

The Olympic Games Need to Have a Permanent Home

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Introduction

The Olympic Games need to find a permanent home and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) needs to accept that it is time. After twenty-nine Summer Olympics held in twenty-three nations and twenty-four Winter Olympics held in twenty-one cities, it is time to acknowledge that cities lose more revenue from hosting the Olympics than they gain. Along with revenue loss, there are multiple factors as to why the Olympic Games needs to find a permanent home.

Misconceptions about Costs & Revenue

Preparing to host the Olympic Games has always been looked at as an honor and a privilege, but what is the reality of being a host country and what impact does this have on the economy? Similar to a city getting ready to host a new sports franchise, many people believe that bringing the Olympics to their country will cause the economy to increase in dramatic fashion. There is a belief that there would be an increase in jobs, tourism, and overall economic output. A 2010 study by economists at the College of Holy Cross about the 2002 Olympic Games in Salt Lake City concluded that the number of jobs created was actually only one-tenth of the figures that were promised by officials (Baumann, Engelhardt, & Matheson, 2010). Since the Olympics only last for roughly two weeks, there is no long-term employment that results from hosting the Olympic Games. Many people point to the construction that takes place in preparation of the Olympics, but those jobs are also temporary, and they mostly go to workers who are already employed (McBride & Manno, 2021). This maintains the status quo of employment in the host country and diminishes the impact on the economy. An example of this would be in the 2012 London Olympics. There were 48,000 new jobs created as a result of these Olympic Games, but only ten percent of those jobs went to previously unemployed people (McBride & Manno, 2021). Equally important is the

revenue generated from hosting the Olympics. With the cost of hosting the Olympics increasing rapidly, there is actually scarce revenue generation when put into perspective. A couple examples of hosts losing money are Beijing 2008 and London 2012. Beijing spent over \$40 billion in costs, and they only generated \$3.6 billion. While London spent less (\$18 billion) and generated roughly the same amount as Beijing (\$5.2 billion). A large factor in this lack of revenue is the fact that more than half of all television revenue goes to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) instead of the hosting country. But what happens to these billion-dollar projects once the Olympics are done?

Most of the time, these stadiums are too big to even host other sporting events. Some countries put the work in to repurpose this space, but the cost of maintaining an area as massive as an Olympic stadium can get pretty expensive. Some examples of stadiums that were successfully repurposed were in London and Berlin. The cost of the site in London was around \$700 million just to build the stadium. But the city decided to spend another \$400 million to convert it to a soccer stadium for the West Ham United football team. The site of the Olympiastadion in Berlin was left abandoned for many years following the 1936 Olympics. It was restored in 2004 and still draws crowds to this day (Krososky, 2021). Other sites were not as lucky as the ones previously mentioned. The sites located in Sarajevo (1984) and Athens (2004) were left as abandoned remains. The Bosnian War in the mid-1990s ended up splitting the country formerly known as Yugoslavia into eight countries. The site in Athens left Greece in even more debt than they were already in. With no financial way to renovate the stadium, Athens made the decision to leave it alone (Krososky, 2021).

Permanent Home Leads to Better Sustainability

Every four years the Olympics are hosted in a new city which has left many wondering how sustainable this is for the environment and the cities hosting. After the completion of the first Olympics in Athens, Greece in 1896 it became evident that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) would need to find a new venue for the 1900 Olympics. The need for a new venue wasn't due to Athens itself but to help the Olympics grab world-wide attention as there were only 13 participating nations with 280 athletes (History.com Editors, 2022) compared to the last Olympics in Tokyo in 2020 with 206 competing nations and 11,420 athletes. The Olympic Games has grown substantially from its inaugural debut in 1896. While some of this growth is due to the changing of location, a bigger portion is due to technological growth. The Olympics are now able to be watched all around the world thanks to technology so the need for the Olympics to travel to a new location every four years to gain exposure is redundant.

Since the Olympics has grown a considerable amount it is time to consider the idea of a permanent home. More often than not hosting cities end up losing a significant amount of money due to the demand for new infrastructure. This consistent loss in revenue from hosting the Olympics is why a recent analysis from Oxford University categorized the Olympic Games as a financial risk putting it next to bankruptcies, natural disasters, and terrorist attacks (Burns, 2022). In total there have been twenty-nine Olympic Games held since 1896 and only two games have ever made a profit. Both of those games happened in the same city of Los Angeles, once in 1932 and again in 1984 (Short, 2015). With Los Angeles hosting the Summer Olympics in 2028, it will be a good benchmark for the IOC to see if the city can turn a profit once again for a third time. One of the reasons Los Angeles was so successful in hosting the Olympic Games is due to the fact they used

existing facilities, or if they did build any facilities, they were able to repurpose them which many other cities have been unsuccessful at ultimately due to the size of the venues. By eliminating the building aspect of the Olympics, Los Angeles not only saved on costs but did not see any repercussions from the construction of new venues. If Los Angeles can consistently have a profit every time they host the Olympic Games, the city should then be a contender for a permanent home.

While cost is an enormous factor for cities hosting the Olympic Games, there are other important factors that need to be analyzed as well. The main reason the Olympics needs a permanent home is due to the amount of people displaced when cities begin building infrastructure for the Olympic Games. Not only are hosting cities using money that would otherwise be spent on education, welfare, and other long-term city needs. They also force many of their own citizens out of areas where they want to build, and more often than not, those areas are home to low-income citizens with no other housing options. Within the last twenty Olympic Games it is estimated that twenty million people were displaced (Short, 2015). When Seoul hosted the Olympic Games in 1988, the government uprooted seven hundred and fifty thousand citizens from low-income areas to make room for the Olympic venues. Next, when Atlanta hosted the 1996 Olympic Games, the city forced out thirty thousand citizens, mainly African Americans, and then for the Beijing Games in 2008, 1.25 million were evicted (Short, 2015).

If the Olympic Games had a permanent city to host in every four years many of these problems would be solved. No longer would citizens have to be displaced to make way for new infrastructure. Cities would also be able to plan for the massive amount of influx in tourists that

would not have to be altered every four years as the location would no longer change. Besides advanced planning, the host city would also benefit from the added revenue of tourists who travel to watch the Olympic Games. If nations are unwilling to find a permanent home for the Olympics due to the host city gaining all the tourist revenue, there could be a clause produced by the IOC for nations to split the revenue. This would give all nations a piece of the revenue but allow the host city to retain a larger amount due to any routine or unexpected financial needs the Olympic Games may have.

Eliminates the Political Aspect

Every four years it seems the Olympics get more media attention than the previous. However, the focus is going away from athletes and the competition itself into politics. If the Olympic Games were to have a permanent home it would eliminate the political aspect of choosing a new nation to host every four years.

In the past nations have refused to send representation, athletes and/or diplomats, to hosting nations for political reasons. One of the earliest political overshadows happened at the 1936 Berlin Olympics as this was during the height of World War II and the Nazis reign in Germany which was a colossal concern by nations worldwide. The next example would be the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow which the United States skipped and petitioned their allies to as well due to the recent invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union. This led to the 1984 Los Angeles Games being boycotted by the Soviet Union and their allies (Cole, 2022). The most recent example would be the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics in which the United States, Great Britain, and Canada refused to send representation as a way to protest China's human rights policies.

All these examples of political upheaval take away from the true meaning of the Olympic Movement which is “to help build a better world through sport” (Cole, 2022). If the Olympic Games were to find a permanent home the IOC could focus more on this goal by introducing new programs and initiatives that inspire athletes to achieve this goal. The goal of the Olympic Movement is centered around athletes who sometimes are barred from competing due to political conflict which only ends up hurting them in return as they are the ones who go through intense training to prepare for the games. After one hundred and twenty six years of the Olympic Games traveling around the world, it is time to find a permanent location that can help rejuvenize the spirit of the games and eliminate the politics.

The Olympic Games Should Go Back to Their Roots

Not only should the Olympic Games be held in one permanent location, but that location should be Athens, Greece. Though the Olympics are incredibly important, it has been discussed already that the financial costs of the event outweigh the gains when a new city takes on the task. Because of this, it appears that keeping the Olympics in a permanent location is the right thing to do but might lead the committee to question where they should be held. Athens, home of the first modern Olympic Games, makes a strong case for being the host city. To start, much of the necessary facilities required to host the games are still in place there (Tsetsekos, 2014). Because of this, only small amounts of additional infrastructure would need to be added each year. This solves the issue of each new city and country facing a hefty financial burden. Even the bidding process that is used to select future cities to host the games is a very large expense that will be eliminated should the games be held in Athens (Tsetsekos, 2014).

If the Olympic Games were held solely in Athens, then we could see actual economic benefits from it because the costs are so low. Athens has had a struggling economy as of late, and this event would surely help the cause and ease their crisis (Tsetsekos, 2014). Hosting a major sporting event in a singular city has shown that it can consistently benefit the local economy. For example, Wimbledon is the largest and most famous tennis tournament in the world, and it is always held in London. Tourists from all over the world come into town for this event. There is a sentimental appeal in keeping events like Wimbledon in the same location. The same can likely be said for holding the Olympics in Athens. While Greek nationals may very well support this argument and feel prideful about hosting the games each time, athletes may not care as much where the games are held. As athletes from around the world flock to wherever the competition is held, they are likely to be more focused on competing and winning rather than location.

One issue that is brought up in research of the selection process for Olympic host cities is the corruption involved. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has been subject to allegations of corruption in their selection of host cities multiple times in the past. Notably, it has been said the members of the IOC had accepted bribes in the form of cash and gifts to host the Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah (Britannica, n.d.). Multiple members of the committee were fired for this once the public caught wind, but the trust had been lost. Adding on to this, the committee faces political pressures in world as well. The Olympics being held in Berlin in 1936 is a perfect example of political corruption interfering with the process of selecting a host city. Greece has traditionally been in neutral or positive relations globally, reducing this problem as well.

Permanent Home in Athens will Help Greece's Economy

The discussion over whether the Olympics should be held consistently has been persistent throughout the years. While it may be seen as a great honor to hold the Olympics, it often is a detriment to the host cities. With massive undertakings of stadiums that fall by the wayside, and incredible taxes that come with it, for some, it just is not worth the trouble. To ensure that cities are not crushed by the immense cost of the Olympics, it would be best to choose a permanent location. This way the stadiums and infrastructure would not simply be cast aside, and instead, be used every four years, making the investment worth it. As stated previously, the best place to host the Olympic games would be Athens, Greece.

The history of the games coming home to Athens should be enough to suggest it being the perfect spot. Going back to where it all started would be a beautiful testament to the incredible tradition that was started there. Since Greece does in fact already have the infrastructure to accommodate the games. They would be able to make money from the games. For a country that is not currently prospering financially, this could be a huge boost to their economy. Furthermore, a permanent location in a historically neutral country would cause no problems between the rivaling nations. There would be no background noise between these countries, as all the focus would be on the athletes, as it should have always been. This has been in discussion as well, “the Hellenic American Leadership Council (HALC) led an initiative and petitioned the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 2016 to make Greece the permanent home of the Olympic Games.” (Harris-Papaioannou 2021). The conversation has started, and it is one worth having. Bringing the games home to Greece would cause major economic relief for not only Greece, but the other countries who could

end up having to revamp entire cities to accommodate the Olympics. It is time to bring the Olympics home to Athens.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper multiple factors were discussed as to why it is crucial the Olympic Games find a permanent home within the next few decades. A permanent home would allow cities who host the Olympic Games to divert the money they would have used into sponsoring the Olympics back into their own cities through education, welfare, and other citizen needs. This would also stop citizens from being displaced due to new infrastructure for the Olympic Games as well as stadiums and venues would no longer sit unused. Most importantly, a permanent home would allow for athletes to be the main focus of the Olympic Games rather than political affairs between nations. The Olympic Games should use Athens, Greece as their permanent location for the Summer Olympic Games as Athens was the home of the first modern Olympics in 1896. As well as Athens already has a majority of the infrastructure needed to host the Olympic Games. A permanent home in Athens will also boost Greece's economy and help provide economic relief for the country.

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