

Sport events and urban public space: a virtuous example in Parisian Public Policies?

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Synopsis:

After analyzed the implementation process of a cross-dimensional project imbedded in public policies ("Les Berges de Seine"), this study aims at identifying how sport events located in urban space, impact the local community.

Abstract:

Introduction

Sport events are now an argument for economic (Burns, Hatch, Mules, 1986), social (Chalip, 2006), and tourism (Walo, Bull & Breen, 1996) development. Because of the cross effects they may induce, public actors sometimes use them in order to fulfill broader policies (Chalip 1995). Due to the development of urban sport practices and the rise of the "leisure" or "outdoor" sports, such events can now be organized on urban public spaces. In a metropolis, such programs based on sport events can have lasting impacts. It is a way to redefine the use of urban spaces by the local community, but also to build a new destination image for tourism attraction by creating a new sport experience (Gibson, 1998). After analyzed the implementation process of a cross-dimensional project imbedded in public policies, this study aims at identifying how sport events located in urban space, impact the local community.

Theoretical Background

The differentiation between agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation has become the conventional way to describe the chronology of a policy process (Weigrich & Jan, 2006). Rather than a bottom-up (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973) or a top-down approach (Lasswell, 1951), Sabatier (1986) has alerted us to the fact that implementation in the policy process not be viewed in isolation. Instead, he insists on exogenous influences from other policy fields that needed to be taken into

account in order to analyze a public policy. The Public Space is a "setting place with incessant adjustments of the distance, proximity, presence or absence of others; a cooperative social interaction, which questions the production process of social life" (Chelkoff & Thibaud, 1992). Urban space is seen through three dimensions: an environment, a point of social interaction and a landscape. The growth and continuing adjustments on a local level made by modern sports have created significant changes in the landscape (Bale, 1989). This trend has already been addressed through the prism of urban planning. It is less the case regarding sporting events containing a direct link to the territory (Bessy, 2013).

Case Description and Methodology

To address these issues we have focused our attention on Paris, European capital and first international tourism destination. A project initiated by municipal authorities' aims to questions these topics: "les Berges de Seine". This is a redevelopment of river banks (2.3 km along the left bank of the Seine, from Orsay Museum to Quai Branly Museum), in order to renew the link between the Parisians and the Seine. Moreover, it is a tool to bring a new light on the historic legacy while being a new space for relaxation, sports and cultural practices. In this research, we aim to be open to empirical evidence (Dey, 1999) to generate a theoretical framework according to the grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The contribution is based on in situ observation, semi-structured interviews (10) with municipal authorities and documentary analysis (communication media, websites, implementation documents, etc.). We will focus on the policy process to figure how this cross-cutting challenge occurred and what it induced through an interpretative approach to policy analysis (Wagenaar, 2006).

Results / Discussion

On "Berges de Seine" plan, sport devices succeed each other during the year. These events have various territorial components (socio-cultural, environmental, etc.) with several audiences (residents, neo residents, tourists, local actors, etc.). In these new event's configurations, the territory is consubstantial (Bessy, 2013) with the event, since its appeal consists of the specific features of the territory. The events do not take place in the environment considered as a playground but instead, they are shaped by the territory. It seems that the project is questioning public space through new purposes, leading to various effects. Firstly, it is a "reappropriation tool" in order to connect again the dwellers and the river. The Seine is no more the prior's economic gateway. It is now mainly an element of the Parisian's landscape uses for recreational purposes with cross-positive impacts. We identify some leverages (projects about culture, leisure, legacy, history, sport) to reach these aims. Secondly, we can figure that this project, imbedded in public policies, includes original governance based on public / private partnerships. Finally, meanwhile the theme of "sport" is a major part of the plan; we figure that its design and implementation are done without the involvement of the sports actors. Though, it seems that these forms of sport activities based on a new type of governance, can assume the role of reformer of urban space purposes.

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