# Heritage Sporting Event: An Old Recipe for a New Problem

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## Abstract

In the last decades, the globalized competition among cities and regions made them develop new strategies for branding and promoting their territory to attract tourists, investors, companies and residents. Major sports events – such as the Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup or World and Continental Championships – have played an integral part in these strategies. Believing, with or without evidence, in the capacity of those events to improve the visibility and the economy of the host destination, many cities, regions and even countries have engaged in establishing sports events hosting strategies. The problem of the globalized competition in the sports events "market" is that many cities and regions do not have the resources - either financial, human or in terms of infrastructure - to compete in hosting major sports events. Consequently, many cities or regions have to turn to second-tier sports events. To organise those smaller events means less media coverage and more difficulty in finding sponsors, while the costs – both financial and in terms of services – stay high for the community. This paper analyses how Heritage Sporting Events (HSE) might be an opportunity for cities and regions engaged in sports events hosting strategies. HSE is an emerging concept that to date has been under-researched in the academic literature. Therefore, this paper aims to define the concept of HSE through an exploratory research study. A multidisciplinary literature review reveals two major characteristics of HSEs: the sustainability in the territory and the authenticity of the event constructed through a differentiation process. These characteristics, defined through multiple variables, give us the opportunity to observe the construction process of a sports event into a heritage object. This paper argues that HSEs can be seen as territorial resources that can represent a competitive advantage for host destinations. In conclusion, academics are invited to further research HSEs to better understand their construction process and their impacts on the territory, while local authorities are invited to consider HSEs for the branding and the promotion of their territory.

**Keywords:** Heritage Sporting Events; Hosting Strategies; Events; Heritage

## Introduction

In the last decades, the globalized competition among cities and regions make them develop new strategies for branding and promoting their territory to attract tourists, investors, companies and residents (Fourie & Santana-Gallego, 2011; Hede, 2005; Mason & Duquette, 2008; Misener & Mason, 2008). Major sports events – such as the Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup or World and Continental Championships – have played an integral part in these strategies. For Graton, Dobson and Shibli (2000), the financial success of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics played an important role in the growing interest from the public authorities toward sports events. Although the benefits from hosting a sports event are difficult to measure and are sometimes overestimated (Black & Van der Westhuizen, 2004; Feddersen & Maennig, 2012; Hede, 2005), many public officials believe that sport, and sports events especially, can be a catalyst for local development (Misener & Mason, 2008). Therefore, in the 1990s, cities (Lausanne, Sheffield, Vancouver…), regions (Savoy, Tyrol, State of Victoria…), and even countries (Denmark, Qatar, Canada…) established sports events hosting strategies. To cope the growing competition among territories on the globalized sports events "market", some of these strategies evolved to public polices in the 2000s (Chappelet, 2006). This evolution toward an institutionalisation of the sports events hosting strategies was motivated by a need to secure resources and to legitimise the public expenses dedicated to the candidature process and the event organisation.

While the competition between territories was growing, sports events also evolved. In a few decades, their revenue exploded, both from the action of sponsors and media rights, while their size grew dramatically. Summer Olympics went from 26 to 36 disciplines between 1984 and 2012[1], while in twenty years the FIFA World Cup went from 16 to 32 teams[2]. On the one hand, this increase of size might be beneficial for the host destination both in terms of revenue and visibility. On the other hand, it implies also a growth of costs. On an organisational perspective, more investments are needed for the

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[1] www.olympic.org
[2] www.fifa.com

infrastructures and the security. While on a candidature perspective, the higher requirements, the growing competition to host events and the professionalization of the whole candidature process imply extra expenses.

One problem raised by the globalized competition among territories and the growth of size and costs for the organisation of sports events is that many cities and regions do not have the resources – either financial, human or in terms of infrastructure – to host major sports events. Consequently, many territories engaged in these strategies have to turn to second-tier sports events. The question raised by the resize of these hosting strategies is the capacity of those events to meet the initial objectives[3]. Indeed, as presented by Graton et al. (2000), if major sports events might lead to economic benefits for the host destination, these benefits are, if any, much lower with second-tier sports events. Of course, to organise those smaller events means also less media coverage and more difficulties in finding sponsors, while the costs – both financial and in terms of services – stay high for the community (Chappelet, 2014).

Therefore, it is necessary for those territories to rethink their development and promotion strategies. The logic behind these sports events hosting strategies is based on attracting exogenous resources (international one-off events) to the territory. Influenced by the positive example of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, the idea is that those international one-off events are the best solutions to initiate or accentuate local development. However, while some territories were focusing on sports events, other regions were developing strategies based on endogenous resources (local heritage) to brand and promote their territory. This paper will analyse the relation between heritage and sports events and more specifically how Heritage Sporting Events (HSE) might be an interesting option for the sustainable development of territories engaged in sports events hosting strategies. Although, many sports events have some heritage component, local authorities usually underestimate their capacity to brand and promote the territory. HSE is an emerging concept that to date has been under-research in the academic literature. Consequently, this paper begins with an exploration of the relation between heritage and sport. A multidisciplinary literature review will be conducted to identify HSEs' characteristics, which will lead to a definition of this emerging concept. Implications for both academics and public authorities will be discussed in the end of this paper. In conclusion, local authorities engaged in sports events hosting strategies will be invited to consider HSE for the branding and the promotion of their territory.

## Heritage and Sport

In recent years, in parallel to sports events, heritage has gained increasing attention both from public authorities and academics. The notion itself evolved through time. If at the beginning it refers to economic and legal values, with the idea of inheritance in the family, it expanded to refer also to more intangible objects as the Kabuki theatre in Japan or the Binche carnival in Belgium[4]. Although the notion of heritage broadens a lot in the last decades, sport and sports events are rarely recognised as heritage objects. For some authors (Gammon, Ramshaw & Waterton, 2013; Hinch & Ramshaw, 2014; Pfister, 2011; Ramshaw, 2011), sport has often been overlooked in heritage studies due to it representative of both recent and popular past, making it part of "low" culture in comparison with "high" culture, which is usually represented by heritage.

Therefore, to see sport and sports events especially as heritage is not self-evident. It is based on the idea that heritage is not a finite resource (Howard, 2003) and that heritage objects are identified as such through a social construction (Boisseaux, Knoepfel, Laesslé & Tippenhauer, 2012). This constructivist approach toward heritage as two important implications for this research, (1) the question is not "whether sport can be heritage, but rather how is sport heritage constructed" (Ramshaw, 2011, p.4), and (2) the actors' differentiation strategies to distinguish their event from other, more or less, similar events have to be taken into account. Before looking at how HSEs are constructed and differentiated from other sports events, we need to focus on the literature on sport heritage to identify the HSEs' characteristics and how these differentiation strategies are put in place.

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[3] Which aim usually at developing the economy and promoting the image of the host destination.
[4] Both inscribed in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Intangible Cultural Heritage List, www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=fr&pg=00559.

*Sport as Heritage*

For Ramshaw and Gammon (2005), "sport reflects both heritage that occurred (and continues to occur) on the field of play, while also articulating the achievements of athletes, teams and events that go beyond sport and become part of a grander narrative*"* (p.232). This paper is focusing on the second understanding of the linkage between the two concepts, namely sport as heritage and not the heritage of sport. With a growing body of literature sport heritage has, during the last decade, been recognised in many ways. Timothy (2011) presents sporting artefacts and materials that can be considered as heritage resources and the role they played in cultures at different times and spaces. In many cases, sport heritage has been studied through a nostalgic representation of its past. Mason, Duquette and Scherer (2005) looked at how new built sports facilities in North America deliberately embraced a nostalgic imagery of their sporting pasts. In the same way, Gammon (2004) and Gammon and Fear (2007) studied how sports stadia and sporting venues seen as heritage can be used as a tourism resource. Fairley and Gammon (2005) refer to a nostalgic link to sport by presenting sports events which feature former famous players (like the "Trophée des Légendes" played during Roland Garros). Finally, this "romantic" vision of sport can also be seen through sports events trying to recreate the "purity" of past practices, as the Winter Classic in ice hockey, which is a regular-season game played out-door (Ramshaw, 2011).

*Sports Events as Heritage*

Although, different concepts can be linked to the notion of HSEs in the literature, in most of the cases, they do not consider the event as heritage or as having a heritage essence. Under the concept of "Special Events", the notions of "Hallmark Events" and "Signature Events" can be identified. For Getz (2008), "…'hallmark' describes an event that possesses such significance, in terms of tradition, attractiveness, quality, or publicity, that the event provides the host venue, community, or destination with a competitive advantage. Over time, the event and destination can become inextricably linked, such as Mardi Gras and New Orleans" (p.407). The capacity of an event to be seen as an integral part of a destination's brand is very important in a HSE's perspective. Despite the numerous acceptations of "Hallmark Events", the majority of authors (Getz, 2008; Hall, 1989; Jago & Shaw, 1998; Ritchie, 1984) agreed on the fact that they are events limited in time, with a significant scale, attended by a large crowed and focus on a distinct theme. Although for Sofield (2003) "Signature Events" are a sub-division of "Hallmark Events", he distinguishes them by the unique link that they develop with the host destination. For Arcodia and Robb (2000) "Signature suggests the linking of a particular activity with a particular location. […] For example, the running of the bulls is always associated with the Spanish town of Pamplona" (p.157). Therefore, in the collective imagination, the link created between the destination and the activity is so strong that it is almost impossible to transfer the event to a new venue. For Jago and Shaw (1998), the ambiguity between these different notions (special, hallmark and signature) comes from the absence of a clear definition.

A stronger connection between sports events and heritage can be seen through the concept of "Sport Heritage Attractions" (Ramshaw, 2011; Hinch & Ramshaw, 2014). This concept refers to the desire, in North America in the first place, to maintain and sometimes create a link to an idealized and reclaimed sport's past. This nostalgic view of sports events is exemplified in Ramshaw's (2011) study through the "Heritage Classic Ice Hockey Event" and in Fairley and Gammon's (2005) article with the "Delta Tour of Champions" in Tennis and the "Highland Games". Either through former athletes, former sports or former ways to practice a sport, all these events bring the idea of continuity and celebration. These events are also a way to create a grand narrative around the sport itself.

Finally, the notion of "site of memory" developed by Nora (1984) refers both to real or imagined "places" which are connected with specific meanings and associations for a group, and above all, to their emotions. Consequently, it can be seen as a shared symbol supporting social cohesion in groups and societies. For Nora (1984) some sports events, like the Tour de France, are able to crystallize the emotion of a large number of people, and by consequence can be seen as "site of memory". This idea is reinforced by Pfister (2011) analyses that show how, by calling upon emotions and passions, sports events create deep-seated patterns of identification.

As we have just seen, many notions exist to define sports events that have a strong connection to the territory and/or to the past. However, the link to a heritage dimension of the event remains rare and

refers usually to some tangible aspects of the event or to a nostalgic vision of sport. In this regard, Fleuriel and Raspaud's (2011) study about the cycling race "Paris-Roubaix" is interesting and somehow different. This research focus, among other things, on the safeguarding of the heritage elements from the race, identify as the cobblestones' areas and Roubaix's velodrome. For the authors, the preservation in this case is problematic due to the intangible dimension of the object, that is to say, a sports event. If the safeguarding concerns tangible objects - the cobblestones and the velodrome - it is the event that gives them a specific value. In this study, the heritage essence of the event has been clearly identified. However, because the focus of this research on Paris-Roubaix is not HSEs, the authors do not develop the potential heritage dimension that some sports events might have.

In a broader perspective, to perceive events as potential intangible heritage objects is recent. In 2003, UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. In its article 2 (UNESCO, 2003), the convention recognizes "festive events" as potential manifestation of intangible heritage. If some sport practices have been inscribed in the list, like equitation in the French tradition[5], only one sports event has been inscribed so far, Kirkpinar oil wrestling festival in Turkey. However, Kirkpinar's nomination form (UNESCO, 2010) points out the cultural aspects of the event more than its sporting dimension. Indeed, the intangible heritage domains represented in the event are the cazgirs' prayers, the various rituals and practices, the handmade costumes and the display in front of an audience (UNESCO, 2010, pp.2-3). This non-recognition of the heritage dimension of sports events, at least out of their cultural aspects, can also be explained by the fact that to date HSEs have been under-research.

### Heritage Sporting Events

The first definition of HSE - recognised as a sports event with a heritage essence - has been only recently made by Chappelet (2014):

> [a heritage sporting event] belongs to a particular place and returns to it regularly, typically every year or sometimes every two years, without interruption apart from an extraordinary situation. The owner of the event is a local entity, usually a non-profit association or a community, at least not a national or international organisation. (p.29)

To this definition, the author adds that it is only through a long historical process that the event can be seen as a heritage object. From the definition and this last comment, it is possible to identify the following characteristics of HSE, (1) its recurrence in a specific location, (2) its ownership by local entity, and (3) its longevity. These three characteristics have in common to reinforce the territorial integration of the event, which can favours, over time, its recognition as heritage. As presented by Chappelet (2014), the recurrence of the event allows to capitalise from year to year on the knowledge required to organise the event. This capitalisation makes the event organisation more efficient and effective over time. The local ownership removes the necessity to be a candidate to host the event. It reinforces the relation between the event owner and the territory, while removing the uncertainty and the costs involved by the candidature process. Chappelet (2014) also highlights the importance of the localisation. For the author, the location is an integral dimension of HSE, the name of the host destination being often included in the event's name (Wimbledon Championship, Boston Marathon or Palio di Siena). This relation between the event and its location offers stronger visibility for the host destination and the event, both benefiting from the brand equity of the other. The longevity of the event will strengthen this relation and over time inextricably linked them together as previously presented by Getz (2008).

Other elements developed in the academic literature can be associated to these first characteristics on our progression toward a definition of HSEs. Bessy (2014, pp.38-44) highlights, in a research on events' innovations, three types of developments that HSEs imply: on their concept, their governance, and their communication.

For the author (Bessy, 2014), HSEs usually look for a strategic position that allows them to be differentiated from traditional sports events either by the values they convey, their strong territorial anchoring or the specificities of their form of competition. Similarly, in a study about heritage and

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[5] Inscribed in 2011, www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00011&RL=00440.

geographical indications, Boisseaux et al. (2012) observe that all the heritage goods of their study are trying to differentiate from more or less similar products. It is the adjustment[6] between the constituent elements of the object (namely the know-how, infrastructures and receptions dispositions[7]) that will allow its differentiation and the creation of a heritage resource (Boisseaux et al., 2012, p.21). It is the connection to this resource that will give the object its heritage value. In the case of sports events, Bessy (2014) observes that this differentiation allows the events to go beyond the image of a traditional sports competition to become a territorial resource able to contribute to the local development.

Bessy (2014) also perceives an innovative aspect in the governance of HSE. For the author, the governance of HSEs favours the development of partnerships between local actors, secure resources and regulates conflicts. In the same way, for Maltese (2010) sports events have the capacity to bring together many stakeholders who contribute in terms of resources, even if their interest might differ. The growth of the event's stakeholders, as well as the construction of a common culture between these actors, will enable the sustainability of the event while reinforcing the collaborations. In a governance perspective, this might lead to the creation of an urban regime, knowing that this shape of social network is favoured by the presence of a sports hosting strategy (Pinson, 2012).

Finally, Bessy (2014) also points out the innovation in terms of communication from HSE. For the author, this communication is based on a specific message adapted for the territory and highlighting its uniqueness. The message is not only constructed for external actors, but also for local residents by referring to their identity. The focus of the communication is not only the event, but the whole region. Consequently, the host destination and the event are both more visible. Of course, in terms of heritage, the communication will also influence how potential consumers perceive the event and its authenticity[8]. This is an important element. To be legitimate in the eyes of the population HSEs need to be perceived as authentic, either by showing continuity to the past, either by being linked to some specific features from the territory's identity.

*Characteristics of HSE*

From the different elements identified in the literature, we can distinguish the following variables of HSEs: the recurrence, the specific location, the ownership and/or organisation by local entities, the longevity and the differentiation strategy[9]. The first four variables have in common to reinforce the sustainability of the event on the territory. The differentiation strategy is adding value to the event by constructing and/or reinforcing its authenticity in the eyes of the population.

The recurrence, the specific location, the governance and the longevity of the event are interrelated. As seen previously, these four variables are influencing the sustainability of the event, which can be seen as one of the main characteristics of HSE as presented in *Table 1*. The recurrence in a specific location helps the population to identify to the event and to connect the event with the destination. The local ownership of the event and its organisation by a network of regional stakeholders enable to secure resources, regulate conflicts and build a common culture between the actors. All these elements are reinforcing the sustainability of the event. Finally, the longevity of the event is both inferred by the previous variables and necessary for them to develop. For instance, it is only over time that a proper network of actors can be created around the event. In the same time, a strong network will reinforce and sustain the event in return. The sustainability, observed through these four variables, is necessary to identify an event as a HSE, but not sufficient. Indeed, many sports events can be durably established in a territory and cover some or all the variables identified without being recognised as heritage. Therefore, it is only through the differentiation strategy that it is possible to observe the construction of the event as a heritage object.

In both Bessy (2014) and Boisseaux et al. (2012) studies, the differentiation strategy is coming from a desire by the organisers to distinguish their event (respectively their object) from more or less similar events. In the case of HSEs, it will reinforce the perceived authenticity of the event, making it more than a traditional sporting competition. For Boisseaux et al. (2012, p.17), this differentiation is taking place through the interaction of three elements: the know-how, the infrastructures and the reception dispositions. The "know-how" refers to the capacity of the actors to produce and/or maintain the good.

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[6] Made over time.
[7] These dimensions will be discussed later.
[8] That might be constructed or reinforce through the communication (Wang, 1999).
[9] *Table 1* shows the characteristics, the variables and some of the literature used to identify these elements.

The authors include in it the necessary equipment to apply this specific know-how. For instance, the "Patrouille des Glaciers", a ski mountaineering race organised every two years by the Swiss Army, is a good example of this particular know-how. Originally organised to test the abilities of the soldiers, the race is now open to the public. For the Swiss Army, it is a great opportunity to demonstrate their abilities in difficult conditions, while in the same time using the event to communicate on a positive function of the army. The "infrastructures" are all the tangible elements that the destruction will lead to the disappearance of the event (that is to say, the land, buildings, etc.). They are also used by the organisers to express the uniqueness of the event. As an example, it is almost impossible to imagine the French Open not being held on red clay or even being moved to another location than Roland Garros Stadium[10]. Finally, the "reception dispositions" refer to the consumption and/or appreciation of the good by the actors, including the belief in its special value or, in the case of HSEs, in its authenticity. The authenticity can be constructed through the narrative and myths surrounding the event. In the case of Wimbledon, the dress code (players only allowed to play in white) or the need for players to bow or curtsy to the Royal Family (slightly changed in 2003), are symbols and traditions part of the tournament grand narrative that makes it unique in the eyes of the public. The whole idea behind the differentiation strategy is for the event to be perceived as an authentic aspect of the territory in the eyes of the public and the participants. This perceived authenticity will give the event legitimacy.

Table 1. HSEs' characteristics

| Characteristics | Variables | | Literature |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sustainability | Recurrence | | Chappelet (2014), Giampiccoli, Lee & Nauright (2013); Jago & Shaw (1998); Parent, Eskerud & Hanstad (2012) |
| | Location | | Arcodia & Robb (2000);  Bessy (2014); Chappelet (2014); Coulom & Bessy (2014); Di Méo (2007); Getz (2008), Sofield (2003) |
| | Governance | | Bessy (2014); Chappelet (2014); Cometti & Dulac (2008); Di Méo (2007); Dormois (2008); Dowding (2001); Fleuriel & Raspaud (2011); Maltese (2010); Pinson (2012) |
| | Longevity | | Boisseaux et al. (2012); Chappelet (2014); Di Méo (2007); Parent, Eskerud & Hanstad (2012); Ramshaw (2011) |
| Authenticity | Differentiation strategy | Know-how | Bérard & Marchenay (2004); Bessière (1998); Bessy (2014); Boisseaux et al. (2012); Faure (1998); UNESCO (2003) |
| | | Infrastructures | Bessy (2014); Boisseaux et al. (2012); Faure (1998); Fleuriel and Raspaud (2011); Ramshaw & Gammon (2005); Tardy (2003); UNESCO (2003) |
| | | Reception dispositions | Bessy (2014); Boisseaux et al. (2012); Di Méo (2007); Faure (1998); Groll (2013); Pfister (2011); Ramshaw (2011); Tardy (2003); UNESCO (2003) ; Wang (1999) |

*HSE as a territorial resource*

The view of HSE as a territorial resource is coming from the evolution of the concept of heritage. As seen previously, heritage was originally linked to more tangible objects and broadens afterwards to intangible objects. For Landel and Senil (2009), heritage gives specific qualities to the entities it is associated to. These qualities enable the corresponding objects to be differentiated on open markets. As we have seen before, HSEs fall within this logic.

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[10] Although in 2010, the French tennis federation (FFT) announced that they were considering moving the tournament to a new venue outside Paris. Amid charges of bluffing and brinkmanship, the FFT decided to renovate the current venue.

Gumuchian and Pecqueur (2007) define a territorial resource as "a constructed characteristic of a specific territory in a perspective of development" (p.5). Furthermore, the authors distinguish initial resources that are unique to the territory (cultural, natural, historical, etc.), from accomplished resources that are resulting from actors' actions. Linked to HSEs, we can see that the sustainability's variables previously identified are related to initial resources, while the differentiation strategy is what will transform a sports event in a HSE, and by consequence in an accomplished resource. This last remark can be linked to Boisseaux et al. (2012) research. For these authors, the differentiation process enables the transformation of a good, more or less similar to other goods in the market, in a heritage resource that represents a competitive advantage for the territory.

To see HSEs as territorial resources gives us information about the spectrum of events that the notion might cover. For Coulom and Bessy (2014), to be identified as a territorial resource, an event cannot be exogenous and generic. For the authors, "it is the difference between exported events that only exploit the local resources and events constructed by and for the territory" (p.170). Therefore, even if major sports events have a heritage dimension by their long history, they will not be considered as HSEs in this research. These major events represent resources that are transferable regardless of the local characteristics. On the contrary, HSEs are territorial resources that are linked to the host destination (Coulom & Bessy, 2014) and can become over time inseparable from the territory (Chappelet, 2014).

*The construction of HSE*

From the characteristics previously identified and the understanding of HSE as a resource, it is possible to create the following framework to visualise the transformation of HSE from a sports event to a territorial resource.

Figure 1. Construction of Heritage Sporting Events
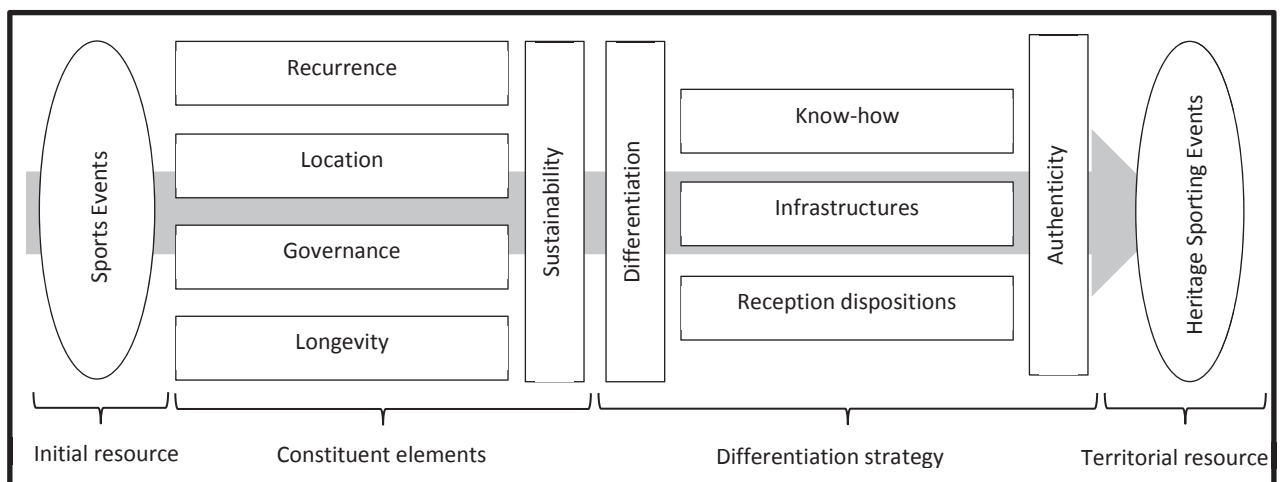


In the framework represented in *Figure 1*, the constituent elements are important for two reasons. First, by reinforcing each other, they ensure the sustainability of the event in the territory, creating over time a strong identification between the host destination and the event. Sustainability does not only refer to the longevity of the event, but also to its capacity to adapt and evolve with the context. For instance, by being usually owned by local entities (Chappelet, 2014), a change in the elected officials might impact the organisation of the event. Therefore, the network surrounding the HSE needs to be strong enough to evolve and to integrate new stakeholders. Second, they indicate us potential HSE. As stated before, they are necessary to identify an event as a HSE, but not sufficient. Therefore, to be able to observe the differentiation strategies put in place by event organisers, potential HSEs need to be identified in the first place.

The narrative, and therefore the communication, is very important in the differentiation process. It is used to build and/or reinforce the event's authenticity. To be seen as legitimate by the population and the media, the heritage value of the event needs to seem authentic. Of course, as stated by Wang (1999) this authenticity can be constructed. Paris-Roubaix and Vendée Globe are interesting examples in how

narratives can reinforce the perceived authenticity of an event[11]. Both events are known under nicknames, "The Hell of the North" or "The Everest of the Seas", which are reinforcing their uniqueness. Many race events, often told as anecdotes, are also becoming over time part of the grand narrative of the event, giving a heroic dimension to its participants or at least to the winner. These different narrative elements being used by the official communication of the event and the media are reinforcing the impression among the population that the event is unique. Pfister (2011) observes that the media's part is even more important considering that the narrative is usually endorsed retrospectively. Therefore, the media and the media coverage of the event are essential in distinguishing sports events and making them part of the collective memory of a group (Groll, 2013). From an initial natural resource, which has a potential for the territory, the event is becoming a constructed resource that might lead to local development (Coulom & Bessy, 2014).

*HSE Definition*

Based on the process presented in *Figure 1* and the different elements identified in the literature, it is possible to offer a definition of the concept of HSEs:

> Heritage Sporting Events are sustainable sports events that developed over time a strong relation to their host destination and were able to distinguish themselves from other sports events to be seen as authentic, and therefore, legitimate, in the eyes of a given population.

This definition highlights the important dimensions of HSEs previously identified. It points out the sustainability of the event through its constituent elements. The capacity of the event to be distinguished from other events and to be seen as authentic and legitimate is also highlighted. The new dimension introduced is the "given population." This is an important element that needs to be taken into account. For Ramshaw and Gammon (2005) to brand an object, a place or a tradition as "heritage" suggests that it has some cultural significance for a group. Therefore, HSEs can be local, regional or international events according to the population who identify to it. International HSEs, like Wimbledon, might even be the exception, identification being usually stronger at the local or regional levels. For Gravari-Barbas (1996), the identification of a group is important for the legitimacy of the object and its safeguarding. In that regard, Fleuriel and Raspaud (2011) study about Paris-Roubaix is interesting. They show how Amaury Sport Organisation, the private company that owns the competition, emphasizes the heritage dimension of the race and its signification for the regional population to ensure public financing for the preservation and the maintenance of the cobblestones' areas. Furthermore, it refers also to the article 2 of the UNESCO convention on intangible heritage (UNESCO, 2003) were a heritage object needs to be recognised by a community, a group or individuals to be potentially acknowledged by the institution.

**Discussion**

Based on an exploratory research on Heritage Sporting Events, this paper presented the theoretical construction of this emerging concept. This is a first very important step on a broader study on HSEs. On the one hand, it enables to understand the construction process of HSEs from a sports event to a territorial resource as presented in *Figure 1*. On the other hand, it allows the definition of a new field of research that needs to be further studied.

The constituent elements that sustain the event in the host destination (namely the recurrence, the location, the governance and the longevity) enable to identify sports events with a potential heritage dimension. In a research perspective, this is an important element. When a specific label exists, like the world heritage by UNESCO or to another extend the protected designation of origin by the European Union, objects with a heritage dimension are already identified. As stated before, sports events are usually not recognised as such. Therefore, researches on HSEs need to have tools at their disposal to identify potential heritage events. In future studies, the four variables that sustain the event in the territory (presented in *Table 1*) need to be applied to different cases. It will give the opportunity to observe the configurations in which HSEs might exist. For instance, according to Chappelet's (2014) definition, a HSE comes back "*every year or sometimes every two years*" (p.29) to its host destination. However, one could say that an event that happens every four years, like the Vendée Globe, creates

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[11] For more information about these events, please refer to Damien and Dorvillé (2011).

more expectations by being rare and consequently, might develop a stronger connection with the participants and the public. Of course, in Chappelet's perspective this recurrence on a year or two-year basis only favours the sustainability of the event, but should not be seen as a distinctive characteristic of HSEs. Similarly, the localisation of the event might differ from one case to another. Some of the HSEs identify by Chappelet (2014, p.26) are always taking place in the same venue (Palio di Siena), while other have only the same final location (Paris-Roubaix). Of course, these comments should be understood in the reference to the construction process presented in *Figure 1*. The constituent elements shape and sustain the event. It is only the differentiation process that will enable the event to be seen as authentic.

The differentiation process offers the opportunity to observe the construction of a sports event in a heritage object. The know-how, the infrastructures and the reception dispositions presented previously are always in interaction. The actors surrounding the event use them to communicate and to differentiate their event. Of course, according to how the message is received by the audience and the general context of the event, the organisers might modify their communication. In this regard, the "Paris-Dakar Rally" is an interesting example. Organised since the 1970s, this rally raid was usually, as suggested by the name, going from Paris to Dakar, Senegal. Due to security reasons and a growing protest against the race, the event was moved to South America in 2009. Before that date, the communication was, of course, a mix between the three dimensions of the differentiation process, but with an emphasis on the route through the North African Desert (*the infrastructures*). This can be seen through the "official" story behind the creation of the race[12], almost told as a myth, and the motto of Thierry Sabine, the founder, "a challenge for those who go a dream for those who stay behind." Since they had to change the "infrastructure," the communication also had to adapt. Therefore, the official communication is now highlighting the human adventure (*reception dispositions*) behind the race and the safety dispositions (*know-how*) during the whole route[13]. This example shows how the differentiation strategy needs to be understood as a dynamic process. If in the Dakar's case, the communication had to change due to a relocation of the race, a modification of the event's network - either by adding new stakeholders, either by a modification of the predominance in the network - might also impact the differentiation strategy. These two examples highlights that the constituent elements and the differentiation strategy are related. Of course, this relation and the whole process in general need to be further researched.

### Conclusion

This paper introduced the notion of Heritage Sporting Event. Through an exploratory research, the construction process of a sports event to a heritage object was presented. The sustainability of the event on the territory, observed through its recurrence, location, governance and longevity, allows the identification of sports events with a potential heritage dimension. The differentiation process, made possible by the communication on the specific know-how, infrastructures and reception dispositions of the event, gives an added value to the event and transforms it in a territorial resource. As such, HSEs can represent a competitive advantage for their host destination. In that regard, the event and the territory being inexorably linked, they both benefit from the brand equity of the other.

Therefore, HSE could be an opportunity for local authorities engaged in sports events hosting strategies. These strategies are usually based on exogenous resources (international one-off events), but this logic is challenged. On the one hand, it is more and more difficult for territories to be designated to host major sports events (due to the growing competition and the gigantism of those events). On the other hand, major events are questioned by the population and the public authorities. The demonstrations during the 2013 Confederations Cup in Brazil or the vote against the 2022 Olympics in Switzerland by the population of the region are some examples showing that the logic behind the sports events hosting strategies might need to be rethought. In that regard, HSEs represent an opportunity to base the promotion and development of the region on endogenous resources that might lead to the sustainability of the hosting strategies. Of course, if public authorities are invited to consider HSEs for the promotion and branding of their territory, further researches are needed to better understand their construction process and their impacts on the territory.

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12 www.dakar.com /dakar/2015/us/history.html

13 www.dakar.com

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