

# Organizational Change in the International Olympic Committee: From Superstructure to Base

Dwight H. Zakus  
University of Regina

The International Olympic Committee (IOC), the governing body of the Olympic movement, has evolved from a small, ideologically-dominated group to a large, economically-dominated multinational corporation over its history. This paper presents a preliminary overview of this historical change. Using Heydebrand's organizational analysis it can be shown that the history of the Olympic movement is the reverse of what is normally assumed in the normal world of organizations. Whereas most organizations arise out of or as the result of some economic need or concern (objective basis), the Olympic movement started as a "hegemonic" organization (subjective basis). Although this is common with sport organizations, which are generally classed as "unproductive" entities in Marxist terms, the IOC has a unique position and power base. The notion of the movement starting or being the outcome of a hegemony has been discussed in a previous paper. This paper describes the nature of this early formation and then proceeds to show how the organization changed into a major economic concern of worldwide proportions. That is, the historical background of the movement will be analyzed to understand when the "processual", or organization as activity or process, was predominant to a point where the "structural", or organization as an established structure, has become predominant. This change can be seen in the size of the movement's membership, organizational structure, and the other aspects of organization. Based on the preliminary historical data, the period of 1896 to the mid 1920s was one in which the Olympic movement was quite small, basically led by Baron de Coubertin, and structurally informal. From the 1920s to the post-World War II period, the movement expanded widely, and came to have many features of a bureaucratic structure. It is from this point that we can assert that the Olympic movement changed from its original informal form to a formal structurally and economically viable international organization. Today we know it as a very rich, self-perpetuating, multi-national corporation which has gone beyond, but not abandoned, its original hegemonically-based form.