

CONFORMITY AND RESISTANCE: PREPARING A FRANCOPHONE SPORTING EVENT IN NORTH AMERICA

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Organizing committees of large-scale sporting events face conflicting pressures from their environment when preparing to host the events, thereby leading them to conform to certain pressures and resist others. Writers on organizations, primarily institutional theorists, have mainly examined conformity, not resistance. This article seeks to examine the competing conforming and resistance pressures for an organizing committee. Findings from a case study relating to the *Jeux de la Francophonie*, or Games of La Francophonie, highlighted the presence of conflicting pressures between the North American context of the organizing committee and the European, Francophone context of the event's international body, which impacted goal setting, funding/commercialization, athlete/artist caliber, sanctioning, and international government relationship and VIP treatment. The nature of the event, the stakeholders involved, and the event's setting or context were found to be interrelated sources of pressures on the organizing committee.

Key words: Conformity; Resistance; Institutional theory; Events; Case study; Francophone; Francophonie; Stakeholders; Pressure

Introduction

Large-scale international sporting events have been increasingly popular over the last 20 years, as notably evidenced by the growing government support, attendance at events, and sponsorship and commercialization interest in these events, especially the growing number of companies wanting to be associated with these types of events (Brown, 2000, 2002; Ludwig & Karabetsos, 1999; Séguin, Lyberger, O'Reilly, & McCarthy, 2005; Stipp, 1998), and by the increasing television broadcasting fees and overall coverage—the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games television rights fees went

for \$894 million compared to Squaw Valley's 1960 Winter Olympic Games that went for a mere \$50,000 (MacAdam, 2006). A large-scale or major sport event can be defined as

a sporting championship recognized by the appropriate governing body and attracting a minimum of 1000 spectators or a sports event that attracts international media coverage as a result of the caliber of competition, and one in which a minimum of 1000 spectators are present at the event (Emery, 2001, p. 92).

For large-scale sporting events, Parent and Deephouse (2007) identified different stakeholders—all individu-

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