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Sport Event Policy

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Abstract

Sport event policy refers to a) the public policy on hosting sporting events and b) the policies and strategies of sport governing bodies connected to sporting events. Sport event policies represent the formalisation of administrative procedures involving using public funding as annual budgets for sport events. The importance of governmental authorities and their policies play a major role for winning the bid of major sporting events with close relations with local authorities and sport organisations. The phase with the greatest policy focus in events is the bidding process, where the main goal is to win the bid and obtain rights from an event owner for hosting the event. State sport policy goals connected to hosting events are defined in such a way that the hosting of sport events creates benefits and thus serves broader sport-directed goals in the host city, region, and country. The content of the sport event hosting policies is tightly connected to and/or formulated within the state sport policy and to the concept of legacy. Not all countries have dedicated or formal sport event hosting policies. Sport event hosting policy content is often included in elite sport policies and in the elite sport strategies of national sport governing bodies. The event policies and strategies that national and local sport organisations formulate are also concerned with competency building in hosting sport events as well as the recruitment of volunteers and members and to increase sport participation. As policy goals are formulated to be fulfilled, sport events are politically required to

deliver policy outcomes. However, the actions of event organisers and sport organisations often do not comply with their goals and the sport event hosting policies that the government has formulated.

Keywords: Public policy; sport event legacy; bidding process; event strategy, elite sport; policy analysis

1 Public and Sport Specific Event Policies

Sport event policy refers to a) the public policy on hosting sporting events and b) the policies and strategies of (local, national and international) sport governing bodies connected to sporting events. Sport event policies, also known as sport event hosting policies, represent the formalisation of administrative procedures involving public funding as annual budgets for sport events. As public funding must be justified and legitimised in political processes, sport event hosting policy processes are highly connected to why it is worthwhile spending public money by staging major events that are mainly addressed to elite sport athletes. Therefore, sport event policies are highly connected to the concept of legacy (Coaffee 2013). During the past two decades, policy approaches to legacy planning by event bid committees, sport governing bodies, and host governments have become increasingly sophisticated (McCloy 2009). A legacy can be understood as leaving something behind that lasts for a longer time than the event itself. More specifically, legacy is defined as ‘planned and unplanned, positive and negative, tangible and intangible structures created for and by a sport event that remain longer than the event itself’ (Preuss, 2007: 211).

Not all governments, regional authorities, and municipalities have a sport event policy. A sport event policy can facilitate and promote cooperation and communication between public authorities on a federal, regional, and municipal level, as well as between public authorities and various stakeholders at events. The lack of a sport event policy, or a special type of sport event policy, can also represent barriers to sport event hosts (Leopkey et al. 2010).

At the national level, sport event policy is normally linked to other state policies, such as the promotion of elite sports, mass sports, the development of a national sport infrastructure, and tourism (Chappelet and Lee 2016). However, it is also linked to other policy areas as an instrument for promoting for example public health and developing urban areas. As Getz (2009) pointed out, the degree of government action, which can range from doing nothing to regulation, then intervention, is in itself an ideological question on what public tasks should be carried out in the public’s best interest. If public authorities get involved in event policy, what ideological bases, political goals, and regulations should exist for the policy (Getz 2009)?

Sport event policies reflect global trends as well as both national and local cultural peculiarities (Leopkey et al. 2010). The increased internationalisation of public policymaking and policy transfer related to major events has driven the development of sport event policies. Thus, sport event policies are developed from other policy areas and contexts, such as public health or urban development.

A related term to a ‘sport event policy’ is a ‘sport event strategy.’ A strategy can be described as a plan of action created to achieve goals. A strategy is commonly used to describe a business plan designed to help a company to survive and thrive in the competitive marketplace. Because public organisations and businesses are growing more alike, and because the use of management principles (and language) in the public sector prevails, the

term ‘strategy’ is also used in connection to public authorities, and the term ‘policy’ is also used to describe a business agenda. Chappelet and Lee argued that a sport event hosting policy can be depicted as a sport event hosting strategy, namely the following:

[a] series of decisions and activities by prospective host cities/regions/ countries which utilise public funding and other resources under formal and informal institutional frameworks to regulate their involvement for supporting the successful bidding and hosting for sport events, via employing management and marketing tools that coordinate and promote actions of related stakeholders, such as governments at different levels, sport organisations, commercial sponsors, volunteer groups, local communities and event owners.

(Chappelet and Lee 2016: 36)

The hosts and organisers of sporting events also need to obey sport policies from national and international sport organisations and federations. Sporting events at the local, regional, or national level must relate to the policies of the applicable national sport federation(s), and if the results have to be registered internationally and qualify athletes for international competitions, these individuals must also follow rules for international sport federations. Furthermore, policies from the World Anti-Doping Agency, (inter-) governmental organisations (such as the European Union), and Leagues of Pro Athletes or teams are relevant for sporting event organisers. Also, sporting event organisers must obey specific (sport) policies within the host country, such as children protection policies from the state and/or sport governing bodies; sustainability policies where, for example, public institutions require that events support the triple bottom line (see also [Getz, 2009](#)); or anti-doping policies that extend the policies of the World Anti-Doping Agency. For international sporting events, the international sport federations (or the International Olympic Committee for Olympic Games) form the policies for the events, including the goals, concepts, and legacies. National sport organisations may also use the event to implement their own sport policy goals, which are often related to sport development in a specific country.

Various frameworks exist for policy analysis. When it comes to the analysis of sport event hosting policies, a unified theoretical framework for empirical analysis and research in the field of sport event policy is underdeveloped ([Getz 2009](#)). However, some scholars have systematically analyzed sport event policies by studying them vertically (state, region, municipality) in each country, or horizontally (i.e. transnational and comparing sport event policies between countries) (see [Leopkey et al. 2010](#)). Others focused on the institutionalisation of policy formulation or they have viewed the sport event policy process as stages, hence policy making, implementation, outcome and evaluation ([Strittmatter 2017](#)).

Leopkey and colleagues (2010) suggested employing different components when analyzing sport event hosting policies: a) the policy process, including the policy actors involved as well as the shaping of institutions and determinants; b) the policy content, such as the problem definition, policy goals, and implementing instruments; and c) policy outcomes or impacts. This entry is structured around the three components of sport event hosting policies. Furthermore, a general understanding of the process, content, and outcomes for sport event hosting policies is provided.

2 Sport Event Hosting Policy Process

Official policy documentation and information are key to having successful event hosting policies because they inform and discuss details about the event's application, evaluation, and reporting process. In this way, event hosting organisations have a better understanding of what is expected of them throughout the various phases of the event—from bidding to planning, staging, and evaluating the event up to the legacy management phase (Leopkey et al. 2010).

The importance of governmental authorities and their policies play a major role in winning the bid for major sporting events (Chalip 2006; Leopkey et al. 2010) with close relationships with local authorities and sport organisations (Merkel & Kim 2011). A transnational analysis and comparisons between sport event hosting policies shows both similarities and differences (Leopkey et al. 2010). The requirements from international federations and multi-sport organisations are a driver for similarities in sport event hosting policies. The different socio-economic, cultural and institutional context as well as political and ideological requirements of the host countries are a driver for differences in the sport event hosting policies. Sport event hosting policies of major sport events (e.g. Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup), in more authoritarian regimes such as Russia and China, included re-establishment of the countries' images and status and relationship building with foreign governments (see e.g. Wei et al. 2010). Developing countries that recently hosted Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup, South Africa and Brazil, had a major policy focus on the improvement of quality of life and socio-economic equality among the citizens. The policy content of event hosts in Western countries are more diverse and directed to foster an often already mature economy and/or technologically as well as improve an already advanced infrastructure in the country. One of the most frequently identified public policy objectives linked to major sport events across countries and continents is to increase sport participation, the so-called demonstration effect (see Chalip et al. 2017).

Another pattern among sport event hosting policies worldwide is that they often must mention positive legacies for (public) funding. Therefore, a lot of information about how the outcomes of sport events are obtained needs to be provided in the policy process. The implementation of sport event policies through sport events is linked to and depending on the leveraging capacity of major sport events (Chalip et al. 2017). The leverage perspective to studying sport event (policy) outcomes represents a prospective approach when focusing on the strategies aimed at increasing the desired sport policy objectives in order to increase the knowledge of how to maximise long-term positive event legacies (Chalip 2006). In order to effectively leverage policy objectives through sport events, implementers must create awareness, create strategies and tactics before the event and then, implement them during the event. According to O'Brien and Chalip (2007), the main leverage categories are economic, social and environmental benefits. Each category presupposes different strategic objectives and means of achieving them. Earlier research on sport event leverage focused on economic growth, for example through tourism and business development, while more recent studies have explored the development of social and environmental benefits for the host communities. In that respect, sports event policy objectives often state that sport events should serve as arena for development of skills in the community through volunteering and organising. The leverage approach to legacy shifts the focus from event owners and event organisers to on how a variety of organisations may use the event to implement own organisational goals (Chalip et al. 2017). Event hosting policies and programs encourage

cooperation between many stakeholders, as no single stakeholder can fund and organise the event alone. Cross-sector partnerships are therefore crucial for facilitating a successful sport event policy process, especially in the event's bidding phase.

The phase with the greatest policy focus in events is the bidding process, where the main goal is to win the bid and obtain rights from an event owner for hosting the event. The bidding process spins around policy deliberation and gaining support from (sport) political stakeholders. The process is highly characterised by local, national, and international lobbying among the stakeholders of the events, such as different levels of governments (national, regional, and local); sport organisations at the international, national, and local levels; commercial sponsors; media; local communities; and volunteers (Chappelet & Lee 2016). The networking of stakeholders is important in the policy process and requires complex structures and networking relationships. Involved in the bid process, the formal files, international lobbying, and public communication are crucial for being successful. Sport event policy processes can actively contribute to bidding success when multiple partnerships and the involvement of stakeholders are successfully managed. Multiple partnerships are seen as both facilitators and barriers for event policies (Leopkey et al. 2010). The former is because multi-party partnerships may provide a pool of resources and expertise that can feed into the success of the event policy process, not least by networking opportunities. The latter is the case because coordinating multiple partnerships effectively and responding to various and sometimes conflicting expectations can be a challenge in the process.

3 Sport Event Hosting Policy Content

The content of sport event hosting policies determines which and how many events public authorities will support during political periods and/or a given fiscal year. In addition, the amount of funding offered can be mentioned along with the type of involvement and/or final reporting procedures the authorities require. Content can also include a specific amount of money available for individual sport events and whether the funding is one-off or recurring. In addition, the funding criteria are often included (Leopkey et al. 2010). For example, one criteria of the Norwegian government for funding sport events, is that sport events must follow the policy on the provisions of children's sport stating that children below the age of thirteen are not allowed to participate in national or international championships.

The content of the sport event hosting policies are tightly connected to and/or formulated within the state sport policy. Not all countries have dedicated or formal sport event hosting policies. An example for a sport event hosting policy is the Sustainability Plan of the City of Los Angeles aiming at reducing negative environmental impact while fostering economic opportunity. This policy is also applied for hosting sport events. The Sustainability Plan has been incorporated in the successful bid for the 2028 Los Angeles Summer Olympic Games stating that the Games will help to achieve positive environmental and economic outcomes with clear short and long term policy objectives for the host city.

State sport policy goals connected to hosting events are defined in such a way that the hosting of sport events creates benefits and thus serves broader sport-directed goals in the host city, region, and country. The content of the sport event policies is thus highly connected to the criteria of goal setting for the events. Examples of sport- and health-directed goals include: developing the talent of elite athletes, providing opportunities for athletes to compete on their home soil, strengthening the amateur sport system, creating a trickle-down effect to becoming more physically active, promoting (elite) sports in the country, and improving sport

facilities. Other goals are connected to national pride and celebrate national unity through sports (Merkel & Kim 2011), fostering community enterprises, access to and the distribution of work, and trading locally.

Sport event hosting policy content is often included in elite sport policies (Coaffee 2013; Houlihan & Zheng 2013) and in the elite sport strategies of national sport governing bodies. The event policies and strategies that national and local sport organisations formulate are also concerned with competency building in hosting sport events as well as the recruitment of volunteers and members, and to increase sport participation (Chalip et al. 2017).

To summarise, the content of sport event policies is usually related to how the event may be used to create positive benefits for the hosting population. During the past few decades, the promotion of potential economic, tourism, urban, social, and/or environmental legacies is frequently used to justify significant public investments required to host major events (Girginov & Hills 2008).

4 Sport Event Hosting Policy Outcomes or Policy Impacts

As policy goals are formulated by sport organisations and governments to be fulfilled by those that are involved in the organisation of sport events, sport events are politically required to deliver policy outcomes. However, the actions of event organisers and sport organisations often do not comply with their goals and the sport event hosting policies that the government has formulated. Not meeting policy goals does not often result in consequences such as cuts in budget or resources. Concerning Olympic events, information about the outcomes of policies in connection with events has historically been systematically withheld, and often policy outcomes have lacked specificity (Coaffee 2013; Strittmatter 2017).

Sport event policy outcomes are in this sense also connected to how sport event legacy outcomes are measured. Thus, researchers focusing on the outcomes of sport events have also shifted the responsibility for the delivery of legacy outcomes from event owners and organisers to those actors who would like to use the event to implement their own organisational policies and goals, i.e. event leveraging (Chalip 2006; Kellet et al. 2008).

Policy outcomes and the evaluation of sport event hosting policies can also be the start of a new policy process. Other outcomes are the creation of regulations in specific sports and/or other sport policies, as well as the revision of existing policies and/or the formulation of new sport event hosting policies. Thus, sport event policies are constantly re-evaluated. Evaluation helps governments to adapt to changing needs and requirements, as well as respond to fluctuations in public budgets (Leopkey et al. 2010). Updating formalised policies is important for overcoming barriers for potential host candidates.

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