

# THE INTERACTING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE HOSTING CITY AND THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE DURING OLYMPIC GAMES – THE CASE STUDY OF THE OLYMPIC SUBURB OF PERISTERI DURING ATHENS 2004 OLYMPIC GAMES

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## Abstract

### Literature review

The relationship between the hosting city and the newly formed organising committees for mega events is by definition not only a legitimate status but also a plethora of regulatory mechanisms in order to facilitate the organising of the competition (IOC, 2000). The magnitude of the event therefore and the resources needed dictate the nature and depth of the economic and political relationship of the two parts needed to complete the event successfully. The present study examines the Athenian suburb of Peristeri that hosted the Olympic boxing venue during the Athens 2004 Olympic Games. The level of decision making that the city enjoyed as well as the nature and form of power exercised by the Olympic Committee presents a case study able to produce results to be generalised widely amongst host cities.

### Methodology, Research design and data analysis

Policy Network is the framework to be engaged in the present research in each capacity to analyse actors who are involved in developing policy action to an issue. Houlihan (1991) gives an insight into how parties become excluded from specific networks. More specifically, the study examines the notion as expressed by Hoyer et al (2010) that "policy communities and networks may be facilitated via formal linkages, such as inter-departmental committees or consultative bodies, but also operate in a less formal manner through a shared awareness among those organizations that are affected by a specific issue".

The very nature of the study, dictated qualitative research as appropriate in collecting data on the 'meaning' people place on the events, processes and structures, and relating these meanings to parties' relationships. The representation of both relevant bodies is not restricted to the top political levels but is extended to the managerial section where all recorded agreements occurred securing the validity of the output of the research. Official semi-structured interviews with representatives of the City of Peristeri namely the Mayor, two Vice Mayors and three relevant Olympic city policy sections' managers as well as four city venue representatives where contacted. The Athens 2004 perspectives were reviewed through firstly, the competition manager for the hosted sport of boxing and secondly, the venue manager during the Games. At central Olympic level, the Athens 2004 Organising Committee policy making section of the sports division namely, the general manager for sports, the manager of sport policy and operations, the manager for test events and the manager of competition management were thoroughly interviewed.

## Results

Despite the great degree of communication evident in the interviews contacted, the Athens 2004 representatives characteristically defending their centralized role, underlined the role as organisers of the event having critical responsibilities towards this mission (Westerbeek et al, 2006). This emphasised role is backed up with a series of Olympic documentation and declarations leaving however room for doubting the power density over the city. The city on the other hand faces a forced Olympic reality when the boxing event was in fact pre-decided at central level before announced to the Mayor (MoU, 2003). A restricted budget basically allocated to enormous community needs is facing an unrealistic event support role that was never prepared for. There was no room for enthusiasm when city representatives have less than a year to share resources with other community needs and face negatively expresses pressure groups. This stance is reinforced by the insecurity facing the city due to uncertain post Olympic legacy, intangible community benefits and unclear ownership assets.

## Discussion and conclusion

As a highly political activity but also a puzzling managerial exercise the coexistence of the host city and the centrally formed organising committee faces a huge challenge in order to maximise involvement and secure the event hosted in the area. The exclusion of the city during the central Olympic policy making, as well as the venue design, along with the huge Olympic standards enforced in the area by the Olympic technocrats enforced the initial hesitation of the city planners and caused disbelief towards the Olympic system. The lack located at the OG structure to include any city representatives prior and during the Games created a series of reporting and managerial problems dictating the need for reconsideration of the whole Olympic structure and event roles. The study evidently demonstrates theory's argument of parties' exclusion from policy networks urgently formulating cooperation paths outside the OG structure heavily based on informal networks. The Olympic Games are facing a great challenge towards incorporating the city mechanisms legitimately and managerially in order to gain organisational success and community acceptance and support.

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