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## **Introduction: Youth, sport and the Youth Olympic Games**

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Recent data from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) would suggest that the Olympic Movement is in good health. The Rio Games of 2016 had more broadcast hours (on television and new media) than the London Games of 2012 and consumers watched for longer than previously. The IOC's marketing analysis reported in confident tones that "Rio 2016 truly marked a watershed moment in the history of Olympic broadcasting, highlighting the changes in media consumption habits and underlining how broadcasters are expanding their digital offerings to provide their viewers with more choices than ever before in terms of how, when, and where they can watch the Olympic Games" [IOC, (2016), p.23]. Income to the Olympic Movement was also at an all time high in the period 2013–2016. However, these indicators of robust health sit alongside a series of increasingly pressing concerns which include: the decline in the number of cities competing to host the games often as a result of citizen activism prompted by the escalating cost; the rapid change in media consumption of the Olympics (Nielsen, 2010, *Los Angeles Times* 2016), continued doping scandals and concern over the IOC's attitude to doping as in the case of Russia; and concern within the IOC that the young were losing interest in the Olympic Games and were losing touch with the values of Olympism.

It is the last of these concerns that provides the focus for this special issue. The establishment of the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) was, in part at least, an attempt to reconnect the Olympic Movement with a younger generation. The YOG were largely the personal project of Jacques Rogge and were approved by the IOC in 2007 despite a marked lack of enthusiasm from key stakeholders (Houlihan et al., 2014). The games were initiated with an ambitious set of objectives which were to:

- bring together the world's best young athletes and to celebrate them
- offer a unique and powerful introduction to Olympism
- innovate in educating about the Olympic values and debating the challenges of society
- share and celebrate the cultures of the world in a festive atmosphere
- reach youth communities throughout the world to promote the Olympic values
- raise awareness among young people of sport and the practice of sport
- act as a platform for initiatives within the Olympic Movement
- be an event of the highest international sporting standards for young people.

The YOG were also to be an event which was to run by and for young people. Four editions of the YOG have been held (Singapore in 2010, Innsbruck 2012, Nanjing 2014 and Lillehammer 2016). It was the most recent games in Lillehammer which provided the opportunity for the research that underpins many of the articles in this special issue. The editors and the authors would like to acknowledge the encouragement and cooperation provided by the Lillehammer Youth Olympic Games Organizing Committee (LYOGOC), and particularly the CEO Tomas Holmestad.

The eight papers in this special issue cover a range of aspects of the YOG and also directly address some of the objectives of the YOG identified by the IOC and mentioned above. One of the key ambitions of the IOC, the local organising committee, the Norwegian Olympic Committee (NIF) and the Norwegian Government was that the games should stimulate an increase in youth volunteering in sport. The paper by Sand, Strittmatter and Hanstad directly addresses the legacy ambitions of the games organisers in relation to volunteering. As the authors state 'volunteerism is a cornerstone of Norwegian organisational life' although, as is the case in many European and North American countries volunteering by the young appears to be in decline. Utilising the concepts developed by Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003), the authors distinguish between reflexive and collective volunteering. Reflexive volunteers are driven by personal motives whereas collective volunteers are driven more by motives of duty, responsibility and community. Using data from a large survey, the authors concluded that the LYOGOC were successful in recruiting young volunteers and that many volunteers were motivated by a mix of reflexive and collective values, but with reflexive values more prominent raising concerns about the capacity of the YOG to generate long term engagement in sport volunteering.

Anna-Maria Strittmatter's article complements that by Sand et al. and examines the way in which the YOG was used as a lever to help fulfil the objectives of the Norwegian Olympic Committee's Youth Sport Policy particularly those objectives concerned with the recruitment of a new generation of club volunteers. Utilising neo-institutional and implementation theories Strittmatter explores the ways in which the institutional setting of the Lillehammer YOG Organising Committee and key stakeholders, particularly NIF, facilitated, but more significantly constrained, policy implementation. She draws particular attention to the extent to which the objectives of the Youth Sport Policy were increasingly subordinated to the narrower objective of the LYOGOC to deliver a successful games.

Roald Undlien's article on social entrepreneurship opportunities created by events such as the YOG approaches the topic of volunteering from the standpoint of the managers of non-sport not-for-profit welfare organisations. His research explores the entrepreneurialism of these managers in taking advantage of the opportunities to further the objectives of their organisations through association with the YOG. In particular, the research explores the ways in which opportunities were created for the socially marginal groups that the organisations supported to volunteer during the YOG. Using social capital theory Undlien concludes that, due to the high level of support given by the LYOGOC, the games provided significant, although relatively short-lived, opportunities for the volunteers to strengthen their personal social capital and to generate a degree of bonding and linking social capital.

The contribution by Parent, Kristiansen and Houlihan moves away from the topic of volunteering and examines two related issues associated with the successful delivery of major sport events such as the YOG namely knowledge management and accountability. Among the conclusions reached is the importance of the culture of the host country in affecting the collection and dissemination of knowledge and, more significantly, the attitude towards accountability and governance expectations. The YOG, as a relatively new event, is still in the process of establishing expectations regarding governance structures and protocols for the event. At the Lillehammer YOG, two types of accountability were identified – hierarchical (to the IOC) and horizontal (mainly to

domestic stakeholders). While the former was highly structured the latter tended to be more informal and relaxed, reflecting a country where a culture of openness in public organisations is deeply ingrained.

The theme of the relationship between the organising committee and the IOC is further developed by Lesjø, Strittmatter and Hanstad who examine the pattern of influence between the two organisations and how the nature and extent of influence changes over the lifecycle of the games. The research, based on extensive interviews with senior actors, highlight the degree to which the IOC attempted to transfer procedures and expectations developed for the Olympic Games to the YOG with, at times, little regard to the different scale and objectives of the games. The authors show how, over the lifecycle of the YOG, the organising committee was able to achieve a greater degree of autonomy and gain the trust of the IOC through negotiation and demonstrations of competence and commitment to the ideals for the YOG announced by Jacques Rogge.

The contribution by Prüschenk and Kurscheidt addresses one of the central objectives of the YOG which is to reinvigorate the Olympic brand and promote Olympic values to a younger generation. The authors conducted their data collection at a time when the Olympic Games was subject to considerable media criticism relating to the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi. Despite the criticism levelled at both the IOC and the Russian organisers of the games the authors found that not only was there a substantial degree of awareness of Olympic values, but that a clear majority had a positive perception of those values. Furthermore, respondents under the age of 30 held a particularly positive perception of the YOG providing some encouragement to the IOC that their strategy of using the YOG to engage with a younger generation has potential to be successful.

The second contribution that addresses directly one of the objectives of the YOG is that by Batuev and Robinson who trace the organisational and governance challenges in adding skateboarding, which debuted at the Nanjing YOG, to the Olympic program. Utilising new institutional and resource-dependency theories the authors explore the tensions within the sport which were evident not only in the complex international governance structure, but also in the competing perceptions of the sport held by competitors and fans. Those who valued the radical values of the sport found the prescriptions of the IOC for a single global federation rather than a looser network anathema. The authors draw attention to both the power of the IOC to set the terms of involvement in the Olympic Games and the continuing attraction to elite athletes of participation in the Olympic Games.

The final contribution returns the focus of the special issue to broader issues facing the Olympic Movement and how the YOG provides an important laboratory for innovation. Naraine and Parent examine the nature and significance of new media, specifically Twitter, in relation to the YOG. At the beginning of this introduction, it was noted that one of the challenges facing the Olympic Movement was the changing pattern of media consumption of the games with the young more likely to access Olympic output via new media rather than through watching television. The authors provide an analysis of how Twitter was used during the first four YOGs by the organising committees. The authors trace the increasing sophistication in the ways in which organising committees used Twitter and the changing balance between using the medium to report and to promote.

This collection of articles adds to the growing body of research into the YOG and its implications for the Olympic Movement. Despite the skepticism of many IOC members the YOG has proved to be an important laboratory for a number of questions facing the

IOC, in particular those associated with the modernisation of the Olympic program, encouraging international federations to innovate, protecting the IOC's media income at a time of rapid and radical change in how the Olympics is consumed and, perhaps most important of all, how to ensure that the younger generation will value the Olympic Games in the same way that their parents purportedly do. The articles in this special issue are a contribution to the ongoing debates about the value of the YOG and the values of the Olympic Movement.

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