SUSTAINABILITY OF MEGA SPORTS EVENTS – SUBSEQUENT USE OF EVENT INFRASTRUCTURE AS A KEY FACTOR

Author:
Christian Moesch

email:
christian.moesch@ispw.unibe.ch

University:
University of Berne

Faculty:
Institute of Sport Science (ISPW)

Abstract

Aim of Paper and Research Questions
One of the primary aim of cities, regions or countries bidding for mega sport events is often to generate a development stimulus. The investment in new infrastructure plays a decisive role to achieve this objective. By improving the level of infrastructure the event venue can become more attractive both as tourism destination as well as business location. Talking about sustainability or legacy of mega sport events, the follow up use of the event-related infrastructure is a key factor. The investment in permanent infrastructure should focus on the overlap between long run local needs and the event's short-term requirements. But on the one hand it is difficult to predict the subsequent needs with regard to the generated stimulus and on the other hand the destinations are often not willing to restrict the facilities to a reasonable proportion in the intention to carry weight. The main objective of the presented investigation is to develop an assessment tool estimating threats and opportunities emanating from permanent event infrastructure.

Literature Review
In the literature the subsequent tourism demand or the effects on image items are frequently discussed (e.g. Preuss, 2007; Spilling, 1999). Although the event-related infrastructure often cannot sufficiently be used after the event, approaches to assess or to measure the costs and benefits in this regard are rare. Talking about the effect of infrastructure on sustainability, first the causality between event and long-term use has to be analysed. Maennig (1997), for instance, represents the view, that there is no relationship between events and the construction of permanent facilities. He argues that due to the temporary event character there must be an independent follow up need for every permanent item of infrastructure. Other studies try to differentiate between event-related and not event-related costs and benefits. Mainly for sport infrastructure most studies establish a narrow causality between the follow up effects and the event (e.g. Frey, Iraldo & Melis, 2008; Spilling, 1999). The contemporary research in this field shows different development types of event-related infrastructure ranging from best cases yielding additional profit up to oversized facilities becoming a serious burden for whole regions. The last-mentioned cases often lead to considerable public subsidies (Stettler et al., 2007).

Research Design and Data Analysis
A conceptual referential framework based on extensive analysis of literature and documentation, was checked and adjusted in the course of the work using empirical findings derived from consultation with experts and case studies. Building on that a concrete model calculating the risk potential of event-related infrastructure was developed and subsequently adapted to several case studies with an eye to its exploratory consolidation. The case studies were processed on the basis of analysis of existing documentation and studies, and of interviews with people directly involved. Finally, the case-study findings were synthesized and – wherever possible – generalized. The following four mega events were investigated as part of the research project: 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, 2003 World Ski Championships in St. Moritz, the 2006 Football World Cup for the host city of Stuttgart and UEFA EURO 2008 in Switzerland.

Results
The model shows that in terms of sustainability not only economic results on facility level can be taken into account. Even loss-making infrastructure has potential to generate benefits in a macro economic or social understanding. Therefore benefits caused outside the facility and values deriving from the public good character of the infrastructure must also be considered for a final estimation (cf. Moesch 2008). As a general rule resulting from the case studies it can be said that risk potential is at his peak for sport infrastructure. Certain differences can be pinpointed between events with centralized and those with decentralized venues. Because of the spatial concentration the risk potential of centralized events, such as Olympics, is higher.

Discussion and Conclusion
The sustainability of mega sport events is closely connected to the subsequent use of the event infrastructure. Sustainability in the actual sense requires a strategic fit concerning topic and dimension between the event and the hosting region. There seems to be less risk potential or rather better benefit expectations for investments in general infrastructure such as media, safety, accommodation, telecommunication or (public) transport. Particularly transport infrastructure is characterised by high intangible value (e.g. time saving, comfort, reliability). Summing up, the results support the conclusion, that modest investment in sport infrastructure and well-directed investment in general infrastructure are a promising strategy for a positive sustainability balance in the context of mega sport events.

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