

The role of major sports events as a new strategy in Western European urban policies: the case of Madrid and London bids to the 2012 Olympic Games

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Introduction

To respond to the challenges of national and global factors, an increasing number of Western cities in the post-industrial urban hierarchy, as in the case of the two cities selected for this presentation London and Madrid, are undergoing ambitious urban regeneration programmes. As part of these new 'entrepreneurial urban practices' (see Hall and Hubbard, 1998; Gratton and Henry, 2001; Harvey, 1990), urban and political leaders of both cities, which are among the five 'candidate cities' selected to host the 2012 Olympic Games, are using their Olympic bids as part of the strategies for revitalising their local economies, enhancing their cities' image and also promoting significant urban regeneration of deprived areas (Andranovich et al, 2001; Baade and Dye, 1988; Essex and Chalkley, 1998; Dobson and Gratton, 1995; Henry and Paramio, 1999; Logan and Molotch, 1987; Loftman and Nevin, 1996).

Parallel to the development of an ever-more intense global inter-city competition, there is a growing interest of Western cities in hosting the pinnacle of all major sports events, the Olympic Games. This interest emerged since the commercial and managerial success of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics and the significant urban transformation occurred with the 1992 Barcelona Olympics (Emery, 2001; Brunet, 1994; Chernushenko, 1994; Gratton, Dobson and Shibli, 2001; Dobson and Sinnamon, 2001; Roche, 2000; Shoval, 2002), but this interest has been recently enhanced by the substantial economic benefits assured by the broadcasting rights and the sponsors to the host city (Andranovich et al, 2001). Particularly relevant of the forthcoming selection process for the 2012 Olympic Games to be held the 6th July 2005 in Singapore is that three global cities (London, New York and Paris) together with two capital cities like Moscow and Madrid are in the final selective process which has led, Shoval (2002) argues, to the creation of a new phase in the development of the Olympic Games.

As part of on-going research project, this comparative study initially examines the reasons behind the London and Madrid bids to the 2012 Olympic Games. This is followed by a revision of how both cities address the infrastructure of sports facilities as well as their management in order to become a successful bid to stage the 2012 Olympic Games. In order to address these issues, this paper draws on documentary analysis of materials produced by the International Olympic Committee (IOC, 2001, 2002, 2004), on the Madrid and London questionnaires to the IOC and on local and national press coverage.

The case of Madrid and London bids: Analysis of Sports Infrastructure and Management

The origin of the London bid emerged in 1997 after three previous unsuccessful bids of two British cities such as Birmingham (1992) and Manchester (1996 and 2000), while the Madrid bid came to fruition officially in August 2000, although there were some previous movements to prepare the proposal, immediately after the second consecutive failure of Seville to the 2008 Olympic Games. Unlike London, the Madrid bid only became official after winning the Spanish Olympic Committee's (COE) endorsement with Seville in 21st January 2003.

When explaining the reasons behind this strategy, the majority of the literature points out to the tangible as well as the intangible benefits that this mega-event strategy could bring to the host city by organising the Games. As some of the previous editions of the Olympic Games have showed (e.g. Barcelona 92, Sydney 2000 or Athens 2004) (Essex and Chackley, 2002), the analysis of the candidature files of London and Madrid share as a common issue the opportunity that this sporting strategy represents to promote and accelerate the regeneration of existing deprived areas in both cities. In the case of London, its candidature file underlines the urban regeneration theme by saying that 'it (the bid) will accelerate the most extensive transformation seen in London for more than a century' (London 2012, 2003, p. 3). Shoval (2002) goes further and adds that in this new phase the Olympic bids of global cities like London as well as New York

and Paris represents one of the current strategies to gain global recognition and competitive advantage over other global and emerging cities. To underline this, and looking back to 1997, the mayor of London, Ken Livingston said that the city could back the bid only if this urban strategy could be a catalyst to promote substantial urban renewal of East London where the majority of the new Olympic facilities and infrastructure are considered in the planning process.

Like London, the candidature of Madrid appeals to the economic, social, symbolic and sporting benefits that the bid could bring to the city, but also could contribute, following the successful and world-wide model of Barcelona 1992, to the regeneration of two old derelict areas of Madrid, one in the east where the majority of the Olympic sports facilities are going to be located and another in the south.

After going through the first evaluation process the 18th of May 2004 in Lausanne, the infrastructure and sports venues of both cities were considered as important assets. Using a SWOT analysis, in terms of sports infrastructure the strength of both bids is based on the quality and concentration of sports venues, specially after following the main recommendations of the IOC study commission with respect to sports venues (maximum concentration, proximity to the Olympic village, connection possibilities with the public transport system, respect for the environment, use of sports facilities already exists and search for temporary solutions when necessary) (IOC, 2002) (*see table 1*).

In the case of London, the main sports venues will be located in the only Olympic area proposed on East London, an important area of reclaimed land. In the case of Madrid, after an initial project which considered building the Sports Arena in the north of the city, in autumn 2003 the Madrid bid promoters considered the high concentration and proximity of the majority of existing and new sports venues in the eastern part of the city (sixteen Olympic sports events are planned) which has been valued as the main strength of the Madrid project. At the same time, the level and quality of the sports venues in general in Madrid has been better qualified than any other bids contenders in the first selection process (see IOC, 2004).

	London	Madrid
Olympic Areas	1	3
Competition Venues		
Existing Sports Venues	14 (56%)	24 (70%)
Planned Sports Venues	1 (4%)	5 (15%)
Additional Sports Venues		
➤ Which will remain after the Games	7 (28%)	3 (9%)
➤ Which will disappear after the Games	3(12%)	2 (6%)
Evaluation of Sports Venues	6	8

Table 1. Number of Sports Venues of Madrid and London bids and evaluation of the sports infrastructure of both cities

Source: Compiled from questionnaires files of Madrid and London bids; IOC (2004).

In the case of the management of sports facilities, a long-term planning that includes strategies to consider the post-event costs and management is crucial as the IOC recommends. The IOC focuses as an important issue on the use of sports facilities after the event and how to maximize the management of existing sports facilities while allowing a growing number of temporary sports facilities. With these recommendations, the IOC wants to avoid previous examples of bad sports facilities planning. The last example is the Olympic Stadium of Sydney, which despite being less than four years in operation is currently under-used and financially constrained.

Conclusions

To face national and global challenges, more global and leading cities like London and Madrid are involved in the competition to host an Olympic Games. This mega-event strategy promises to the host city significant benefits in terms of economic, political, symbolic and sporting terms. However, it is a high-risk strategy because it depends on many factors.

Under the new presidential period in the IOC of Dr. Jacques Rogge new pressures have been put on getting a more efficient and compact Olympic Games, which could keep the current level of attraction to more cities. At the bidding stage, one of the most important factors in the selection process is represented by how candidate's cities manage the sports venues issue. It remains to be seen how some of the planned sports venues will be operating in the case of either Madrid or London will host the XXX edition of the Olympic Games.

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