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Stakeholders, Challenges and Issues at a Co-hosted Youth Olympic Event: Lessons Learned from EYOF 2015

The 12th European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF) was arranged in Austria and Liechtenstein January 2015. By using a stakeholder framework, the study aims to a) identify and differentiate between primary and secondary stakeholders based on their level of influence in planning, implementation and impact of the event; and b) to analyze the challenges and issues caused by the co-hosting. Qualitative data stemming from interviews, observations and document analysis indicate that EYOF is a less formalized event with a scaled down budget. The local stakeholders turned out to have most to gain and were willing to pay for such an event. Therefore, the Organizing Committee involved local sponsors, companies and communities, who resulted in being core or primary stakeholders. The usual IOC core stakeholders played a reduced role. Major challenges in co-hosting were the coordination and administration of a boarder, two currencies, transportation and accommodation. EYOF as an international event might not have international influence, but it may have a sustainable impact on the communities due to the co-host. This implies that co-hosting is a good model for future Olympic hosts if one wants to attract smaller countries, and have the benefits of cost-reduction, strengthening the community and cross-border relations.

Keywords: Event management, youth sport events, legacy, Olympic organizing committees, stakeholders

Introduction

'The European Winter Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF) jointly hosted by Austria and Liechtenstein...will serve as a historic guide to the Olympic Movement of how countries can share events', its chief executive Philipp Groborsch said before the opening. ¹

The 12th winter EYOF was the first-ever Olympic event being co-hosted by two countries and consequently had a dual organizing committee with representatives of both the Austrian Olympic Committee and the Olympic Committee of Lichtenstein. Previous instances of sharing was when the equestrian events of the Melbourne 1956 Summer Olympics had to take place in

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Stockholm because of quarantine regulations. UEFA has had two countries organizing their European Football Championship three times (Belgium and the Netherlands in 2000; Austria and Switzerland in 2008; and Poland and Ukraine in 2012) and FIFA has tried out the model once with South Korea and Japan hosting the World Cup in 2002. This co-host approach was pioneering in the history of the International Olympic Committee and exemplifies the ongoing IOC's renewal of the Olympic Movement. With the adoption of Agenda 2020 at the 127th IOC Session in Monaco, the IOC approved 40 recommendations for the strategic roadmap of the Olympic Movement in the ensuing years. Subsequently, the dual host country approach is now accepted and encouraged after an ongoing public debate 'on costs versus benefits has ensued' ² The focus on a lasting legacy from the Olympic event in the respective host city and nation has not only gained interest in the Olympic movement ³, but also has become an increasing research interest among sport scholars ⁴. As the co-hosting is a new phenomenon, in this article we point out stakeholders, issues and challenges from the recently-hosted 2015 Winter EYOF. By doing so, we draw on the impact on the local community present during the organization and implementation phase and look for a possible legacy caused by the dual host. While we know that event organization is impacted by a large amount of stakeholders ⁵, a co-hosted event might involve other stakeholders than single hosts which can be important for a positive outcome of the event. For this purpose, stakeholder theory serves as conceptual framework enabling us to elaborate upon the dynamic stakeholder relationships and the evolving issues ⁶ with which the 2015 EYOF Organizing Committee had to deal with when hosting the event in two countries. The concept of Stakeholder theory has previously been found appropriate to study the organization of sport events ⁷.

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The article is structured as follows. In the next section, we present relevant background information and statistics about EYOF 2015 and its hosts. Section three explains the conceptual framework of stakeholder theory followed by a presentation of the qualitative methods applied in this study. In the fourth section, we present the findings and discuss whether the organization of EYOF can serve as a model for future hosts of Olympic events. The article concludes with a summary of the main results and recommendations for further research.

Contextual Background: EYOF 2015 and the Host Region

The EYOF was launched in 1991 by an initiative of the former IOC President Rogge in order to promote Olympism among the youth. The event is hosted biennially in a summer and a winter edition. The participants are between 14 and 18 years and nominated by their respective NOCs. In the period 25-30 January 2015 the 12th EYOF was arranged in Vorarlberg (Austria) and Liechtenstein. EYOF is organized on behalf of the European Olympic Committee (EOC) which has the exclusive rights to the event and under the patronage of the IOC. For many young athletes EYOF is their first meeting with international competition ⁸, and most of all, a multisport event with 45 participating nations. Only Albania, Azerbaijan, Israel and Kazakhstan of the EOC members did not send a team to the festival. For an entire week, 900 athletes, together with 600 officials, 1200 volunteers, and 150 accredited media representatives were assembled ⁹. Compared to other IOC organized events, the EOC-organized EYOF is a smaller and scaled down event with only eight sports: Alpine Skiing (Malbun, Liechtenstein for individual competitions and St. Gallenkirch, Austria for the mixed team); Biathlon (Bursenberg, Austria); Cross-country (Steg, Liechtenstein); Figure skating (Dornbirn, Austria); Ice hockey (Tschagguns, Austria); Nordic Combined (Gaschurn, Austria); Ski jumping (Tschagguns,

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Austria); and Snowboard cross (Schruns, Austria). In addition, the Winter Youth Olympic Games (YOG) has Bobsleigh, Skeleton, Curling, Freestyle skiing, Luge, Short track and Speed skating. Consequently, only four international sport federations were involved in EYOF. Table 1 shows a comparison with the other European multisport and IOC events.

The region, Vorarlberg and Liechtenstein, is embedded in the so-called countries-quadrangle bordering on Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Due to its location in the Alps, the region is a popular tourist destination. The official language is German. Vorarlberg is one of the nine states of the federal republic of Austria, located in the very west of the country with a population of 379,621 residing in an area of 2600 square kilometers ¹². The other part of the region, Liechtenstein, is a constitutional hereditary monarchy based on a parliamentary democracy ¹⁰. Liechtenstein has an area of 160 square kilometers, with the equivalent of one tenth of the population of Austria's as of 30th June 2014 ¹¹. Due to its small size, political as well as economical bonds with its neighboring countries is important for Liechtenstein, reflecting its close relationship to Vorarlberg ¹². On the other side of the border, Vorarlberg has previously hosted several international sports events organized by the International Ski Federation (FIS). World Cups in Alpine, Snowboard cross and Freestyle snowboarding have been organized annually for several years. As a result, the OC met an experienced winter sports region.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is based on a stakeholder approach. Stakeholder theory allows for descriptive, instrumental and normative analyses of the stakeholders, that is, the various individuals, groups and organizations which affect or are impacted by the actions of a focal organization ¹³. Stakeholder theory has been used by various sport event researchers to describe

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and analyze the event, the organizing committee and its stakeholders¹⁴. Additionally, Hanstad and colleagues have previously demonstrated that using a stakeholder approach helped to organize, analyze and develop an understanding of Youth Olympic Games compared to Olympic Games¹⁵. When analyzing the YOG, four key stakeholder groupings were found: the host core stakeholders (host governments, local communities in which the different competitions took place, and organizing committee); the international core stakeholders (the sport organizations and the delegations including athletes, coaches, and other mission staff); the sponsors and media (primary for the OG but relatively absent from the YOG scene); and finally, parents and other stakeholders¹⁶.

To classify what type of stakeholder one is, Clarkson¹⁷ used the terms 'primary' and 'secondary' stakeholder:

A primary stakeholder group is one without whose continuing participation the corporation cannot survive as a going concern. ... Secondary stakeholder groups are defined as those who influence or affect, or are influenced or affected by, the corporation, but they are not engaged in transaction with the corporation and are not essential for its survival.¹⁸

It is quite possible for an organization to have more than one primary stakeholder and the relationship between the organization and its stakeholder is usually mutually beneficial¹⁹.

Certain attributes have to be present in order to define whether a stakeholder is a primary or secondary stakeholder²⁰. Mitchell et al. defined the characteristics as follows: 1) power could be coercive, utilitarian or normative; 2) legitimacy would be found when a stakeholder's claim is perceived as being appropriate, socially acceptable, expected based on individual, organizational or social norms; and 3) urgency would be felt when the stakeholder's claim is perceived as time

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sensitive and critical or highly important. They further underline that power is transitory; it can be acquired as well as lost. Latent power exists though, 'the exercise of stakeholder power is triggered by conditions that are manifest in the other two attributes of the relationship' ²¹.

Furthermore, it is important to understand that these attributes are not constant but are dynamic and changing in strength. Despite this, Freeman's definition still prevails where the stakeholder comprises 'any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievements of the organization's objectives'.²² In sport, the stakeholders are interpreted very broadly to include, 'for example, media, fans, coaches, athletes, sponsors, and government, as well as 'members'.²³

When reviewing the salience level of YOG stakeholders, Hanstad and colleagues concluded:

The general list of OG stakeholders is the same as for YOG: host governments, community, organizing committee, delegations, sport organizations, sponsors, media, and other stakeholders. However, salience levels were found to differ. For example, main drivers of the OG – sponsors and the media – were not found to be as critical for YOG.

This did not seem to affect the current survival of the event but it is not to say that the future survival of the event is not at stake without these stakeholders' resources²⁴.

Since EYOF is part of the Olympic youth family, we assume that that the relative salience level is closer to YOG than the OG – but smaller due to the fewer number of sports involved, and therefore fewer International Federations (IFs) etc. Additionally, the ownership of the event is held by EOC, which is one of the five continental regions which comprise IOC. EYOF is limited to European athletes compared to YOG which is for youth from all over the world. Further, the co-hosting of EYOF is assumed to represent a difference compared to YOG. EOC is what Fassin ²⁵ calls a 'real' stake owner, who has a legitimate claim in the organization and deserves a

stake. Researching stakeholders can be conducted on basis of three different relationships: first, based on the organization itself; second, based on the stakeholders; and third, rooted in the relationship between organization and stakeholders²⁶. Our study is based on the focal organization of EYOF, the OC, and looks at its operational and structural challenges as a co-host organization related to stakeholder issues.

Methods

We used a qualitative approach of the 2015 EYOF in this exploratory study of the first co-hosted Winter EYOF as we wanted to explore the event organizing committees and the other stakeholders' perspectives. The data collection consisted of observations, interviews and document analyses, and the techniques for the three sampling methods are described below.

Observations

The first two authors were present during the festival and had the opportunity to observe; one as solely a researcher while the other also worked as a venue operations coordinator volunteer at one of the venues. The aim of these observations was to see if a co-hosting created any observable challenges for the organizer. As a result, our collective role as observers was not limited to areas we could access with our accreditation level (competition sites, ceremonies and the congress centre) which gave us access to the general, spectator areas for these venues – but also to meetings with OC members of sports operations, venue operations, coaches meetings, jury of competition and volunteer trainings. As observers, we managed to collect data and experience the meaning of events as they occurred. Together, we visited all the competition sites in Austria and Liechtenstein, the opening and closing ceremonies, flower ceremonies and medal ceremonies. The field notes we assembled were important when preparing the interview guide

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since additional questions were included based on observations made during EYOF in order to explore, explain and/or verify observations.

Interviews

After obtaining approval from the Norwegian Research Council, informed consent to use material was obtained from all participants before conducting face-to-face interviews. At the beginning of each interview, participants were informed that the information they provided would remain anonymous, and that they could terminate the interviews at any time. We conducted a convenience and purposeful sampling procedure²⁷, and interviewed six members of the organizing committee (including the CEO). Together they were responsible for the major operations of the OC. One NOC representative was also interviewed. In addition many informal conversations were held with different stakeholders involved in hosting this event. These informal talks offered a greater understanding of the research issue, and the result of spending time in the research situation provided insight into the daily operations which otherwise could be difficult. The interviews were conducted both during EYOF and later via Skype.

The semi-structured interview guide for the OC members focused on the issues and challenges of staging an event within two host countries such as the bidding process, daily work within the OC, financial issues with two different currencies and money-flow, logistics (transport and accommodation), the nine venues, food and language issues. A flexible interview guide was used by researchers which allowed for reordering of questions in order to better probe participants' responses. Follow-up questions were used in order to elicit in-depth responses from the participants. The interviews ended with a process feedback question, "what should I have asked you about, and do you have anything to add". Interviews lasted between 45 and 80 minutes. The interviews were conducted in English.

Documents

Documents provided by the OC such as the *Chefs de Mission Manual*, *Technical Manual* as well as volunteer training manuals provided a source of data about inter alia organizational and structural processes as well as policy procedures. These documents were a supplement to observations and interviews as well as providing the basis for further questions in interviews. In order to investigate the role of the media (one of the stakeholders), we searched for documents both in the national database for all Norwegian newspapers (called 'Retriever') and internationally, the daily website (Insidethegames) for EYOF in 2015. Little was written about the festival in the Norwegian media, and a total of 42 short notes/articles; 23 before and 19 after EYOF. None of these short notes/articles were in the nation-wide media, indicating the lack of public interest in the event. Many of the newspapers confused EYOF with the Youth Olympic Games.

Analysis

We used several methods to record our observations. Most important were the field notes where personal impressions were written down alongside reflective notes. Long reports were not written; rather, it was a process whereby seemingly different or important aspects of EYOF stood out, and would be noted and then discussed between the members of the research group. These notes were subsequently important for the interview guide for the post-Games interviews with members of the organizing committee. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. An examination through content analysis was deemed preferable when analyzing the additional interview data ²⁸. The coding of raw passages is carried out according to a classification scheme,

and can be used to unobtrusively explore large amounts of textual information in order to ascertain the trends and patterns of the words used, their relationships and the structures and discourses of communication ²⁹. We used the stakeholders identified from previous research ³⁰ as a starting point in the analysis. The researchers read and coded the raw material in main categories based on topics in the interview guide, and elaborated subcategories. In an effort to ensure to accuracy in data collection, two of the OC members received a first draft of the article which resulted in clarifications and additional information. Using data from several sources - observations, interviews and documents - increase the trustworthiness of the findings.

Result and Discussion

The discussion focuses around what we considered to be primary stakeholders of the event – the host core stakeholder represented by the OC and the local communities. The international core stakeholders play an important role for the OC but are less salient to the EYOF than they are to the YOG. The other two stakeholder groups found in YOG ³¹, the sponsors and media, parents and other stakeholders were even less salient for this event compared to YOG by becoming secondary/involuntary EYOF stakeholders. This is examined in the second part of the discussion where EYOF is compared with the other multi events hosted by the IOC and EOC to present the context of EYOF under the Olympic system. Next we move on to the local community as a stakeholder with normative power for this event. In the final section we revisit some of the usual issues and challenges when hosting an event such as budget and finances, venues, accommodation and transportation ³². Finally, we present some of the challenges presented by the OC members and the point of views from one NOC representative is added. In conclusion,

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implications of how the co-host experience by EYOF can serve as a model of good practice for future hosts will be outlined.

The Characteristics and the Uniqueness of a Co-Hosting OC

Since EYOF was co-hosted by two countries, both of these were represented at all structural levels of the OC. The *host core stakeholders* for the OC consisted of host governments and communities and the set-up was quite unique and more complex than if there had been only one host country as in the YOG³³. Of these, the governments, both NOCs and the EOC had normative and coercive power which means that without them the event would not have taken place. The local communities were the stakeholder with normative power having high influence due to their economical contribution. According to one OC member, the idea to co-host the event came from the President of the NOC in Liechtenstein. He reached out to Austria because Liechtenstein was too small to host it alone, and the Host-City Contract was signed during the YOG in 2012. The operating company settled in June 2012 under the title *Europäisches Olympisches Jugendfestival Vorarlberg-Liechtenstein 2015 GmbH*, and functioned as the legal umbrella of the OC in Vorarlberg/Liechtenstein³⁴. The General Assembly consisted of several stakeholders from the two countries with representatives from NOCs Austria and Liechtenstein, Sport Ministry of Liechtenstein, County of Vorarlberg, Department of Sports Vorarlberg, the Cable Way Company and the mayors of Schruns and Tschagguns. Altogether Austria had 68% of the shares (Federal State of Vorarlberg 25%, Austrian Olympic Committee 17%, Schruns City 13%, and Tschagguns City 13%), and Liechtenstein 32% (Principality of Liechtenstein 15% and Liechtenstein Olympic Sports Association (LOSVA) 17%). Under these is the supervisory board

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which made the final decision concerning finances as well as other items according to our interview with the CEO.

Even though Liechtenstein is represented in the top management of the OC, the organizational chart does not mirror the reality.

On the organizational chart we wanted to show that Liechtenstein is also involved in the top management. In reality he [managing director from Liechtenstein] was not in the top management. The managing director from Liechtenstein was not responsible for the budget; he was not even present in the office. It was more a marketing move to put this position onto the organizational chart to show that both countries are equally represented (OC member 1).

The two NOCs had very different powers. While Liechtenstein's NOC seemed to have a more passive role in the organization being guided by and under a kind of supervision of the Austria NOC, Liechtenstein's power can be interpreted as normative. The OC comprised 24 members, a rather small organization but functioned well as an operational unit. The administration, accounting, and HR issues were under the direction of the CEO. The former managing director was replaced by a CEO, who came into the OC 10 months prior to the event. The OC, with a mean age of 32, had altogether experience from 16 Olympic Games.

With this event, the OC members found themselves compiling manuals where they drew upon their previous experiences with Sochi 2014 and Innsbruck 2012. As one OC member 2 said: 'We did everything the YOG way!' Furthermore, and due to their experience, they 'increased the level of service because half of us had these function and experience from the 2012 YOG'. Apparently, an experienced staff is important when developing Olympic events even further, particularly when co-hosting.

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The OC members emphasized that EYOF was a 'low budget event'. Due to the absence of important stakeholders as international sponsors, media/TV and spectators, the available funds were limited, and therefore they could not afford to hire senior event managers in the OC. Instead, the management decided to employ many young people with experience from previous Olympic events, such as the YOG. The importance of having experience from the YOG was stressed by all OC members. The experience of these 'Games gypsies'³⁵ was important because of the restructuring which occurred immediately prior to the event, and the lack of money; all employees had to take on more tasks than intended at the beginning.

As the main financial benefactor and as the more experienced country in hosting major sports events, Austria took the lead in the organization. Since Austria contributed 1.8 million euro and Liechtenstein 700,000 euro to the budget, the inequality was also reflected in the location of the venues (two in Liechtenstein and seven in Austria). This imbalance was accepted by both countries.

The International Core Stakeholders in the Scaled Down Event

The international core stakeholders previously found for YOG were the IFs and the delegations including athletes, coaches, and other mission staff – and of course the IOC³⁶. The IFs are also in this case as in other events responsible for that the competitions follow international rules, so they exercised normative and coercive power. As IOC is a central stakeholder of YOG, so is EOC for EYOF, and they are both what Fassin³⁷ labels as stake-owners without whose support these events would not be organized, something which stresses their saliency towards the OC³⁸. However, the EYOF is a smaller event in all ways, and the Olympic Charter³⁹ which provides

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the rules and guidelines for the organization of the OG and YOG, does not apply to an EOC event (see Table 1 for a comparison of these events).

[***Table 1 near here***]

When interviewing the OC members about the importance of the different international stakeholders, only EOC was mentioned – but more because of the EYOF Manager’s role as a support person with normative knowledge rather than actual influence. Since there was no event manual provided by the EOC that the OC had to follow, the coercive power on the organization of the event is not as strong as the IOC’s power over the YOG. The NOCs were naturally key clients, but their early concern raised before and after the event concerning the travel distance, did not affect the decisions based on the financial situation and their loyalty to the region.

Nevertheless, their support and positive attitude towards the event was necessary for the OC and resulted in a successful event which classified the NOCs as primary stakeholders of both normative and coercive power. The athletes, who are also grouped as international stakeholders, were of course, visible at the different venues during the competitions. The OC admitted that they 'read Agenda 2020 carefully'⁴⁰ [both OC members 4 and 5], and had to rethink what they did in Innsbruck as this was an even smaller event with fewer stakeholders.

During EYOF, the four IFs of the eight participating winter sports were present; the International Ski Federation (FIS), International Skating Union (ISU), the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) and the international Biathlon Union (IBU). Further international stakeholders were the athletes and the NOCs from 45 European countries which participated at EYOF. As you can see from Table 1, the number of participating athletes is not that different from YOG, this means that each sport can send a bigger team to EYOF compared to YOG. The legitimacy of the relationship between the international stakeholders and the OC, and the ability

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of the international stakeholders to influence the OC enables us to define the international stakeholders as moderately salient for the EYOF⁴¹.

According to the OC, there were 160 accredited journalists from 22 nations. Nevertheless, we only observed a few in action at the venues. As well, few of them wrote for an international audience and many relied on what the organizers produced themselves. Additionally, the events were also covered by local newspapers and on the pictures that parents sent home to local news outlets. As with YOG, sponsors and media were secondary stakeholders at the festival⁴². They were not engaged in any transactions and therefore are not compellingly necessary for the survival of the organization⁴³, and they did not see their task as reporting from the events because no one was willing to pay in order to see the competitions, and that is a signal to the wider society. We observed a journalist from one of the Norwegian Sports schools who had students-athletes participating in many sports. He covered the event and sent stories to their respective local newspapers for free. While some of the papers accepted this offer, the major newspapers were not even interested in a free story! No one really cared what was going on, therefore the media was not present and the sponsors also did not see what business it was for them. In contrast to the IOC organized events, EYOF as an EOC event had more regional sponsors, which will be elaborated upon below.

Local Community and the Citizens as “Core” Stakeholder

The local community and its citizens were mentioned as core clients in the interviews: We early realized that the communication to the citizens were of major importance for the OC and realization of the festival. They are our core group to plan for; it is not the parents or other spectators. We learned this in Innsbruck, so we put some effort into the

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music festival at the medal plaza [held in Schruns every evening], sport might not be not as interesting for the locals. So since EYOF is a festival, you need to include the other clients there and offer non-sporting activities too. (OC member 3)

The importance of the local population was a repeated theme in the interviews. In order to get the citizens to support the event, the OC had to sell in the messages of the Olympic Movement, and they had put lots of efforts into communicating that the money that is spent by the local community will directly be advantage for them, and that all new building constructions in the area is in sync with 'the already existing city planning' (OC member 1). For that reason, the OC involved the citizens to actively help shaping the event showing that spending the millions of Euro is of advantage for the area. 'We needed to deliver a good event for the athletes and for the citizens' (OC member 1). The OC strategically used local companies as sponsors.

In the Olympic Games, there are many strong and resourceful partners, though; this is not the same here. As we had supportive providers in the local region, such as the local car owner, we chose to use them as sponsors. As a result we ended up with many minor local sponsors from the communities, which resulted in more paperwork and contract writing. (OC member 7)

Due to the tight budget of the OC, the dependency on the host region increased. As the main provider of resources came from the region, the saliency of the local community for the OC is very considerable. Based on Clarkson's⁴⁴ classification of stakeholder salience stating that the relationship between an organization and its primary stakeholders is based on a high level of interdependence, we identify the local community as the core stakeholder of EYOF. The fact that the OC gave priority to the local community's demands confirms our argument that the local

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community is of high salience towards the OC ⁴⁵. This argument is also proven by the coordination of the accommodations within the region.

The strategic decision was to not have one Olympic village but to use the hotels along the Montafon valley as accommodation for all participants, visitors and staff of EYOF. The OC saw this move as advantage since the hotel owners could function as 'multipliers' for event communication and promotion. Further, profit would directly go to the citizens of the region which was important in strengthening local support for the OC. The inclusion of the region was also visible with the torch relay where the schools were very much involved in the organization of the event. The OC worked together with the schools to establishing the torch relay throughout the entire Montafon valley which resulted in a positive attitude towards the events among youth in the region.

In contrast to Innsbruck, YOGOC's access to young and international students attracted to the sport event, ⁴⁶ the recruitment of the unpaid volunteers was not as straight forward. The OC received 3600 applications but required just 1200 people. The problem was that they needed bilingual volunteers who could speak both English and German. Three-quarters of the volunteers came from Vorarlberg. For the venues, the OC recruited experienced volunteers from the local communities who had worked with sports events in the Vorarlberg region before ⁴⁷.

Furthermore, several schools sent pupils as volunteers to EYOF. While some classes were supervised by their teachers who also functioned as volunteers together with their class, some students could assign their work during EYOF as internship which is mandatory to in their school program. The goal of the regional governments and the OC was to engage the local citizenry; the inhabitants of Vorarlberg and Liechtenstein played a very active part in shaping the event and making it a success. For many pupils it was very exciting to contribute to an Olympic

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event. If it had not been for the school children who were taken by bus to the events, there would not have been any spectators. The parents, together with the school children filled up the stadiums with free entrance. Altogether 30,000 people visited the Games during the five days of the event according to the organizer. However, the two observers among the authors doubt that this figure is correct.

The festival was not only seen as a boost for the local community but also as catalyzer for strengthening the already-existing cross-border cooperation between Austria and Liechtenstein, and hopefully as a stimulus for sport and tourism. Even though the NOC from the two countries had already been co-operating for many years ⁴⁸, the cross-border relationship was reinforced. Austria took on the role of the big brother, taking the lead in the organization and pushing Liechtenstein up, in order to strengthen the whole Montafon region. For Austria's part, most of the responsibility was left to Voralberg, one of the nine Austrian regions:

Originally, the region did not have really close ties, even though the distance in itself is only seven kilometers, but you have to go around the mountains with a car. Mountains divide people. They did not have a close relationship before, but this changed it. They had so many meetings that they feel more united now. (OC member 1)

EYOF seems to have strengthened cross-border relations in advance and during the event which was not taken for granted but required hard work by the OC. It is too early to judge whether this strong relationship will remain after the event, but the positive experience from the host region and the OC members enable us to assume that it will be so. In the following section we present the challenges that the OC as co-hosting organization had to face and cope with.

The Issues and Extra Challenges for a Co-Host (OC): The "Invisible Boarder"

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The opening ceremony focused on the historic moment and the advantages that 'two nations and two different mindsets' hosted the festival together. The two national anthems played, two official opening speeches etc., and artists from both sides of the border contributed to the ceremony. The proximity of the two countries separated by mountains was obvious when present; hence, it was also pertinent that the challenges for the dual host organizing were mentioned with a smile in the opening. The host organization accredited their success to the cross-border *communication*. It was repeatedly stressed that two countries can host an event successfully if they communicate concerning the challenges such as the one elaborated upon above. However, when interviewing the members of OC, budget, venues, logistics, housing, transportation and the volunteers, were mentioned as challenges for the festival. Further, the fact that two countries were watching the work of the OC put pressure on the organization.

Finances and Two Currencies. Budgets are always a major task for any OC ⁴⁹. This event was no exception, and the budget, money-flow and custom issues caused the OC hard times. EYOF had a total budget on 6.5 million euros provided by various partners and shareholders: Republic of Austria €1.8 Million, County of Vorarlberg €1.8 Million, Principality of Liechtenstein €0.7 Million, Participation fees €1.0 Million, Sponsors, and EOC. In comparison, 2012 YOG which was 11 million euros. The new CEO was met with unsolved cash-flow issues, and lack of money (two million euros). In addition, January 2015 the Swiss National Bank suddenly changed the fixed currency exchange rate and no longer base it on the euro. For two countries with different currencies (Liechtenstein with CHF and Austria with the euro), this naturally created an unexpected situation. The OC did not foresee such a development, and it naturally affected all their budget points and they had to adjust to this new economic development. Another challenge was to get the money prior to the event from Liechtenstein:

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In Liechtenstein they have a different mindset. They did not understand that we needed cash before we could give them the invoice. But in order to organize such an event you need cash first and then you provide the invoices afterwards. It took many discussions with Liechtenstein to make them understand how the money flow works. (OC member 2)

What made the co-hosting particularly challenging was that Liechtenstein was not part of the European Union, and customs become an issue. When sending uniforms for volunteers from the headquarters in Schruns to Liechtenstein, they had to pay duty. Nevertheless, following the efforts of the CEO, reimbursements were made. This being a practical issue, a co-host organization nevertheless depends on both countries being equally involved in every part of the process.

Venues. Another challenge was the venues, particularly deciding which of the many available venues to use for EYOF challenged the OC in the preparation of for the event. As Liechtenstein infrastructure is best suited for hosting cross-country skiing and alpine skiing, these venues were easily agreed. While Austria paid 2/3 of the total budget and Liechtenstein 1/3, this division was also decisive in that the seven venues were assigned to Austria and two to Liechtenstein. However, it took until May 2014 before all the venues were agreed upon; in particular where to host the biathlon was a major issue.

There were also challenges for the venue managers and venue operations managers. Instead of purchasing services from bigger, well organized and renowned companies, the OC members tried to use local companies as much as possible:

One major task at the beginning was to map the different local companies where the venues were situated because we wanted to use them. We wanted to support them and they know the area here. Every company here in Voralberg was uncertain whether the

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event was good for the region, so we had to convince them and sell in the festival. This process was time consuming. We tried to fill as many functions as possible with local ones first, but in the end we [i.e. OC] also had to use some outsiders as well (Vienna, Munich). The distance between the venues also made the job harder. (OC member 6)

A final stakeholder important to the smooth running of the venues was the military. Several OC members mentioned this as a resource that made their job possible, especially in the set-up of the venues when the area was affected by heavy snowfall in the beginning and during the event. Without the manpower of the military, venues would not have been in place in time after difficult weather conditions at the start of the event. The unpredicted challenges which came up made the OC dependent on the military which we therefore can interpret as stakeholders with urgency.

Accommodation. 'Accommodation was challenging from the start. We started working a year before the festival, and some even cancelled their internship because of the lack of place to stay' (OC member 5). First of all, the hired organizing committee of 24 individuals needed a place to stay for their year-long contract. The next step was to accommodate all the others, and it was underlined by the other member of the OC that it did not make it easier that it was the "Montafon valley's busiest period". Early on, a partnership with the Tourist Office Montafon was made which "worked out great". Montafon was completely booked during the festival ⁵⁰. The accommodation manager made contact with all the 32 hotels that housed the 45 national teams. Even though EYOF and YOG usually have Olympic Villages for the NOCs to stay in such as with the OG ⁵¹, the infrastructure in the Schruns-Tschagguns region made it almost impossible. Originally an Olympic Village in Schruns/Tschagguns within walking distance to the training and competition venues was included in the first bidding document for EYOF 2015 ⁵².

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Unfortunately for the athletes it changed, because there is no place to build it. I do not know how they come to the conclusion to use the hotels, but it was a better choice. In comparison, YOG is bigger, there was no place or reuse of such a building in the Montafon valley; we would not have the same sustainability or use of such a building after the games. (OC member 2)

The NOCs did not find this an optimal solution since the athletes, whom the competition actually is for, missed out on the Olympic atmosphere which so many athletes often encounter as the most memorable experience⁵³. But when the OC went for this solution, the NOC representative admitted: 'The people at the hotel took really good care of us; they followed up on all our requests'.

Transportation. The actual transportation logistics was solved by a team consisting of four persons, and from the interviews it early became clear that transportation was their 'baby':

We had a lot of challenges, not only because we consisted of two countries, but we were a small team as well. The transfer between Liechtenstein and Austria had to go through a border which makes things harder as the customs involved a lot of paperwork. (OC member 5)

NOCs and volunteers had to cross the border daily. In order to make the crossing run more smoothly, their accreditation with pictures and pictogram functioned as a passport. 'As all parties were informed how this would work, this never become an issue' (OC member 3).

A hot topic before the festival started, was the distance between accommodation and venue – quite a distance for the athletes with the busiest schedules. Prior to the event, the NOCs raised concerned over this issue; some athletes actually had a two hour bus drive back and forth if they were competing in Liechtenstein (cross-country skiing in Steg and alpine skiing in

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Malbun). 'Transport is also a clear point where two countries so far away from the highway, but not so far in reality will struggle – you cannot move the mountains; two hours are two hours', was expressed by an OC member. The OC was aware of the concern, and they 'added cars for athletes' (OC member 2). Nevertheless, the sentiment was that the solutions were not optimal, and that the first co-hosted event needs to be improved if this is to be a tradition.

We will give EOC a clear feedback on the transportation and logistics of this event. They cannot assign a championship to a host organizer who makes it so complicated. We did not find it acceptable, but we accepted it and stayed positive during the championship. But we left the hotel 6 am and got back at 6 pm; we hardly saw each other – so we are concerned that the athletes did not have the experience we wanted them to have. Maybe the competitions should have been two days longer? (NOC Representative)

As observers, we experienced firsthand the traffic jam through Feldkirch when crossing the border. In addition, the travel distance made it very hard to attend more than one sport event a day for spectators. This also had consequences for the athletes due to a compact schedule filled with training, qualification and final days as well as single and team competitions who had limited time to watch each other. This has previously been pointed out as one of the best experiences for athletes during a multisport event ⁵⁴.

Conclusion and Implications: 'Think Before You Bid'

Informed by the stakeholder approach ⁵⁵, we first identified the primary stakeholders (i.e. local communities, NOCs of Austria and Liechtenstein), and secondary stakeholders (the sponsors and media, parents and other stakeholders) of EYOF 2015. In between, we grouped the international core stakeholders (NOCs and IFs) as salient to the OC but with limited influence on the event

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organization. A special role determines the EOC as stake owner⁵⁶. In addition, an interesting finding was the importance of the local communities which turned out to be *core* or *primary* stakeholders with high salience towards the OC, in contrast to other Olympic events where local communities are less salient. This was caused by the scaled-down budget and lack of technical manuals for the EYOF which forced the 2015 EYOFOC to choose creative options and gave them the opportunity to obtain resources from local stakeholders. The local stakeholders were those who had most to gain and were willing to pay for such an event. Therefore the OC involved the local sponsors, local companies and local community in order to create an enthusiasm for the project.

The flip side of the local involvement was that the OC members had to deal with an increasing number of small stakeholders compared to events organized by the IOC where the usual core stakeholders had a reduced role. Hence, the local community appears to have more salience and power upon the EYOF than on YOG⁵⁷. The voluntary and willing involvement of the citizens due to the strategically smart work of the OC lead to region-wide success which will not disappear as quickly as it was formed. Even though the EOC as responsible umbrella organization for the EYOF could be assumed to highly influence the OC, they did not coerce their power on the OC but rather served as adviser with normative knowledge. Since no one seemed to be interested in paying for the EYOF in order to watch the athletes competing, neither spectators, media nor sponsors had much salience for the OC.

The second aim of the investigation was to identify the challenges and issues the co-hosting EYOFOC had to deal with. The experience of junior staff (the event gypsies) was a clear advantage when finding solutions for the issues and challenges which escalated since this was a co-hosted event. The major challenges in co-hosting were logistics with transportation,

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accommodation and the coordination and administration of two currencies and the EU border. As Jack ⁵⁸ recently pointed out: 'Multisport events are an expensive business!' Even worse, they are an intangible turn of investments. The 2015 EYOFOC addressed the issue of the 'escalating costs' of the Games elegantly ⁵⁹, though it was a process that made the CEO utter 'think before you bid' to future host nations. This goal was achieved by increasing the importance of several local communities in both countries, possibly to the cost of international stakeholders, though local criticism was reduced and an apparent local enthusiasm was amplified. The interviewees also emphasized that it was important to have just one leader, not two.

In conclusion, EYOF – as an international event – might not have international influence, but it may have a sustainable impact on the community and a legacy of cooperation between the two countries resulting from the co-host organization. The co-hosting of EYOF appears to be a good model for future Olympic hosts due to advantages such as cost-reduction, strengthening the local communities and cross-border relations ⁶⁰. The 2015 EYOFOC illustrated that smaller countries which would not otherwise be able to stage the event alone due to economic, logistic and resource issues may be successful hosts. The positive organization of the festival bounces positively back to the Olympic Movement, a big advantage for the heavily criticized organization.

Future research should investigate why nations continue to host and organize festivals where few want to travel to and take part in. We may claim the EYOF's purpose lies in being a laboratory rat for future Olympic events. Surely, host cities get money to rehabilitate their facilities and even get a few new venues as a reward for the hard work. Nevertheless, the actual contribution of the EYOF to youth sport development is to be questioned because the supply of Olympic events (especially for youth at the European level) is way higher than the public

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demand. The terrain gets even more complicated with the European Games in Baku which will be organized the first time in 2015. The Baku organizer, who was the sole bidder, has promised to pay for 6000 athletes. This is not exactly in line with the moderation that IOC has suggested. To follow up this kind of games will only be possible in an authoritarian state.

Table 1

Differences between IOCs two winter events the 2014 Olympic Winter Games and the 2012 Winter Youth Olympic Games – and the EOC winter event EYOF and the new EOC event, the European Games, are presented

	World Organized		European organized	
	OG Sochi 2014	YOG Innsbruck 2012	EYOF Voralberg Liechtenstein 2015	European Games Baku 2015
Candidates cities (short list)	3	2	2	1
Olympic Villages	2	1	32 hotels	
Participating NOCs	88	69	45	50
Medal winning NOCs	26	29	17	
Int. federations	7	7	4	
Sports	15	15	8	20
Duration (days)	17	10	5	18
Medal events	98	63	30	98
Athletes	2566	1020	900	6000
Competition venues	12	6	9	18
Spectators*	1.1 million ticket holders & 4.1 billion television viewers	110,000	30,000	
Media/press representatives*	10,000	800	150	
Volunteers*	25,000	1357	1200	12 000
Costs	US\$51 billion	23.7million euro	6.5 million euro	

*Approximations.

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