

THE LEGACY OF MEGA SPORTING EVENTS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Synopsis:

The purpose of this paper is to systematically review research related to MSE legacy, to 'take stock' of current research on MSEs, and develop recommendations for future research to advance this field of knowledge.

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AIM OF ABSTRACT/PAPER

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THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on mega sporting events (MSEs) has grown considerably over the past 30 years. The rising cost of MSEs, controversies over government spending, allegations of corruption and increased scrutiny by a variety of stakeholders have led to concerns over their 'sustainability' (Coakley & Souza, 2013) resulting in a growing interest in the concept of 'legacy' (Preuss, 2007). The growth in legacy research can also be attributed to the IOC mandate in 2000 (Girginov & Hills, 2008) that hosts must produce legacy plans. While this body of literature has made progress in deconstructing the concept, identifying variations, different contexts and processes associated with legacy, little has been done to synthesize this knowledge and identify complementary and contradictory assertions.

METHODOLOGY

Systematic reviews include three key activities: 1) identifying and describing the relevant literature, 2) critically appraising literature in a systematic manner,

and 3) bringing the findings together in a coherent synthesis (Gough et al., 2012). Using similar initial search queries as Preuss (2007), our multi-national research team searched ten academic databases (Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, CAB Abstracts, ERIC, SciELO, Science Direct, SCOPUS, SportDiscus, Sociological Abstracts, and Web of Science) using the guidelines developed by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA) group (Moher et al. 2009). Initial searches resulted in 372 articles. Filtering for articles based on whether the article was from a peer reviewed journal or whether the article had relevance to the topic resulted in the elimination of 146 articles. This process resulted in 226 articles being included in our final analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to identify disciplines of scholars, purpose of the research, research methods, location and MSE studied. Content analysis was used to understand how legacies of mega-sport events were conceptualized.

RESULTS

In examining trends by year, our review found an exponential increase in the number of research articles examining the issue of the legacy of MSEs since 2005. Twenty-four different types of MSEs were the subject of legacy research. The majority of articles (75%) focused on the Summer Olympic Games (42%) and the FIFA World Cup (33%). In terms of countries where legacy research took place, the most studied countries were: South Africa (22%), England (15%), General/unspecified (11%), China (10%) and the US (7%). A large majority of studies were non-empirical conceptual/commentary papers (28%). The most common methods used in empirical legacy research were surveys/questionnaires (22%), qualitative in-depth interviews (14%), case study methods (12%), content/document analysis (9%), and secondary data analysis (8%). Conceptualization of legacy was most often framed around economic legacy (20% of articles), followed by tourism (14%), social development (13%), urban infrastructure and development (11%), host branding and marketing (10%), security and surveillance (7%), and sport development (7%). Other concepts of legacy studied by multiple papers included environmental, political, and volunteerism (4% each), health (3%), and socio-cultural impact (3%). Although the majority of research articles focused on an economic legacy, there have been fewer articles over the past 3 years focused on the economic legacy of MSEs. Interestingly, trends have shown an increase in research articles focused on security and surveillance, environmental, and sport for development legacies.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Overall, there has been a significant increase in articles examining legacy of MSEs. The majority of the research focused on the legacies of the FIFA World Cup and Summer Olympic Games. This is hardly surprising given that the bidding process and expense of these events are the most competitive and scrutinized. However the type of legacy studied has changed, specifically an increase in studies focused on MSEs providing a security legacy. This may be due to countries using the MSE as a way to justify increased security costs and more invasive surveillance practices that would not be politically possible without the MSE. The decline in research focused on the economic legacies of

MSEs may be due to the lack of empirical evidence that MSEs provided significant economic legacies to host cities aligned with increased public skepticism. Studies that examined broader social legacies of events, particularly the stated social goals of Olympic host cities, such as environmental and social benefits have increased. Increased variation in hosts and events will be necessary to fully understand MSE legacy.

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