Exploring Issues within Post-Sport Event Legacy Governance

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Sport event legacy broadly refers to “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, p. 211). Its sustainable delivery involves diverse stakeholders who have different interest in making legacy related decisions (Thomson et al., 2018). Thus, researchers have demonstrated the importance of strategic planning in the pre-event phase regarding the legacy governance system (i.e., the combination of controls and processes that drive the network towards consensus while satisfying stakeholders’ needs) (Leopkey & Parent, 2016). However, there has been limited attention given to the governance of legacy following the conclusion of the event (i.e., post-event phase) despite the potential organizational, political, and personnel challenges (e.g., dissolution of the event organizer) (Bell & Gallimore, 2015). Consequently, little is known about legacy issues in this phase, and how stakeholders interact within the post-event legacy governance system.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore issues in post-sport event legacy governance. Specifically, issues associated with the three dimensions of governance: (1) polity (institutional structure of governance); (2) politics (relationships between actors); and (3) policy (policy instruments) (Treib, Bähr, & Falkner, 2007) were examined. Investigating these dimensions facilitated a broader understanding of governance in the post-event phase.

Additionally, an issues management perspective was employed to facilitate issue identification and categorization (Parent, 2008). This study aimed to address the following research questions: (1) What are the issues perceived by stakeholders regarding the polity, politics, and policy dimensions of post-sport event legacy governance?; (2) How are these issues interrelated to each other?; and (3) Are there perceived gaps among stakeholders regarding these issues?

A single-case study focusing on the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics was conducted (Yin, 2013). Following the hosting of the event, there continues to be debates among stakeholders regarding the event’s legacy. Thus, the Korean government established the PyeongChang 2018 Legacy Foundation to manage the Games’ legacies. Given the challenges and opportunities, the case provided a platform to examine post-event legacy governance in a recent edition of the Games. Archival materials and interview data (n=16) with key stakeholders were collected. Data analysis involved inductive and deductive content analysis (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2014). Findings represent the identification of issues, issue-issue links for understanding relationships among issues, and issue-stakeholder links for exploring perceived gaps among stakeholders.

Ten post-event legacy governance issues emerged and were categorized based on the three dimensions of governance: polity (legal, accountability, Korean governance context), politics (funding, venues, conflicting values, coordination, participation), policy (pre-event planning, losing policy momentum). Issue-issue links suggested the identified issues are interrelated. For instance, the legal issue influenced accountability, funding, venues, and losing policy momentum. The Korean governance context (e.g., decentralized local driven sport event hosting) impacted legal, funding, accountability, and venues. Additionally, issue-stakeholder links indicated that issues were perceived differently by each stakeholder. This study highlights the issues in post-event legacy governance, multi-dimensionality of the governance and stakeholders’ gaps regarding the issues, and suggests implications for event stakeholders.