

8.2 - REFLECTION ON THE GRADUATION PROJECT

This section reflects on the graduation project by looking at possibilities for further research, as well as limitations to the current implementation of the project.

8.2.1 - Real inclusiveness of the citizen in the decision making around the Olympic Games.

For this graduation project it is chosen to look from a top down approach to the organisation and implementation of the Olympic Games, using the existing structure of NOC, OCOG and host-city. According to several sources (Lei & Spaans, 2009) (Muller, 2015), the inhabitants around the Olympic sites are often consulted. Through committees they can influence the decision making process. However, often these initiatives are the first to be abolished, due to budget or effort (Muller, 2015)

Within the project it is mentioned that there are ten aspects within social sustainability that are affected by urban regeneration. This graduation project researched to possibility of Olympic legacy to enhance five of these aspects. The other five aspects are 1) social mixing and cohesion, 2) social capital, 3) demographic change, 4) participation, empowerment and access, 5) wellbeing, happiness, and quality of life. From this point, in order to enhance social sustainability especially real empowerment and participation of the citizen in the decision making process is interesting. So, in order to really enhance the citizen in the organisation, and to ensure social sustainability in the legacy of the Olympic Games, citizen need to have a voice. This means a direct 'inhabitant representative' in the executive board of the Olympic Games or the creation of a separate Olympic committee primarily concerned to defend the interests of the citizens. This direct involvement of the citizen in the decision making process could be a real contribution to the organisation of the Olympic Games, encouraging also a bottom-up view to the Olympics and is a real recommendation to further research.

8.2.2 - Transferability of the project and design principles

Within this graduation project it is chosen to design an Olympic venue in the Netherlands. This decision was made due to proximity of the design location, making it easily reachable, as well as the Netherlands initially had the ambition to organize the Olympic Games in 2028, which makes sure there is a lot of research to build upon. The graduation project, the strategy for Rotterdam South, the design of the Olympic venue and the design principles, are all based upon current thoughts and planning and design traditions known within the Netherlands.

The Olympic Games is held every four years in a different city, all around the world. Every nation has a different culture towards planning, design and above all the position of its citizens. Inhabitants of slums in Brazil were not regarded to be in the same position as we look towards inhabitants of problematic neighbourhoods for example. Large scale displacement is not ok to Dutch measures. This will have different consequences for the implementation of the Olympic Games. It is earlier mentioned that mega-events in countries with oppressive regimes are more likely to become over-prestigious projects.

Still, in essence all humans strive for the same values. The strategic proposals for Rotterdam South and the design principles are targeted towards the benefit of the citizens. Therefore, if implemented, they should be of same beneficial effect to citizens in the Netherlands as in any other country. Reducing pollution through planting additional trees at footpaths is equally beneficial to all humans for example. Furthermore, the design principles tend to describe a generic issue in the design of the Olympic Games plus its legacy and propose a social sustainable solution to it. As requirements from the IOC to the Olympic Games are the same to each country, the proposed design principles should be applicable to every edition. Still, it could be very interesting to further explore these cultural differences and its implications for the potential and especially the implementation of the strategic proposals or gathered design principles.

8.2.3 - Need to enhance multiple social sustainability aspects

This graduation project looked at design possibilities to enhance multiple aspects of social sustainability. The need to look at multiple aspects, instead of focusing on one, derived from literature, where it is stated that social sustainability can only be enhanced if multiple aspects were addressed. However, this multiplicity of design directions led to less focus and in depth exploration in the graduation project. Enhancing multiple aspects limited the practicality of design research and made it even more challenging to enhance all subjects within a design for the Olympic Games in Rotterdam South.

A recommendation for further research would be to focus on just one subject. For example, Olympic legacy and its possibility to enhance education is already enough to create a big research or design project. Focusing on one subject should lead to more in-depth and constructive research will arguably lead to a more practical contribution to social sustainability in Olympic legacy.

8.2.4 - The need of event led regeneration

The Olympic Games require a major investment of billion from the national government and the host-city. Partly this investment is supported by sponsors, gifts and subsidies of the IOC, but public money is still required. For the regeneration of Rotterdam South, the organisation of the Olympic Games is required as it forms the possibility for immediate major reconstruction of the city district, but even more, it opens billions of valuable funds, which previous projects and initiatives failed to gain. For the 2012 Olympics, the former mayor of London, characterized the bid as "the only way to get billions of pounds out of the government to develop the East End" (Guardian, 2015). It shows the importance of mega-events for reaching desired

Still, the spatial programme of the Olympic Games was way too big for the city district of Rotterdam South. Therefore, the spatial impact of the Olympics, not only for Rotterdam-South, but for many cities all around the world, is way too large. This could be levered by extending the duration of the event, which reduces the amount of required halls, or reducing the

amount of sports. Since this isn't going to happen soon. Ways to combine sports, decrease the spatial impact of the Games or re-using existing structures to severe measures, can all be possibilities for further research and design.

Also, the decision to of creating two Olympic districts, with a deprived neighbourhood in-between that profits from the created visitors flow, is already an improved of former Olympic implementations. Still the graduation project doesn't feel to be maximizing the potential of organizing the Olympics and using its legacy to regenerate deprived neighbourhoods. Further research to models for maximization of this regeneration potential are largely needed as they form on of the first steps in implementing the Olympics. To maximize at the beginning is a start at maximizing in the final result. Also, it might be very interesting to look at possibilities for multiple smaller events to reach the same result, as a set of events that are targeted towards one sport, gives the possibility to bid for sports that are already represented within the city.

8.3 - REFLECTION ON THE PROCESS AND RELATION TO GRADUATION LAB

8.3.1 - Reflection on the process

The overall graduation process was “messy.” This is an understatement. In fact, the first half a year more time was spent thinking how to do my research (considering on what terms I would do my research, what was my input and what was the output of that research, when I would do my research in the time still left), instead of actually doing research. In this procrastination lies the key to what was going really going on; Trying to find the basis on which to start. But a start in a research project isn’t something you just come up with and can grasp without knowing which direction you will look to. The Olympic Games are such a big event, such a broad concept, which such an impact on many fields, even within the field of Urbanism. By continuously reading and finding all exact problems within the organisation and legacy of the Olympics that are related to social sustainability is not possible, especially if social sustainability is still a much debated and fussy concept and there is no clearance what aspects that contribute to social sustainability you would choose. At some point you have to make choices and be consequent to it.

Considering what is most important within my design occurred to be a major inner struggle, as I tend to regard all information and facts as equal. Each story seemed to be relevant and of concern to my graduation project. In this way, focus and being straight to the point is limited. Both Rients and Remon went to great lengths to show me how to focus on the design project, what were the major design interventions, how will they contribute to the social legacy of the Olympic Games and how can you get an overview. This proves still to be of concern, as I’m still not convinced to which extent all my interventions are of concern and are the major exemplifying project that lead to a social legacy, because they seem to me all of major concern and are all required to reach any level of social sustainability in the legacy of the Olympic Games. At the same time I tried to keep in mind how to present all these ‘what could be a intervention’, how to keep it in line with what I did before, that it made me reluctant to any decisions and bold statements. In short; It was a lot of how, how, how, without and central why, leading to a lot fussiness and work which could not be used.

Lack of boldness and overall procrastination, not having the discipline to put yourself to the uncomfortable, reluctant to make statements and dive into the deep. These are not qualities of an urban designer, but needs

to be overcome in order to find a way through such complex projects. Mentor Remon mentioned that designing is a unique ability we learn at the faculty of Architecture, by engaging problems to solve them into unexplored territories and solutions. It is an ability to be enhanced, embraced and be proud of.

Therefore, looking back to graduation project, this is definitely not what I consider the best design project, not even one I’m particularly proud of, but this project might be the project that taught me most about myself. I gained many lessons and knowledge about the Olympic games and a design project, but it showed me the most about how I approached design projects; With a reluctance to step into the unknown and actually learn. As a result I gathered information and didn’t conclude, I drew beautiful maps without knowing what to draw exactly and made a project without the straightforward, rich body a good project in Urbanism has. It gave me more than a year of agony, stress and neglect to the important. In the end, I realize that this graduation project is too big and isn’t something you can go back in time and repair, but you can make the best out of it, and this is what I did.

8.3.2 - The relationship between research and design

Throughout the graduation project there was a continuous quest for 'prove'. Therefore all conducted research targeted on proofing and legitimizing the design, gathering information upon information. The graduation project was initially aimed to be explorative, research by design, but became a very dogmatic exercise, based on program, size and without a lot of reasoning. An increasing detail in analysis of planning and design of the Olympic program is witness of this rigor. The design by research part is much bigger than it originally intended to be, the research by design much smaller.

A design intervention is grounded in the legitimacy of the proposal. A design intervention is grounded in applicability to the posed problem, the applicability on that location and the applicability to the proposed result. My personal belief is that within a design project there should always be a narrative of why, what and how.

The bridge between research and design was the creation of the design principles. The principles are based on an encountered spatial issue in the Olympic program (why), the proposal for adaption of program (what), and the resulting enhancement of social sustainability by that adaption (how). The creation of a separate book with design principles gave me the possibility design more freely. It released the burden of questioning what the design principle will add to the social sustainability within the Olympic program in general and gave room the question what design principle could do for social sustainability of the design location. At the same time the design location of Rotterdam South enriched the proposals, as location specific solutions were required, such as a tunnel near Zuidplein. It shows a location specific variation on how to overcome local barriers, which is very practical for the Olympics, but even more necessary to upgrade the urban environment of Zuidplein and in turn Rotterdam South.

8.3.3 - the relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject

The graduation project is conducted within the graduation lab "Urban transformations and sustainability" in specific the research group of "Design of the Urban Fabric". The graduation lab capitalize on the Dutch approach to Urbanism, focusing on relationships between tangible projects and intangible processes. In current practice all urban proposals should be sustainable. Design of the Urban Fabric focus on the prominent position design research can take in sustainable urbanism (Urban Fabrics, 2017).

The topic of the Olympic Games is very related to the theme, as the Games form a possibility for urban transformation that is almost unmatched. The games are not only a urban transformation project in itself, but even harnessed to catalyse even bigger development plans and new urban transformations. A Olympic venue can be considered to have two separate lives: The life for the Olympic and the life for after the Olympics. Therefore mega-event planning feels as a very specific and special component of urban transformation, as it deals with two different designs, which is expressed in a set of strategic proposals for the Olympic Games in Rotterdam South and an design for the development of Varkenoord North. The focus on inclusiveness of the citizen and social sustainability contributes to sustainability in the spatial design of the mega-events; up till now a troublesome relationship, and therefore this project is very relevant.

8.3.4 - the relationship between the methodical line of the graduation lab and the student

Within design of the Urban Fabric, the creation of design patterns as basis for urban design is promoted. The proposed design principles are used as starting points for design on the specific assigned zones of Varkenoord and Zuiderpark. The proposed principles are based on practical spatial issues the design of the Olympic program, such as the abundance of required parking space. This use of design principles can be considered as variant to the methodological approach of creating design patterns. Still the design principles give answer to many spatial issues and are not composed answering a single design problem. Therefore it is unclear whether the principles can be called a design pattern at all, but more a collection of proposals for design interventions.

The creation of the excel model in order to process data for implementation of the Olympic program in Rotterdam South is not aligned to any design feature at all. Therefore the methodological line of the graduation lab is not very well represented in this graduation project and in the final result of the graduation project.

8.3.5 - The relationship between the project and the wider social context

The research to social sustainability in Olympic legacy and the incorporation of the citizen as main actor to design for was a result of negative media attention to the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. The Olympic Games are always a hot topic in the media due to its impressive character and Rio de Janeiro proved again that hosting the Olympic Games can also be a threat to the sustainability of the city. For 2024 and 2028 there were only two candidate cities. The will to organize the Games is declining. Over the next years the NOC-NSF and other businesses are researching the possibility of hosting the Olympic Games in the Netherlands in 2032. The quote from former NOC*NSF representative Camiel Eurlings 'the Games should adapt to the city, not the city to the Games' is example for the identity switch the event has to make (NOS, 2017).

In society there is an increasing focus on inclusiveness and sustainability in the field of Urbanism and urban design. Social sustainability is the least researched aspect of sustainability. Event planning and design are well researched topics, though the legacy of an event is already less well defined. Social sustainability in the legacy of event planning is even less defined as it manifest in often hard to measure outcomes (Lei & Spaans, 2009). Except for providing the IOC spatial design principles for future Olympic Games, this graduation project aimed to define a framework for better understanding of social sustainability in event planning and the concept of social sustainability.