

## **The Youth Olympic Games: Analyzing Institutional Performance in an Olympic Context**

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### **Abstract**

The 1<sup>st</sup> Youth Olympic Summer Games (YOG) took place in Singapore from August 14-26, 2010 with participation of 3,530 elite young athletes ranging in age from 14 to 18 years old. These Games were followed by the first Youth Olympic Winter Games hosted by Innsbruck, Austria in 2012. Does the introduction of these Games represent good sport policy, good sport practice or merely a crass attempt to further commercialize and promote the Olympic brand image to youth?

Although academics and sport officials in their critical analyses of the YOG are cautious about this newly introduced event, the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) background ideational abilities – i.e. the process by which the YOG has become communicated and accepted - has skipped their attention. This paper utilizes discursive institutionalism as a theoretical framework to analyze available primary and secondary sources, documents, reports, personal interviews, and official communications on the first Youth Olympics. There is a serious disconnect between the initial idea and the institutional manner in which the IOC is developing this Olympic event. The paper also advocates for establishing an independent review mechanism that can provide feedback on the IOC's performance related to Youth Olympic Games.

**Keywords:** Youth Olympics, discourse analysis, International Olympic Committee, governance, communication

## Introduction

Since its founding, the Olympic movement has gone through crises that have tested its ability to survive. While maneuvering before political pressure, boycotts, and financial and ethical problems, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has been successful in keeping the Olympic Games the world's greatest sporting event. Living with the need to articulate competition and education, individual and nation, sports for the elite and sports for everybody, the movement has lurched between the polarities of "idealism" and "realism." In practice that has meant a process of adjustments in response to newly occurring demands. According to Tavares, the IOC's search for reconciliation between continuity and change as the central axis from which one can think about Olympic values in our contemporary society (Tavares, 2006).

The crisis of credibility that arose from the corruption scandal of its members in 1998-1999 has increased the demand for organizational reforms by the IOC. By establishing the 2000 Commission the IOC delivered the right message to its stakeholders and the public. By adopting internal democracy, more transparency, and broader representativeness the IOC has moved toward a more democratic and socially responsible structure (IOC Report, 1999).

The reforms of the IOC recommended by the 2000 Commission were significant. They included the restructuring of the bidding process to host the Olympic Games, greater accountability to stakeholders and the public, and several new programs in line with the core Olympic values. Yet all of these were introduced without an external, independent review mechanism. Since the implementation academics, scholars, and sport leaders have welcomed or critically analyzed the 'promises' and 'realities' of the reform package. Using a present Olympic initiative, the Youth Olympic Games (YOG), as a case study, this paper aims to analyze the recent decision making and communication processes inside the IOC. Baron de Coubertin believed that "the best way of paying tribute to an illustrious past is obviously to learn from its teachings in order to prepare for the future" (de Coubertin, 2000 p. 523). This study examines whether the IOC has learned from its past especially the lessons of the reform process almost fifteen years ago?

In 2007 IOC President Jacques Rogge announced the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) as "the newest example of the Olympic Movement's and the IOC's commitment to deepening social responsibility and developing a healthier new generation through Olympism worldwide" (IOC Newsletter, 2008 p. 2). In this initiative the IOC emphasizes the importance of educating young participants on core Olympic values as well as delivering solutions to some contemporary societal problems through Olympic education. The sporting activities are composed of all sports on the Olympic program with limited number of disciplines and events as well as youth-driven disciplines that are not part of the Olympic Games. There is also a specific requirement that host cities implement workshops on important issues, such as the awareness and practice of Olympic values as fair play, sportsmanship, and respect for others; the dangers related to doping, overtraining, and early drop outs; and the importance of sports for healthy lifestyle, social integration, and social responsibility (IOC Executive Board, 2007). Rogge stated:

The purpose of the YOG is not to create mini Games. It would have a different character. This special occasion places as much, if not more, emphasis on the *manner* in

which things are achieved, rather than the sporting achievements itself. The YOG would be true to the vision of educating young people through the values sport teaches. The YOG will also be a demonstration of the IOC's commitment to young people by providing for them an event of their own in the spirit of the Olympic Games (IOC Executive Board, 2007)

On July 5 2007 in Guatemala City, the members of the 119<sup>th</sup> IOC General Assembly voted unanimously in favor of the idea (IOC Executive Board, 2007). The 1<sup>st</sup> Youth Olympic Summer Games were scheduled to take place in Singapore from 14-26 August 2010, with an expected participation of 3,500 elite young athletes ranging in age from 14 to 18 years old. These Games would be followed by the first Youth Olympic Winter Games hosted by Innsbruck, Austria in 2012 (IOC Newsletter, 2008).

While no one has objections in principle to the YOG – as Richard Pound stated “any international exposure for young people in a sport context can only be a good opportunity” (Pound, 2008) – scholars and officials criticized the IOC's newest initiative as lacking any primary analyses of its fundamental premise (Judge et. al., 2009, 2011). They see the YOG as an example of the youth sport events that usually are legitimized by the discourse on health and social development, (Hallevalle, 2006) while practicing commercialism, child exploitation, and cheating (Wamsley & MacDonald, 2006). Skeptics challenge the IOC's good faith by pointing to the lack of media coverage and transparency of the event (Brennen, 2007). They question whether “we should believe that the YOG really will not have any pursuit of medals as its major objective?” or whether there is an intentional inclusion or exclusion of young athletes with disabilities in the Games (e.g. Baka, 2008; Fay, 2009).

Understandably, the newness of the YOG makes it difficult to draw any conclusion on this Olympic initiative. At the same time there are primary and secondary documents, reports, and minutes of meetings, official communications and personal interviews that are available and worth analysis. The issue of particular interest for this essay lies with studying the “background ideational abilities” (Schmidt, 2008 p.310) of the IOC in structuring and constructing this new Olympic institution. This paper examines how this new idea was communicated by the IOC, to whom exactly, and when. The existing IOC policies and procedures, the timeframe for institutionalizing the YOG, and the evaluations and reports of the Panel of Experts (YOG Brochure 2007, 2008) and the Evaluation Commission involved in the bidding process to host the first Youth Games show how the IOC structures the logic of communication and frames the discourse on this new event. By utilizing discursive institutionalism as a theoretical framework, this study argues that there is an existing discrepancy between the initial idea and the institutional manner in which the IOC is developing the Youth Olympic Games.

## **Discursive Institutionalism – The Framework for Studying Ideas, Discourse, and Institutional Change**

The ‘behavioral revolution’ in political science in the 1950s and 1960s was precisely the rejection of old institutionalism. Rather than simply concentrating on a juxtaposition of formal legal, administrative, and political dimensions of institutions, new institutionalism widens the definition of an institution. Although still accommodating the formal rules, procedures, and practices, the new approach highlights the importance of arenas such as informal rules, norms, symbols, and beliefs (e.g. Markovits & Hellerman 2001; Thelen, 2002; Pierson 2004). The 1993 Nobel Prize winner in economics, Douglass North, argued that institutions embody and guide patterns of behavior in society (North, 1990). The rediscovery of institutions has opened a new research focus in comparative politics. The main concern of ‘new institutionalism’ is the role of institutions in shaping policy – an approach that attempts to bring institutions back into policy analysis.

Scholars whose work fits the rubric of ‘discursive institutionalism’ have four characteristics in common. First, they take ideas and discourse seriously. Second, they set ideas and discourse in institutional context. Third, they put ideas in their meaning context and see discourse as logic of communication. Finally, the main innovation of discursive institutionalism is to explain change and continuity. Thus, for them ideas and discourse in any institutional context have explanatory power. (Schmidt, 2008) As Schmidt argues, ideas are the substantive content of discourse and as such, they exist at three levels: policies, programs, and philosophies. Discourse is an interactive process of conveying ideas. It comes in two forms: the *coordinative discourse* among policy actors and the *communicative discourse* between the political actors and the public. (Schmidt, 2008 p.316)

Additionally, political scientists’ use of ideas tends to occur at three main levels (Hall, 1993). The first level encompasses specific policy solutions proposed by policy makers. The second refers to more general programs that underpin the policy ideas. This reflects problematic beliefs that operate between worldviews and specific policy ideas and define the problems to be solved by policies, the issues to be considered, and the goals to be achieved (Berman, 2006). The third level refers to “deep core” – public sentiment or public philosophies – the worldviews that link policies and programs to organizing ideas and values of knowledge and society. Generally both policies and programs tend to be discussed and debated while philosophical ideas are underlying assumptions that are rarely contested (Campbell, 2004).

The real question for scholars studying ideas is why some ideas become policies, programs, and philosophies that dominate political reality while others do not. What specific criteria ensure the adaptation of a given policy? Hall argues that the policy ideas also need to have administrative and political viability to be adopted (Hall, 1993). The element of timing or the matter of expertise linked to the validation of ideas is also important factors in policy success (Campbell, 2004). Sometimes, however, good ideas fail and bad ideas succeed. It can be explained by the fact that the success of a program does not just depend on cognitive ideas capable to satisfy policy makers. It also depends on the presence of complementary normative ideas capable of satisfying policy makers *and* the public

alike. Moreover, ideational change in social sciences and society results also from external processes and events that create a receptive environment for new ideas (Schmidt, 2008).

The discursive processes help to explain why certain ideas succeed and other fail because of the ways in which they are projected and also depending on to whom and where. Following Habermas' definition of the "public sphere" (Habermas, 1989, 36) some scholars tend to focus on "policy sphere" where policy actors engage one another in a *coordinative discourse* about policy construction, while others look at the "political sphere" in which political actors engage the public in a *communicative discourse* about the necessity of such policies. The coordinative discourse consists of "the individuals and groups at the center of policy construction who are involved in the creation, elaboration and justification of the policy" (Schmidt, 2008). They can be experts, elected officials, activists and organized interests who seek to coordinate agreements among themselves on the policy issue. Examples include advocacy coalitions or networks but also may include mediators who serve as catalysts for change as they articulate the ideas of the coalitions (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). The communicative discourse occurs in the political sphere. It consists of the individuals and groups involved in the presentation and deliberation of the political ideas to the general public. In a process of public persuasion, political leaders, party activists as well as the media, social activists, public intellectuals, and think-thanks communicate their responses to the presented policies engendering debate, and ideally, even modify the offered policies under discussion (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Thus, there are always ideas and discourse, most of which tend to reinforce existing realities and only some of which promote change. When, therefore, does discourse exert an influence by promoting change?

Discourse contributes to the success or failure of ideas first by how it articulates their substantive content, for example, the relevance of the issue at hand, its applicability, or ambiguity (Radaelli & Schmidt, 2004). The formal institutional context has also an impact on where and when discourse may succeed. According to Schmidt, in "simple" polities, where governing activities tends to be channeled through a single authority the *communicative* discourse – that to the general public – tends to be more elaborate than the *coordinative* discourse among policy actors. This is because policies here are imposed without much consultation. By contrast, in "compound" polities, where governing activity tends to be dispersed among multiple authorities the coordinative discourse among policy actors tend to be much more elaborate than the communicative discourse to the public (Schmidt, 2008). In more specific institutional settings discourse may succeed depending on when speakers address their remarks, whether they address the right audiences, and whether the communication occurs at the right time. In these specific cases the message must be both convincing and cognitive, meaning it should be justifiable and legitimate in normative terms, at the same time (Schmidt, 2008).

Summarizing the role of ideas and discourse in any institutional setting, Schmidt points out the dynamics between the institution as "context within which an agent thinks, speaks, and acts" and as "contingent, a result of the agents' thoughts, words, and actions." She argues:

As a result, action in institutions is not seen as a product of agents' rationally calculated, path-dependent, or norm-appropriate rule-following. Instead, it is the process in which

agents create and maintain institutions by using what I call their background ideational abilities. These underpin agents' ability to make sense of and in a given meaning context, that is, the terms of ideational rules or 'rationality' of that setting (Schmidt, 2008 p 310).

In other words, institutions frame the discourse, defying the institutional context within which the acceptable ideas and discursive interaction develop. The ideational processes by which agents create and maintain institutions can be summarized by the concept of 'background ideational abilities.' As Schmidt points out, this concept also signifies "what goes on in individuals' minds as they come up with new ideas" and how they "start to use the institutions differently, when they decide to use them" (Schmidt, 2008 p 310).

### **The Path to the Youth Olympic Games**

The idea of organizing an Olympic competition for young adolescents can be traced back to two continental initiatives. In 1991 the European Olympic Committee (EOC) introduced the European Youth Olympic Games (EYOG) (EOC, 2009). The main objectives of this event become formulated around the Olympic ideal of "educating youth through sport." Jacques Rogge, at that time President of the EOC, stated that a highest level, continental, multi-sport competition for youth in the spirit of Olympic values, especially fair play, supports the long-term interests of the IOC, the National Olympic Committees (NOC), and the international sport federations. It does so by providing an Olympic experience for young elite athletes while turning the athletes' attention at an early age towards the benefits of the IOC's values and educational programs (EOC, 2009).

Ten years later in 2001, as part of the legacy of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, the Australian Olympic Committee launched the Australian Youth Olympic Festival (AYOF) (Baka, 2008). Today both continental youth competitions are organized biannually, with a participation of approximately 1500-2000 young elite athletes in 13-16 sport disciplines. Both events focus exclusively on the athletic achievements of the "young Olympians" and are used by sport federations for early talent identification. The budget for hosting the events has increased consequently to about \$ 4-6 million (Baka, 2008).

In July 2007 in Guatemala City the proposal of the YOG was welcomed positively by the IOC membership. Although there were concerns expressed immediately regarding the costs, early burn-outs, doping, and – the most wanted correlation – staging an elite youth sport event and an increase in mass participation in sport, the membership voted in favor of the Games (IOC Newsletter, 2008). USOC's Vice President Bob Ctvrtlik immediately offered "the USOC's resources as well as support" to this new initiative (Brennen, 2007). Juan Antonio Samaranch was excited about this new Olympic institution, "which will convince governments around the world about the importance of sport!" (Brennen, 2007). Phil Coles, IOC member from Australia also was excited about the launching of the worldwide youth event. He said: "It's a bold move and it presents a unique opportunity for the world's youth" (Brennen, 2007). President Rogge's comments were framed around the major problems that the IOC intended to solve with organizing a YOG:

The World Health Organization estimates there are one billion obese people in the world. Children are walking and cycling less, playing fields are disappearing because of real estate pressures and the technology boom is limiting the amount of time kids are devoting to sport - we need to adapt! The YOG will arrest the alarming number of children dropping out of sport. The education component will focus on the Olympic values and the environment and YOG will pay enormous attention to the prevention of doping (IOC Newsletter, 2008 p 2).

Immediately after announcing the idea of the Youth Olympics in Guatemala City the IOC mailed a letter to all National Olympic Committees informing them of the new opportunity for the cities interested in bidding for the Games. The letter was accompanied by the Youth Olympic Games Brochure and the Candidature Procedure and Questionnaire. The materials described all the excitement as well as the symbols of the Olympic Games that should be present at the Youth Olympics creating a truly Olympic atmosphere of the competition: a torch, a flame, a flag, an anthem, Opening and Closing Ceremonies, and a medal ranking showing the success or failure of the national representatives at the tournament. Based on the Olympic Games broadcasting and financing structure, there is an existing media partnership and sponsors' club at hand (Ivan et al., 2008)

Before the deadline of October 26, 2007, eleven cities prepared and submitted their Candidature Files to the IOC. Namely, in alphabetical order: Algiers (Algeria), Athens (Greece), Bangkok (Thailand), Belgrade (Serbia), Debrecen (Hungary), Guatemala City (Guatemala), Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), Moscow (Russia), Poznan (Poland), Singapore (Singapore), and Turin (Italy). During the first round of their evaluation the Panel of Experts placed heavy emphasis on the feasibility of implementation of each project in the given timeframe of two and a half years. The Panel of Experts assessed the projects on the basis of a number of criteria. Weighting were assigned to each criterion on the basis of its importance for the organization of the event. The Panel of Experts chose to assist its analysis with the decision making software "Olympic Logic." This software has been used to assess the files of applicant cities wishing to host the Olympic Games since the 2008 bid process. Most traditional models such as the Average Weighted Sum Model cannot be used for the IOC's assessment of the Candidature Files as those methods may mask some weak grades with strong grades when averaging them. The result could be misleading since the combined average of a city may be acceptable while there is an existing hidden unacceptable weakness in some criteria. Olympic Logic overcomes this problem using principle which simultaneously involves the respective performance of YOG Candidates for all criteria computing them in relation to each other. The result is that the software considers volatility, turbulence, or unevenness of the grades preventing the masking of weak grades and leading to more accurate results (IOC Evaluation Commission Report, 2008). On 12 November 2007 the Panel of Experts of the Evaluation Commission selected the five finalists: Athens (Greece), Bangkok (Thailand), Moscow (Russia), Singapore (Singapore), and Turin (Italy).

In the second round the evaluation of the candidate cities was continued but adapted specifically to each city. While the procedure and deadline were identical for all candidates, the content of the evaluation differed based on the final report of the Panel of Experts. Thus, a letter was sent to the candidates with a city specific set of questions. The members of the Evaluation

Commission made the decision not to visit the candidate cities; instead, the Commission invited the candidates to a virtual meeting by way of a videoconferencing. The aim of this method was to “foster a professional and targeted exchange between the bid committee and the IOC Evaluation Commission” (IOC Evaluation Commission Report, 2008 p 3). The Commission reviewed the applicants with a risk assessment analysis, giving emphasis to the timeframe available to host the 1<sup>st</sup> YOG in 2010. Five areas of risk were identified. These formed the basis for the Commission’s evaluation principles. (Table 1) At the video conference the candidates were offered an opportunity to introduce their bids through a 15-20 minute presentation followed by a question and answer session. Mostly candidate cities also had government representatives at their presentation, making the IOC Commission aware of the government support of their bids.

Following the video presentation the five short-listed Candidate Cities’ files were further assessed and the Commission’s final report was submitted to the IOC Executive Board at the end of January 2008. On the basis of this report the IOC Executive Board recommended Moscow and Singapore to the IOC members for final election. (Table 2) Following a postal vote by all IOC members, on 26 February 2008 Rogge announced Singapore as the host of the first Youth Olympic Games in 2010. (Table 3)

### **New Ambition, Familiar Outcome**

The IOC’s creation of the YOG can easily be categorized following Hall’s definition. As a solution to the worldwide problem of decrease in physical activity (or increase in obesity) the IOC introduces a new Olympic institution, explicitly targeting the young audience at risk. There is a well-defined list of issues that will be solved with this new policy in place and also the methods are developed with which the YOG suppose to solve those problems. Specifically, there will be educational workshops and cultural components alongside the sporting competitions during the Games. The mandatory character of the Cultural and Educational Program (CEP) was clearly stated in the Candidature Procedure and Questionnaire. The requirement for the candidate cities was to take seriously the notion of the IOC’s guideline stating that the main focus in staging the 1<sup>st</sup> Youth Summer Games should be on games management instead of competition management. The educational and cultural component should be a living, inevitable, and valuable one, not be given to them second class treatment! The goal, according to Ng Ser Miang, the Chairman of Singapore 2010 Organizing Committee and an IOC Executive Board Member, was not to create “a small version of the Olympic Games”, but rather place “emphasize on the culture and education elements of the program” (Slater, 2009 p. 38). The CEP must seek to prepare youth athletes to be self-disciplined, responsible individuals, who understand, accept and appreciate different cultures of the world. While participating at the YOG the athletes must learn, accept, and protect the Olympic values of Excellence, Respect, and Friendship, as well as after the Games are over they should live and serve as role models for their peers back in their respective countries. According to the Olympic Charter the Olympic Movement’s goal is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport participation. Thus, at the third and deepest level the IOC turned to its “deep core,” namely to the Olympic philosophy. And this philosophy is rarely contested by the

public. Additionally, attaching normative value to the action serves well to legitimate the new initiative.

As March and Olsen argued, the element of timing and the matter of expertise linked to the validation of ideas are also important factors in launching a successful policy (March & Olsen, 1989). Rogge used his success and expertise from launching the European YOF to introduce the idea of a worldwide event during the 119<sup>th</sup> IOC Session. The positive comments from prominent Olympic officials such as the Vice President of the USOC and by other NOCs helped create a receptive environment for the YOG; this receptiveness turned into unanimous votes in Guatemala City.

To analyze properly the logic of communication related to the Youth Olympics we should go back first to Habermas' differentiation between policy and political sphere followed by Schmidt's categorization of simple and compound polities. In the policy sphere actors engage one another in a coordinative discourse about policy construction, while in the political sphere political actors engage the public in a communicative discourse about the necessity of new policies. The discourse may help turn an idea into a real policy successfully if it goes hand-in-hand with the formal context of the institution which frames the discourse. About institutions with fragmented decision making processes, such as the IOC, "with elites in charge and entrepreneurial actors jumping through windows of opportunity in moments of uncertainty to produce a shift in ideas" Schmidt states:

Different forms of discourse may be emphasized in different institutional settings. In "compound" polities, the coordinative discourse among policy actors tends to be much more elaborate than the communicative discourse to the public. ...This is because it is difficult to communicate anything more than vague terms .....without jeopardizing any of the compromises they make in private (Schmidt, 2008 p 306).

The lack of publicity on the YOG's idea, the bidding process, or even the rapidly hosted first Youth Games, the absence of consultation with the governmental and non-governmental sport organizations, experts, or think-tanks has been already heavily criticized by scholars. For example, in their study, "The Best Kept Secret in Sport: The 2010 Youth Olympic Games" (2009) Judge et.al., reported on the extremely low personal and public awareness of the YOG among athletes, coaches, administrators, sport officials, and parents representing six different Summer Olympic sports in the United States. In 2010, the authors repeated an investigation on personal and public awareness regarding the then upcoming 2010 YOG – this time among stakeholders in the Greek sporting community. (Judge et. al., 2011) Although Greeks have a historically established attachment and passion for the Olympic movement, the article also argued for a need in increasing awareness and more effective messaging around the YOG.

Analyzing the IOC's background ideational abilities – i.e. the process by which the YOG has become communicated and accepted – this study can add to this list the following new observations. The candidate cities paid particular attention to both components of the Youth Olympics programme structure: athletic competition and cultural and educational programming. One cannot see the same considerations in the IOC's decision-making process and evaluation methods for selecting the host

city. The main selection criteria had an overwhelming focus on financial feasibility, followed by revenue generating potential through sponsorship deals and venue constructions. Although during the announcement speech the Educational and Cultural Programs of the event were heavily emphasized, they were absolutely ignored by the Evaluation Commission's assessments. The Educational and Cultural Programs did not even make the list of the five main criteria for becoming a successful candidate city during the bidding process. While analyzing the Commission's evaluation reports on each of the candidate cities' files, it became evident that when the educational programs are mentioned – if at all – it is only in connection with budgetary lines or operational expenses. The IOC has not placed any real criteria on this important segment of the YOG while selecting the host city for the very first time (Ivan et. al., 2008). The educational component turned into a “vague term” immediately after its original conception. To the lack of communication between the political and the public sphere one must also add a new dimension between IOC officials, stakeholders and the public. The logic of communication inside the Olympic institutional setting changed firmly between its ideational stage and its very first institutional implementation.

The rules and standard operating procedures that comprise institutions leave their imprint on outcomes by structuring behavior. Institutions shape outcomes because they shape the actors' identities, power, and strategies. As James March and Johan Olsen argues

Actions taken within and by political institutions change the distribution of political interests, resources, and rules by creating new actors, identities, by providing actors with criteria of success and failure, by constructing rules for appropriate behavior, and by endowing some individuals, rather than others, with authority and other types of resources. *Institutions affect the ways in which individuals and groups become activated* (March & Olson, 1989 p 159).

Analyzing the data provided in Table 1 one can conclude that the weightings to evaluation criteria in the first round as well as the five risk assessment criteria in the second round are the same that the IOC uses for deciding which candidate city will be able to host the Olympic Games. Taking into consideration all of the time constraints the members of the Panel of Experts and Evaluation Commission had to institutionalize the event – as it is shown in Table 3. – it comes as no surprise they turned to the relatively newly developed “Olympic Logic” software that served well the selection process for the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. But when one has a closer look at the results of the software's final evaluation of the files – as it is shown on Table 2 - may be surprised. The software clearly shows Moscow's file being the most suitable to host the 1<sup>st</sup> Summer YOG. The Evaluation Commission reported that the Mayor of Moscow, the Deputy Prime Minister, and the Minister of Sport all were present at their video presentation. The support from the Russian Olympic Committee and Russian Olympians were also evident through their participation at the meeting. There was no doubt Moscow had the finances, the special status owning almost all the facilities, and vast amount of expertise in organization of international youth competitions. All the 28 competition venues have already existed – with 2 requiring additional work only. Although Moscow's project focused consistently on staging,

organizing, and marketing the 1<sup>st</sup> Youth Olympic Games – without any mentioning or linking this event to the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi -, the Evaluation Commission had some serious concerns about the overlapping marketing timeframes of the two Olympic events. In its report the Commission stated:

“...instead of Sochi 2014 managing sponsorship sales for the Youth Olympic Games, it only has ‘final approval rights’ and it appears that the YOGOC would conduct such sales. Should Moscow be elected, the agreed structure would need to be reviewed to place full marketing control in the hands of Sochi 2014 from 1 March 2008 in order to create a clean marketplace for the Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games and to ensure most favorable revenue generation potential for both the YOG and Sochi 2014.” (IOC, Evaluation Commission Report, 2008 p 11)

Thus, the existing institutional norms of the IOC, its formal and informal rules and behavioral expectations clearly affected the way how the first host city was elected. But by selecting the city to host the first YOG based entirely on commercial measurements may shape the form of this new Olympic institution into undesired directions.

One may ask why the YOG matters? First, with staging the YOG the IOC clearly sends a message to its stakeholders and the public. But a successful communication campaign of a new Olympic event, such as the YOG, can only be delivered as a process unfolding over extended period of time – especially taking into consideration its worldwide importance and long term effects on the sport community As Houlihan said,

While it is easy to challenge the Olympic Movement’s willingness to operate by values described in the Olympic Charter, the success of the movement in becoming a global reference point for sport organizations and culture remains undeniable. (Houlihan, 1994, p 79)

Second, by targeting a very young audience with the Youth Olympic Games the IOC should pay extra efforts to keep its promises, especially to its communicated goals and values. Third, because despite all of the IOC’s strategic initiatives that focus on reconciliation between change and continuity, and after almost fifteen years of its ‘reformed governance,’ the IOC’s existing culture and institutional norms still work against the desired transparency, open communication, and external monitoring when it comes to the launching of a new event. As Douglass North pointed out,

While the rules may be changed overnight, the informal norms usually change only gradually. Since it is the norms that provide “legitimacy” to a set of rules, revolutionary change is never as revolutionary as its supporters’ desire and performance will be different than anticipated (North, 1990 p. 56).

## Conclusion

To conclude this analysis without being critical is not easy. At the same time to be critical for criticism's sake will not help the IOC, the Olympic Movement or the host cities of the forthcoming Youth Olympics. Most importantly, this study would like to raise awareness of this new Olympic initiative among academics and advocates as well as practitioners, youth coaches, and athletes. The first Summer YOG took place in 2010 and it was followed by the first Winter YOG in 2012. The IOC's Panel of Experts and Evaluation Commission have selected the host for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Summer YOG among only two candidate cities – Poznan (Poland) and Nanjing (China), while Lillehammer was the only candidate city submitting a bid to host the 2<sup>nd</sup> Youth Olympic Winter Games in 2016. Recently, President Rogge announced the host city of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Summer YOG in 2018. And the winner is: Buenos Aires (Argentina). Thus, it is safe to say, that the criteria of evaluation are in place, as the process of communication. As Pierson argues,

[when] a particular issue or conflict emerges in a society it becomes critical for two reasons. First, the resources available to actors at the moment in time help to determine the repertoire of possible responses. Second, once a response is adopted, it may generate self-reinforcing dynamics that put politics on a distinctive long-term path (Pierson, 1995 p 3).

It is time to encourage the sport community to focus more attention to this new Olympic institution by recommending actions and taking measures to ensure that key stakeholders and the IOC in particular will share best practices and keep their promises. It is time to engage in discussions about this new Olympic initiative with particular reference to its intention to developing solutions to some very important contemporary societal problems. And more specifically, it will be very timely to pay more attention to developing a clear guideline for the forthcoming Youth Olympic Games' Cultural and Educational Programs - based on the real best practices of Olympic education worldwide. Recently, the CEP has already gained more weight among criteria of evaluation than it had back in 2007 and the cultural and educational programs at Singapore and Innsbruck have been seen by young Olympians as exciting opportunities to learn about and discuss broader societal problems and become more active citizens after returning home. The words of Baron de Coubertin may keep up our hope: "The best way of paying tribute to an illustrious past is obviously to learn from its teachings in order to prepare for the future."

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**Table 1.**

## The 2 Rounds of the Bidding Process

- 1<sup>st</sup> Round – Panel of Experts
  - Weightings to Criterion:
    - Governance 3
    - General Infrastructure 3
    - Sport and Venues 5
    - Education and Culture 4
    - Youth Olympic Village 5
    - Transportation 2
    - Accommodation 2
    - Finance and Marketing 4
    - Overall Project 3
  - Benchmark 6
  - “OlympicLogic” software
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Round – Evaluation Commission
  - Letter with specific questions (based on the P of E analysis)
  - Video Conferencing
  - 15-20 min presentation
  - Risk assessment criteria:
    - Governance and guarantees
    - Finance
    - Youth Olympic Village
    - Competition Venues
    - Transportation

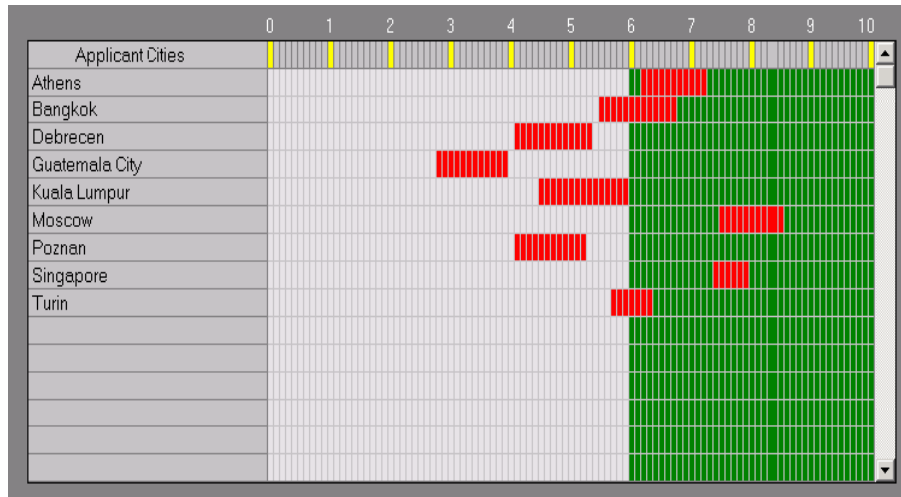
Source: Emese Ivan, “Corporate Social Responsibility, or Integrated Strategy: The Youth Olympic Games,” paper presented at the ‘Power of Sport Summit,’ Boston, MA, May 18, 2009.

**Table 2.**

## Candidature File Analysis

### 1<sup>st</sup> Youth Summer Olympic Games

(IOC, Report of the Panel of Experts)



Source: IOC, Report of the Panel of Experts 2007 using the Olympic Logic Software

**Table 3.**

## Deadlines in the Bidding Process 1<sup>st</sup> Youth Summer Olympic Games

- July 5<sup>th</sup> 2007 – voting in Guatemala City
- July 6<sup>th</sup> 2007 – announcement of the initiative
- End of July 2007 – letter to NOCs
  - YOG Brochure
  - Candidature Procedure and Questionnaire
- August 31, 2007 - NOCs name the Candidate Cities
- September 7, 2007 - IOC Workshop in Lausanne for the Cities
- October 26, 2007 - submission of Candidature Files
- November 12, 2007 - short-list by the Panel of Experts (1<sup>st</sup> Round)
- December 3, 2007 - written comments on the P o E's report to finalists
- December 3, 2007 - answers to Evaluation Commission's questions
- December 13, 2007 - video-conferencing
- End of January 2007 - Evaluation Commission's Report and Recommendation
- February 26, 2008 - announcement of the Host City

Source: Emese Ivan, "Corporate Social Responsibility, or Integrated Strategy: The Youth Olympic Games," paper presented at the 'Power of Sport Summit,' Boston, MA, May 18, 2009.

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