



# **THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONS, POLITICS, AND POWER RELATIONS IN OLYMPIC TRANSPORTATION PLANNING: THE CASE OF 1996 ATLANTA SUMMER OLYMPIC GAMES**

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## **Abstract**

The political situation and institutional structure determines the policy approach that the host city prepares for mega-events. Although each host city uses fixed strategies to plan for the short term event, the outcome of these strategies mostly depends on the host city's political structure and its institutional culture. In other words, the impact of mega-events on host city's long term planning strategy varies on the choice to continue using these strategies in the long term and it is restricted by the host city's planning traditions. In this sense, this research intends to investigate whether the short term focused mega-event planning is expanded to reach long term goals of the host city and whether this short term focus affects the policy, structure, and culture of the transportation planning institutions of the host city.

Most past academic research has focused on the physical capacity of the mega-event host city and the investments made for the events. However, the impact of this temporary situation on host cities' policy making process for the long-term has been mostly neglected. By using 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games as a case, this paper focuses on the role of institutions, politics and power relations on Olympic transportation planning in order to gain a better understanding of the positive and negative impacts of the events on host cities. This research focuses on the policies used by planning institutions in the transportation planning process of 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games, and the change in transportation institutions' strategy and vision throughout the event planning process. Understanding the event organizational agendas and priorities in respect to transport and the decision-making process is important, and this research seeks to fill this gap by focusing more attention on the transportation planning and institutional side of mega-events.

## **1. Introduction**

The Olympic Games are based on the spirit of competition between athletes. This spirit of competition is shared by rival candidate cities. In order to win their bids to host the

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Olympic Games, cities must put their best foot forward. Since 1984 Los Angeles Games, Olympics are growing in many aspects, mainly due to financial success of Los Angeles Games and increasing economic potential of the Games. Thus the event planning process becomes more comprehensive and more challenging. The Olympic Games require years of event planning, also pose one of the biggest global planning challenges. These forces combine to render urban planning an essential part of the Olympic Games.

Olympic Games generate demand not only for the event itself, but also for other related services including transportation. This study focuses on urban planning side of the Olympic Games; specifically transportation planning that can be derived through hosting this events. The transportation concept is one of the technical criteria to evaluate the candidate cities' capacity to host the Olympic Games and it is also one of the mega-events' main legacies. A typical mega-event transportation strategy is to increase the use of public transport during the event, thus quality public transportation is the backbone to passenger movement for all mega-events, and all game areas are designed to be accessible by public transportation.

Most past academic research has focused on the physical capacity of the mega-event host city and the investments made for the events. However, the impact of this temporary situation on host cities' policy making process for the long-term has been mostly neglected. This research focuses on the policies used by planning institutions in the transportation planning process of 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games, and the change in transportation institutions' strategy and vision throughout the event planning process. Understanding the event organizational agendas and priorities in respect to transport and the decision-making process is important, and this research seeks to fill this gap by focusing more attention on the transportation planning and institutional side of mega-events.

## **2. Transportation Planning for Olympic Games**

The selection of the host city for the Olympics is a long process covering a seven-year period and starting with the National Olympic Committees (NOC) within each country. Any city interested in hosting the Olympics should express its interest to the NOC in the country. After the approval of its NOC, the city is considered as an applicant city and submits a candidacy file to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to be evaluated by the IOC's Commission of Inquiry. This file is a technical document which gives detailed information about the city's condition in 23 categories including transportation and an important reference for the current situation and future implementations. The Commission evaluates each candidate city in terms of their technical, physical, financial, and organizational capacities, and makes an assessment on its potential to stage the Olympics successfully based on a set of technical criteria including legal issues, sports

venues, Olympic villages, environmental conditions and impact, safety and security, finance, and the transportation concept (IOC, 2009).

The transportation concept evaluation is about the main traffic planning objectives and the strategies on organization, ticketing, testing, and training. IOC identifies four different objectives for transportation: 1) *Offer* is about how to meet the demand for the Games by providing data about the current and future infrastructure on air transport, motorways, main roads and parking, main parking areas, and public transportation system; 2) *Demand* indicates the overall personnel and training needs and estimated spectator numbers; 3) *Concept* is about the strategy that will be used during the Games that shows the relationship between offer and demand for the particular candidate city; 4) *Planning and Management* determines the responsibilities of different authorities for different transport activities (IOC, 2006).

The transportation concept is one of the technical criteria to evaluate the candidate cities' capacity to host the Olympic Games and it is also one of the mega-events' main legacies. Quality public transportation is the backbone to passenger movement for all mega-events, and the Olympics provide an exceptional stage to seek long term approaches to transportation planning. All game areas are designed to be accessible by public transportation, and other modes of transportation are linked to public transportation, such as parks, automobile lanes, bike lanes, and sidewalks for pedestrians. The main components of the Olympic Transport Plan can be listed as follows (Bovy, 2003):

- Well-promotion and advertised 100 % public transport usage
- Free use of public transport with event tickets
- Spectator-parking ban in and around the venues along with limited private car accessibility
- Free park and ride spaces supported with shuttle services directly tied to the venues and transit stations

### **3. Literature Review**

Most past academic research has focused on the physical capacity of the mega-event host city and the investments made for the events. Basically, the main focus was limited to the event staging period and how to manage this temporary demand for the events. However, the impact of this temporary situation on host cities' policy making process for the long-term has been mostly neglected.

Mega-events have the potential to be the catalyst for host cities to apply their planning strategies in a more focused environment, and they can result in remarkable changes in infrastructure, urban form, and city image (Essex and Chalkley, 1999; Essex and Chalkley, 2004). According to Essex and Chalkley (1998), the Olympic Games offer

“the justification for related developments to be ‘fast-tracked’ through accelerated planning, design and construction.” (p. 201). Mega-events are “the best stage upon which a city can make the claim to global status” (Short, 2004, p.24). These forces combine to render urban planning, an essential part of the events planning process, and the event itself provides an exceptional stage to seek long-term approaches. The interest of cities for hosting mega-events has been growing mainly due to increasing economic potential of the events. The largest exceptional public events (ECMT, 2002) that are defined as ‘mega’ includes the Olympic Games, Expos, Soccer World Cups, and Commonwealth Games which attract large number of visitors and justify large-scale infrastructure development (Roche, 2002). Since mega-events have an impact on cities beyond sport, and these non-sport outcomes may be even more important than the sporting outcomes, the events can be analyzed from a policy perspective. The fact that the mega-events are not just about sports, but they give an opportunity to accomplish the plans on their policy agendas has also been realized by city leaders (Hiller, 2006).

Los Angeles Olympic Games in 1984 can be seen as a turning point for staging mega-events, mainly due to its economic success. It was the largest amount of temporary and portable facility implementation and utilization event at the time (Larson and Staley, 1998). After the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, Atlanta organized the second privately funded Olympics with no direct public funding in 1996. “No new taxes” pledge was in the heart of the Olympic Organization to get and keep public support for the Games and it limited government involvement on major decisions (French and Disher, 1997). The lack of public involvement and public funding also meant that implementing comprehensive and integrated planning was limited. In order to hold the city harmless against in a financial liability, Atlanta took full advantage of existing facilities and adopted them to Olympic sports venues through necessary modification and/or installing temporary equipment and systems in order to avoid the under-use of venues (Larson and Staley, 1998; Smith, 2007).

The shift on the significance of mega-events increased the interest of researchers on the impact of mega-events. Mega-events have been studied from many different perspectives, such as its economic impacts, tourism impacts, or urban regeneration impacts. The early studies by Ritchie (1984), Hall (1992), and Roche (1992) provides the foundation that the Olympics can be seen as a tool for local economic development. For Preuss (2004), the Games globally increase the recognition of the host city and this positive climate attracts business investment to the host city. Olympics also create a positive tourism legacy by strengthening the host city’s image as a brand. The involvement of government at different levels has also been investigated.

Most of the studies focus on the potential benefits and positive impacts of mega-events (Gold and Gold, 2007; Short, 2004; Hiller, 2006; Cashman, 2002), while there are few studies that investigate the negative impacts (Lenskyj, 2000). 1992 Barcelona Games left an indelible mark on Barcelona and cited as an exemplary Olympic Games. The Games

showed the positive effects of events on the city by strengthening its image, infrastructure, urban landscape, and culture to compete with global cities (Millet, 1995). “The Games served as a catalyst for urban and economic change in the city, positioning Barcelona internationally and communicating its constructed image to a global audience” (Kenneth and Moragas, 2006). On the other hand, Atlanta and Sydney Games are seen as the examples of negative social impacts of Games on host cities (Lenskyj, 2000).

For mega-events, the power relations between actors also determine the possible outcomes. In Atlanta case, downtown business coalition had the power and they made the critical decisions throughout the Olympic planning process. The three major categories of public policy – distribution, regulation, and redistribution – constitute real arenas of power, and the structure, political process, and relations are developed in each arena (Lowi, 1964). For Lowi (1964), distributive policies are defined as highly individualized decisions that only can be called a policy by accumulation; regulatory policies are also specific and individual and involve a direct choice as to who will be indulged and who deprived in the short run; and redistributive policies differ on impact which is much broader, approaching social classes. In terms of power, the distributive arena is pluralistic and only organized interests are operating, the regulatory arena composed of a multiplicity of groups organized around tangential relations and the redistributive arena expresses different generalization.

Greenberg et al. (1977) states “public policy is almost never a single, discrete, unitary phenomenon. Indeed, the appeal of public policy studies as a focus of intellectual endeavor lies precisely in its richness” and illustrates the problems arising from the complexity of using policy as a unit of analysis by Lowi’s work. Greenberg et al. (1977) discusses the difficulties they face in order to test public policy hypotheses. They briefly list the reasons why public policy is more complex as a focus of systematic comparative analysis: the policy process takes place over time and this leads to difficulty in explaining “the process” as a simple unit; since the policy proposal itself is complex and has several important aspects, it is very difficult to place it in any single category; the existence of many participants makes the policy making process complicated; and the public policy process cannot be described by simple additive models, because it is complex as a research focus. Greenberg et al. concludes that the researchers must make guesses and assumptions that cannot be just in order to operationalize the basic concepts of Lowi’s theory, thus we may never be able to obtain hard knowledge of the policy process. In this sense, it is hard to systematically analyze the policy process for mega-event planning, since it is very complex and includes many participants.

For Olympic Game planning, institutional cultures, structures, and history determine constitutional choices, and constructional choice outcomes effect the operational and collective choice actions. In other words, institutions are path-dependent in one sense and they have limited capacity, power, and flexibility to make decisions than are

extremely different than their “path”. The concept of path dependency suggests that future decisions are limited and embedded by the decisions made in the past, and the changed conditions are not always enough for a shift in policy decisions. Path dependency creates a policy situation where the organizations are weak and have limited options that they cannot create their own preferred policy agendas, and responding to changing public preferences becomes difficult when public policies are institutionally embedded (Low and Astle, 2009). The main barrier for this kind of policy change is “the inflexibility of mental models and the rigidity of institutions” (Low et al, 2005). The policy decisions of Olympic host cities are the result of the key policy actors’ decisions, and these actors are oriented by “story lines” that present reasons for the taken actions as well as for the future policy directions (Low et al, 2005).

#### **4. Case Study: 1996 Atlanta Summer Olympics**

The City of Atlanta, a progressive city in the south, is in the center of the metropolitan region. Having no geographical boundaries allowed Atlanta to grow in a very low density pattern. Atlanta’s population settles over a large area, and this lead to an automobile-oriented urban design feature. The Atlanta region’s population has grown rapidly in the last few decades. Especially after the Olympics, the region has attracted millions of people and the economy has expanded. Class and racial separation are the two characteristics of the region. Historical class and racial separation became permanent with the edge-city suburban development, exclusionary suburban land-use regulations and weak fair-housing enforcement which created two separate cities: black south and white north (Keating, 2001). Local politics is controlled mostly by the city’s downtown business leaders who influence elected officials. This political environment in Atlanta leads to the policy decisions that neglect public interests and undermine regional and social needs because of a narrowly defined private interest (Keating, 2001). Limited vision, class and race segregation along with the lack of attention to the fundamental issues created serious problems that are transferred to the future decision makers of the city.

##### **4.1 Bidding for the Olympics**

After President Reagan eliminated several federal aid programs geared toward urban policy in 1984, cities had to look for other funding sources and, for Atlanta, the Olympics provided the perfect economic impetus to focus on the revitalization of downtown area (Burbank et al. 2002). Atlanta’s bid for hosting the Olympic Games can be understood as the product of an active growth coalition that already exists in Atlanta. For Atlanta, the vision and the central motivation among growth elites were to show that Atlanta is a “world-class” city that is capable of hosting Olympic Games. In order to justify local development, public policy strategies promoted tourism, and Olympic Games provided that promotional means to reach a broader population (Burbank et al.

2002). For Atlanta, the Olympic bid was not just about hosting a major sporting event, but to transform the city into a world stage player.

Atlanta competed with other cities – Athens, Toronto, Manchester, Melbourne, and Tokyo – for the nomination of 1996 Olympic Games. Since the 1996 Olympics was the centennial anniversary of the Olympiad, Athens was the favorite candidate city mostly because of sentimental reasons; however, IOC did not award Athens for hosting the 1996 Olympic Games, mainly because of the governmental instability at that time, and because of the fact that the city was not ready to be prepared effectively on time for this huge organization (Hutton, 2001). Some of these other candidate cities were engaged in bribes, attempted to buy the votes of IOC members, and acted unprofessionally during the election process. As a result, Atlanta – best of the rest – used technology, an image of enthusiasm along with the strong support from Atlantans, and the organization skills to be selected over Athens by a 51-35 vote to host the Games after five rounds of voting. Atlanta’s bid was considered strong in terms of its concepts for transport – especially the air connection to the world with one of the leading airports in the world in terms of capacity and passenger –, existing sport facilities and accommodations, and communication systems; however these concepts created serious problems during the Games (Roche, 2000).

The business elites were the pushing power for Atlanta to bid for Olympics. Atlanta was able to host the 1996 Olympics through Billy Payne’s (a real estate attorney and former baseball player) vision and determination along with the support of his friends known as the “Crazy Atlanta Nine” that will form the Atlanta Organizing Committee (AOC) later (Rutheiser, 1996). The members of the AOC preferred an organizational structure where decision making could be closely controlled and operations would be less subject to public oversight. To this end, they incorporated the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG) as a nonprofit civic organization with a thirty-one-member governing board. The board included the mayor, delegates from the USOC and IOC, holdover members from AOC, and others drawn from Atlanta's civic and business elites (Burbank et al 2001:92).

The goal of the Olympic transportation plan in Atlanta was to confine activities to a constricted area to shorten travel time between venues. Thus, major venues and events were concentrated within the imaginary “Olympic Ring” circle - the 3.1 miles (5 km) in diameter of downtown Atlanta. The Olympic Transportation System (OTS) was created to coordinate all transportation systems to provide sufficient service. ACOG made a policy decision to assume responsibility for spectator transportation, even though IOC only requires Olympic Organization Committees to provide transportation for Olympic Family members. ACOG voluntarily took the responsibility for spectator transportation based on the assumption that Olympic families cannot be moved efficiently, if the public movement is not controlled.

Although transportation was one of the biggest challenges for an auto-oriented city like Atlanta, Atlanta's existing transportation plan, especially the rail system, was a vital part of their proposed transportation plan, which played an important role in Atlanta's winning bid for the Olympics. Atlanta Regional Transit System consists of MARTA, Cobb Community Transit (CCT), Gwinnett County Transit (GCT), Clayton Transit (C-Tran), and XPress Regional Commuter Service; but MARTA is the most-used public transportation system by far (more than 90%) in the region. For ACOG, Atlanta's transportation system prior to the Games was deficient for providing service to millions of people during the Olympics. Based on this argument, MARTA formulated a transport plan on using existing bus and rail systems with the support of a temporary bus system to operate during the Games which consisted of 1475 borrowed buses from more than 65 US transit agencies (ACOG, 1997; MARTA, 1996). Before the Olympics, the MARTA bus system consisted of 750 buses; whereas it utilized 1700 buses and 2000 drivers during the Games period. Including the borrowed buses, MARTA Olympic Bus System became one of the largest bus systems in the US. For the Olympics, three rail stations and 7 miles of additional route were added, and frequency of transit service was scheduled to increase and extended to 24 hours a day (ACOG, 1997). Available public transit services during the Games consisted of regular MARTA services with increased night services, shuttle services, park and ride lots in suburban locations, and special services for Olympic Family members. Overall, the public transit system met the expectations; MARTA system delivered about 14.4 million one-way trips, while the supplemental bus system delivered almost 4 million one-way trips during the Olympics (ACOG, 1997).

## **4.2 Olympic Legacy of Atlanta**

Atlanta's Olympic effort primarily aimed to meet the IOC requirements in a most efficient way from Games organization to architecture with limited infrastructure investment. In other words, Atlanta, as a "pragmatic and bottom-line-oriented city", reflects the characteristic of 1990s – "a decade of stringency and moderated expectations" (Dixon, 1995, p. 52). An Olympic bid was a logical next step for Atlanta to grow and put the city in the world map. The goal of the Atlanta Games was to promote business growth, create a world city image, and attract international business to the city. After staging the Games, several companies relocated to Atlanta, and the Games was one of the important reasons for achieving this.

Although Atlanta put a priority to create a world class city image instead of creating permanent physical legacies, the city itself and its Universities – particularly Georgia Tech and Georgia State University – benefit from some of the physical facilities that are built for the Olympics. New dormitories that will be used by Georgia Tech and Georgia State University after the Games were constructed by \$47 million ACOG contribution, a new \$24 million natatorium was built on the Georgia Tech campus, and ACOG spend

\$1.5 million to renovate Georgia Tech's Alexander Memorial Coliseum, the Olympic Boxing venue (Humphreys and Plummer, 1995). The Olympic Village was located at Georgia Tech and over \$150 million in capital facilities had added to Georgia Tech which is the largest expansion in University's history. Among all, most notable legacies from the Games include the Centennial Olympic Park, Olympic Stadium, Georgia Tech Aquatic Center, twelve upgraded pedestrian corridors, and a new international concourse and a central atrium at the Hartsfield International Airport.

On one hand, the Games created opportunities for the construction of new sporting facilities as well as the improvement of the physical environment of the host city generated civic pride, provided an opportunity to generate world recognition and contributed to transforming the image of Atlanta (Malfas et al. 2004); on the other hand the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games created negative social impacts on low-income residents, intensified social problems and deepen existing divides among residents. For example the Centennial Park construction dislocated many businesses without assistance for relocating. Additionally, the Olympics left a negative legacy among low-income neighborhoods where many people were relocated. The Olympic Stadium construction inflicted further damage on the low-income black neighborhoods in the area, and their limited role in Olympic Planning prevented local governments to take action and protect these people from damage (Keating, 2001). ACOG was a powerful coalition of business leaders and elected public officials who faced a legacy of distrust within the city's low-income African-American neighborhoods (Newman, 1999). This was the result of years of policies such as expressway construction and urban renewal which relocated thousands of low-income African-American families. Focusing and engaging on international business to create a world city image also resulted in losing local identity and neglecting local issues (Keating, 2001).

### **4.3 Politics and Power Relations**

The trend for cities to increase their international connections in the global era and the increasing competition between cities to host Olympic Games has incorporated into economic strategies of cities. The rationale of image creation for a city has results in increase in tourism and business investments, and this change has an ultimate effect on local governance as local budgets become allocated along these lines. (Burbank et al 2001). Given the difficulties that city leader's face within the broader political and economic environment and the changes in federal policy and in the international economy forced American cities to play an entrepreneurial role, and the Olympic Games are seen as a way to achieve local economic goals (Burbank et al., 2001). Regime theory can explain the reasons behind the entrepreneurial growth approach. Regime theory argues that American political economy has two principles: government institutions are controlled by elected officials and the economy is directed by private actors (Burbank et al., 2001). Both government and business has interest in local politics and the urban regime provides an environment in order to make "the informal arrangements by which

public bodies and private interest function together in order to be able to make and carry out governing decisions” (Stone, 1989). The basic idea of regime theory is that the political leaders and businesses establish an “informal agreement” which consists of a network of well-established connections built on trust between business and political leaders (Burbank et al., 2001).

Urban regime theory expects that the business interests dominate the policy decision, although the structure of the regime varies from city to city, because of the different conditions in economics, dynamics, institutional settings, and history of the city. Most of the decisions are made through public-private partnerships. In this sense, for any city “an Olympic bid does not involve all the individuals who may be part of the informal governing structure of a city, but it does illustrate in a concrete fashion how business resources and governmental authority come together to undertake a policy initiative” (Burbank et al., 2001, p. 158). In contemporary American cities, staging the Olympic Games is not simply an international sporting event but a tool for implementing the vision of a world-class city. With their short duration, limited beneficiaries, and need for extensive planning, the process of bidding for and holding an Olympic games provide sufficient opportunity for growth (Burbank et al., 2000).

In Atlanta, the Olympic bid occurred because of the existence of an urban regime to provide a way to overcome the weaknesses of city government and benefit from businesses (Burbank et al., 2001). In the case of United States, the Olympic Organization Committees take the formal responsibilities of preparing and staging the Games. It does not mean that local and state governments are not involved or the Games were run by for-profit companies (Burbank et al., 2001). In Atlanta, the Olympic Committee (ACOG) had the main responsibilities. It was in control of every aspects of the game planning and it established an efficient redevelopment agenda for the city. The projects that met the desires of both public and private entities are undertaken and completed with a coalition (e.g. Olympic Stadium and Centennial Olympic Park).

In Atlanta Region, the relationship between the government entities and business helped to maintain the image of public-private enterprise. The idea of citizenship was replaced with consumers as the central point of urban public life and, the Olympics enabled Atlanta to make significant changes to the downtown infrastructure that were regard as dreams for many local business professionals and politicians for decades (Lowes, 2002). The main goal for business leaders was to create a commercial legacy by attracting private investment through encouraging companies to locate their regional and national headquarters and offices in Atlanta. The commercially orientated perspective of the Games planners resulted in a legacy that favored the redevelopment of commercial downtown districts rather than neighborhood renewals.

#### **4.4 Institutional Cooperation**

In the Atlanta region, individual political power bases create a situation where no suburban city, town or county want to combine its problems, its resources, and its effort with those of the city of Atlanta and any kind metro-wide cooperation is seen a threat to this status quo (Padgett and Oxendine, 1996). Additionally, largely divided community, and political and racial lines still exists in the metro area and these facts are other barriers for achieving metro-wide cooperation and coordination.

In order to achieve the most benefits out of Olympics, cooperation and coordination among several authorities is necessary from the beginning to the end of the Olympic planning process. Because of the tight deadlines of the Games, cities can do much work in a short time. Games are the excuse to guarantee to complete the infrastructure on time. Within its unique planning environment, the Olympics help to make the process faster with the positive affect of highest cooperation and coordination among different agencies and authorities. In Atlanta case, the collaboration among several authorities beginning from the bidding phase until the staging phase was the most notable accomplishment of the Olympics in Atlanta. (Padgett and Oxendine, 1996).

For transportation planning, especially for regional transportation planning, one of the biggest challenges is the difficulty of creating convincing harmony between different authorities. Organizational structure and management make the difference on the transportation accomplishment of the Games. Harpt (2002) states that one of the keys for creating a successful Olympic Transportation Plan is establishing coordination and cooperation among agencies. This harmony and cooperation is needed more and has the potential to create successful regional transportation plans. However, creating collaboration is challenging especially in the United States because of the political, cultural, historical, and social boundaries, and it is hard to expect the same motivation and concentration from each authority. Since the emergent problems caused by the Olympics are temporary, it becomes easier to agree on a “potentially controversial strategy” for each agency or authority; but once the games are over, disagreements can easily rise again (Giuliana et. al, 1987). Many of the changes in the way of thinking and operating do not retain after the Games.

The Atlanta Olympics showed that the Olympics may have a limited impact on renovating the host city. Even though the economic and physical benefits of the event were clear, institutional culture did not change significantly because of the lack of a comprehensive planning effort and funding. This experience reminds us that Olympics are not the “magic bullets” for solving cities’ persistent problems (French and Disher, 1997). The city focused more on “Olympics-as-sport” side and the needs of communities are disregarded (Andranovich et. al, 2001). The motivation of Atlanta was to create a world-city image, prestige, reputation, and economic development through hosting the Olympic Games with a minimum investment on infrastructure. Atlanta’s Olympic experience is an American way of making a justifiable government decision which is different from other countries (Dixon, 1995).

## 5. Conclusion

The Atlanta region is growing, and the region has attracted millions of people especially after the Olympics. Having no geographical boundaries, race and class segregation resulted in a growth pattern that settles over a large area with a very low density pattern and this lead to an automobile-oriented urban design feature. Local politics is controlled mostly by the city's downtown business leaders and this politic environment leads to a narrowly defined privately concerned policy decisions. The business elites supported the Olympic bid which was privately funded and included a feature of minimum public investment and a maximum private profit. The lack of public involvement and public funding also meant that implementing comprehensive and integrated planning was limited in Atlanta Olympic planning process.

After the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, Atlanta organized the second privately funded Olympics with no direct public funding in 1996. The lack of public involvement and public funding also meant that implementing comprehensive and integrated planning was limited. In Atlanta, the local politics is controlled mostly by the city's downtown business leaders who influence elected officials, and this politic environment leads to a narrowly defined privately concerned policy decisions. This political environment leads to the policy decisions that neglect public interests and undermine regional and social needs because of a narrowly defined private interest. In Atlanta case, the business elites supported the Olympic bid which was privately funded and included a feature of minimum public investment and a maximum private profit. The lack of public involvement and public funding also meant that implementing comprehensive and integrated planning was limited in Atlanta. Downtown business coalition had the power and they made the critical decisions throughout the Olympic planning process. For mega-event planning, institutional cultures, history, and structures determines constitutional choices, and constructional choice outcomes effect the operational and collective choice actions. In other words, institutions are path-dependent in one sense and they have limited capacity, power, and flexibility to make decisions than are extremely different than their "path".

Atlanta's bid for hosting the Olympic Games can be understood as the product of an active growth coalition that already exists in Atlanta. For Atlanta, the vision and the central motivation among growth elites were to show that Atlanta is a "world-class" city that is capable of hosting Olympic Games. Regime theory can explain the reasons behind this entrepreneurial growth approach. In Atlanta, the Olympic bids occurred because of the existence of an urban regime to provide a way to overcome the weaknesses of city government and benefit from businesses. The main goal for business leaders was to create a commercial legacy by attracting private investment through

encouraging companies to locate their regional and national headquarters and offices in Atlanta. The Olympic bid was not just about hosting a major sporting event, but to transform the city into a world stage player. The Atlanta legacy is largely understood to have been committed to business and commercial aims – building the reputation of the city.

In the Atlanta region, largely divided community and political and racial lines are the barriers for achieving metro-wide cooperation and coordination. In Atlanta, the Olympics help to make the process faster with the positive affect of highest cooperation and coordination among different agencies and authorities, and the collaboration, beginning from the bidding phase until the staging phase, was the most notable accomplishment of the Olympics. This harmony and cooperation is needed more and has the potential to create successful regional transportation plans in the future. The Atlanta Olympics showed that Olympic Games may have a limited impact on renovating the host city. Even though the economic and physical benefits of the event were clear, institutional culture did not change significantly because of the lack of a comprehensive planning effort and funding.

Although Atlanta put a priority to create a world class city image instead of creating permanent physical legacies, the city itself and its Universities benefit from some of the physical facilities that are built for the Olympics. The 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games created permanent physical legacies e.g. the Centennial Olympic Park, Olympic Stadium, Georgia Tech Aquatic Center, 12 Upgraded pedestrian corridors, a new international concourse and a central atrium at Hartsfield International Airport, and the ITS System. The Olympic Games was a logical next step for Atlanta to grow and put the city in the world map and the city generated civic pride, provided an opportunity to generate world recognition and contributed to transforming the image of Atlanta. On the other hand, the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games created negative social impacts on low-income residents, intensified social problems and deepen existing divides among residents.

The issue about the impact of Olympic Games on politics and power relations has largely remained understudied. This study represents an initial attempt to explore this phenomenon, and further research is needed to better understand this relationship. There are some limitations which must be considered in generalizing the findings of this study. First, this study focused on one type of mega-events; Summer Olympic Games and, investigated one single case, Atlanta. This study did not cover the Paralympics Games and did not examine Winter Olympics. Further, since this study only examines one case, the results may vary in other cities. Each Olympic host city's experience is unique, and this experience is not necessarily transferable for solving current policy problems of the city; however it provides some policy alternatives for the future. Each city is limited by its own conditions to benefit from the same Olympic strategies. Moreover, it might be argued that there has not been enough time to evaluate the real long-term impacts of the

Games in Atlanta, although 16 years have elapsed since the Olympic Games was staged. It might be still premature to totally evaluate the long-term effects which may extend to a few decades or more.

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