An Examination of Non Host Community Roles During the Hosting of the Olympic Games

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Throughout the history of the modern Olympic Games, much attention has been focused on the host city (e.g., Deccio & Baloglu, 2002; Ritchie, Shipway, & Cleeve, 2009). Upon being awarded the right to organize the event, city officials sign the Host City Contract with the local National Olympic Committee (NOC), and the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Next an Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (OCOG) is formed. The role of this organization is to establish the functions and services for all aspects of hosting the event (IOC, 2016). Although it is the candidacy city that bids for and eventually hosts the event, it has been noted that “given the size and the scope of the Olympic Games, the host community is not the only one that experiences [direct impacts of the event]” (Karadakis & Kaplanidou, 2012, p. 243). These non-host cities are also referred to as ‘peripheral communities’ (Liv, Broom, & Wilson, 2014), as well as ‘satellite hosts’ (Cai, Hu, & Xie, 2004) in the literature. Interestingly though, with a few notable exceptions (e.g., Deccio & Baloglu, 2002; Ritchie, Shipway, & Cleeve, 2009), little research has focused on the non-host communities and the roles they play during the Games. Although these locations may not be the official host city of an Olympics, they often support a variety of events taking place. Previous examples include Athens, Georgia at the 1996 Olympic Games (e.g., gymnastics, and volleyball) and Wymouth and Portland, England (Sailing) as part of the London 2012 Games. The use of peripheral communities is not a recent phenomenon. As early as the 1920 Games in Antwerp other locations such as Beverloo Camp (approximately 75 miles outside of Antwerp) were being used for related events such as pistol and rifle competitions in this case (IOC, 2016). The roles of peripheral communities are not only important during the Games, but also after. Moreover, topics such as event legacy have become a mainstay in the justification for hosting sporting events (Leopkey & Parent, 2012), however little research has focused on impacts beyond the host city. By examining these types of communities, our understanding of their roles during the Games and the resultant legacies can help support the importance of these communities and their vital significance behind the bidding and execution of the Olympic Games as well as the provision of a positive, sustainable post-Games legacy.

This poster is part of a larger project that will focus on the event legacies of non-host or peripheral communities impacted by the hosting of an Olympic Games. For this specific research poster, the purpose will be to identify and examine the roles of peripheral communities during the history of the modern Olympic Games.

A qualitative research design supported by current sport and event management literature was used to build a project that focused on the roles of non-Olympic host cities. Data collection involved the accumulation of all previous Games’ final reports and other related information from newspaper clippings, periodicals and web site information. A content analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013) was performed using Atlas.ti software which facilitated the retrieval of emergent themes related to the roles of non-host/ peripheral communities. Open and axial coding were used to help discover these common themes and identifying the relationships between them (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). Finally, higher level codes provided the foundation for the emergent roles discussed below.

Preliminary findings reveal that these non-host communities have common emergent themes related to their supporting roles in hosting the Olympic Games. For example, many become part of the event through the hosting of a variety of competitions because they have an existing facility that is capable of hosting one of the sporting contests. This was the case in Athens, GA when their historic Sanford stadium held the final rounds of men’s and women’s soccer at the 1996 Games. Other communities became involved during the acclimatization and early arrival of delegations. For example, Oxford University in the UK played host to several teams including Chili’s track and field team and New Zealand’s triathlon team during the lead up to the London 2012 Games (University of Oxford, 2016). In 2007, Beijing also hosted the ‘Good Luck Beijing’ sporting event where competitions such as road cycling, baseball and hockey took place in not only Beijing, but also in Hong-Kong to better prepare for the Olympic Games (IOC, 2007). A more in-depth overview and discussion of these roles will be highlighted during the poster.
It is evident from the above findings that non-host communities play several roles during the lead up to and hosting of an Olympic Games. These range from holding various Olympic competitions to supporting delegations and tourists from around at location facilities pre and during Games. As such these communities play a large role in the successful preparation, execution and eventual provision of legacy for modern Olympic hosts. This poster is part of a more detailed project that will emphasize the legacies of peripheral communities impacted by the hosting of the Games. Upon the completion of this project, forthcoming continuation of this study will result in a more focused case study on analyzing and evaluating the legacies of peripheral communities that have been impacted during the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games (e.g., Athens and Savannah, Georgia). From the initial bidding process to the everlasting impact of a Games’ legacy, this more in depth study would contribute to the better understanding of not only the roles and impact of peripheral communities during the Games, but also the Olympic Games as a whole.