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Original article

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES

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Abstract

Problem statement. The Olympic Games represent the most important competition of world sports, with a huge impact on human life. Persisting throughout the centuries, they have become not only a sports phenomenon, but also a social, cultural and economic one. That is why the organization of the Olympics has been regarded, in recent years, in the context of sustainable development. The concept of "sustainable development" includes all forms and methods of socio-economic development, which are mainly focused on ensuring a balance between the social, economic, ecological aspects and the natural capital elements. The principles of sustainable development can be found in the Olympism, too.

The aim of the research. The study aimed to highlight the way in which sustainable development was reflected in the organization of the Olympic Games, starting with the Vancouver 2010 edition until Sochi, in 2014.

Objectives: The main objective was to determine the economic and social impact of sustainable development on the Olympic Games.

Methods of research: Bibliographic research was on the basis of this study.

Conclusions: If, in the Vancouver Olympics, sustainable development did not reach its purpose, the developer failing in business because of the real-estate credit crisis, in London, the Organizing Committee managed this issue better by far. This imposed a set of requirements relating to sustainability at all levels of the supply chains, and one of the main objectives was to make sure that both the metals for medals and the diplomas and flowers were coming from sustainable sources.

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Key words: sustainable development, Olympic Games, sport, performance.

Introduction

One of the most important mega-events organized in the last century is represented by the Olympics. The summer editions reached a record-participation: over 10,000 athletes from more than 200 countries. Specialty literature on this issue reveals the topicality of the theme and the economic interest of the Games for theorists, inclusively in the economic area, and specialists as well. Economists, sociologists or journalists have researched over time the impact of organizing the Olympics.

In recent years, there have been numerous debates regarding the role of this type of competitions. The question raised is whether their organization is a matter of honor, as Pierre de Coubertin would have liked it, or one with financial implications. If Pierre de Coubertin organized, in 1896, the first edition of modern Olympic Games, focusing on the idea that "The important thing is to participate", in the last 80 years, the economic, social and political implications have been crucial.

The potential of economic benefits offered by hosting the Olympics is, obviously, specific to each country. A country with better infrastructure and safer conditions will manage more easily to minimize costs and maximize benefits. That is why the organization of the Olympics has been regarded, starting with the Vancouver 2010 edition, in the context of sustainable development.

Gro Brundtland, Chairman of the World Commission on Environment and Development, delivered, in 1986, after the Chernobyl disaster, a report entitled "Our Common Future", providing the most widely used definition of sustainable development: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". At the same time, Brundtland Report admits that the economic development cannot be stopped, but the strategies must be changed, so that they match the ecological limits offered by the environment and the planet's resources.



The concept of “sustainable development” includes all forms and methods of socio-economic development, which are mainly focused on ensuring a balance between the social, economic, ecological aspects and the natural capital elements. Drawing a parallel between sport and sustainable development, it can be noted that the principles of sustainable development are found in the Olympism, too: public-private partnership, respect for human rights, economic, social and institutional development of communities, etc.

The principles of Olympism encompass the general characteristics of sustainable development. According to the Olympic Charter, these are:

1. Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and spirit. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of a life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example and the respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.

2. The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society, concerned with the preservation of human dignity.

3. The Olympic Movement is the concerted, organized, universal and permanent action, carried out under the supreme authority of the IOC, of all individuals and entities who are inspired by the values of Olympism. It covers the five continents. It reaches its peak when the world’s athletes are brought together at the great sports festival represented by the Olympic Games. Its symbol is five interlaced rings.

4. The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practising sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual

understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play.

5. Recognizing that sport occurs within the framework of society, sports organizations within the Olympic Movement shall have the rights and obligations of autonomy, which include freely establishing and controlling the rules of sport, determining the structure and governance of their organizations, enjoying the right of elections free from any outside influence, and the responsibility for ensuring that principles of good governance be applied.

6. Any form of discrimination against a country or a person, on grounds of race, religion, political opinion, gender or others, is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement.

7. Belonging to the Olympic Movement requires compliance with the Olympic Charter and recognition by the IOC.

Organization of the Olympics in the context of sustainable development

Designation of the Host City is made according to the rules stipulated in the Olympic Charter.

Any request to organize the Games must be submitted to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) by the competent public authorities of the applicant city, with the approval of the National Olympic Committee of the respective country. They must guarantee that the Olympics will be organized in compliance with the conditions issued by the IOC Executive Board and, implicitly, with the principles of sustainable development. The city elected to host the event is announced seven years before the beginning of the respective edition.

Consequences of organizing the Olympic Games are both economic and social.

Immediate effects	Medium- and long-term effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - job creation (for constructing the infrastructure, roads, links between the sports facilities and the accommodation centers for athletes and journalists) - increase in hotel occupancy - increase in turnover recorded by restaurants and shops - increase in number of visitors - increase in foreign exchange earnings, with a favorable effect on the balance of payments - increased security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increased concerns with managing the infrastructure developed for the Olympics, which must be used, transformed for quasi-normal situations or other sports events (reconverting the Olympic Village, the infrastructure - roads) - reusing a part of the modular structure by transferring it to future locations (sustainable development), e.g. London - the new trend, starting with Vancouver 2010 - using the airport infrastructure for economic purposes and the sustainable development of the respective country

Medium- and long-term effects are more difficult to quantify, because one must take into account both the degree of development of the city concerned and its tourism potential.

Examples:
Los Angeles 1984 Olympics represented a financial success for the organizers



Barcelona 1992 Olympics have turned the city into a world-class tourist destination

Athens 2004 Olympics were the spark that triggered the economic crisis

Beijing 2008 Olympics had the effect of improving China's image worldwide

Mc Hugh (A Cost-Benefit Analysis of an Olympic Games) makes an analysis of the costs and benefits strictly related to the organization of the Olympics, comparing them with the costs and benefits of capital investments necessary for the entire infrastructure. At the same time, Mc Hugh states that one must also take into consideration the benefits that may derive from such a competition: increased international visibility, better advertising opportunities throughout the event and growth in tourism, which should lead to quantification of the net benefit.

For developing countries, the long-term benefits may weigh more than the short-term burden of organizational costs.

Organization of the London Olympics in the context of sustainable development

During the Sochi Winter Olympics, at the beginning of 2014, France Presse made an analysis of what happened in Vancouver, 4 years after the Canadians had announced their intention to organize, in 2010, a model-edition of the Olympics, less expensive and based on the principles of sustainable development. The conclusion was that, although the Olympic Village had cost less compared to that in Sochi, it was still producing important losses to the municipality of Vancouver. Hit by the bad real-estate credit crisis before the Games, the developer went bankrupt. The City Hall contributed with one billion dollars - a sum equivalent to the municipal budget for one year - at an overall cost of the Games reaching 7 billion dollars, far from the 50 billion estimated for Sochi. Geoff Meggs, the Municipal Counselor, declared to France Presse, quoted by Mediafax, that it was about "Bad luck and bad management" and that "We are not sure how high the losses are, but it is certain that the city has lost tens of millions of dollars". Meggs explained the arising financial issues by the fact that the municipality had required the developer to build luxury apartments. Initially, 20% of these apartments should have been allocated for social purposes, but only half of them had this destination. In his turn, Mike Klassen, responsible for the Municipal Department of Urbanism between 2007 and 2009, stated that "Promoting the idea of organizing the Olympics at low costs, with an Olympic Village respecting the principles of sustainable development and with the hope of solving some social issues, sold well in the press, and this helped us win the organization of the Games".

On 6 July 2005, the IOC nominated London as host of the 2012 Olympic Games. It has become thus the first city in the modern history of competitions to organize the Summer Olympics for the third time, after the 1908 and 1948 editions. In January 2007, it was set up the Commission for a Sustainable London 2012, whose purpose was to monitor the works for the Olympic Park and inform the public about the environmental impact of constructing the infrastructure for the Games, but also about the opportunities arising throughout this process.

"The Games should lead to a step change in the health/ wellbeing of local people, and in construction practices and design of new developments", said Claire Holman, a member of the Commission for a Sustainable London 2012, while Shaun McCarthy, Chairman of the Commission for a Sustainable London 2012, stated that "Sustainable development was the central piece of the auction" (The Environmental Sustainability of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games).

Being concerned with supporting sustainable development and social responsibility, the Organizing Committee of the London Olympics had, among its main objectives, getting sure that both the metals for medals and the diplomas and flowers were coming from sustainable sources and were obtained through a responsible and ecological utilization of resources. In this sense, the Organizing Committee imposed a set of requirements relating to sustainability, at all levels of the supply chains.

One of the partners was Rio Tinto. He was the exclusive supplier of raw materials necessary to produce the 4,700 gold, silver and bronze medals for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Having a corporate social responsibility policy oriented towards ensuring a sustainable development, Rio Tinto, as an Olympic and Paralympic partner, but also at the Group level, established a partnership with an independent organization, Historic Futures, in order to analyze transparency of the supply chain for the metals used to produce medals, from the extraction site until the final product.

The five directions targeted by the London Olympics organizers were:

- climatic changes,
- waste,
- biodiversity,
- healthy living,
- inclusion, with the related sub-themes.

Organizing the London Olympic Games cost the British **nine billion pounds**, money coming from the public budget and sponsorships. Transformations were massive. More than 200 old

buildings were demolished, their components being reused to construct the park, and more than 74,000 plants and 4,000 trees were planted. Thousands of new houses were built in the vicinity of the Olympic Park, and this was followed by other constructions necessary to the community: schools, infrastructure, transport lines and hospitals. Stratford City, next to the Olympic Park, will become a new city and a business center. The area will also benefit from one of the largest urban parks in Europe. The soil affected by industry was treated and then reused in constructing the park, and the waters were cleaned using innovative techniques. In an interview with sportsnews website, the Ambassador of Great Britain in Bucharest said about the organization of the London Olympics according to the principles of sustainable development: "We have set this challenge, that the London Olympic Games will be the most green and sustainable in the history. We have thought about how we can face this challenge: with many innovations. For instance, the basketball stadium, after the Games, will be transferred in its whole to Brazil, for the 2016 Olympics. The swimming stadium has a capacity of 10,000 seats, but after the Games, it will become a smaller swimming center. In the Olympic Park, the sidewalks have a flexible design; after the Games, they will be reduced in size and the area will have a larger park. This is a very interesting aspect. We have used traditional places for the Olympics. There is an historical place in downtown London - Horse Guards Parade - located in the center of White Hall, a place for military parades. It is there that the beach volleyball competitions will be held. Therefore, we have constructed a beach in this traditional place, for this new Olympic sport. I think that the Olympics will be sustainable, because we have created not only a park for a single event, but also a park for London".

Socio-economic consequences in the context of sustainable development

- Traditional places were used for the Olympic Games. Horse Guards Parade - located in the center of White Hall, a place for military parades, hosted the beach volleyball competitions.
- Due to the Olympics, a new district was created, providing many jobs and new houses for the East London people.
- 6.5 billion pounds were invested in transport infrastructure, to establish links between the new district and the other areas of the capital city.
- "The Javelin", a high speed train was constructed to link King's Cross to the Olympic Park.
- The main challenge for the London 2012 Olympics was the construction of the

Olympic Park, in compliance with the principles of sustainable development and getting the best results possible in waste management, in reducing the water and energy consumption.

- During the Games, it was promoted the use of public transport, walking or cycling. Eleven million pounds were invested to construct bicycle and walking routes in the Olympic Park area.
- Regarding security, 500 million pounds were invested in new technologies.
- The basketball stadium will be transferred in its whole to Brazil, for the 2016 Olympic Games.
- The swimming center, with a capacity of 10,000 seats, was reduced in size.
- The Olympic Village houses were built according to the Code for Sustainable Homes - Level 4, requiring that CO₂ emissions were 44% lower than those imposed by the 2006 construction standard; the code also required reducing the water consumption.
- Abandoned industrial buildings and neglected areas represented much of the site covered now by the Olympic Park. The objective to recycle 90% of waste resulted from building demolition was reached. Waste products (tires, wagons and used cars) were eliminated within an 8.53km radius around the waters passing through the Olympic Park. To reinvent the Greenway area, both pedestrian and with cycling tracks, there were used materials such as bricks, paving stones, timber sleepers, all of them being recycled after the site was cleared.
- 2/3 of the steel used to construct the Olympic Stadium roof was recycled, reducing thus the construction cost by 500,000 pounds. The Olympic Stadium has been the easiest to build ever, the roof truss girders being made from unused gas pipelines.
- In the velodrome, meteoric water was collected and used for irrigations. In the Aquatics Center, the water resulted from pool washing was collected and used for the toilets.
- All buildings used by up to 40% less water, due to some initiatives such as collecting the storm-water. This objective was reached by creating a connection between waste management and energy generation. It was developed an anaerobic processing system with pipe networks for bringing biogas from the landfill area back to the Olympic Park and use it in energy generation. (Dumitrescu, 2014)

Conclusions

As long as the competitions organized under the sign of the 5 circles continue to involve tens of thousands of participants, there will certainly be cities willing to submit their application file. Even if the organizers of the Montreal 1976 Olympics finished to pay their debts only in 2011 (35 years later), the financial or image-related success of other editions encourages politicians, mayors or sports people to wish to organize the most important competition of the planet: the Olympic Games. Almaty and Beijing have already bidden to host the 2022 edition of the Winter Olympics and, next year, the cities for the 2024 Summer Olympics will enter the scene.

From the previous research, but also from the experience of the journalist who effectively participated in four editions of the Games (Sydney, Beijing, Vancouver and London), we agree to both the conclusions of Alice Wnorowski (2011), who says that the bids to organize the Olympics represent a success even if the respective city (country) does not win the right to host the event, and those of Jill Haynes, who thinks that the Sydney Olympics can be considered a social and economic success, also due to the results of the Australian athletes.

Once the Games have started being organized under the sign of sustainable development, this will continue without any doubt

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in their future editions. After the 1992 Rio de Janeiro “Earth Summit”, attended by representatives of 170 States, the 2016 Olympics are expected to bring together more than 10,000 athletes from over 200 States, and the principles of sustainable development will definitely govern the Rio Games, too.

Furthermore, for 2024, the IOC might decide that the Olympics should be held concomitantly in two cities or even in two different countries. The decision was taken by the IOC, at the 127th plenary session of Monaco. “We have the intention to introduce a new philosophy with regard to the bidding process. The IOC took this decision for inviting the potential candidates to submit a project that includes the best economic and social conditions”, said the IOC Vice-president, John Coates.

Bids for the 2014 Summer Olympics can be submitted until 15 September 2015 and the final decision will be made in 2017.

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