

# EXAMINING THE LEGACY OF LARGE-SCALE SPORTS EVENTS AS A GOVERNANCE ISSUE: A CASE STUDY FROM TRABZON, TURKEY

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## ABSTRACT

The hosting of large-scale sports events is usually identified with a short period of enthusiasm for residents and improved city infrastructure. However, negative and unexpected outcomes such as enormous debts, underused facilities or discontented communities may also come to the agenda in the aftermath of the events. Thus, the early praise for the events may fade away in time, or conversely, widely criticized events may begin to be approved by residents when they establish a more positive legacy than first thought. Grassroots sports participation and positive changes in public life are two significant legacies of major sports events to ensure their success in the long-term. This paper focuses on the European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF) Trabzon 2011 Games and examines its two legacies—grassroots sports participation and public life—four years after the Games. The data were collected through semi-structured, open-ended interviews, and a total of 50 interviews based on a mix of purposive and convenience sampling was conducted. The results revealed an increase in grassroots sport participation and the emergence of a new mentality in the city.

**Keywords:** Legacy, Grassroots sports participation, European Youth Olympic Festival, Public Life, Sense of Place

## ÖZET

Büyük spor organizasyonlarının ev sahipliği, genellikle kent sakinleri açısından kısa süreli bir coşkunluk, kent için ise gelişmiş bir altyapı anlamı taşımaktadır. Bununla beraber, organizasyon ardından kalan borçlar, yeterince kullanılmayan tesisler ya da yerinden edilmiş topluluklar gibi olumsuz ve beklenmedik sonuçlar da gündeme gelebilir. Böylece, organizasyonla ilgili baştaki övgüler yerini tenkitlere bırakabilir, ya da başlangıçta çokça eleştirilen organizasyonlar başta düşünülenenden daha olumlu etkiler yaratarak zamanla halk tarafından kabul görmeye başlayabilir. Spora kitlesel katılım ve sosyal yaşamdaki olumlu değişimler büyük spor organizasyonlarının uzun dönemde de başarılarını korumaları açısından iki önemli mirasıdır. Bu araştırma, EYOF 2011 Trabzon Gençlik Oyunlarının dört yıl sonrasında bu iki konuyu ele almaktadır. Araştırmanın verileri açık uçlu sorulardan oluşan yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlar yoluyla elde edilmiştir. Amaçlı ve

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kolayda örneklem metotları kullanılarak toplam 50 mülakat yapılmıştır. Sonuçlar, oyunların kentte spora katılımı ve sosyal yaşamı etkilediği yönündedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Miras, Kitlesele katılım, Avrupa Gençlik Olimpiyatları, Sosyal Hayat, Aidiyet hissi

The hosting of large-scale sports events provides a short period of enthusiasm for residents and improves the infrastructure of the city. However, some of them are also symbolized by negative and unexpected outcomes such as enormous debts, underused facilities or displacement of communities. Thus, the early praise for the events may fade away in time. Conversely, widely criticized events may begin to be approved by residents when they establish, in retrospect, a more positive legacy than first thought (Gold & Gold, 2009).

On the other hand, even though post-Games planning is crucial to create a positive impression for the Games, authorities mostly concentrate on the short-term objective of hosting a successful Games as the time frame is short and the demands are gigantic. This pressure makes it extremely difficult for any of the city organizers to plan the after-Games in any systematic fashion. Hence, less attention is given to how the construction of facilities is related to the long-term objectives of the city (Cashman, 1998; 2003; Boukas et al, 2013).

Planning the legacies of major sports events is a continually repeated issue, both in literature and in the declarations of intent of candidate cities (Bondonio & Mela, 2009). There are several reasons for this growing interest. For example, Hergüner (2012) argues that the Olympic Games have become a significant soft power instrument for states' foreign policy owing to the changing nature of international relations. This paradigm shift increases the attention given to the legacy issue by the governments. Nonetheless, legacy is largely different from city to city as the characteristics of the host city residents, the existing international circumstances, and the nature of the event all create a number of impacts which are not easy to precisely anticipate (Ritchie, 2000; Cashman, 1998).

One of the many forms of legacy is the increase in sports participation among the host population, thus providing support for existing policies to enhance participation. Another important legacy of major sports events is the changes in public life (Veal et al. 2012). This study will investigate the said legacies of the European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF hereafter) 2011 Games, which was organized in Trabzon.

Trabzon is known as a sport city mainly because of its soccer club, Trabzon SK, which is the first soccer club other than Istanbul clubs to win the Turkish league title despite the relatively small size of the city. However, the affinity of the locals for other sports is still in question. Besides, the

locals are generally known for their strong devotion to their traditions and having a distinctive culture. This makes it a good case study to analyze the above-mentioned legacies for the city. Accordingly, the paper tries to find out whether the EYOF 2011 Games had an impact on grassroots sports participation and public life in the city.

There is a dearth of literature investigating the impact of major sports events on small- or medium-sized cities with a distinctive local culture and limited capacity to turn these events into a major social and financial success for the city due to their size. This study aims to fill this gap in the literature.

There are several limitations of the study. First, this is a retrospective study, which relies largely on the correct recollections of several informants who have significant personal interest in the matter. However, recollections may be problematic as they fall short in producing the correct representation of reality. Second, convenience sampling was applied for the interviews. The main problem with this technique, for Kitchenham & Pfleeger (2002), is that the people who are willing to participate may differ in many ways from those who are not willing.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows: The legacy issue will be presented and outlined in the following subsection. Then, the method of the study will be described. Later, more details about the EYOF 2011 Games will be provided. Finally, the findings will be discussed and followed by the conclusions.

### **Legacy of Major Sports Events as a Governance Issue**

The concept of legacy is an ubiquitous part of debates about mega-sports events. It is used as a yardstick to assess their worth for host cities. However, there is no consensus on the meaning of legacy and the variety of legacies (Gold & Gold, 2009; Bloyce & Lovett, 2012).

For Veal et al. (2012), the legacy of major sports events can take several forms, including sporting benefits such as better sporting facilities, strengthened sports organisations and the increase in mass sport participation. There are also non-sporting benefits, such as improved tourism profile and infrastructure.

Besides, Gold & Gold (2009) distinguish tangible legacy from intangible legacy. For them, intangible legacy such as place promotion, sports participation, community spirit, and the development of a volunteering culture cannot generally be directly measured. Nonetheless, the outcomes of tangible legacy can be measured in terms of provision of facilities or reference to visitor numbers.

Cashman (1998) argues that commemorating a peak experience and mourning the Games are two significant reasons why the legacy issue should be dealt with in a serious fashion. For him, one public issue is how to best remember an event that comes into view in the public imagination.

Hosting a mega sporting event is an utmost experience for many residents in their life, and they want to re-live that magic moment. Therefore, there is a need for the people to re-connect with that moment. Moreover, once the event is over, the attention of the media shifts to another city and many residents may feel a sense of loss. Legacy, according to him, is a constructive way of coping with mourning through symbols, rituals, and memory. In addition, he divides the major sporting events—mainly the Olympics—into three periods, among which the post-Games period is by far the longest as it may persist for decades after the Games. The other two, namely bidding and organising periods, are much shorter. Nonetheless, for him, the post-Games period is the least-planned one.

Guala & Turco (2007), in their discussion about the legacy of large-scale events, claims that the physical legacy is apparent from the venues, improved transportation systems or new accommodation facilities. While the host cities aim to use these facilities for a longer term economic and social transformation, their success largely depends on the planning of the post-Games. Correspondingly, Girginov (2011) puts emphasis on the negative developments in the host city caused by the major sports events along with the positive side of the games, such as infrastructural improvement. Therefore, he maintains that this tension turns the legacy into a governance issue.

**Table 1.** Major Sports Event Legacies

1	Economic impact
2	Built environment - non-sporting
3	Public life
4	Sport - information and education
5	Sport - elite performance
6	Sport – mass participation
7	Sport – financial /administrative support
8	Sport – physical infrastructure
9	Sport – symbols, memory, history
10	Health

Source: Veal et al. (2012)

Besides, Cashman (1998) asserts that the legacy of major sports events is a complicated issue to handle for several reasons. First of all, the legacy issue comes to the agenda of the host city after the major sports event. Hence, the decisions are taken in an unplanned and haphazard manner as the local organising committee has already ended its activities. Secondly, many planners overlook the prospective post-Games expenditures to improve the legacy of the Games. Finally, legacy policies have no established standards to follow. Having said that, Veal et al. (2012) suggest a 10-fold typology of major sports event legacies, as shown in Table 1. They include economic impacts, infrastructure built, sports, education, contributions to public life, elite performance, mass (grassroots) participation, financial support, and

public health as the main legacies into their typology. This paper will focus on the public life and grassroots sport participation legacy of major sports events.

### **Method**

The data for this study were collected through semi-structured, open-ended interviews. The interviewees were selected using both purposive and convenience sampling techniques.

Purposive sampling techniques comprise selecting certain units or cases based on a specific purpose rather than randomly (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Accordingly, the empirical analysis is derived from data gathered through semi-structured interviews with sports authorities. 10 key interviews were conducted with people who were officially affiliated with the EYOF 2011 Games as referees, organization committee members or interpreters, and are currently holding a sports-related job in the city, such as sport facility manager, General Directorate of Youth and Sport (GDYS hereafter) Trabzon Branch official or trainer. This provides an opportunity to ascertain differences, if any, in grassroots sports participation and the mentality of city residents since the end of the games.

However, as memories about past events, actions and attitudes are subject to modification over time, use of corroborating data from other sources should be employed when doable to increase the credibility (Schutt, 2004: 343). Therefore, to increase the reliability of the abovementioned interviews' results, an additional 40 interviews were conducted in a university campus adjacent to the Hayri Gur Sports Hall, which was built for the Games and is hosting European and Turkish Basketball League (TBL) matches of the Medical Park Trabzon Basketball Club in addition to other sporting and cultural events. For these interviews, convenience sample technique was applied. The said technique involves the selection of the most accessible people who are willing to take part. It is the least costly to the researcher, in terms of time, effort and money, but may result in poor quality data (Marshall, 1996; Kitchenham & Pfleeger, 2002). University campus was chosen as the sports hall is adjacent to the campus. This allows the researcher to measure the impact of the facility on its vicinity.

A total of 50 semi-structured open-ended interviews were conducted to gather data and all the interviews were conducted in January 2014. The key interviews lasted 40 minutes, whereas interviews with students took around 20 minutes. The questions focused on the different aspects of the Games' legacy identified in the literature review. The interviews were recorded, subsequently transcribed verbatim, and translated into English.

### **EYOF Trabzon 2011 Games**

Held biennially, the European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF) is the only all-European multi-sport event for young athletes from the 48 country-

members of the Association of European Olympic Committees. The first EYOF Summer event was organized in Brussels in 1991, and the winter edition began two years later (Candrea & Ispas, 2010). Trabzon hosted the summer edition of the Games in 2011. The cost of the Games was estimated at almost US \$ 200 million.<sup>1</sup> Several modern sport facilities (including the Yomra gymnastic hall, the first of its kind in the country) were constructed for the Games (Karaca, 2012). Table 2 indicates the names of sport facilities built or renovated for the Games.

It is clear that major sports events are greatly helpful to the promotion of host cities. However, the high cost of hosting the Games generally raises over-spending debates within the host countries in case the financial, cultural, and sporting returns of the games do not meet the expectations of people. This has been experienced in several host countries. For example, for Boukas et al. (2013), there is no doubt that the 2004 Athens Olympic Games improved modern identity and increased the pride of the residents in their city. Nonetheless, several years after the Games, many Olympic venues have become inoperative and the country is still under the financial burden the Athens Games left behind. These stirred the fury of Greeks, who will go on to pay for these facilities.

Compared to the Olympics, EYOF Trabzon 2011 had a moderate budget. However, considering the size of the city, which limits the total return of the EYOF Games, the sustainability issue should be addressed as well.

**Table 2.** Facilities and Their Locations

	Facility	Location (District)
1	Hayri Gür Sports Hall (capacity: 7500)	Pelitli
2	Athletics Stadium	Söğütlü
3	Gymnastics Hall	Yomra
4	Olympic Swimming Pool	City Center
5	Beşirli Tennis Complex	City Center
6	Olympic Village	City Center
7	Sports Halls (Renovation and enlargement works)	Yomra, Arsin, Araklı, Of, Çarşıbaşı, Vakfikebir

Source: Karaca, 2012

### Grassroots Sport Participation Legacy in the City

As previously mentioned, this paper focuses on two legacies of major sports events, namely mass sports participation and public life.

Mass sports participation is also called “grassroots participation” or “sports for all.” The latter is a term that has been endorsed by many governments since the 1970s. The mass sports participation legacy of major sports events has been a topic long discussed by scholars. About the impacts of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games on grassroots sport participation

<sup>1</sup> 302,818,428.00 Turkish Liras in 2011 (Karaca, 2012).

in the city, for example, Veal et al. (2012) emphasize three immediate expectations after the Games, as follows:

- The sporting community in the city has inherited world class sport facilities, and it is predictable that these facilities will boost sports participation rates in the city.
- The youth have been given the chance to experience the charming ambience of the Games and a growth in the interest to participate in sports is expected.
- Olympic programs in the aftermath of the Games have been developed to promote different sports in the city.

In the same vein, Table 3 summarizes the direct and indirect effects of major events on sports participation in the host city.

**Table 3.** Dimensions of the Sport Participation legacy of major sports events in host city

	Individuals are inspired to do sport in consequence of:
Direct	Engagement with the event via mass media, live spectating, volunteering et cetera.
Indirect	Enhancement of sporting facilities and strengthening of sporting programs and organizations.

Source: Veal et al. (2012)

Likewise, in this paper, the interviews confirm the assumptions concerning the sport participation legacy of major sports events for the host city mentioned in Table 3. Particularly, the indirect effect of the Games on sports participation in the host city through the enhancement of sporting facilities and strengthening of sporting organizations is verified for Trabzon case by interviews.

In the study, all the interviewees agree that the Games positively affected mass sports participation in the city, and there is a growth in grassroots sports participation. The interviewees underscored the construction of new sporting facilities as the main reason in this growth. As one respondent stated: *“The number of coaches in different sports disciplines has drastically increased with the construction of new sport facilities in the city. Therefore, new opportunities have emerged to orient youngsters and children on different sporting activities. Every year, we organize summer and winter sport camps. Besides, coaches regularly visit different schools in the city to promote sporting opportunities and identify potentially talented athletes. As a result, last year around 10,000 young athletes participated in our summer camps in 25 different forms of sports activities. The 2011 Games and new facilities have irrefutable impact on harnessing the potential of the children and youngsters.”*

On the same issue, another respondent remarked: *“Our people in Trabzon are so devoted to sport. The city has traditionally been quite successful in soccer, boxing, and judo. However, soccer had a more distinguished place and*

*other sports were not so popular. During and after the Games, many people became familiar with different kinds of sport. Therefore, the interest in various sports other than soccer has grown, and today parents allow their children to participate in different sports activities in addition to soccer."*

### **Public Life: Formation of New Mentality through Sense of Place**

Major sports events are believed to increase optimism among locals about the future of the host city through creating a sense of pride, and providing new opportunities in the city. For example, in his study about the effects of the Turin 2006 Winter Olympics on the city identity, Guala (2009) maintains that the Olympics created a new attitude among locals toward the future of the city by enhancing a sense of pride about the city and an optimistic view. His study illustrates that residents of Turin overwhelmingly support prospective major sports events in the city, and the construction of new culture and leisure facilities, as what happened in occasion of the Games. For him, the positive attitude about Turin's future is related to expectations in growing tourism revenues even if most of the residents are not very familiar with the tourism sector. He argues that this is an indicator of changing values and optimism.

Similarly for Trabzon, all the key interviewees underlined the Games' positive effect on the economic prospects in the city. They gave an upbeat assessment of tourism revenues in the aftermath of the Games. According to an official:

*"During the Games, many people visited the city, but more importantly, we inherited invaluable sports facilities from the Games, thanks to which we may now organize various events. For example, in the coming days, we will organize weightlifting and boxing championships, as well as an international tennis championship. Therefore, different groups, mainly consisting of athletes and trainers, will stay in the city and contribute to the city's economy. These events obviously increase the awareness level about the city, which will eventually boost tourism revenues."*

Concerning the sense of pride about the city, the Games had several impacts on both authorities and residents. According to one official, as quoted below, the Games promoted a positive image for Trabzon:

*"Above all, it was important to prove that major sport events may be organized in Trabzon. This made the city residents proud of their city and the officials more assertive in organizing future events. Furthermore, during the Games, seats were full of fans, especially whenever an athlete from Trabzon appeared. There was a festive ambience."*

Another key interviewee remarked: *"The 2011 Games was the biggest sports event ever organized in our city. The ambience was like the Olympic spirit was in here. Hence, I believe that the city has surpassed certain levels because of the Games."*

On the other hand, in some cases, a rising sense of pride after the major sports event does not guarantee an increase in the optimism among locals about the future. For example, Boukas et al. (2013) claim that the lack of long-term sustainable planning after the 2004 Athens Olympic Games left the residents upset with the lost opportunities. Therefore, today, many people believe that hosting the Olympics has exacerbated Greece's current economic crisis by allocating public funds to deal with the enormous cost of the Games without ensuring any return on investment. This raises questions about the use of facilities.

About EYOF 2011, all the key interviewees agree that the facilities built or renovated for the Games are fully functional. Thus, they deny any prospective over-spending claim for the said facilities. On this issue, one respondent stated:

*"As of now, our facilities are totally booked for upcoming events, and we are experiencing difficulty in responding to all demands. In the facilities, regional, national and international competitions of different sports are taking place, and our Trabzon branch of GDYS is operating in more than 60 sports activities. This is an indicator of the prolific use of facilities. Anyway, if a facility is not satisfactorily used for more than two years, it becomes rusty. Ours are operational and full of activities."*

These opinions were supported by the student interviews as well. Only 6 out of 40 university students said that they have not attended any sporting or cultural event in the sports hall adjacent to their campus. However, they all recognized the facility's positive contributions to the city life in general.

## **Conclusion**

The legacy of major sports events is a governance issue. However, it is also a problematic issue to cope with as there are no established standards to follow, or the planners may fail to see the necessary post-Games expenditures. In general, large-scale sports events are admitted as a source of prestige for the host city. However, the contribution of these events to the city is multi-faceted and therefore, it should be largely discussed and analyzed. Thus, this paper discussed two prospective contributions of the EYOF 2011 Games, namely grassroots sport participation and the change in public life.

In Trabzon, one of the important changes is the growing interest in various sports other than soccer. The interview results support the argument that enhancement of sporting facilities and strengthening of sporting organizations increase grassroots sports participation. In Trabzon, the construction of high-standard sporting facilities is of primary importance in mass sports participation. With these new facilities, the number of coaches in different sport disciplines has increased and they have promoted different sporting opportunities mainly in the schools. As a result, high participation rates have been achieved in various sports.

The EYOF 2011 Games has several effects on public life in the city as well. According to the participants, the Games promoted a positive image for Trabzon, and increased optimism about the future of the city through creating their sense of pride and providing new opportunities.

Veal et al. (2012) underline the paucity of reliable evidence of any relationship between the legacy of grassroots participation and hosting large-scale sports events. They argue that it is important to know what levers to pull in order to leverage sports events to build a sports participation legacy. For Trabzon, there is no indication that the legacy of EYOF 2011 Games was thoroughly planned. However, the continuous efforts to use the facilities through sporting programs helped in advancing the legacy of the Games.

Finally, regarding the limitation of the study, the findings consider two legacies of the EYOF 2011 Games. Undeniably, all the legacies should be thoroughly investigated to have a clear picture on the nexus between the host city and the major sports event. Therefore, further studies using different methods are needed on this issue.

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