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Policy instruments in the governance of sustainable London Olympics sports legacy

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Background

The London 2012 Olympic organisers and the UK government, as a major stakeholder in this project, promised that the Games would be used to promote sport participation across the country for all groups and to leave a lasting sporting legacy. This represents the most ambitious project in the history of the Olympic Games and involves a great deal of political and social steering. The UK Government *Our Promise for 2012* and the *Before, During and After* action plan offer a framework for organizations across the UK and create a new policy space where actors employ a range of policy instruments in order to deliver legacy.

The study followed Treib et al's (2007) conceptualization of governance as institutional properties (polity), actor constellations (politics), and policy instruments (policy). Taken as policy, governance implies attending to the mode of political steering, or the use of a range of policy instruments such as regulations, norms and sanctions. Treib et al (2007) proposed four such modes of governance in the policy dimension including coercion, voluntarism, targeting and framework regulation. The delivery of any legacy entails designing systems of governance to guide and steer collective decisions towards a satisfactory level of consensus amongst various parties concerned. Thus, an understanding of the policy instruments is critical.

Objectives

To critically analyze the use of policy instruments in the governance of sustainable Olympic sport legacies.

Method

The study utilized a qualitative method including document and consultation meetings analysis. Notes were taken from five national legacy meetings. Legacy documents were put in the four categorised established earlier. Three policy instruments with wider implications were identified in the voluntary (Inspire), targeting (Podium) and framework regulation (Public Service Agreements PSA) modes of governance. Data were analysed by looking at policy discourse, instruments' main function and outcomes.

Results

The political process of creating sustainable Olympic sports development framework was stimulated by a mix of policy instruments. Voluntary steering was illustrated by the 'Inspire' programme promoted by LOCOG. It is a benchmark instrument created to recognise outstanding non-commercial sport projects inspired by the Games and so far 140 projects were awarded the 'inspire' mark. 'Inspire' has become a powerful instrument in cultural governance concerned with shaping the cultures of the socially excluded and the general population. The 'inspired person' is not simply an active sports person, but one who is creative, sharing, and possessing leadership quality as only the very best get recognized and the 'Inspire' badge.

A targeted use of policy instruments for introducing change in a particular sector included enhancing the role of the further and higher education in the Games through Podium. The new body's functions are to communicate, collaborate and enhance participation. However, because Podium is funded by the Higher Education Council of England it has no clout in the rest of the UK.

A central instrument in the framework regulation mode of policy steering has been the PSA. It ensures that the Government promises are turned into tangible and measurable legacy results by sport governing bodies. But with half of the 1 million new participants projected to come from just eight sports poses a major risk. The PSA not only introduced a framework but a whole new management culture characterized with downwards monitoring and upwards reporting. The framework regulation also involves sanctions against non-delivery of agreed targets.

Conclusions

The UK Government has actively shaped the legacy policy space in response to the twofold task of delivering its commitments and justifying the huge public cost involved. The main policy instruments in the four modes of governance have been proposed, designed and implemented by state actors. The society was invited to play part in fulfilling the potential of the Games as framed by the state, which set out to transform young people's lives and to establish the rules of the legacy game. The framework regulation mode of steering has been of particular significance to creating sporting legacies because it links legacy visions with state actions. In combination with the targeting mode of steering it has provided action with specific focus. Olympic sport legacy has been delivered through binding and non-binding policy instruments supported by sanctions and fixed norms.

References

Trieb, O., Bähr, H. & Falkner, G., (2007). Modes of governance: towards a conceptual clarification. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 14 (1), 1-20.