Large-Scale Sporting Events and Stakeholders’ Effect: The Case of the 2018 Winter Olympics French Bid

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The purpose of this research was to study the stakeholders’ effect on the candidature of four French cities for the 2018 Olympic Winter Games. The use the stakeholder theory (Freeman & Reed, 1983; Freeman, 1984; Donaldson, Preston, 1995) to understand the workings of organizing committee (OC) has been used by researchers in the past (e.g. Parent & Seguin 2007; Parent Olver & Seguin 2009). However, these studies have examined the effect of stakeholders on one sporting event and its organizing committee. As a consequence, results often depend on the kind of event observed. In this paper, we examined the French national bid for the 2018 Olympic Winter Games to analyse and to compare the stakeholder effect on the four French cities involved in this national bid. A common interest (to gain the right to be the official candidate-city representing France on international bidding stage) and a common calendar made this comparison possible. We particularly studied the specific issues for each of the cities, the structure of the leading committee, their working and decision-making processes as well as the relationships between the different stakeholders.

Archival material (Internet website of the NOC and the candidacies, press packs, articles from daily or weekly newspapers) and 28 interviews were used as part of data collection. For each candidacy, one-on-one interviews were conducted with key political, economic actors, local media and athletes who supported the project. This set of interviews gave an exhaustive overview of the key-actors involved in the 2018 Olympics project.

Following the analysis of archival document’s analysis, it was noted that the stakeholder’s effect on the local strategy to gain the right to host the 2018 Winter Games can be analyzed by taking account of three levels (local, horizontal, vertical) giving the position of the different stakeholders in a systemic environment. This social network highlights relationships between stakeholders involved within one candidacy, second between stakeholders involved in the different candidacies and last, relationships between candidacies and the NOC. Our survey identifies three periods in these relationships: a city-led relationship, a NOC-led relationship, an Annecy’s led relationship. Moreover, this research underlines different stakeholder’s effect between the key actors involved in these projects. It has been noticed specific emerging pattern for each of the four French candidate-cities.

The theoretical input of our survey is based on the comparison of four candidacies designed to gain the right to host a major sporting event. This comparison is relevant through the use of 2 indicators: common time and event (the 2018 Winter Games). The final framework proposed in this paper is mostly based on the power, legitimacy and urgency’ model of Mitchell, Agle & Wood (1997). Thereby, stakeholders associated with the four candidate cities have been ranked into the model in regards with their attributes in the local project. In this perspective, a specific model has been designed for the Annecy’s, Grenoble’s, Nice’s and Pelvoux’ cases.