PRO/CON: Should the Olympics stay in one place?

By Tribune News Service, adapted by Newsela staff on 08.18.16

PRO: Billions of dollars could be used to help other people

The Olympics are in need of financial help.

There’s nothing better at the end of summer than cheering on American swimmers Katie Ledecky and Michael Phelps, or watching the United States women’s gymnastics team. But the price tag for hosting the games has soared too high. That’s why we need to consider permanent sites for the Summer and Winter Games.

The Olympics has been a financial disaster for Brazil. Still, it has gone on as scheduled in Rio de Janeiro, even though the country had to pay for a security force of 85,000 soldiers and police officers because of street crime. They’ve gone on even though it would have been better for Brazil to spend the money on affordable housing and clean water than on expensive new stadiums. And they’ve gone on even though the final price tag will probably exceed $20 billion.

In this July 2015 photo, the Olympic Park for the 2016 Olympics is under construction in Rio de Janeiro. The Olympics offers 28 sports, 300 events, 10,500 athletes and, with the exception of five football venues, are all packed into Rio for 17 days. The Paralympics add two more weeks, and thousands more athletes. AP Photo/Leo Correa, File
“We are in a moment in the world where we need to be reasonable with the way we spend money,” said Fernando Meirelles, who directed the opening ceremonies. “When 40 percent of the homes in Brazil have no sanitation, you can’t really be spending (billions) for a show.”

That’s a message that the International Olympic Committee needs to hear.

Choosing A Permanent Place

The idea of permanent Olympic sites dates back more than 30 years.

In 1984, F. Don Miller and William Simon of the U.S. Olympic Committee proposed permanent sites. They wanted one each in the Americas, Europe, Asia and Africa. According to their plan, the Olympic Games would switch between them.

Where exactly should the permanent sites be? Why not ask the athletes? Former and current medal winners would know the top facilities in their sport.

It might make sense for Greece to be among the permanent sites, too. That’s where the Olympics started more than 3,000 years ago.

What would this change accomplish?

First, it would end the insane competition to host the games. It would help put a stop to the bribes and corrupt behavior that some cities use to win this bidding war. More importantly, it would allow cities to instead spend money on helping their people.

Saving Cities Billions Of Dollars

Montreal in 1976, Athens in 2004 and now Rio have spent their citizens’ money for the chance to throw a party for rest of the world. These cities spent billions of dollars they didn’t have. Unfortunately, the cost to host the games continues to rise. The 2008 Summer Games in Beijing cost more than $42 billion. Six years later, Sochi in Russia spent more than $50 billion for the Winter Games.

Costs will only continue to rise with the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo. There, one new stadium will cost $2 billion. That is even higher than the construction costs of Yankee Stadium in New York and MetLife Stadium in New Jersey.

The IOC gets a lot of money from selling the rights to advertise at the games and to broadcast them on TV. It could give this money to the permanent sites to help them stay up to date. Then, new facilities for the next Summer or Winter Games wouldn’t be needed.

Of course, the world doesn’t usually operate in such a logical, fair way. But by using permanent sites, the IOC would also have a chance to improve its bad reputation. Fewer costs for facilities would mean more money for everyone. IOC officials could give money to countries in need of medication or food assistance.
Such programs would help fix the image of the games. The Olympics have been full of scandals in recent years. Athletes have illegally used drugs to be faster or stronger. In Rio, there have been reports of polluted water. The IOC should be eager to do something to make the organization look better.

Now’s their chance.

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CON: The Olympics allow all people to feel national pride

It would be wrong to host the Olympic Games only in Greece, or in permanent sites on five continents. This would reduce the majesty and the international quality of the Games.

This year's Rio Games have faced many problems that have led some people to call for new ways of planning the games. Currently, nations compete for the chance to host the Olympics. Some think they should be held in permanent facilities in North and South America, Europe, Asia and Africa, instead.

This would be a serious mistake. It would deny countries an opportunity to show their national pride and improve their economies. Most importantly, it would deprive them of the chance to make history.

The Olympics represent a country's ultimate opportunity to show its national identity to the world.

Celebrating Recovery From War And Ruin

For example, the 1964 Tokyo Olympics marked an important moment in Japan's history. The games restored Japan's national pride after the country's defeat in World War II. It also started Japan's long, successful climb toward becoming an economic power.

Those Olympics helped rebuild Japan's public transportation network. A high-speed train connecting Tokyo to Osaka, a city more than 300 miles away, started running just days before the games. The main section of the Metropolitan Expressway, the highway system in central Tokyo, was renovated. Tokyo's television broadcasting system was also improved. This led many Japanese citizens to purchase new TVs.

During the 2012 Olympics in Great Britain, polls showed that a majority of British men felt more national pride because their country was hosting the games. This is important for a nation.
Bigger Than The Games Themselves

The Olympics have also made history for reasons much bigger than the games themselves.

The 1936 Olympics were held in Berlin. Adolf Hitler, Nazi Germany’s leader, wanted to show the world that Aryan people, meaning whites who came from Northern European, were superior to everyone else. An African-American athlete named Jesse Owens proved him wrong. Owens was the most successful athlete of the 1936 Games.

Owens also became the first American to win four track and field gold medals at a single Olympics. His record was not broken for 48 years.

The fact that Owens accomplished this in Berlin made his achievements even more meaningful. Hitler wouldn’t have been as humiliated if the Olympics had been held in another country.

Olympics Belong To The World

Another example happened in 1956. That year, the Olympics were held in Melbourne, Australia. Back then, the rest of the world did not know much about Australia. Holding the Summer Games there made the rest of the world more excited to watch them.

An armed conflict in Hungary had threatened to ruin the 1956 Games. That year, the Soviet Union sent tanks into Hungary. People in Hungary were revolting against the communist policies that the Soviet Union supported. In a communist system, the government owns all of the businesses in a country. The Soviet Union was trying to crush the revolution in Hungary.

Shortly afterward, the Soviet water polo team competed against the Hungarians.

Hungary got the world’s attention by winning by 4-0. The match turned ugly after a Hungarian player was pulled bleeding from the pool with a deep gash over his eye from a Soviet head butt. But the brave Hungarians persevered.

The Olympics belong to the world, not to any single nation. Any major city that wants to pay for the Olympics should be able to host them.

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