

Bidding to Host the 2024 Summer Olympic Games: Continuing Issues or a Turning Point?

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Since 1896, when Athens held the first edition of the Modern-era Summer Olympic Games, one of the distinctive features of these sporting events has always been the willingness of a major urban city to host the events. After three of the five official candidates bidding to host the 2024 version of the Summer Olympic Games withdrew their applications, it raised serious questions about the efficacy of the policies and practices governing the bidding process. An institutional theory perspective is used here to analyze this situation and the organizers' response. Managerial and theoretical implications are discussed.

Keywords: Summer Olympic Games, International Olympic Committee, host city bidding policies and practices, institutional theory, organizational development

INTRODUCTION

Over the last century the Summer Olympic Games have grown from humble beginnings to become an elite, Mega-sporting (Ferris et al., 2023; Horne & Whannel, 2020) transnational institution (Bartlett & Beamish, 2018; Bartley, 2018). This growth and change in the nature of the games has been exciting and good news for some members of important stakeholder groups. However, these developments have become a source of mounting concerns for other members of key stakeholder groups. In situations like this, identifying ways to adequately address the interests of both supporters and opponents of current policies and practices falls to the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which has the final responsibility for governing all facets of the games (IOC – Olympic Charter, 2024).

This study examined one of the highly contentious situations alluded to above that surfaced during the bidding process to determine which urban city would be selected to host the 2024 Summer Olympic Games. From a management perspective, this situation was particularly challenging for the IOC to address because of several important contextual factors that must be considered in the decision-making process. For example, since the first Summer Olympic Games were organized, and for each edition of the Games thereafter, only one urban city had been allowed to serve as the official host (Kluge, 2019). Second, while urban cities have always been viewed as a key stakeholder group in each Summer Olympic Games (Chappelet, 2016), unlike other key stakeholder groups (e.g., International Sports Federations), they are not part of the IOC. Rather, they are independent organizations that contract with the IOC to provide a stage and support for the Games. Third, not only have urban cities been key stakeholders in all the Summer Olympic Games, but there is evidence that from the founding of the games to the most recent edition in 2024, urban cities have also been able to shape the evolution of the Olympic Charter (IOC – Olympic Charter 2024) in a variety of different ways (dos Santos et al., 2021).

While the host bidding issues associated with the 2024 Summer Olympic Games presented challenges for the IOC from a management perspective, they were nonetheless very interesting from an institutional theory perspective (Glynn & D'Aunno, 2023; Robertson et al., 2022). For example, this theoretical perspective has a long history of examining how formal institutions tend to structure their work (Scott, 2014) and change over time (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). An examination of this situation, therefore, could potentially provide additional insights into how both the IOC and some urban cities, as formal institutions, are currently addressing sensitive policy and practice issues. Second, institutional theory has also been used to view change from an organizational field point of view. Thus, this study could possibly add to our understanding of how independent institutions with long-standing mutually beneficial relationships, like the IOC and any major urban city with an interest in bidding to host a version of the games, try to influence each other's internal decision-making processes (dos Santos et al., 2021; Greenwood et al., 2017). Third, this perspective has also had an emphasis on understanding how cultural interactions and expectations can influence institutions to change over time (David et al., 2019). Accordingly, this exploration might yield some new insights into how increasingly popular global communication channels, like social media, are impacting how both the IOC and urban cities are individually doing their work as well as how they are influencing their relationships with each other in the digital age (Hall, 2024).

Below, some additional background information is provided that can be helpful to understand how the IOC host city bidding process policy and practices for major cities have been developed over time and decisions made on how they should be changed.

Structure of the Summer Olympic Games

Since the first version of the Summer Olympic Games took place in 1896 with Athens as the official host, once every four years thereafter, in what is also called an Olympiad, another edition of the games has been planned to take place (Kluge, 2019). Each of these subsequent Olympiads, in turn, have been officially designated by the IOC with the year in which they were intended to take place along with the name of the host city. Except for 1916 (Berlin), 1940 (Tokyo), and 1944 (London), all these planned events were held. The 33rd Olympiad took place in 2024.

Given the IOC labeling for each Olympiad, there is a perception by some that each edition occurs in just one year within the Olympiad. However, key stakeholders involved in hosting the games, including the major urban cities, understand that hosting the Games consists of moving through four interconnected phases that can span a timeframe from nearly to over a decade.

More precisely, the four phases include: the bidding process; the leadup; the event; and the legacy (Rowe, 2012). For example, the focus in the first part of the bidding process is on two important tasks. The first task is for urban cities to decide whether they want to submit a bid for a particular edition of the games. If the answer is yes, then their second task is to inform the IOC of their interest and submit any documents that might be required. The next part of this bidding phase occurs after all the official bids have been submitted. Specifically, once all the bids are in, the IOC evaluates them and ultimately selects the city they feel would be the most appropriate host. After the selection decision has been made, three more phases follow. Those phases are: the lead-up time to prepare for the events, a defined time when the games' events are conducted, and then an indeterminate amount of time hereafter when the short- and long-term legacy effects on the host city become apparent (IOC – Olympic Charter 2024). So, while the IOC officially designates each version of the Summer Olympic Games to occur in one calendar year within each Olympiad, for an urban city the time commitment to host an edition of the Games starts well before the Games are held and can continue for many years after they are over (Booth, 2024).

Structure of the Host Bidding Process Over Time

Another major factor that potential host cities typically consider when deciding whether to bid to host a particular Olympiad has been the structure of the bidding process policies and practices in place for a particular Olympiad. This is because from the founding of the Modern-era Summer Olympic Games in 1894 to the 2024 Games, depending upon conditions at the time and the prevailing management philosophy, the policies and practices guiding the bid process have been quite different (Kluge, 2019).

To appreciate the magnitude of the differences that have occurred in the structure of the host bidding process over time, three examples, each one drawn from a different period in the development of the games, are briefly described below. The first bidding process example comes from the foundation years of the games, which include the period from 1896 (Athens) to the 1928 (Amsterdam) Games. During this time, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, who is considered to be the founder of the games, played a major role in those host bidding processes, which were conducted in a very informal manner. More precisely, given that the earliest games were often attached to larger world exhibitions, no formal documents were required, the hosting decision was often made based on informal conversations between the Baron and potential host city representatives, and the deal was sealed with little more than a handshake (Kluge, 2019). The second example comes from a dark period in the history of the games when there was mounting resistance within many cities to host any future games. The opposition at that time was due largely to the chilling effect of unfortunate events and outcomes associated with several games during this period. Among the most notable concerns being: the shooting of several Israeli athletes at the 1972 (Munich) Games; the massive cost overruns stemming from overbuilding at the 1976 (Montreal) Games; and then a 67-nation boycott of the 1980 (Moscow) Games. Indeed, in the wake of these events interest in hosting the Games declined precipitously to the point where only Los Angeles was willing to even consider hosting the 1984 Games. Moreover, even that willingness was pre-conditioned by a requirement that the Los Angeles organizers alone and not the IOC would dictate the rules for organizing the games. Ultimately, the IOC agreed to this demand, which fortuitously led to one of the most positive changes in the history of the games. Namely, for the first time the games were primarily private- rather than publicly funded. This change was subsequently followed by a growing interest in hosting the Games. Unfortunately, however, one also marred with corruption charges and calls for more reforms. As a result, the IOC ultimately decided to embark on a major effort to establish a new comprehensive set of reforms captured in what was called the Agenda 2020 guidelines. These new standards included among other things, several ideas for a revised host bidding process to be used with the 2024 Games.

2024 Summer Olympic Games Bidding Process – Agenda 2020

When the bidding process to select a major urban city to host the 2024 Summer Olympic Games began, the Agenda 2020 guiding policies and practices to be used in this process had already been clearly established by the IOC in 2014. For example, one of the major policy provisions was that at the end of the bidding process only one city would be elected to host the games. The specific practices to be used in the bidding review and evaluation process were also spelled out in the IOC developed and approved Agenda 2020 document. (*IOC – Olympic Agenda 2020 – Context and Background*).

Work on the above reform document was started in 2013, when fourteen IOC working groups began spending over a year working on specific reform initiatives. The result was 40 recommendations that described how the Olympic Movement should function in the future. As it turned out, the first 3 recommendations were specifically aimed at enhancing the bidding process in several important ways. For instance, the first item spoke to the intent to shape the bidding process as more of an invitation. The second item focused on describing how bids would be evaluated by assessing key opportunities and risks for the city. The third item spoke to ways to reduce the cost of bidding. Thus, the hope was that collectively, these reforms to the bidding process would ultimately allow each city to present a project plan that would best match their long-term sport, economic, social and environmental plans. (*IOC – Olympic Agenda 2020 – Context and Background*.)

Structure of the IOC

To better appreciate the IOC's role in creating the Agenda 2020 standards as well as selecting the final host for the 2024 Games, it is important to recognize that over time the IOC's management structure and style has evolved from an administrative approach to an Olympic "network of stakeholders" governance model (Chappelet, 2016). More precisely, from its inception in 1894 until the early 1970s only five major stakeholder groups (i.e., the IOC, a local Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (OCOG), National Olympic Committees (NOCs), International Sport Federations (IFs), and National Sport Federations (NFs)

were primarily involved in organizing the games. Beginning in the 1970s, however, this so-called “Classic Olympic System” evolved into a “Regulated Olympic System”. This change occurred when a new set of stakeholders, including governments and official Olympic financial sponsors such as those in The Olympic Partner (TOP) Sponsor program (Fairfield-Sonn, 2022), began to be part of an expanding IOC network of organizations, each with interests that led them to want to officially support the games. Along with their common interest in supporting the Games, this network also became more united over time through a complex set of functional and financial interests (Chappelet, 2016). This network continued to expand until by the beginning of the twenty-first century a total of 24 organizations were included in what has been called the “Total Olympic System” (Chappelet, 2016). In 2024, there are currently 111 Members of the IOC who represent the interests of the Olympic Movement in their respective countries (*IOC – Olympics – IOC Members – 2024*).

Urban City Issues With the 2024 Host Bidding Process

As noted above, since the founding of the Summer Olympic Games, urban cities have been able to exert influence on the IOC to change their approach to the governance of the Games. (dos Santos et al., 2021). In examining some of the urban city concerns with the 2024 Games bidding process, it is interesting to see the wide range of issues that surfaced in this round of bidding that may need to be addressed moving forward. For example, one salient issue for the cities was the need to have more economic, environmental and social sustainability reflected in the games (Ferris et al., 2023). Another key concern was their desire to see a decrease in both the local short- and long-term negative legacy issues created by hosting the Games (Wolfe, 2023). There was also a desire for more transparency from the IOC about why local resident opinions on the value of hosting the Games seemed to have become a more critical factor in the evaluation of potential host cities bids (Bourbilleres et al., 2023; Hiller & Wanner, 2018; Kassens-Noor, & Lauer mann, 2018; Lauer mann & Vogelpohl, 2017). Rounding out this illustrative list of city concerns was the hope in some quarters that new ways could also be found to make the host application process easier for the potential hosts to complete (Tham, 2023).

The above observations lead to the central research question in this paper. Specifically, *do the results of the 2024 Summer Olympic Games host bidding process mark the continuation of or another turning point for urban city issues with the IOC host bidding policies and practices?*

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

For several reasons, an Institutional theory perspective was chosen to examine the bidding process to select the host city for the 2024 Summer Olympic Games. First, as discussed by Glynn & D’Aunno (2023), Institutional theory has a long history of examining how formal institutions, such as the IOC and urban cities, do their work from both a structural (Scott, 2014; Tolbert & Zucker, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977) and change perspectives (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Selznick, 1996, 1949). Therefore, this perspective can be valuable in examining both the initial structure of the Summer Olympic Games bidding process and the organizers’ response when three major cities withdrew their bids to host the 2024 Games. Second, this prominent perspective (Greenwood et al., 2017; Greenwood et al., 2008) also recognizes the value of viewing change from an organizational field perspective. Accordingly, Institutional theory concepts can also be used to examine how sources outside a sports organization or the sports industry, such as major urban cities, can influence a sports organization’s internal decision-making efforts (dos Santos et al., 2021). Third, this perspective has also had an emphasis on understanding how cultural interactions and expectations can influence institutions to change over time (David et al., 2019). Thus, this perspective is appropriate for examining how the increasing use of social media around the world has impacted the way both the IOC and urban cities are doing their work separately and together. Finally, as suggested by Washington and Patterson (2011) and supported by a subsequent literature review by Robertson et al., (2022), the field of sport management has provided a great opportunity to not only use institutional theory to test out propositions about the industry, but also to test out some of the tenets of institutional theory itself.

METHODS

A substantial body of research has been conducted on the governance of sport organizations from an Institutional theory perspective (Robertson et al., 2022). One area of that governance, which has only received limited attention to date, is the management of long-term, mutually beneficial relationships between major sports organizations and their external stakeholder group members. For example, as explored here, between the IOC and independent, major urban cities that have either expressed an interest in hosting or have already served as a host for one or more edition of the Summer Olympic Games (dos Santos, et al., 2021).

The aims of this project, therefore, were threefold. First, to add to our general understanding about the kind of ways established sport organizations have tried to work effectively with major external stakeholders to create successful sporting events. Second, exploring if some current issues may make it more challenging for independent, external organizations to work in an evolving partnership relationship with a major sport organization. Third, to share the findings and insights from this examination with other sports- (e.g., FIFA World Cup) and non-sport organizations (e.g., United Nations) on approaches to managing external stakeholder partnerships that might prove to be valuable to them in their own organizational development efforts (Berry, et al., 2021).

Case Selection

Examining the 2024 Summer Olympic Games' host city bidding process was viewed as appropriate and interesting for this study for several reasons. First, for over a century the IOC has worked with a substantial number of major urban cities worldwide and ultimately selected one city from among the interested key stakeholder members to host each edition of the Games. Second, it could provide a way to gain insights into what kind of issues between the IOC's bidding process and three of the initial host city Candidates led the cities to withdraw their bids while two other cities agreed to continue being considered as a host for the upcoming 2024 Games. Third, to better understand the IOC's decisions about how to resolve the issues in this round of the bidding process and what it might portend for the IOC's evolving relationships with other potential urban city hosts.

Sources of Data

Open, On-Line Search

The search for relevant information on the specific bidding process used for the 2024 Summer Olympic Games, within the context of the historical development of the Summer Olympic Games host city bidding processes, began with and continued throughout this study with several on-line search strategies. Specifically, on-line search efforts were made to develop an initial case study document database including identifying publicly available documents from: Google searches; Google Scholar searches; ProQuest searches; and the Olympic Games website.

Olympic Studies Centre – Olympic World Library - Lausanne, Switzerland

After preliminary work on the development of a core document database was completed, to supplement and enrich that initial document database, additional public information was identified within the Olympic Studies Centre holdings at Lausanne Switzerland along with documents that could be gathered from access to the Olympic World Library's (IOC - Olympic World Library) collection of 40,000 publications, 15,000 e-documents, and 1,500 M historical archives that address every aspect of the Olympic Games.

In this instance, data from the Candidature Files, the IOC Historical Archives, and the Candidature Process Zoom link to a wide range of academic and official publications within the Olympic World Library (IOC – *Olympic World Library*) holdings proved to be particularly informative. At the same time, it was also valuable to learn from the Olympic Studies Center staff about some potentially useful documents that due to their confidential nature were embargoed and so they would not be available at this time.

Data Analysis

Working with information drawn from the above-mentioned data sources, an Institutional theory perspective (Glynn & D'Aunno, 2023) was used to examine several aspects of the IOC host bidding process from both a structural (Scott, 2014; Meyer & Rowan, 1977) and a change (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Selznick, 1996, 1949) point of view.

The first step in this analysis was to understand the design and results of the 2024 host bidding process. That analysis was then complemented with a longitudinal examination of the overall outcomes of the host bidding processes used from 1896 to 2032 from a network analysis concept perspective. The purpose of the latter analysis being to look to see if there were any potential long-term patterns in urban city *participation, hierarchy, and persistence* in the bidding processes over time that could influence how the IOC changes to the 2024 host city bidding process might be viewed by major urban cities at this time.

FINDINGS

Given the aims of this study, there were three types of findings in this examination that are valuable in speaking to the central research question of interest, namely, *do the results of the 2024 Summer Olympic Games host bidding process mark the continuation of or another turning point for urban city issues with the IOC host bidding policies and practices?*

The first set of findings provide information on specific formal changes to some IOC policies and practices for the host city bidding process that the IOC made in the wake of developments during the 2024 bid evaluation and selection process. The second set of findings, utilizing several important network analysis concepts (Carroll & Sapinski, 2011), suggest some potentially significant long-term patterns based on Candidates' past bidding experiences that might influence a city's interest in submitting a bid for future games (Booth, 2024). The third set of findings, mentioned in the Introduction and reviewed in the Discussion section, are several illustrative major concerns raised by cities in the 2024 round of bidding that reflect either continuing concerns or a turning point in the host bidding policies and practices.

IOC Policy and Practice Changes to the 2024 Olympiad Host City Bidding Process

After the IOC became aware that three of the five potential major urban city hosts had decided to withdraw their applications, they broke with long-standing policy and ultimately decided to elect both one host for 2024 as well as one for 2028 at the same time. This goal was achieved through a two-step effort. The first step took place July 11, 2017, when the IOC made their historic and unanimous commitment in principle to allow both the host of the 2024 and 2028 Summer Olympic Games to be named simultaneously. That decision was subsequently ratified on 13 September 2017, when the head of the IOC announced that Paris would be the host for the 2024 Games and Los Angeles the host for the 2028 edition of the Games (IOC – 2024/2028 Host City Election; IOC -. *YouTube* – “Paris wins bid for 2024 Olympics, LA to host in 2028”).

While some viewed the above proclamation at the time as a win-win decision for both the Olympic Movement and the Host Cities, others wanted to see even more reforms made to the host bidding process policies and practices going forward. As a result, the IOC subsequently decided that the 2020 Agenda standards would not be used for the next round of bidding. Rather, for the 2032 Games, a refined version of the 2024 rules based on 118 new reforms would be used instead. Known as the *New Norm* (IOC – *New Norm*), this new process focused on identifying a “preferred Candidate” for the IOC to mentor rather than having the IOC focus primarily on selecting the most competitive bidder. In addition, this process would place more emphasis on issues such as: increasing the ease of the host bidding process; putting more weight on sustainability issues; and letting the host design the games in such a way that the city could benefit the most from pursuing their own greatest opportunities while minimizing their risks as a host. In 2021, while several cities had expressed an interest in potentially becoming the host for the 2032 Games, Brisbane was given the honor by the IOC of doing so. (Tham, 2023).

Network Concept Analysis of Some Outcomes From All the Host Bidding Processes

As noted above, while not officially part of the IOC, given the central role of urban cities in staging the Summer Olympic Games, they along with many other key stakeholders are part of a large network of organizations with functional and/or financial interests in the success of the games. Therefore, like any other set of networked organizations insights into their relationships, in this case vis-a-vis hosting a Summer Olympic Game(s), can be gauged using well established network analysis concepts (Marin & Wellman, 2011). Below, three illustrative issues around the outcomes of the host bidding processes over time are examined more closely using network analysis perspectives on *participation, hierarchy, and persistence*.

To begin, one debatable issue in this situation was about whether having only two final Candidates for the IOC to consider as the host of the 2024 Games was normal in the host bidding process or an outlier? Here, an important and useful network concept is called “*participation*” (Diani, 2004). Specifically, from a network analysis perspective, participation can be particularly useful in speaking to this issue because it refers to the level of involvement by different organizations within the network on issues of central interest to the network. Therefore, it can help explain some of the dynamics and structure of relationships within the network.

In Table 1 below, entitled, “NUMBER OF CITIES BIDDING TO HOST EACH OLYMPIAD” we can see that the number of cities interesting in hosting each specific Olympiad has varied over time (Booth, 2024). More precisely, the range in the number of bids has been from 1 to 12. The mean number of bids for all the Olympiads from 1896 to 2032 has been 4.6. The median number of bids has been 4. The modal number of bids has been just 1 bid. Since that modal number, however, includes the first three Olympiads (i.e., Athens, Paris, and Chicago/St. Louis) where the IOC intended to only solicit one bid as well as Brisbane where only one bid was proactively considered by the IOC that result needs to be interpreted with caution. So, given that there have only been 4 Olympiads where 2 Candidates were actively considered to become the host suggests that only having 2 host Candidates to evaluate is not unheard of, but it is not the norm.

**TABLE 1
NUMBER OF CITIES BIDDING TO HOST EACH OLYMPIAD**

Number of Cities bidding to host an Olympiad	Olympiad and Host City	Number of Cities in this category	Descriptive Statistics
1	1896 Athens; 1900 Paris; 1904 Chicago/St. Louis*; 1928 Amsterdam; 1932 Los Angeles; 1984 Los Angeles; 2032 Brisbane	7	
2	1912 Stockholm; 1920 Antwerp; 1980 Moscow; 2024 Paris***/2024 Los Angeles***	4	
3	1908 London; 1916 Berlin**; 1940 Tokyo**; 2020 Tokyo	4	
4	1964 Tokyo; 1968 Mexico City; 1976 Montreal; 1988 Seoul; 2016 Rio de Janeiro	5	
5	2008 Beijing; 2012 London	2	
6	1924 Paris; 1972 Munich; 1996 Atlanta	3	
7	1944 London**; 1948 London; 1960 Rome; 1992 Barcelona; 2000 Sydney;	5	
8	1952 Helsinki;	1	
9	1956 Melbourne;	1	
10	N/A	0	

11	2004 Athens	1	
12	1936 Berlin	1	Range 1-12
	*Note; Chicago was selected as the host, but the honor was passed on to St. Louis for USA political reasons		Mean 4.6
	**Note: City selected, but Games not held due to war		Median 4
	***Note: See Bourbilleres et al., (2023)		Mode 1

Source: IOC – Olympic World Library – Candidature files and *** Bourbilleres et al., (2023)

Another important issue to examine here was given the large number of major urban cities that have had an interest in hosting an edition of the Summer Olympic Games since its inception, how many and how often have individual cities been selected to be the official host? (Booth, 2024) The network analysis concept of “hierarchy” (Liebowitz, 2005) can be useful to address this issue. This is because, from a network analysis perspective, hierarchy can help reveal power dynamics, influence patterns, and information flows within a network by identifying key players and their relative positions within a structured system.

In Table 2 below, entitled, “NUMBER OF TIMES A CITY HAS BEEN SELECTED TO HOST AN OLYMPIAD”, some patterns are striking. Specifically, the data indicates that after over a century of the Summer Olympic Games being organized only six cities (i.e., London, Paris, Los Angeles, Tokyo, Athens, and Berlin) have been selected more than once. However, collectively, they have been selected to host 17 out of the 35 Games or 43% of the times they could have won this honor. In addition, another 18 cities have been selected once. This means that for the vast majority of other cities that have also been recognized as official Candidates to host an Olympiad, at one time or another, however, curiously, none have ever been selected. This observation raises an important research question about why only a relatively small number of cities have been able to dominate the receipt and honor of hosting a Game(s)?

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF TIMES A CITY HAS BEEN SELECTED TO HOST AN OLYMPIAD

Number of times a city has been selected to host an Olympiad	City	Olympiad year
4	London	1908; 1944**; 1948; 2012
3	Paris	1900; 1924; 2024
3	Los Angeles	1932; 1984; 2028
3	Tokyo	1940**; 1964; 2020
2	Athens	1896; 2004
2	Berlin	1916**; 1936
1	Chicago/St. Louis*	1904
1	Stockholm	1912
Selected - Games not held	Berlin*	1916
1	Antwerp	1920
1	Amsterdam	1928
Selected - Games not held	Tokyo*	1940
Selected - Games not held	London*	1944
1	Helsinki	1952
1	Melbourne	1956

1	Rome	1960
1	Mexico City	1968
1	Munich	1972
1	Montreal	1976
1	Moscow	1980
1	Seoul	1988
1	Barcelona	1992
1	Atlanta	1996
1	Sydney	2000
1	Beijing	2008
1	Rio de Janeiro	2016
1	Brisbane	2032
	*Note; Chicago was selected as the host, but the honor was passed on to St. Louis for USA political reasons	
	**Note: City selected, but Games not held due to war	

Source: IOC – Olympic World Library - Candidature files

A third illustrative issue of interest is whether there is evidence of any structural inequality among urban cities bidding to host a Game and if so, does submitting repeat bids lead to more selections? Here the concept of “*persistence*” (Mahulga, 2006) can be helpful. From a network analysis perspective persistence is important because it measures the longevity or stability of relationships within a network.

In Table 3 below, entitled, “DOES PERSISTENCE MATTER IN BEING SELECTED TO BECOME A HOST?”, these long-term patterns are also intriguing. For instance, one city (i.e., London) has applied 4 times and has been selected every time they have applied. There are also several other cities (i.e., Chicago/St. Louis 1904; Antwerp 1920; Munich 1972; Seoul 1988; Atlanta 1996; and Sydney 2000) that have only applied once, they were selected and never applied again. In between, there are yet other cities like Paris and Los Angeles that have applied many times, have been selected several times, but have not been selected every time they submit a bid as well as yet other cities (e.g. Rome) that have applied many times but have only been selected once. Then too, a particularly large number of cities seem to have given up interest in bidding after not being selected on the first bid or in the case of Detroit after not being successful with 7 bids. Considering these outcomes, it suggests that some degree of structural inequality may indeed have occurred among the Candidates to host a game over time.

TABLE 3
“DOES PERSISTANCE MATTER IN BEING SELECTED TO BECOME A HOST”

Number of Selections	Number of times recognized as a Candidate	Selected as the Host City and Olympiad(s)
4	4	London 1908; 1944; 1948; 2012
3	5	Tokyo 1940; 1960; 1964; 2016; 2020
3	7	Paris 1900; 1924; 1972; 1992; 2008; 2012; 2024
3	9	Los Angeles 1924; 1948; 1952; 1956; 1976; 1980; 1984; 2024;2028
2	5	Berlin 1908; 1912; 1916; 1936; 2000
2	6	Athens 1896; 1944; 1948; 1988; 1996; 2004
1	1	Chicago/St. Louis 1904; Antwerp 1920; Munich 1972; Seoul 1988; Atlanta 1996; Sydney 2000
1	2	Stockholm 1912; Mexico City 1968; Montreal 1976; Barcelona 1992; Beijing 2008; Rio de Janeiro 2016; Brisbane 2032
1	3	Melbourne 1956; Moscow 1980
1	4	Amsterdam 1928; Helsinki 1952
1	8	Rome 1960
0	1	Kristiana; Prague; Cologne; Dublin; Frankfurt; Nuremberg; Baltimore; San Francisco; Florence; Nagoya; Birmingham UK; New Dehli; Brasilia; Milan; Cape Town; Lille; St. Petersburg; San Juan; Savilla; Osaka; New York; Hamburg
0	2	Alexandria; Lyon; Minneapolis; Brussels; Vienna; Belgrade; Manchester UK; Toronto
0	3	Philadelphia; Chicago
0	4	Buenos Aires; Madrid; Istanbul
0	5	Budapest; Lausanne;
0	7	Detroit

Source: IOC – Olympic World Library - Candidature files

DISCUSSION

The above findings have theoretical and managerial implications for anyone who wants to learn more about how some formal institutions are currently structuring their work and responding to continuing and new demands for change. More precisely, from an Institutional theory perspective (Glynn & D’Aunno, 2023), how independent organizations engaged in long-term mutually beneficial relationships are attempting to influence each other’s internal decision-making processes over time (dos Santos et al., 2021; Greenwood et al., 2017). Moreover, how social media communication channels, in particular, are increasingly being used in efforts to influence both intra- and inter-organizational relationships (David et al., 2019) in the digital age (Hall, 2024).

In terms of managerial policy and practice development (DeRycke, J. & DeBosscher, V., 2019), the findings in the study can provide some insights and ideas that could be valuable to the IOC and other organizational leaders in their efforts to maintain or grow relationships with other external institutions. To begin, one important insight was to recognize that effectively managing these relationships may require an

openness to dealing with both continuing (Wolfe, 2023) and potentially new turning point issues (Hiller & Wanner, 2018; Lauermaun & Vogelpohl, 2017) at the same time. That point was unmistakably illustrated here in how the IOC responded to both the continuing urban city concerns such as fostering more economic, environmental, and social sustainability in the games (Ferris et al., 2023) as well as the potential turning point concern around whether Paris or Los Angeles should ultimately be chosen to host the 2024 games in this highly contested competition (*IOC –2024/2028 Host City Election*).

In addition to the insights noted above, the potential value of two pragmatic management ideas were also demonstrated by some of the findings in this study. The first idea was based on the results of the network analysis findings on participation, hierarchy, and persistence. Specifically, in times of significant change, a prudent step for leaders of the IOC or any organization to take would be to seriously evaluate the value-added proposition of their mutual relationships from the perspective of their potential partners. For example, the merits of this type of analysis could be seen by a review of the combined results of the three illustrative network analysis questions that revealed signs of several reasons why the IOC should be concerned about their future relationships with potential host cities. First, there was the declining number of cities that were willing to bid to host the games. Second, a hierarchy had emerged between the cities and those not selected to host a game. Third, in terms of the value of persistence, there was evidence that the submission of more bids may or may not improve a city's chance of being selected. Given these results, it seems advisable that the IOC should direct efforts to identify additional compelling arguments for why urban cities should continue to pursue bids to host future games (Booth, 2024).

The second practical management idea (McDonald et al., 2015) comes from noting the possibility that the primary reason why three feasible Candidates may have withdrawn their bids to host the 2024 Games was not because the city leaders, who initially wanted to host the games, changed their minds (Hiller & Wanner, 2018). Rather, that this change in heart might more accurately reflect the strength of recent grassroots local stakeholder group efforts, within a number of different cities, to muster sufficient resistance to the idea of hosting a game that the bid had to be dropped (Smith et al., 2024; Kassens-Noor & Lauermaun, 2018; Lauermaun & Vogelpohl, 2017). If this proves to be true, then it could signal a game-changing tipping point (Gladwell, 2002) for the long-term relationships between urban cities and the IOC. Accordingly, moving forward, the IOC may need to become as skillful in managing soft relationships with local constituents as they have done in the past with their more formal relationships with broadcasters (Dyreson, 2015) and top-level sponsors (Fairfield-Sonn, 2022).

In summary, the distinction between managing continuing versus turning point issues was viewed as important here because while the former could add more stress to a mutually beneficial relationship the latter might end it. In this study we found evidence of the need for the IOC to address both types of issues with skill and proficiency. Hopefully, leaders of other organizations will be able to use some of the insights and ideas here to more effectively maintain and enhance their relationships with other external stakeholders.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to add to our general understanding of how large, independent institutions address challenges to their long-standing, mutually beneficial relationship(s). Here, the institutions of primary interest were the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which has final responsibility for all aspects of the Summer Olympic Games, and major urban cities interested in bidding to host the 2024 edition of the Summer Olympic Games.

In this case, a major challenge to the relationship was triggered when three of the five Candidates to host the 2024 Games decided to withdraw their bids, thereby leaving only two fully qualified cities in contention to become the host. Since according to the Olympic Charter at that time, only one city could be selected as the host for the 2024 version of the Games, it created a highly contentious situation for the IOC to resolve. Ultimately the IOC decided the best course of action would be to change some of their host bidding policies and practices. Specifically, they changed the policy on selecting hosts from having only one host identified for each edition of the games to being able to simultaneously select multiple hosts as long as they were for different versions of the games. This allowed Paris to be given the honor of hosting

the 2024 Games and Los Angeles to be awarded the honor of hosting the 2028 Games. In addition, moving forward, they decided to replace their competition-focused host bidding system practices called Agenda 2020 with a more mentoring focused approach called the New Norm. After that decision was made, they used this new approach to rather quickly select Brisbane as the host for the 2032 Games. However, how well these changes will address some of the continuing and potential turning point issues of major cities around future participation in the Summer Olympic Games remains to be seen.

In conclusion, while this study provides some interesting insights into and ideas on how some of the major host bidding process issues for the 2024 Summer Olympic Games were addressed by the IOC, several limitations also need to be mentioned and hopefully tackled in future research efforts. First, regarding breadth, it would be valuable to see how other Mega-sporting and non-sport organizations are approaching sensitive relationship issues with some of their external stakeholders. Second, in terms of depth, it would be useful to explore in more detail how some of the potentially long-term issues raised by examining the historical bidding record on urban city participation, hierarchy, and persistence in the Games might foreshadow future relationship challenges. Third, in terms of evaluating the long-term impacts of the 2024 decisions, it would be equally important to do a longitudinal study of the reactions by urban cities to the new and continuing changes to the host bidding processes. Each of these efforts would certainly be welcome.

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