

**Forming Policy Networks between the Organizing Committee for
Olympic Games and the Host City**

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Abstract

The exclusion of related organizations in the complex process of Olympic policy making and implementation could jeopardize the successful completion of the Games, create a hostile planning environment and fail to maximize the benefits local community could receive from the Games hospitality. Official semi-structured interviews with representatives of all policy levels at the Athens 2004 Olympic Games related institutions offered a valuable insight on how informal parallel networking patterns are being formulated to face Olympic structure's inefficiency to incorporate the Host City mechanisms. Resulting in the enlightenment of the City's role prior and during the Games the study aims to contribute with generalizable suggestions to other relevant Olympic hosting communities in quest of their role in the complicated Olympic policy superstructure.

Keywords: Olympic Games, Host City, Policy Network

Introduction

The nature and extent of relationships developed between the designated agencies to organize mega events have received very limited interest by researchers (Westerbeek, Smith, Turner, Emery, Green and Leeuwen, 2006). Olympic policy remains a highly centralized activity characterized by numerous procedures to be implemented by inhomogeneous bodies and authorities. This lack of uniformity often results to inconsistent Olympic policy implementation and sometimes hostile organizational environment in front of the Games hosting. Host cities play a crucial role in bidding for a mega event like Olympic Games (International Olympic Committee - IOC, 2000a), however little insight has been recorded on local authority's involvement at the different stages of planning and staging the Games that would conclude with applicable practices towards a democratic Olympic managing scheme.

The exclusion of the local government from the Olympic structure represented by the Organizing Committees for Olympic Games (OCOG) is analyzed here within a self-centric policy environment heavily focused on the event technical demands rather than an extended developmental policy environment. The exploration of the present policy network looks for causal links of the assumed parties' with the policy application process. The focus is located in the actual network achieved through idiosyncratic cooperation patterns. More specifically, the present study focuses on the process of hosting the Olympic sport of boxing at the City of Peristeri (CoP) during the Athens 2004 Olympic Games as a characteristic case of local government exclusion of the Olympic policy community and the implications to the Games preparation and staging.

'Policy Network' is used here as the vehicle to analyze the relationships that developed between the Olympic structure and the local government at the Athens 2004 Olympic Games. The present study therefore aims to enlighten:

"the identifiable process of formulating a policy network between the central OCOG management system and the host city in its effort to be included in the Olympic policy implementation process".

Research areas to be examined include:

- a. involved parties' interest and role
- b. the ways the policy actors interact in the process of exercising Olympic policy
- c. OCOG's stance towards encompassing the host city in the organizing structure in relation to the implementation of a centrally predefined Olympic policy.

Conceptual Background

The complicated process of designing and implementing sport policy has become the subject of a number of studies highlighting the role and interest of the parties involved or excluded from this process as well as the possible consequences (Houlihan, 1997; 2005; Mills and Seward, 1994 in Dunleavy and Stanyer, 1994; Wright, 1988). Hoye, Nicholson and Houlihan (2010) argue that sport policies often encompassed in policy statements remain the property of central sport authorities. The elitist stance of many sport policy bodies often leads to the production of elite sport programs. Sport policy at an Olympic or professional sport level remains a highly centralized activity to be implemented uniformly from host organizations often causing doubts on its ability to be adjusted to local idiosyncrasies. Olympic Games constitute a complicated sports policy environment facing the challenge of exercising homogeneous policies and procedures at all local Olympic environments. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) focusing strongly on the successful completion of the sport competition remains a self-centered policy structure that is often criticized on its capacity to represent all parties involved in the process of implementing the Games. Compact and pre-agreed “Policies and Procedures” (Athens 2004 Organizing Committee - ATHOC, 2003c) are applied at all Olympic localities aiming at satisfying the most difficult task that of a homogeneous high quality Olympic product sustaining its intrinsic as well as its commercial value. Organizing Committees for Olympic Games (OCOGs) being the designated agencies for Olympic policy implementation are educated to exercise centrally designed policies facing the challenge of addressing Olympic issues within a different every time local political and societal structure (ATHOC, 2002a).

Many theoretical attempts to analyze the process of governance and policy making in sport bodies have been recorded internationally. The ‘institutional theory’, seeks to analyze organizations’ relation to their environment and the structural forms they create in order to address their operation. The organizations’ internal patterns and reforms constitute a reaction to the environment’s pressures, demands and power enforcement (Hoye & Cuskelly, 2007). Similarly, the ‘Resource Dependence theory’ implies a strong relationship between different bodies based on the need for resources, funds and support which is often met in the sports environment. Sports organizational structures as well as performances are strongly based on their ability to attract resources through well established intra-organizational relationships (Cornforth, 2003). The theory of ‘Policy Network’ along with the legitimate and structural bindings proposed by the previous theories is extended to the social and informal interdependency patterns formulated between involved organizations in the process of policy making and implementation.

The sports environment constitutes a characteristic example of identifiable dependencies between the sports bodies and the different funding institutions (public and non profit authorities, sponsors, advertising agencies etc.) often being the only supporting mechanism. Amateur clubs and facilities, but most often amateur sporting events remain the most evident proof of dependency to central policy mechanisms that can determine even the future development of a sport. Similarly, Smith (1997) dealing with policy networks suggests that power is the result of dependency, based on an exchange of resources. Therefore, organizations, governments and other involved parties have a strong incentive to build networks.

Limited research though has been recorded regarding the interaction amongst different organizations in the Olympic sport policy making process that could lead to generalizable practices (Turner & Westerbeek, 2004). 'Policy Network' is employed in the present study due to its capacity to analyze and explain interpersonal and informal relationships that are developed between parties that can benefit sports localities and agencies. More specifically, the study examines the notion as expressed by Hoye et al (2010, p.47) 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". Formed networks exchange information leading to the recognition that an affected party has a direct interest in a certain policy area. Policy Network includes actors who are involved in developing policy responses to an issue. Houlihan (1991) characteristically gives an insight into how parties become excluded from specific networks. One of the issues underlined by this theoretical paradigm is the 'capacity' of the community to restrict entry to other 'communities' - in the present case the local community - which are often in conflict.

Research Setting

Qualitative research is applied in the present study due its capability to collect the value and importance interviewees recognize in different situations and their explanation on the reasons and implications of their occurrence. "A qualitative research design, based on expert interviews, better fits the research question for strategies of network governance and, hence, will test if and how the explored policy networks achieve to organize effective network governance and to execute certain functions effectively...through strategic cooperation" (Wienges, 2010, p.37).

The representation of the relevant policy groups is extended to all Olympic, Government and City level securing the validity of the data collected. Officially arranged semi-structured interviews included representatives of the

City of Peristeri i.e. the Mayor, Vice Mayors of Culture, Sport, and Works. Information on city operations was gained through the questioning of (three) relevant city sections' managers and (four) city site coordination representatives. The Olympic structure was thoroughly examined through representations at all policy levels namely, the competition manager and the technical operations manager for boxing and the venue manager as well as the venue operations manager. In addition, the Athens 2004 Organizing Committee (ATHOC) was examined at central policy making section through the sports division's general manager for sports, the manager for sport policy and operations and the manager for competition management. The Ministry for Sports was contacted regarding information on the venue design, construction and adaptation through the venue architects and the directors for venues design. The Amateur International Boxing Association (AIBA) constitutes the supervisory body for the enforcement of all appropriate competition rules and conditions for the sport of boxing during Olympic Games (AIBA, 2002). The Olympic Federation was represented by the President himself and a group of Executive Board Members offering precious information on the expectations of an international sport body from a host city. Valuable knowledge was gained through the review of Olympic archival material/documents in the form of policy declarations, strategic plans, concept of operations, functional plans and venue operating plans.

A panel of experts reviewed questions designed to achieve effective interviewing from related actors. Employing a standard protocol for qualitative research results were retrieved through content analysis (Berg, 2004). Patterns and thematic categories identified in the process of analysis were classified and grouped to produce meaningful conclusions. Linked to reviewed theory and internal policy documents the results were triangulated to achieve enhanced validity (Patton, 2002).

Results analysis

Facing the challenge of mega-event planning

The sport of Boxing enjoys a favorable position in the Olympic program due to its historic contribution to the Games being one of the very first to be included in the ancient and modern Olympics according to the AIBA representatives. Additionally, Olympic boxing competition includes representations from almost all Olympic nations (more than two hundred) and all continents, positioning boxing amongst the very few 'universal' sports included in the Olympic program. Along with its universal recognition, its archegonic value, and its dynamic nature boxing enjoys 'sold out' ticketing during semi-finals and finals as well as long hours of live coverage and a fanatic audience at all continents.

The boxing venue according to the bid file for the Athens Games was scheduled at the high quality recreational sea-side area of Faliron. Official ATHOC unpublished documents revealed planning of a brand new tailor-made indoor arena that promised ideal competition conditions in comparison to sports accommodated at old venues or disadvantaged locations (ATHOC, 2002d). The construction of this new Olympic venue was presented as only a part of the most ambitious site plan for the coastal area of Athens, aiming to offer people a wide range of sea-side facilities and recreational activities. This project aimed at recreating an abandoned area to the most visited upgraded leisure area in the greater area of Athens for the years to come.

According to government interviewees, a newly constructed venue was especially designed to satisfy the boxing competition and all television requirements with site plans as well as operational plans to be completed ahead of planning in an effort to make Athens a success. According to ATHOC representatives, initial site plans presented to the International Federation were accepted with satisfaction since a sport specific venue at one of the best areas of the host city is always well received by international bodies fostering for the well being and promotion of their sport. All planning and site preparations were completed by 2002 one step before the initialization of construction procedures while all necessary international federation agreements were secured through official procedures and binding ATHOC mechanisms (ATHOC, 2002b; 2003d). Gaining International Federation's agreement was considered by ATHOC policy representatives a difficult and crucial task in the process of organizing the Games (ATHOC, 2003a). Relations between the Organizing Committee and the International Federations are heavily based on the readiness as well as the quality of the competition conditions for each Olympic sport often producing a turbulent pre-Olympic environment able to jeopardize the Games.

The City of Peristeri is a historic Athenian suburb accommodating a large number of industrial units since the 1960's, characterized by strong workers' unions and a vivid political stance. The fast industrialization of the area produced a heavily urban and degraded area and consequently, a radical political environment. Local governments were for years characterized by fierce left beliefs arguing their disadvantaged position within a polluted and heavily concrete surrounding. Olympic Games were always a controversial issue for the local community doubting the real interests of the parties involved. Local elections came in the middle of a pre-Olympic turbulent era with the central government deciding the fate of the 'permanent' Olympic venues and the naming of the suburbs as 'Olympic Municipalities' implying the burden but also the benefits to follow.

Despite the initial positioning of the Boxing at the upgraded area of Faliron, government decides to relocate the venue at the most industrial area of

Peristeri despite the fact that all planning and preparation procedures were already completed by 2002 (ATHOC, 2002b; 2002e, 2002d). This relocation was fiercely criticized by the present local government representatives as having evident political reasons for the government to support Peristeri's local party to win elections. However, local elections in 2002 brought an independent and strongly dynamic new government promising to bring change and a new lift to the city's quality of life. This newly formed party enjoyed a great acceptance by local people but would not secure positive Olympic feelings from a disadvantaged locality. The exclusion of the new government from the relocation decision according to local government representatives predetermined a hostile environment and left room for local reaction to the Olympic giant to come. Local planners recalled that Olympic Games were considered as an additional burden to the overall problematic community and were not to enjoy a welcome attitude. This hesitation was reinforced by the Mayor with the realization that very limited resources were to be allocated to the local purse to face the additional Olympic city needs. The initial stages of venue preparation procedures would inevitably suggest negotiations between Olympic planners and the local actors suggesting that the new reality would include their participation, the level of each was to be determined.

ATHOC bureaucrats argued that the initial bid document that positioned a group of venues at the coast of Athens was overambitious and was not based on a realistic post-Olympic venue usage. Cutting down on these new and expensive venues was a difficult and risky decision that ATHOC dared to take in front of international doubts on the capability of the organizers to complete a series of new venue installations in time to host the 2004 Games. A new holistic re-arrangement of competition venues was decided exploiting many existing or near to completion Olympic venues based mainly on sports coexistence during Games as well as events rescheduling. More than five expensive scheduled venue constructions were abundant relieving Olympic budget considerably. However, this radical project would face strong criticisms within the Olympic Family on its capacity to secure successful competition since it was based on either risky venue sharing or delayed construction. Many sports would have to share the same venue exploiting competition schedule margins and venue capabilities.

In the present study, the relocation of the venue would evidently save the cost of a new permanent or rented temporary venue scheduled to host Olympic boxing competition for 2004 at the area of Faliron. Government representatives argued that this decision would save on a huge construction and also support the sporting future of a degraded urban locality. The new proposed venue area at the City of Peristeri was scheduled already to accommodate a small multi-sports complex to satisfy neighborhood needs including the most popular sports

locally, i.e. football, basketball, volleyball and gymnastics. The new proposal would speed up construction procedures and would complete the complex earlier than scheduled, which was however considered by government representatives as one of the most risky Olympic projects for Athens. The initial venue designs fostering local needs would need serious readjustments in order to accommodate a specific Boxing Olympic operational plan. ATHOC venue and operations managers argued that they faced a great challenge: Preserving initial designs of a post-Olympic local venue while enforcing Olympic “Standards for Competition Venues” (IOC, 2002b) to accommodate the demanding Olympic competition. Issues of enlarging seats’ capacity from just 3,500 to 8,500 proved to be the biggest challenge for architects, while Olympic planners faced operational difficulties claiming lack of space and a problematic venue surrounding in terms a security and transportation.

Despite many problematic planning issues, all parties accepted the new reality and offered all resources to make it a pragmatic scenario. However, according to Olympic venue management representatives this overall beneficial new reality was not enthusiastically received by the highest institutional body for the sport of boxing. AIBA threw fierce criticisms on this negative relocation decision as well as the overall capability of ATHOC and the government to secure competition. ATHOC – AIBA relations according to the central policy making section representatives underwent a huge crisis and created the most hostile planning environment reinforcing doubts on Athens’ overall ability to make the Games a success.

City challenged by the Olympic giant

City’s first reaction in becoming an “Olympic suburb” was not as thrilling as expected. This Olympic giant was forced on a community which was never offered a share in the decision to receive an Olympic event. The interviewed representatives of the new local authority underlined their exclusion from discussions on the venue relocation which led to the unwillingness to accept the allocated responsibilities. Being skeptical on local people’s attitude on Olympic Games overall, local authority feared that this undemocratic allocation of the Olympic venue in the city could lead to a serious local political problem that could even jeopardize the Games. Unclear of what is expected, the Mayor coordinated a series of discussions with the government and ATHOC in an effort to identify and quantify the impact the city would receive. Local authority’s reaction escalated with the realization that limited resources were allocated to the local purse for the Olympic operation. Along with the city’s limited resources, the local authority seemed unable to carry this Olympic burden, inevitably producing a hostile city pre-Olympic environment. ATHOC representatives admitted that the understanding that local government’s

reluctance would not support the Olympic operation led to the inclusion of city officials in an initial working group. All available information was offered to the city representatives educating them on the magnitude and nature of operation to be addressed during Olympic Games. Despite this positive start it became evident that these discussions constituted a limited educatory support which would not necessarily signal a legitimate position within the Olympic system. The reactions climaxed with the realization that the city was not represented in the Olympic management structure and therefore practically excluded from the venue preparation and most importantly, the Olympic operation itself.

The city representatives continued to be present during the first stages of planning due to the fact that the land for the venue construction is a city property therefore inevitably would have to give all appropriate permissions. Additionally, the initial site designs fostering local sporting needs had to be adjusted in order to accommodate the 8,500 seats Olympic venue requirement. According to local city planners, the new Olympic site plan would differentiate the local picture in order to operate effectively during the Games though securing the post-Olympic use. Radical architectural designs and adjustments were enforced in order to satisfy Olympic requirements under the skeptical eye of the local government doubting the venue's capability to secure future sporting use. ATHOC competition managers recalled the fierce criticisms expressed by AIBA emphasizing the risky nature of the project and the disadvantaged position for boxing presenting an uncompleted venue, only months before the Games. The venue construction schedule would not satisfy the International Federation that felt that boxing was handled unfavorably in comparison to other sports positioned in well known and brand new permanent venues. Their reasoning was reinforced by the fact that this late venue completion (early 2004) left little available time to organize an effective test event and more importantly to correct all deficiencies experienced during the rehearsals.

However, the final completion of the venue construction and the extent of international exposure the venue would gain, created a new more optimistic reality for the local government. Contributing towards making the competition a success was the only option since 'Olympic Games remain an invaluable human expression that no one could doubt' (City Mayor). The fact that Olympic competition was only months away led to the realization that there's no other scenario but to maximize all possible benefits this might bring and make it an overall positive experience for the City and its people (CoP, 2003a). Prioritizing the successful venue completion, the City proceeded to all land permission procedures and activated all technical sections to facilitate the works of the Ministry for Sports (i.e. the responsible body for constructing the venue). Local government was directly related to the initial phase of venue preparation providing a series of technical installations such as power and water supply,

road connections, etc. The local planners expressed their fears watching the initial venue designs being altered to accommodate the Olympic magnitude endangering the future of the facility despite all governmental reassurances that all premises would be handed back to the City readjusted for community's sporting use. All efforts were directed towards supporting this risky project with the City redirecting or constructing new peripheral roads to facilitate Olympic transportation. The overall surrounding was not planned to accommodate a venue of Olympic size and operation, therefore serious site readjustments became the local authority's responsibility. This necessary setting adjustment to Olympic size became one of the biggest challenges local authority would face and also turn it into a valuable developmental scenario. Industrial activity in the area would have to be regulated despite the local business reactions in order to safeguard construction and later Olympic operation (CoP, 2003b).

Once the initial stage of land and building procedures was completed the City focused on organizing a positive environment for the visiting parties' as well as the local people gradually seeking a share in the whole Olympic welcoming. The last would not be an easy task when operating in a hesitating political locality and a disturbed site area that would affect negatively city life for more than a year. Local authority proceeded to an extended educational campaign in order to create a warm feeling and an understanding of the positive nature of the accommodated sport. Boxing is one of these sports, people can easily appreciate being a "poor man's sport" presenting a strong fighting character that could have suggested a metaphoric life value. Associated with many well-known deprived but culturally vibrant neighborhoods around the globe boxing, was gradually positively received by local people feeling lucky that a universal sporting power would be coming at their door. Local boxing clubs and athletes would be supported by the local authority and ATHOC in order to build an enthusiastic voluntary force leading to the Games. A few months later a very effective volunteer program started to receive applicants preparing the City for the Games in areas such as tourist information services, city signage, cultural activities, etc. Despite the limited budget allocated to the local authority for all this additional operation local authority seemed determined to make it a beneficial local experience and turn into a developmental potentiality.

Experiencing Olympic Structural Inefficiency

Organizing Committee for Olympic Games role is legitimately determined as the authority for coordinating the most complex event of all. Organizing Committees thus, form an idiosyncratic management structure heavily characterized by intersectional coordination led by the President and executive directors. During the four year planning, the structure gradually builds up all sections namely the functional areas which then determine all "policies and

procedures” to be exercised during Games time operation (ATHOC, 2002a; 2002e; 2002d; 2003b; 2003d; 2003e). ATHOC followed the OCOG typical structure leading to the highly critical process of “venue-ization” where all functional areas (FAs)/departments conclude the planning phase to become the operations teams for every venue few months before Games start. In this organizational chart the existence of the “City Operations” department implies a working connection of the Organizing Committee with the suburbs to facilitate all relevant to the Games matters (ATHOC, 2002e). In reality, despite the positive comments expressed by ATHOC representatives, the role of this department is restricted to centrally foster for all issues associated with Olympic works, transportation and all agreements necessary to proceed with the preparations. Acting as the middle part between localities and the relevant governmental departments and Ministries, the importance of this ATHOC section is largely evident at the first planning stages of the Games. Local government representatives vividly emphasized that ATHOC’s mechanisms failed to extend the role of this section to later stages of the Games structural transformation and operation which constitutes the core interest of the present study.

Apart from the initial formal discussions between ATHOC’s bureaucrats and the City officials, there would be no additional communication path established to create a democratic interrelationship. Mayor of Peristeri focusing on the initialization of the venue construction area preparations and the coordination of City’s operation failed to observe this structural gap which became evident at a later stage only when educatory meetings and informatory communication were completed. The reactions to this reality were fierce, claiming that this Olympic elitist stance undermined local government’s role and could endanger Games’ operation. The local government’s belief that ‘Olympics could offer a vibrant developmental opportunity’ would not be supported by ATHOC. The exclusion of the local party from the Games-time structure enlarged the gap between the two parties.

The complicated process of “venue-ization” is considered as the most crucial phase in the final preparation stage leading to the Games. ATHOC’s sections adjusted to their new decisive position in the “Games – time” structure, engineered to practice all predetermined procedures. The Games successful operation is heavily based on the effective blending of the venue sections and their effective homogeneous performance. This operational mode is based on the “Venue Model” where from the most centralized and holistic planning of services, the structure would now transform to individual operational cells with identical behavior at all venues (ATHOC, 2003d). In this Games-time management format there is evidently no representation of the City, implying the detachment of the local government from the Olympic system with the

commencement of the competition. Local government strongly argued that the City is inevitably related to the successful operation through a series of facilitations which however was never appreciated by the Olympic organizers faithfully practicing the traditional Olympic model and therefore excluding the City mechanisms from their management scheme. The flow of updated information on Games preparations is a dynamic and crucial process which guides all planning, while the adaptation to change remains the main characteristic of the Olympic organizing environment. However, Olympic planners would not prioritize this constant updating process towards the City claiming ‘their’ legitimate role in organizing the Games.

Forming a local Olympic Policy Network

Clouds gathered above Peristeri City Hall with the realization that no section representing the local issues was included in the official venue organizational chart of the Boxing Hall. This structural deficiency became evident as soon as the venue construction procedures were concluded and the City shifted its focus towards more operational local preparations. City officials interviewed felt undermined and excluded from the Olympic management scheme despite their efforts be accepted in the new Games-time structure even when turning to government for support. Claiming their right to be educated on the critical venue and overall site issues in order to allocate their resources equivalently, local planners fought for structural inclusion. Fierce reactions towards the central venue management section would not produce any positive results leaving the City officials abundant and insecure. Their enthusiasm but also their political responsibility to perform satisfactorily during the Games was suppressed by the repetitive elimination from the venue environment.

Despite their apparent operational exclusion, local officials appeared determined to make the Games hosting in their city a positive local experience and shifted their communication efforts towards individual Olympic section managers rather than the official path. Vice Mayor recalled that back in the initial stages of planning, several Olympic officials showed appreciation towards the city enthusiasm and offered additional work hours to educate city representatives on developments. This would base the initialization of an unofficial “policy networking” between the local government and ATHOC, after failing to establish a legitimate policy interaction. According to the City representatives unofficial parallel meetings were held to create a working group focusing on:

- a. the operational areas local authority should undertake Games-time to facilitate the event outside venue site
- b. the parallel however not legitimate working scheme to be exercised during Games

- c. the ways the City could maximize the benefits deriving from the Games to build on legacy assets

ATHOC representatives that participated in the unofficial networking admitted that leading to the Games the agenda grew dramatically highlighting a series of issues undermined at the initial planning stage which needed local characteristics' knowledge to be attended. Neighboring to venue production units jeopardizing the safety of the Games is a typical example of the issues that the Olympic structure failed to address focusing strictly on competition preparation. Operating into a heavily industrial area suggested that all production facilities should be evaluated and ranked according to the potential risk they might carry. Then, a group of companies should postpone production during Games time and any dangerous material be transported at secure places. This demanding coordination process demonstrated the City's direct connection to the Games operation that a myopic Olympic structure failed to attend. The agenda was extended to a plethora of crucial issues to be addressed, such as transportation modes, road alterations, venue surrounding improvements and overlay constructions, probable local hazard areas, International Federation officials' hospitality, local celebrations, City voluntarism for tourism and welcoming services, and youth Olympic education. It became obvious that the cooperation of the City with the Olympic venue operations was crucially necessary and urged for an effective structural representation.

The competition management section of the Olympic structure - being the central unit of competition information, sport knowledge and connection with the International Federation - argued that traditionally it behaves more sensitively towards the effective accommodation of the Olympic sport despite its limited hierarchical power inside the OCOG (ATHOC, 2002b; 2002d). In the case of the Athens 2004 Games, the same section developed a close informal cooperation networking with the local authority contributing to the facilitation of many crucial operations. Noteworthy, this informal networking was extended to incorporate AIBA's part when understanding that the City's involvement would determinately affect the hospitality of the sport and its officials. The competition manager recalled a busy agenda of meetings with City's officials on: the overall operational plan, educated them on rights and limitations of the Olympic accreditation mechanism, co-planned hospitality services for AIBA officials, educated City volunteers on Games coming, highlighted important to the Greek audience competition scheduling (that would bring additional burden to the city), organized educatory boxing events to schools and the locality, and communicated Olympic developments to the Mayor to support overall City planning.

This network creation was heavily based on interpersonal relations within a reluctant Olympic environment refusing any official cooperation mechanisms

to the City. ATHOC's structure heavily focused on venue completion and event preparation criticized the certain staff group on redirecting the focus of their competition management responsibilities to an extended not legitimate role. Despite ATHOC's strong criticisms Competition Management being involved inevitably in an extended operational mode presented a community-sensitive conscious. Supporting City's inclusion in the planning of the Olympic experience she argued that "the inclusion of the City to Games planning will enhance all parties experience and contribute towards a democratic and holistically effective Games environment".

Conclusion

The effective but unofficial formed policy network led to a widely accepted recognition that the initially excluded local part not only has a direct relation to the Olympic policy process but acts determinedly to the overall organizational success. According to the policy network theory in respect to an organization's (ATHOC) 'capacity' to restrict entry to the local 'community' (City of Peristeri) in the present case led to an organizational conflict which finally led to the formulation of an informal policy network scheme.

Local people had the chance to experience a festive atmosphere and the International boxing family to receive hospitality some times more generous than the one offered by the Olympic system. The Games was a huge success for the sport of boxing and the local people enjoyed a holistic sport and cultural experience at the City of Peristeri. AIBA described the Games as "one of the best organized Olympic Boxing Competition ever" with an "enthusiastic - exceptional event staff" while the same time the Mayor of Peristeri was proudly receiving the "Golden Star Award" by the President of AIBA for the City's great contribution to the successful completion of the Games. ATHOC overall was congratulated for the positive outcome of the Games and Athens concluded its Olympic course with pride.

During Games-time the City would not enjoy the privileges assumed earlier being restricted to a small number of accreditation passes and some free tickets to certain sports and ceremonies. However, the City's well established relations with some sections of ATHOC would facilitate their information on the competition and more importantly would support their parallel competition-related city operations. The interactive relationship with the competition staff was not well received by ATHOC. The Olympic system realizing the nature of this relationship doubted its necessity and reminded competition staff of their critical Olympic organizing role which remains the focus of a successful outcome. ATHOC policy section representatives strongly noted that "the reporting lines of the complex Olympic management scheme can not afford additional external parties to be included in the Games environment especially

when this relationship is not legitimized”. Top Olympic divisions fiercely criticized this relationship as destructing the attention of the staff towards non venue issues which would endanger the competition overall. This turbulent management setting was further complicated when the International Federation flattered by the City interest and hospitality exercised additional pressure towards the competition staff to coordinate relevant City activities. At the end, the competition staff would inevitably accept an extended role undermined at the initial stages of planning.

Implications and future research

Olympic Games’ structure faces the great challenge of incorporating the city mechanisms in order to gain organizational success and community acceptance and support. The Olympic Games-time management structure suggesting an internally focused scheme evidently fails to address a series of local issues directly connected to the event organization. The need for all ‘policy community’ organizational restructuring was evident through the course of the research and the final event outcome. The City’s battle for structural inclusion demonstrated a real need for bridging relations between the two parts towards more effective Games management, a local enhanced experience and a supported developmental vehicle. The present central OCOG City related unit having limited power over resolving specific local issues needs to be empowered with effective cooperation procedures towards Games-hosting local governments. The present study clearly demonstrated an unexpectedly hostile attitude towards local authority’s inclusion in the Olympic management system, heavily due to the venue focused character of the structure as well as the specific and idiomorphic nature of a short-term management scheme that every OCOG presents. Future OCOGs could evidently benefit from the present research experience and exercise a participative scheme of all affected parties in order to achieve maximum support and facilitated operations.

Additional research is urgently needed to highlight similar Olympic settings and the local societal and political idiosyncrasies that affect Olympic coordination, operations and overall experience. Specifically, formulation of relevant networks between the involved parts of OCOG, local government and other powerful societal parts should be further analyzed in an effort to reach best practices in the process of organizing Olympic Games effectively and democratically. The existence, nature, magnitude and sphere of responsibility and power of relevant sections within the OCOGs could demonstrate the importance placed on local authority’s contribution and the need to form an official Olympic policy community. Central Olympic policy makers could gain knowledge on different local cooperation patterns observed leading hopefully to the most effective and participatory management scheme.

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