

Paralympic Legacies: Evidence From The 2000, 2008 And 2012 Paralympic Games

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Aim

The aim of this literature review is to bring together research regarding the legacies of the Paralympic Games in Sydney, Beijing and London. The central research problem of this review is: How can the Paralympic Games alter social inclusion of people with a disability in a hosting nation, and what insights have come from the Paralympic Games of Sydney, Beijing and London? This article offers an examination of the impact of each event in the legacy domains: infrastructure, political, sports and social. It overall focuses on the opportunities the events have brought regarding social inclusion of people with a disability.

Literature review

Governments worldwide tend to see mega sports events, such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games, as tools for development. Despite the huge investments necessary to host these event, limited research has been done on the social impacts (Cornelissen, Bob, & Swart, 2011, p. 313). The Paralympic Games of 2016 have grown into an event with 4,350 athletes, making it the third largest sports event worldwide (International Paralympic Committee, 2015). However, legacy of the Paralympic Games is a topic which has rarely been discussed (Weed & Dowse, 2009, p. 170). During the last decades, people with a disability have been included in sports increasingly and the attention of the media for adapted sports has risen (Doll-Tepper, 2007, p. 11). Nevertheless people with a disability still remain restricted in their participation and limited in their activities due to their impairment (World Health Organization, 2011, pp. 7–10). The size of the Paralympic Games and the international attention it receives can ensure a decrease in obstacles blocking their participation, which results in more social inclusion of disabled people in a host nation.

Methodology

This article is based on a literature review because the method offers a comprehensive overview of available academic and grey publications related to the topic. This furthermore helps to identify contradicting findings and opinions regarding Paralympic legacy in the host nations. The article is based on three case studies, which are chosen since Paralympic legacy planning and research have been evolving as of the year 2000 up until 2012. Another reason is that researches on legacy of other Paralympic Games are mostly anecdotal and lack empirical data.

Results and discussion

On the one hand, governments tend to see mega sports events as a way to stimulate development (Cornelissen et al., 2011, p. 307). On the other hand, groups of inhabitants of host cities/countries are openly against hosting these events. Despite their disapproval of such events, limited research has been done to clarify the social benefits (Cornelissen et al., 2011, p. 313). The author has developed a model, based on four legacy domains, in order to fill this void regarding the social impact of the Paralympic Games. In the case of the Paralympic Games of Sydney no legacy plans were made beforehand and all impacts were ad-hoc. The impact on social inclusion of disabled Australians, due to changes in the analysed legacy domains, thus seems limited. Social inclusion of disabled people in China appears to have been stimulated due to the Paralympic Games of Beijing 2008. The biggest developments were in the domains political and sports, however the question remains if the entire disabled population noticed these impacts. In relation to the event in London social inclusion of people with a disability was placed high on the agenda. The event proved that positive impacts within all four legacy domains can be achieved with a proper planning. Overall it can be concluded that as of the year 2000 Paralympic legacies have experienced a positive development. However, measuring the exact impacts can be quite challenging. The analysis of the three case studies demonstrates similarities and contradictions throughout a variety of sources. Due to these conflicting views it is hard to define the truth. While legacies in infrastructure are visible and changes in a country's policies regarding disabled people are quite distinctive. Effects in the sports area tend to blur a little already, as it often remains questionable who exactly enjoyed the benefits of the Paralympics. And although research on social legacy seems to be increasing, it still remains difficult to measure the intangible effects among a country's disabled population.

References

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