

AVENAS Gauthier
GIARD Maële

Grenoble's Winter Olympic Games 1968



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D'URBANISME
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1 Introduction

Since 1992, with Barcelona Olympic games, a new model is taking shape : hosting important sporting events, can permit the city development and can be a solution to some of its issues. However, we can notice that well before, Olympic games were a response to a certain demand. That is the case, for instance, of Grenoble, that hosted Winter Games of 1968. Our approach is about seeing how the hosting of an important event permitted to reorganize this city, by promoting its development and by increasing tourism as an economic resource. For this purpose, we used several different methods. First of all, we have adopted a historical approach, in order to understand the issues surrounding the hosting of the Olympic Games. Then, the point is to see how this is put into practice in the development of the city and its surroundings. In order to ensure this, we studied several maps and photographs. Finally, we inquired about the current conditions of infrastructures that have been created 50 years ago. Our hypothesis is as follows : the Olympic Games permitted to deal with some challenges faced by Grenoble, but paradoxically, the city is currently having new issues linked with its urban planning.

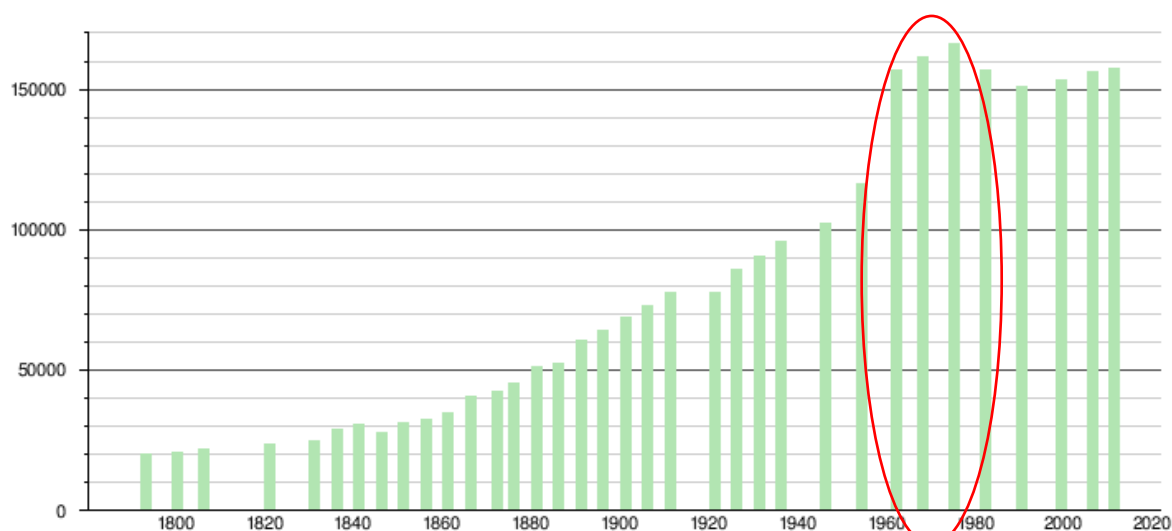
Consequently, the positive heritage of Olympic Games should be qualified. That is why we are going to study this heritage, and to analyze the empowering effects (particularly at the regional level) permitted by the hosting of the Olympic Games.

2 Context

For the first time of its history, in 1968, Grenoble applied for the winter Olympic Games. The other rivals were Calgary (Canada), Lahti (Finland), Sapporo (Japan), Oslo (Norway) and Lake Placid (USA). It was the second French City to host the Olympic Games, after Chamonix in 1924. The French state supported the city in its submission because Charles de Gaulle (French president between 1959 and 1969), wanted to increase French prestige and to modernize ski resorts, in order to develop tourism.

But, at the time, the city was an industrial, rather the current mountain city. The application of Grenoble for the Olympic Games is based on its dynamism and modernism, added to its proximity with different sites. After Second World War, Grenoble knew a big population increase, as we can see on the graph below. With its University and its nuclear research pole, the city seemed very modern and dynamic.

Demographic increasing at Grenoble



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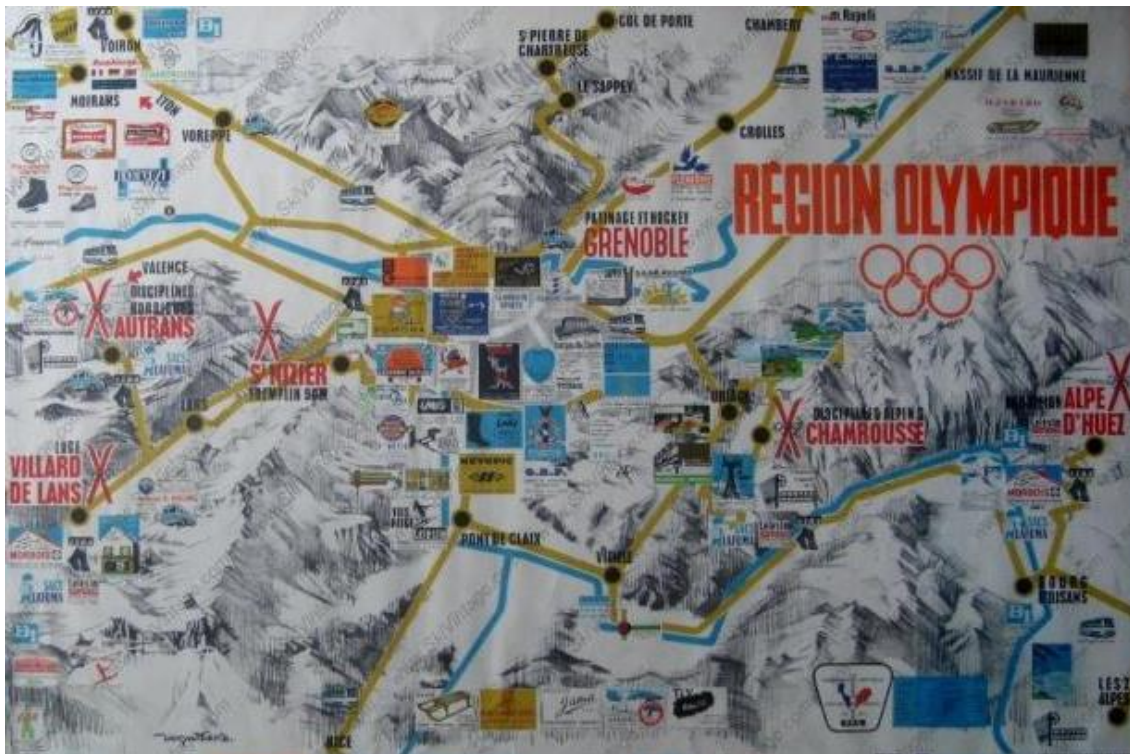
But, the city lacked urban facilities and transport networks. Indeed, in 1964, a ministerial report claimed that the urban equipment of Grenoble fitted for a city of 80.000 inhabitants, while Grenoble was home to 300.000 inhabitants. At the same time, the mountains near Grenoble were interesting for the French medical system. In fact, France was late in the fight against the tuberculosis. Mountains appeared as strategic places to put sick people far from the cities, in order to avoid contaminations. Furthermore, the good mountain air seemed beneficial to the patients during their cure. But, this solution, combined to existing ski resorts, created poles of attraction around the city and prevented the city from having a material and a social unity. This preoccupation linked with Olympic Games explained why the sixties were a period of transition time for Grenoble.

Through its position in the mountains, the city had a potential for property development. The sports event marked the wishes of the both city councillors and of national politicians to realise this potential. Unlike today in Stratford at London, the event did not aim at an urban regeneration of one district but at the creation of a new image for the city and the region. The city already projected itself in a future of skiing tourism and chemistry research and industry. This event permitted the city to create a new economy. For instance, we can think of new international ski labels such as Rossignol and Salomon. But the modern morphology was not already designed, that's why, the urban challenge was to build the city intelligently according to its prospects.

3 Event description

First of all, the major characteristic of this event is that Winter Olympic Games of Grenoble took place in a valley for the first time, and not in a ski resort. The city is at 200 m of altitude. Consequently, it couldn't host the majority of the winter activities. For that reason, most of the competitions took place in ski resorts around Grenoble. Indeed, only disciplines on ice could be organized in the city center. Most of the sites which received this event were in Isère department.

Map with all sites of the Grenoble's winter Olympic Games event

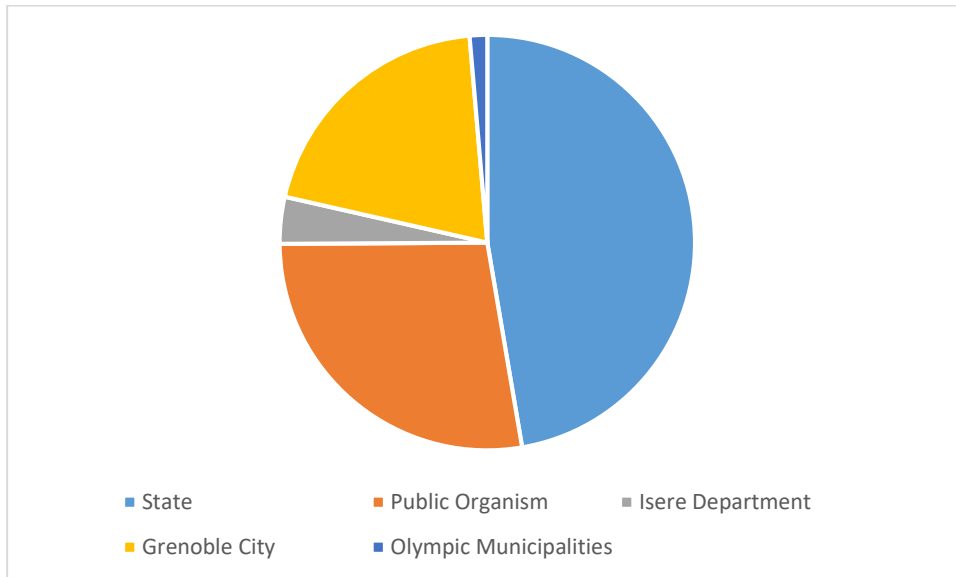


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These Games, organized during fifteen days, gathered more than one thousand athletes, representing thirty seven countries. It was the first time there were so many countries. That's why this event created new challenges. First of all, France wanted to gain power in winter sports. In fact, with its material and geographic capacities, France was able to shine, and to beat Norway in order to obtain the games, France obtained the best results of its winter sports History. In addition, it was a means for the state to create a central place specialized in winter sports. For the city, this event marked the ambition to design a new morphology and it was the opportunity to become the capital of ski resorts. Also, it was the possibility to create new buildings for the Olympic Games and then recycle them in order to meet the lack of infrastructures due to the population increase of the city.

For this event, the total budget was around one billion Francs, which is equivalent to 200 million euros. This investment concerns transport infrastructure, buildings for the competitions, buildings to host competitors, buildings for the media and all other equipments of the Olympic village. The state has financed the majority of the budget. We can also notice that public organisms like SNCF (the national railway company) participated to the financing. In addition, the Isere department, Grenoble and all Olympic municipalities participated too. We can see the repartition of the budget below.

Repartition of the financing

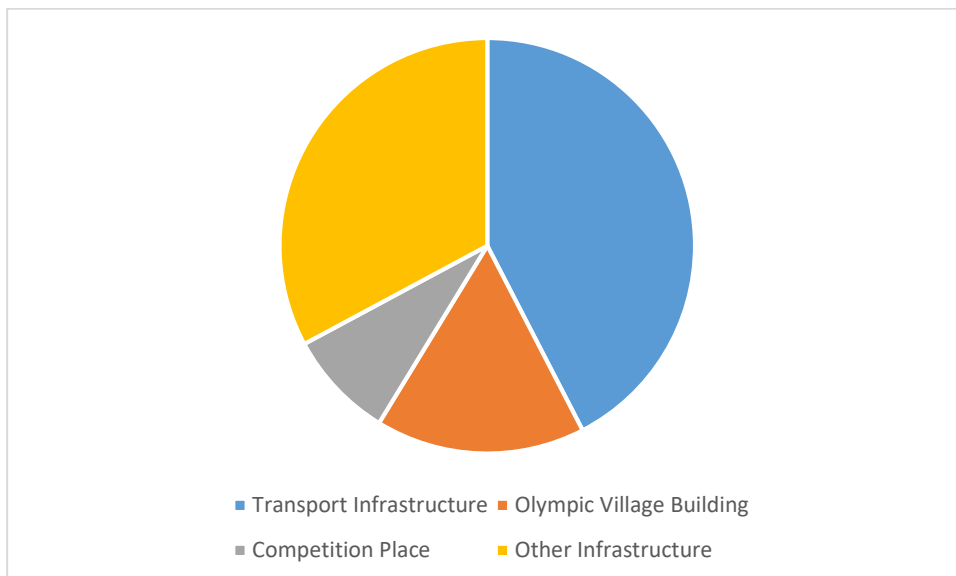


Author: AVENAS Gauthier & GIARD Maële

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We can see, below, that the majority of the budget was invested in transport networks and other infrastructures. These buildings and infrastructures were intended to be used after the event to develop the city. So, we can deduce that more than half of the budget was invested for the future of the city and not for the event.

Repartition of the budget



Author: AVENAS Gauthier & GIARD Maële

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4 Analysis

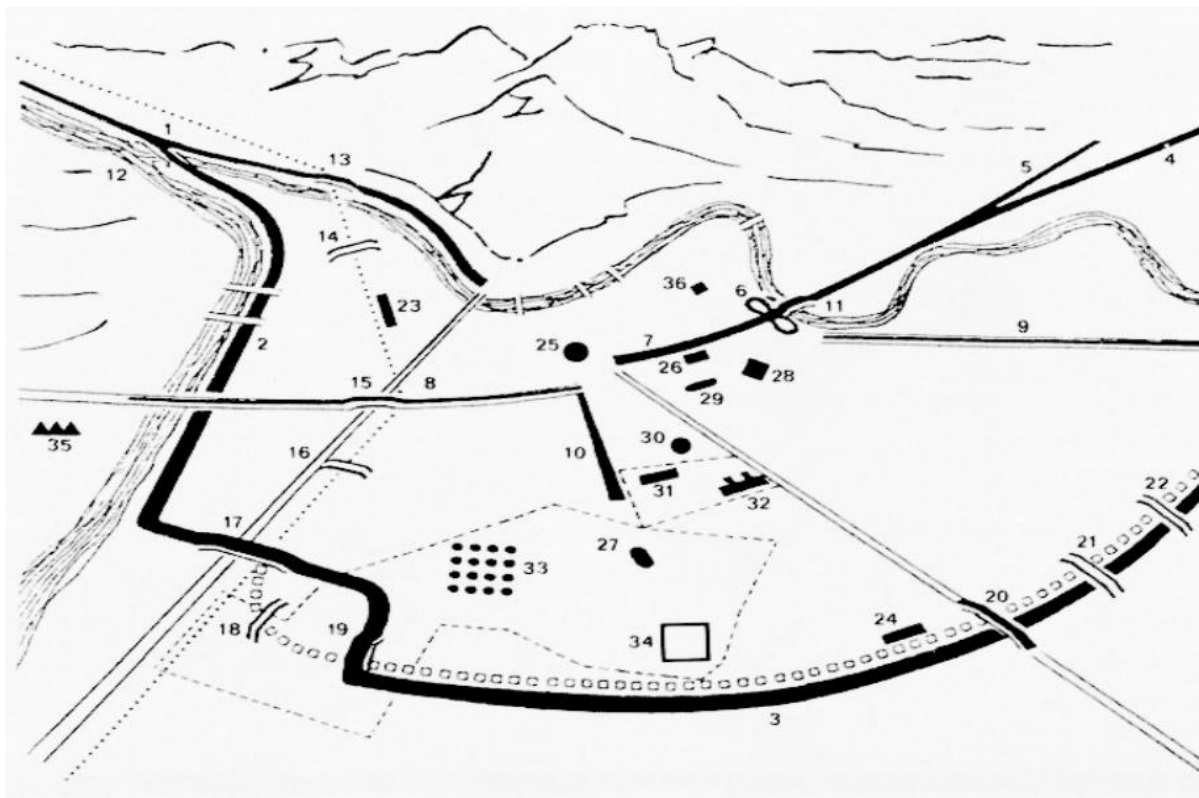
4.1 Urbanity

This event changed the morphology of Grenoble. In fact, a lot of buildings were built for this event, thanks to the Olympic Games financial budget. There were building of three types :

- Buildings for sports
- Buildings for Olympic Games Organization
- Buildings built not for the Olympic Games but to design the new morphology of the city

In addition, there were the infrastructures. If we look at the map, we can realize that the number of transport infrastructures is mostly linked with the change of the city morphology.

Equipments realized for Grenoble's Olympic Games



1. express way A48	14. bridge to cross over railroad network	26. hotel
2. expressway B48	15. higher passage	27. provisory opening Olympic Games stadium
3. belt highway U2	16. higher passage	28. Olympic skating rink
4. expressway A41	17. higher passage	29. fast rink
5. national road N90	18. higher passage	30. conservatory
6. interchange	19. higher passage	31. culture house
7. Jean Pain Boulevard	20. higher passage	32. district Malherbe
8. Boulevards	21. higher passage	33. Olympic village
9. national road N 523	22. higher passage	34. trade palace
10. road Berthelot	23. higher passage	35. fire station
11. bridge "les Sablons"	24. rail road station	36. police place
12. bridge to cross Isere river	25. provisory Olympic road station	
13. hotel		

The link realized between Grenoble and Lyon, Grenoble and Chambéry and the ring road are noticeable because after Olympic Games, the OG infrastructures permitted the development of the city. When we see the number of constructions realized, we can assume that the city could extend thanks to the construction. But, in reality, this only counters the lack existing since fifty years. Also, there were a lot of new road connections realized which linked Grenoble to the ski resorts. The map does not show the new “Grenoble-Mermoz” airport built for the Olympic Games, because the ancient airport was very small and old.

4.2 Social Cohesion

4.2.1 Spatial link

Infrastructures and housing were built rapidly for the event and the hurry due to population increase. But in particular the housing development, built during the games to host the athletes, did not correspond to the needs of the population of Grenoble after the event. That's why, there were a lot of social problem between 1970 and 1990.

Residential constructions, built as part of winter Olympics of 1968 express the implementation of the principles of the Charter of Athens for the urban project of Grenoble as a whole. Indeed, the construction of major urban centres was unique to architectural and urbanistic forces of the time, and crucial in the progressive approach to urban development of high-rise housing units. Likewise, the separation of urban functions and of traffic is a key element in the model of residential realization provided by the Charter of Athens. “Malherbe” and “Ile verte”, which are Olympic Village districts, have public places and green areas between buildings and the street.

As an example, we can highlight the hosting district of the Olympic village. It has been constructed by Maurice Novarina, as part of the Olympic Games (OG), in order to house athletes from all over the world. Planned to be a long-term urbanistic realization, and in the context of housing shortage, the Olympic Village benefits from financial contributions for sporting event infrastructures. This large urban area conceived for the post OG is ambitious and is one of the first implementations of the leading principles of progressive urbanism : social mix, integrated facilities, priority at public spaces.

The urban design is essentially developed in the southern part of the city, and we can notice that once the event was finished, these neighborhoods remain separated from the rest of the city, creating new issues of urban development.

Within this zone of city planning, a distinction can be made between three subgroups shaping autonomous cores. Each of these new centers contains a high rise social housing estate, sporting and/or cultural facilities. In the case of the northern core, the presence of political and administrative structures is linked with the proximity of the city center. The three urban cores are located in the continuity of two strategic axes of the Grenoble road system, in order to ensure good access to the city center. Likewise, these axes permit to join new transport facilities, such as the bypass and highways, which connect new centralities to the rest of the territory. We can easily identify a will to put principles of the Charter of Athens into action, as the historical center is preserved and the sporting facilities are located near private dwellings, in order to limit journey times, for example. The urban design is meant to integrate in the same space the citizens day-to-day functions : living, working, circulating. Nevertheless, in the long-term, it has caused some problems, in particular the exclusion and segregation of some people.

4.2.2 Social link

Symbolic edifices are constructed to show the economical and cultural capacities of the city. Constructed in the interests of well-being, these infrastructures are based on high rise, and favoring luminosity, as the case of Sports Hall, which let in the daylight into the building. Hosting the Olympic Games also permitted to create social bonds in the city. Indeed, the city became the pride of its

inhabitants, and attracted attention for one month. But today, we see more and more the hosting of Olympics as a moment of contest from the citizens (for example : the Rio OG in 2016).

However, we can notice that today, most of the inhabitants ignore that constructions are the fruit of OG. The urban landscape changed considerably, and only the tower hosting the Olympic flame appears as a last witness of this past.

4.3 Values, Identity & Image

Even if buildings constructed for the sporting event were rapidly reused to answer a certain demand, especially in accommodation, we can see that the Olympic inheritance should be balanced.

First of all, the urban shape that has been realised is today outdated, at least in its architecture. Indeed, we notice that the lack of maintenance caused a bad ageing of the buildings, that are no longer the flavour of the month.

Henceforth, they are concerned by several restoration projects, in order to be more attractive and better integrated to the rest of the city.

Moreover, the lack of attention from the politicians to these districts have led the former « Zone urbaine prioritaire » to become a zone impacted by an exclusion process and subject to various social and urban issues since the eighties. Contrary to other comparable situations in France, Villeneuve district is not located at an important distance from Grenoble city center. However, it is completely excluded of this zone in the late eighties and early nineties. During this period, Villeneuve was totally ostracized, and this fact is the direct consequence of the functionalism realised in the context of the urban developments made in the sixties.

With the hosting of the Olympics, Grenoble asserted as the "capital of Alps". We can notice that before being selected for the winter Olympic games, most of its inhabitants were workers who didn't know winter sports, too expensive for them. But with this event, an opening has been made towards this economy. Then, the image of the city and the identity of its inhabitants are renewed. Grenoble concentrates sporting activities, and all the structures linked with skiing are located in the surrounding ski resorts. With the Olympic games, Grenoble has built its metropolitan area and reinforced its central place.

4.4 Environmental Awareness

Today, Grenoble is known to be one of the most polluted cities in France. Its localization is the main cause for this. As a matter of fact, Grenoble is situated at the bottom of a valley fringed by mountains, that is why pollution is accumulating over the city. But this is also due to the fact that the city has notably developed its accessibility, especially by the roads, thus increasing road traffic.

Urban planning workers answered to increase of traffic flows in the city, so some infrastructures conserved their functions after the end of the Olympics. Even if they were not modified in their structure after 1970, they were reinforced by complementary urban interventions, in order to accommodate the more and more important traffic flows. The hosting of OG is in line with a continuity from the politicians : making the city accessible by the roads.

Even if pollution is an important issue, we can notice a decrease of this nuisance in the long term, linked with the closing of polluting industries. Likewise, highways cause important noise pollution. What is more, during high crowded periods, we can see that Grenoble faces congestion.

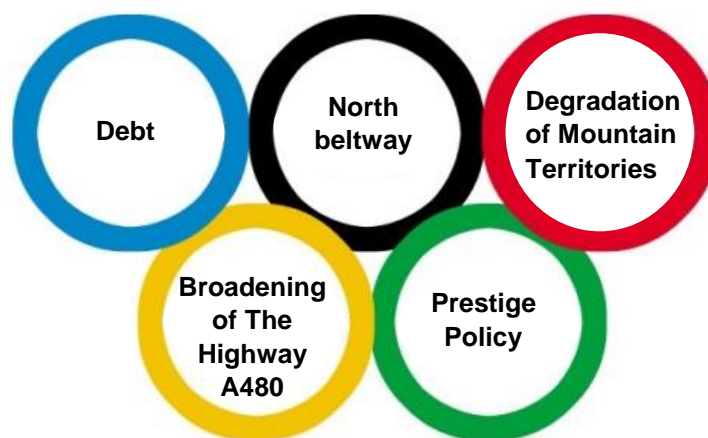
In valleys around Grenoble, we notice an increasing urban sprawl. The city is stretching, and this fact brings to mind some questions. First of all, this creates issues about spatial segregation. Indeed, it is necessary to connect the different parts of the city, in order not to create exclusion and gentrification phenomena. Finally, the urban sprawl can cause environmental issues.

4.5 Economic Competitiveness

Today, Grenoble appears as a door to the Alps Mountains. In fact, by the road, you must cross the city to go to ski resorts of the Isere department. Grenoble also developed the reputation of its University. What is more, it is a real national place for winter sports. Grenoble has also developed its ski industry and has become a European hub in this sector. Moreover, Grenoble currently develops summer tourism and this permits to offer jobs to the inhabitants all the year long. In addition, ski resort villages were created and developed. It permitted to give qualified jobs to replace the industrial job in this region. Thanks to this development, villages near Grenoble don't suffer so much of the industrial activities diminution.

Moreover, in 2012, the city applied for the Olympic Games of 2018. But Annecy (French city) won the bid to go in final against Munich (Germany) and Pyeongchang (South Korea). As we know, Pyeongchang won. It is interesting to ask ourselves why Grenoble didn't win the possibility to host the Olympic Games against Annecy. First off all, politicians didn't support its candidature. Indeed, the mayor of the city presented this candidature like an ecological participation based on solidarity, democracy and environment. Nevertheless, ecologist politicians fought against this project because of the sustainable development. In fact, the hosting of Olympic Games was considered by some as a luxury method to waste more than one billion Euros. Ecologist politicians of Grenoble described this new event as a peril for social disparities and as an environmental damage. To understand these remarks we can see the picture below, that socialist-ecologist politicians published during the candidature.

Picture published by socialist ecologist politicians

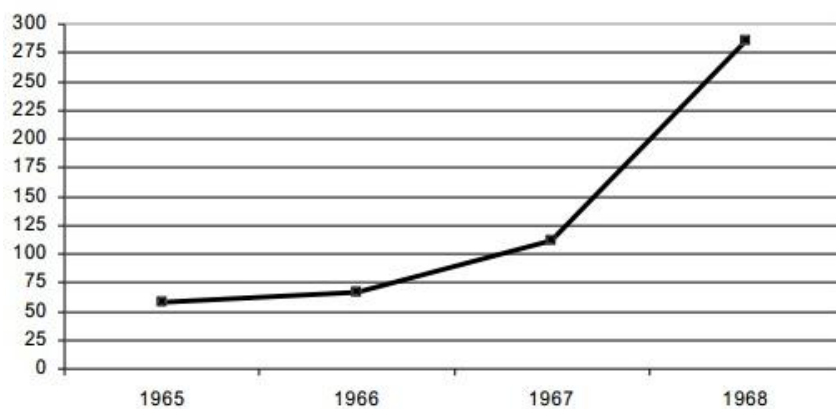


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Local residents who live near the ancient Olympic village have observed an increase of local taxes of 2.4 % each year since the event and during twenty seven year.

At the same time ecologist organisations did research about the economic situation of Grenoble during the preparation and after the Olympic Games of 1968. We can see the administrative account of Grenoble on the graph below. The debt of Grenoble, which appears between 1967 and 1968 is about 160 000 000 Francs (=191 355 761 Euros).

Debt evolution of Grenoble Between 1965 and 1968



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5 Conclusion

At that time, the event has accommodated different regional needs: housing, infrastructure, accessibility... Today it requires new investment to be refresh ageing equipments. The metropolitan area has switched to the tourism economy, particularly winter sport.

Furthermore Olympics Games create a real identity and an image for the city. However citizens and politicians do not seem to be prepared for another event.

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