Understanding Stakeholder Networks in Major/Mega Sports Events

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Abstract

PURPOSE
Staging major/mega sports events involves a complex network of stakeholders (Parent, 2008) that is built up during the organizing committee's lifecycle, and whose actors need to work together to successfully stage the event. Although we generally know who the stakeholders are, we do not understand how they interact for different events or how the network evolves. As such, the purpose of this study is to examine the evolution of the stakeholder network in three different major/mega events following the three modes of operation of an organizing committee's lifecycle (cf. Parent, 2008).
LITERATURE REVIEW
The organization of major/mega sports events involves both internal and external stakeholders whose needs, wants, and demands affect the operations of the organizing committees; in return the organizing committees' decisions may affect the stakeholders (cf. Freeman, 1984). Parent (2008) found that there were three operational modes of an organizing committee life cycle: planning, implementation, and wrap-up. Research has begun to understand issues associated with the inter-stakeholder linkages formed in the Olympic Games, though mainly in relation to the host governments (cf. Parent, Rouillard & Leopkey, 2011). However, analyses of all stakeholders, as well as deeper network analyses are required to understand who are the main coordinating bodies, who holds power, who controls the flow of information, etc.
METHODOLOGY
We examined the organizing committees of three events: the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games (VANOC), the XX Commonwealth Games (Glasgow 2014), and the 2015 Toronto Pan American Games (TO2015). Interviewees were recruited from each organizing committee and the stakeholders groups identified by Parent (2008). VANOC was in the wrap-up mode (24 semi-structured interviews conducted post-Games), Glasgow 2014 was in the implementation mode (10 semi-structured

interviews conducted one year out from the Games, as well as archival material in lieu of an interview for one stakeholder), and TO2015 was in the planning mode (24 semi-structured interviews conducted three years out from the Games). Interviews were conducted via telephone or internet survey given geographical distances, and stopped once all stakeholders groups were represented and theoretical saturation was reached.

Transcribed interviews were analyzed to identify the stakeholder relationships. These relationships were placed in an Excel table for subsequent analysis in the network analysis software programs UCINET 6 (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002) and NetDraw 2 (Borgatti, 2002). Whole network analyses included degree (number of ties per actor), betweenness (ability to control information), eigenvector (degree of importance) and Bonacich power, density, reachability (ability to get from one actor to another), connectivity (diameter, average distance between reachable pairs) and clustering. Measures were normalized where possible.

RESULTS

Network figures and numbers for each mode will be presented at the conference. As a general overview of the results, we find that when we compare the normalized analyses, we see an evolution in the complexity of the network from the planning to the implementation to the wrap-up modes. We find that the average degree and diameter of the network increase, demonstrating that stakeholders increase their number of relationships as the event draws near. In all cases, the organizing committee is in the driver's seat in terms of controlling information (betweenness). Interestingly, we find that the organizing committee is necessarily the most important/powerful actor in the network in terms of for the planning or implementation modes, though it was for the wrap-up mode; density varies; reachability is high in all cases; and connectivity remains small in all cases.

DISCUSSION/IMPLICATIONS

It makes sense that the network evolves as an organizing committee moves from planning through to wrap-up. Although stakeholders create more linkages amongst themselves and increase the diameter of the network, this does not necessarily translate into a denser network. Still, all stakeholders are easily reachable. Also, key stakeholders include not only the organizing committee but can also include the event rights holder, government, venue owners, media, and sponsors.

What these findings tell us is that the network of stakeholders for a major sports event is more complex and interconnected than what is traditionally depicted in the literature. A limitation is that three different events were used instead of following one event over time. Such a longitudinal study would be difficult to do, as longitudinal studies are, though worthwhile. However, a strength of using three different cases is the fact that general network-level trends can be examined (as opposed to absolute and node-level data analyses), trends which are arguably more transferable to a greater number of major sports events.

Implications for managers and researchers will be discussed at the conference.

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