized in the print media and highlights how it can be used strategically to sway public opinion in favour of event bids. The study also highlights the degree to which both proponents and opponents alike consider how event hosting may contribute to the city and region.