

Sporting Events and Entrepreneurialism in Cities: A Structuration Perspective

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In recent years, urban research has become preoccupied with ways in which cities foster and encourage civic and economic development. Research focuses on the process that many cities use to market and exploit civic resources, as urban governance has shifted away from a managerial role in cities, towards more innovative and entrepreneurial avenues of local growth and development (Hall & Hubbard, 1998; Harvey, 1989). Cities provide key sites for analysis, as they have become important junctures in the post-Fordist state, characterized in part by a regime of flexible capital accumulation and the information networks of a globalizing world (Jessop, 2000). With the emergence of a more global economy, cities are looking beyond their own communities for reimagining and redevelopment strategies. This means that cities are tending to look for different ways to be competitive for the purposes of attracting business and tourism opportunities to remain economically, socially, and politically relevant in a broader global context. Cities are no longer simply places to do business, but rather have started to act like businesses by becoming more entrepreneurial, seeking out new ventures to exploit civic resources. In this context, sport (mega-events and professional sporting franchises) has been used by many cities as a new enterprise opportunity to take advantage of urban capital (Rosentraub, 1999; Chapin, 2004). However, this entrepreneurial process has been understood primarily through the lens of positivist urban governance theories, such as regime theory (Sack & Johnson, 1996), which often neglect the ways that these strategies evolve as both part of the actions of entrepreneurs, and the socio-economic systems in which they operate. Harvey (1989) has argued that the "process of city making is both a product and condition of ongoing social processes of transformation" (p.3). Therefore, the use of sport for civic development must be understood as a process of entrepreneurialism as a result of the creation of new ventures embedded in the urban socio-economic environment.

In order to examine the process through which cities' sporting events strategies evolve as part of entrepreneurial action and the socio-economic systems in which they operate, we employ Giddens' structuration theory (1984, 1991) to articulate the entrepreneurial process in which these developments occur. Sarason, Dean, and Dillard (2006) recognized that structuration theory presents a unique way of understanding the "process dynamics of entrepreneurship" (p. 287). Structuration theory helps describe how actors are both creators of, and simultaneously created by, social systems. It can be used to explain that actions, ventures, and opportunities do not exist in isolation from entrepreneurs, but rather become manifested as they are conceptualised by entrepreneurs as part of the venture creation process. Two interlocking concepts are central to Structuration theory. Structure is what gives form and shape to social life, formed around recursively organised rules and resources. Agency refers to the flow or pattern of people's actions, where agents are viewed as purposeful, knowledgeable, reflexive, and active. Structure exists only in and through the activities of human agents (Giddens, 1991). Thus the agency of actors, such as those involved in urban governance, cannot be separated from the social structure in which resources can be drawn upon to create opportunities for civic growth. In this sense, growth opportunities in the city are not static concepts awaiting an agent to 'discover' and exploit; rather civic development opportunities such as sporting events evolve as the actor interfaces with the sources of opportunity and resources. Accordingly, the domain in which sporting events become urban entrepreneurial ventures depends greatly on the actors' ability to interface, reflect, and reposition civic resources in order to develop these opportunities. This presents a duality wherein the entrepreneur and the opportunities are interdependent upon one another.

The first part of our paper provides an overview of structuration theory and articulates how the entrepreneurial process is manifest within today's entrepreneurial cities. We further articulate how civic elites have actively and reflexively shaped the growth and development strategies within their respective cities. Given this view that growth opportunities are idiosyncratic to civic elites, we then discuss propositions developed by Sarason et al. (2006) and describe how cities have actively used sport as a development tool by hosting sporting events, while simultaneously being constrained/influenced by the socio-economic conditions unique to their respective cities. In doing so, we argue that a structuration perspective presents a useful alternative to understanding sporting event strategies as a dynamic entrepreneurial process creating opportunities and new ventures for civic growth and development. Finally, we argue that this co-evolution process of agent and opportunity also helps to explain how and why comprehensive sporting event strategies have emerged on the policy agendas of certain cities. Thus, while it may appear that many cities are using events as part of a similar growth and development agenda, a structuration perspective helps reveal the instantiated differences between cities and event strategies, which could help shed light on why some cities have appeared to be more successful than others in leveraging sporting events as part of their broader growth initiatives.

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