Understanding Change in the Sport Development Stakeholder Network of Korean Ice Hockey as a Result of Hosting the 2018 PyeongChang Olympic Games

Kyu Ha Choi, University of Georgia
Becca Leopkey (Advisor), University of Georgia

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Some countries (e.g., Australia, UK) have utilized the hosting of sporting events to accelerate the development of sport (i.e., amending and creating policies, processes and practices that facilitate opportunities to involve people in sport) (Houlihan & Green, 2007). To expedite this process, a number of stakeholders are required to work closely together (Chalip et al., 1996). Specifically, individual sports are traditionally governed by their respective national sport organizations (NSOs) and local government agencies (Sotiriadou et al., 2008); however, other international sport bodies, such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and international federations could also play salient roles in their advancement (Girginov & Hills, 2008), especially when coupled with the hosting of a mega-event like the Olympic Games.

Given the necessity of involving a variety of stakeholders in the development of a sport, understanding a sport’s development network is critical since stakeholder relationships occur in a network of influences and consist of a series of multifaceted bonds (Rowley, 1997). Therefore, this study will investigate the sport development network associated with the growth and advancement of ice hockey in relation to the hosting of the 2018 PyeongChang Olympic Games in South Korea. This will be accomplished by a) identifying the stakeholders involved in ice hockey’s development at the pre-Olympic bid stage and following the hosting of the 2018 Games, b) analyzing how the network changed following the awarding of the Olympic Games/conclusion of the event, and c) examining how these changes impacted the sport’s growth and advancement in the country.

Method

A case study (Yin, 2013) was built using a combination of archival materials and semi-structured interviews (n=31). The transcribed data was analyzed using content analysis as suggested by Miles et al. (2014). Subsequently, UCINET was utilized in characterizing (in terms of network density, centrality, etc.) and visualizing the changes to the network of stakeholders involved in the development of ice hockey in the country.

Results and Implications

Our preliminary findings indicate that the hosting of the 2018 Games increased the complexity of ice hockey’s sport development network. Specifically, a number of emergent actors directly related to the staging of (e.g., IOC, International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF), PyeongChang Organizing Committee) and preparation for the event (e.g. Army team, independent league) were noted. Additionally, the Korea Ice Hockey Association was pressured to take a more central role due to an increased amount of available financial resources. Moreover, the inclusion of the international bodies (e.g., IOC, IIHF) in the network attracted informational and legitimacy/political support, which Korean ice hockey lacked before hosting the event. The findings contribute to the literature by delineating the stakeholder network, which includes various actors and the changes within the network in the course of the development of the sport in relation to the hosting of a mega-sport event. By demonstrating an overall picture of the actors involved in and potential influences of hosting on a sport’s development network, the findings could assist future host countries (e.g., the 2022 Beijing) in facilitating the growth and development of less popular sports.