Stakeholder Mobilisation: Antecedent Elements Underpinning The Development Of A Community Network To Influence A Stadium Regeneration Scheme

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Aim of the research/project

This paper seeks to address the lack of empirical research on stakeholder mobilisation by focusing on case study research that has sought to identify the antecedent factors through which stakeholder networks mobilize to act against a focal firm. The research is based on a longitudinal case study of the *Our Tottenham* network that was formed in early 2013. It started up as a network of local community organisations that formed partly in response to Haringey Council's 'Plan for Tottenham', with the aim being to create a network of local people to defend community assets and participate in the changes by putting forward their own community plans. This case study therefore represents an appropriate research site with which to better understand the antecedent factors that support the stakeholder mobilisation process.

Theoretical background or literature review

Academic research has tended to take a firm-centred perspective and focus on how firms manage stakeholders. In response, and in recognition of this limitation, a particular strand of research has sought to understand stakeholder motivations and in particular how stakeholder networks seek to influence firms (e.g. Frooman, 1999; Neville & Menguc, 2006). However, despite this, there is still little conceptual and empirical research that sets out how stakeholder networks initially form and mobilize. It can be argued that there is limited understanding of key issues including how stakeholder networks come together, why they come together, how they are resourced, and the extent to which these networks are able to influence a firm. This was recognised by Rowley and Moldavaneau (2003: 206) when they argued that previous literature has not 'yet explored the antecedent conditions of stakeholder group mobilization'. Subsequent research also agreed with this: for example Butterfield, Reed and Lemak (2004) felt that future research on stakeholder alliances should probe more deeply into why members come together, whilst more recently Hayibor and Collins (2016: 351) argue that 'the conditions that predispose stakeholders to act against firms remain largely unexplored in the literature'.

Methodology, research design, and data analysis

Data was collected in three ways during a period of over three years between December 2012 and December 2015: semi-structured interviews (13); participant observations of meetings and other events (28); in addition to secondary material. Coding of the data was an iterative process that started once the majority of the interviews and participant observations had been completed. The analysis started by identifying relevant concepts in the data, using the language of the respondents, and grouping direct quotations under different categories. In this research, this involved concepts linked to stakeholder's views as expressed in interviews with the researcher and in meetings at which the researcher attended as a participant observer.

Results, discussion, and implications/conclusions

The analysis of the data identified five interlinked concepts that acted as triggers for stakeholders to mobilize through the *Our Tottenham* network. These included a lack of salience, a lack of consultation, concerns surrounding the potential negative social and economic impacts, and concerns around the governance and transparency of the regeneration scheme. In doing so, it demonstrates how first and foremost, interest intensity has been shown to be the fundamental reason underpinning stakeholder mobilisation; members of the *Our Tottenham* network were concerned for their businesses and homes. At the same time, the mobilisation of the group also brings in other stakeholders not directly affected as they consider that their support and continued action may influence the focal organisation at a later stage on issues that may directly affect them. In this sense, interest again prevails. In conclusion this research has found that fundamentally stakeholder mobilisation is driven by interest intensity. However, mobilisation is just one aspect of stakeholder activism. Once a group has mobilised, what are the factors that allow for sustained action against a focal firm and for the longevity of the group? Further research is needed on this.

References

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