

The political process of constructing sustainable London Olympics sports development legacy

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Abstract

This study attempts to develop a research agenda for understanding the process of constructing a sustainable Olympic sports development legacy. The research uses a social constructivist perspective to examine the link between the 2012 London Olympic Games and sustainable sports development. The first part of the paper provides justification for the study of sport policy processes using a constructivist lens. This is followed by a section which critically unpacks sustainable sports development drawing on Mosse's (1998) ideas of process-oriented research and Searle's conceptualisation of the construction of social reality. Searle's (1995) concepts of the assignment of function, collective intentionality, collective rules, and human capacity to cope with the environment are considered in relation to the events and discourses emerging from the legacy vision(s) associated with the 2012 London Olympic Games. The paper concludes by proposing a framework for engaging in process oriented research and highlights key elements, research questions, and methodological issues. The proposed constructivist approach can be used to inform policy, practice, and research on sustainable Olympic sports development legacy.

Key words: collective intentionality, constructivism, International Olympic Committee, London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, policy research, sustainable Olympic sports development legacy

Introduction

The Olympic Movement has been concerned with promoting the educational mission of sport, personal excellence and international understanding for about one hundred years. This broad Olympic mission was based on two key pillars – sport and culture. However, from the beginning of the 1990s, under the stewardship of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), two new pillars, environment (Cantelon and Letters 2000) and sustainable sport legacy have been gradually established. These were enshrined in the Olympic Charter (IOC 2007) envisaging a new role for the Olympic Games: “To encourage and support a responsible concern for environmental issues, to promote sustainable development in sport and require that the Olympic Games are held accordingly” (2.13) and “To promote a positive legacy from the Olympic Games to the Host cities and the Host countries (2.14)”.

These new additions to the mission present the IOC as a socially responsible transnational organization, which conducts its business in an ethical manner. Equally, however, it urges the IOC to join the wider political and economic debates headed by the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank (WB) regarding the complex and contested concept of sustainability and how it is implemented in various fields and parts of the world. Some twenty years of coordinated international research and numerous practical interventions led by those two organizations have yielded no universally accepted meaning of the concept or clear understanding of what constitutes successful sustainable policy interventions (Bagheri and Hjorth 2007, Dresner 2003, Thomas 2000).

The emergence of the Olympic legacy concept also raises an important issue of how to research and subsequently promote policy interventions that claim ‘sustainable sports development’ as an explicit goal. This has not been addressed before. The London 2012 Olympic Games present an instructive example for policy research for three reasons: the bid was built on the promise that the Games would be used to inspire the country to become more physically active and to tackle wider social and economic issues such as exclusion, obesity and unemployment; it will be the first time that Games and legacy planning has worked hand in hand; and, any legacy research is inherently political.

Undoubtedly, London 2012 set an ambitious, yet admirable goal envisaging substantial social change. However, how is this challenging programme to be delivered? In order to be successfully implemented, sport development policies will have to address not only people's behaviour, but also deeply rooted social structures and relations. This will require an understanding of the political process of constructing Olympic sports development legacy.

The aim of this study is to better understand the processes involved in conceptualizing and researching sustainable Olympic sports development legacy construction and its implementation. This will enhance our understanding of how sport policy research can contribute to these processes and will enable the development of more effective policies to achieve sustainable sports development. The research uses a social constructivist perspective (Searle 1995, Berg and Luckman, 1971) to examine the link between the London Olympic Games and sustainable sports development. The first part of the paper provides justification for the study of the sport policy process through the constructivist lenses, the second critically unpacks sustainable sports development as a construction process, while the third addresses some theoretical and methodological issues for policy research in sustainable sports development in relation to the 2012 London Olympic Games.

A social constructivist perspective on sustainable Olympic sport development legacy

The constructivist view of social problems emerged as a response to the positivist/functionalist approach concerned with seeing and measuring 'facts', exploring the 'functionality' of events and institutions for the maintenance of society (Durkheim 1961; Merton and Nisbet 1961, Parsons 1974), and the failure of conventional evaluation to address change in any meaningful way (Lincoln 2001). Social scientists were thus expected to identify those conditions that were dysfunctional to society, develop knowledge about problems in order to understand their causes, and propose solutions. Gold and Gold (2008, p. 314) offer an example for a positivist-informed Olympic legacy research agenda: "a particular goal for research during the years leading to and after

2012, therefore, is to examine the reality of legacy in light of the forecasts”. They also identified eleven areas of inquiry, all of which require measuring of facts.

In contrast, a constructivist approach sees problems as essentially social constructions. Here, knowledge and the knower are part of the same subjective entity and the findings are the result of interaction (Guba 1990). According to Finnemore and Sikkink (2001, p. 392), “constructivists focus on the role of ideas, norms, knowledge, culture and argument in politics, stressing in particular the role of collectively held ‘intersubjective’ ideas and understandings on social life”. At the heart of social life are ‘social facts’ (Searle 1995), which refers to things such as rights, sovereignty and legacy, which have no material reality but exist only because people collectively believe they exist and act accordingly (cf. Finnemore and Sikkink 2001). The role of social research from this perspective is to clarify meaning and basic assumptions, show whose definitions of the problem were accepted and how, and what alternative point of views and interventions existed. As Finnemore and Sikkink (2001, p.393) observed, “Understanding how social facts change and the ways these influence politics is the major concern of constructivist analysis”. Becker (1966), one of the key proponents of this approach, drew attention not to the causes and consequences of social problems but to how a problem is defined and created through political processes. As he argued, this is: “a process in which opposing views are put forward, argued, and compromised, in which people are motivated by various interests to attempt to persuade others of their views so that the public action will be taken to further the ends they consider desirable; in which one attempts to have the problem officially recognized so that the power and authority of the state can be engaged on one’s side” (Becker 1966, p.11).

Many commentators agree that development is essentially a construction process (Cowen and Shenton 1995, Esteva 1997, Mosse 1998, Thomas 2000). Mosse (1998) conceptualized the process of development construction as involving: (i) an open and flexible design amenable to learning derived from implementation; (ii) relationship elements between legacy actors critical for constructing and implementing of visions; and (iii) dealing with political, economic and social uncertainties of legacy delivery. This is

an action-oriented, inductive and open-ended approach concerned with the present. As Mosse (1998, p. 10) argued:

Process oriented work involves *continuous* information gathering over a period of programme work. Information on ‘process’ provides neither a ‘snap-shot’ view of development intervention, nor a measure of progress against a fixed set of indicators. Rather, it is concerned with the dynamics of development processes that means with different perceptions of relationships, transactions, decision making, or conflicts and their resolutions.

Thus, a constructivist inquiry into sustainable Olympic sport legacy will have to pay attention not to the organization of the Games and how many jobs, facilities and participants were created, but to the question of what processes, mechanisms and actors were or will be responsible for those results. Therefore, understanding the social constitution of sustainable sport legacy is essential in explaining how its outcomes are being achieved and what effects those have on national and international policy making.

Key elements in framing sustainable Olympic sports development legacy

Antecedents of Olympic legacy thinking can be found in the early writings of Coubertin (1911) and a number of IOC policies such as Olympic Solidarity (Al-Tauqi, 2003) and Sport for All (Palm, 1991). But it was not until the late 1990s when the idea of Olympic legacy gradually turned into a major concern for the Olympic Movement. MacAloon (2008) captured the contested nature of this concept through an analysis of its semantic features and pragmatic consequences. In particular, he warned about the dangers to the Olympic Movement posed by an emerging and predominantly Anglophone transnational group of professional legacy consultants. Those self-proclaimed legacy managers operate with the narrow interpretation of the English term ‘legacy’ with its emphasis on the present’s contribution to the future and ignore the vast accumulated historical, cultural and moral capital, which is implied by the French word for legacy ‘heritage’.

We borrow from Becker's (1966, p.147) notion of 'moral entrepreneurs' on a crusade to depict the political process of Olympic legacy construction. It grew out of a historic process of Olympic growth and a number of recent events including increasing environmentally-unfriendly and unsustainable gigantism of the Olympic Games model and its propensity to compensate the negative development caused by this growth. The IOC moral concerns first found expression in *Agenda 21*, a policy response to global environmental issues raised at the Rio's world summit in 1992 (IOC 1992). This was followed by practical measures including instigating a bi-annual world congress on sport and the environment in 1995 and the Sport and Environment Commission in 1996. Gradually, these concerns spread and subsequently led to the Games organizers demanding that the event be held in an environmentally friendly manner (Girginov and Parry 2005). The idea of Olympic legacy has been rationalized politically (new rules in the *Olympic Charter 2003* and *IOC Manual for Candidate Cities 2001*), legally (through the *Host City Contract* between the IOC, the host city and the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games-LOCOG), and scientifically (the Olympic Games Impact (OGI) project, 2006, which measures the economic, environmental and social impact of the Games through a set of indicators over a period of 12 years and 4 reports). Indeed, as Becker (1966, p. 153) put it: "when the crusade has produced a large organization devoted to its cause, officials of the organizations are ever more likely than the individual crusader to look for new causes to espouse".

To better understand the political process of framing sustainable Olympic sport legacy our argument follows Mosse's and Searle's constructivist approaches to social reality. Searle's (1995) framework to understanding the construction of social reality incorporates four elements including: the assignment of function, collective intentionality, constructive rules, and human capacity to cope with the environment. The idea of sustainability is discussed prior to an examination of the four elements drawn from Searle's framework. This is important because each element bears particular implications for knowledge generation and makes different contributions to policy research and policy making.

The idea of sustainable Olympic sports development legacy

Sustainable sports development has been conceptualized as a social construct, a perception, and a collective endeavour, which reflects specific visions about the purpose of human life, time, progress and social change, which can be appropriated by various parties to suit their purposes (Girginov 2008). Seen this way, the idea of Olympic sport development legacy represents a policy project and a discourse, which was clearly recognized by the UK government. As the Secretary for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Olympic Minister, Tessa Jowell stated (2006): “There is nothing inevitable or god-given about the legacy of the 2012 Games, it was up to those involved to make it and create it”. Within two years of being awarded the Games, the London 2012 scene has witnessed the emergence of a burgeoning amount of sustainable Olympic sport legacy producers and enforcers (Girginov and Hills 2008). In addition to the main legacy actors (e.g., IOC, LOCOG, DCMS, Sport England) there are a range of other legacy-inspired agencies in all thirty-three London boroughs, and many other specialized regional and local Olympic legacy units and strategies. Those agencies have already produced significant number of legacy visions and have been involved in mobilizing substantial material resources and public energy. These visions and the processes through which they are perceived to materialize are not necessarily consistent across organizations but reflect a range of concerns, priorities and interests.

Sustainable sports development, thus, concerns a process of construction, destruction and maintaining of opportunities for people to participate and excel in sport and life. It is neither a state of the sport system to be increased or decreased, nor a static goal or target to be achieved (Girginov 2008, p.13). It represents a unity of destruction and creation involving a simultaneous process of creating opportunities for practicing certain sports to the detriment of others. This unity is exemplified by the 2012 Olympic Games programme, which includes only 26 sports and 20 sports for the Paralympic Games. Those sports receive a great deal of media exposure and funding through international and national sponsorship deals and considerable public investments so that they can secure national prestige by winning medals. More than one hundred other sports practiced daily by people do not enjoy the same advantages and in fact more often than not see

their public subsidies cut (Collins 2008, Green 2007). It is also this unity of construction and destruction within the sports development enterprise, which makes it politically appealing, as it directly concerns itself with matters of justice and equality to which functions such as tackling obesity, improving health and educational attainments could be readily assigned, as demonstrated by Coalter (2007) and Collins (2003).

The press for social justice is one of the defining features of the constructivist inquiry, as it relies heavily on commitments to stakeholder voices being heard (Lincoln 2001). The Brundtland Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987, p. 54), which first put 'sustainable development' on the social and political agenda, clearly echoes the political nature of this concept by defining it as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Sustainable development has since been a much contested concept because it directly engages with justice and equality. The UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy reinforces those concerns and aims to ensure "a strong, healthy and just society by meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal wellbeing, social cohesion and inclusion, and creating equal opportunity for all" (HM Government 2007, p.9). However, there has been a lack of agreement on the meaning of the principle constructs of the concept – needs and development, the resultant difficulties in operationalising them, and the concomitant need for a substantial capacity to predict the future and to handle uncertainty.

Lindsey (2008) proposed a framework for examining sustainability in sports development based on four levels of change, individual, community, organisational and institutional. Despite its conceptual and practical value this framework fails to address the above two principle constructs. The 2008 international symposium on the impact of mega sports events on developmental goals also tried to tackle this issue but failed. It criticized the preoccupation of legacy studies with physical infrastructure and tangible effects of those events at the expense of equally important social and intangible aspects. Contrary to Lindsey, legacy was not interpreted as a series of successive changes at different levels, but as an outcome, which if properly planned could bring about more positive than

negative impacts (University of West Cape 2008, p.15). The concept of sustainable Olympic sport legacy is open to the same challenges as it has to explain how to reconcile the apparent concentration created by a 16 days festival (time), held in a city or, in the case of London, even in one part of it (space), which involves huge infrastructure and operating costs (investment) with the tenets of sustainable development advocating the sharing and dispersion of social, economic and environmental impacts across time and space for the benefits of all (ul Haq 1996).

Mog (2004) argued that irrespective of its contested nature the concept of sustainability shares two common grounds: its process and participatory orientation. Mog (2004, p. 2140) further elaborated that a sensible way of thinking about sustainable development is “as an unending process characterized by the approach used in guiding change rather than any fixed goals(s) to be achieved through specific technologies, policies, institutions and actions”. Most commentators also agree that all sustainable interventions should be conceived of as iterative systems characterized by an enhanced ability of both interventionists and adopters to innovate, learn and change (Dresner 2003; Hjorth & Bagheri 2005; Mog 2004). Sustainable sports development, thus, appears to be an ideal and a moving target, which inevitably involves a process of social learning. This renders sustainable sports development as a construction process aimed at creating value with an anticipated but ultimately unknown end point. As argued elsewhere “Despite its controversial and ambiguous nature, the concept of a sustainable Olympic sports development legacy is very appealing because of its seeming ability to combine the practical and policy-relevant with the scientifically respectable. However, it cannot be fully evaluated if interpreted only as an ‘input–output system’ monitored by large-scale surveys (OGI). Equal attention needs to be paid to the process of legacy construction as a moral, political and sports delivery enterprise” (Girginov and Hills 2008, p. 2102-3).

Assigning functions to Olympic sports development

Searle (1995) sees functions as never intrinsic to a phenomenon but always assigned from outside by conscious observers and users. Historically, sport has been associated with a number of health, social, political, military and economic functions (Coakley 1998,

Gratton and Henry 2001, Mangan 2000, Senn 1999). The main function ascribed to the London 2012 Games is to ‘inspire the nation and young people in particular to become more physically active’ (DCMS 2007). To this effect, LOCOG (2007, www.london2012.com/inspired) has created an ‘inspired’ brand which is awarded on a competitive basis to any cultural and sporting project that can define itself as directly stimulated by the Games. Although it is extremely difficult to capture the processes involved in inspiration, the concept is highly appealing politically.

The use and abuse of functions by political regimes of all persuasions have created spiralling expectations that sport can deliver almost any personal and social benefits at relatively low cost (Collins 2003, Hoberman 1984, Houlihan and White 2002). Recently, those claims have prompted a number of commentators to challenge the taken for granted conceptualisation of the inherently good nature of sport and by implication the Olympic Games themselves (Chalip 1996, Coalter 2007, Green 2008, Houlihan and White 2002). As a result, the focus of policy studies started to shift from what sport does to its potential to deliver various outcomes within the right conditions (Coalter 2007, Nicholson and Hoye 2008). Therefore, from a policy point of view assigning *a priori* functions to sport has become problematic. In particular, prominence has been given to the processes and mechanisms responsible for producing those positive impacts and benefits. Coalter (2007), among others, has made a compelling case for a process-oriented approach to studying sport participation policies. He argued that “the key analytical issue relate (*sic*) to which sports and spots *processes* produce which *outcomes* for which participants in which *circumstances*” (p.34) (emphasis in original). This argument is supported by the fact that the 46 sports on the Olympic and Paralympic programme will have varying developmental potential to bring about personal and public benefits; the new IOC and UK government legacy framework will create the ‘right circumstances’ only for some sports and groups; and that there is a shared understanding on the part of all parties involved that Olympic legacy is not inevitable but created through intended and unintended processes and practices. Drawing from two case studies Girginov and Hills (2008) demonstrated that the experiences, participation processes and outcomes in creating sustainable Olympic legacy in English volleyball and StreetGames (a community based

physical activity programme) varied greatly and entailed different learning curves, delivery capacities, sustainable efforts and beneficiaries. Thus, different sports will have different capacities to engage with different aspects of sport legacy and cannot be treated as a singular entity. Similarly, the main function assigned to the 2012 London Games, to inspire a new generation of young people to take part in physical activity, will find different manifestations across the sports sector.

Collective intentionality

Sustainable Olympic sports development and constructivism share two common important assumptions – creation of intersubjective meanings which go beyond individual beliefs and a mandate for action. For that they both require a collective understanding of Olympic sport legacy and of formal institutions to focus on intersecting and interacting elements of this complex problem. They also both require simultaneous actions aimed at tackling social exclusion, health problems, economic development, unequal distribution of economic resources, and poverty reduction. Intentional development, as Cowen and Shenton (1996) argued, is concerned with the deliberate policy and actions of the state and other agencies, which are expressed in various developmental doctrines. The visions promoted by these doctrines are rooted in the normalizing practices of the modern state and its efforts to produce disciplined citizens, soldiers, leaders and governable subjects and sport has always been used as a main means for that (Duke and Golley, 1996, Mangan 2000). In the field of practical policy collective intentionality is exercised through the notion of trusteeship that is, the intent of one source of agency to develop the capacities of another. Two key intentions with regard to Olympic legacy that have been widely accepted by the myriad of agencies, the UK government and the sports community are increased participation and more opportunities for people to participate in sport.

The notion of trusteeship has a heuristic value for the analysis as it helps link the intent to develop (visions) with agency. All sports development legacy visions rest upon this notion, which amounts to a new policy doctrine suggesting that it is more than creating opportunities for participation. Moreover, the goals of Olympic legacy cannot be

achieved without confronting the human activities and structures that give rise to unsustainable and underdeveloped sport practices. Following Hass' (2004, p. 570) analysis of environmental policies, it is proposed that creating sustainable Olympic sports development legacy policy (as an expression of collective intentionality) rests on two key foundations – procedural and substantive. The former entails participation and transparency both to ensure that new perspectives on development are taken on board and that all stakeholders are included in the process so that policy enforcement and compliance can be guaranteed. The latter involves more comprehensive approaches to policy planning and formulation through an interdisciplinary approach. Whilst achieving a truly sustainable sports development policy may not be always possible, identifying and accepting the key values and principles underpinning sustainability should not only be encouraged but looks achievable.

Collective rules

Collective rules concern not only the normative and legal requirements that determine the behaviour of various legacy actors, but also a range of formal and informal rules and expectations. Girginov and Hills (2008) examined the evolution of the legacy thinking in the three previous UK Olympic bids of 1992, 1996 and 2000 and demonstrated that first, the current concept of sustainable sports development did not exist less than 10 years ago, and second, that it has been actively shaped by a political process responsible for establishing legacy rules, which involved the IOC, the UK government and a number of other agencies. The political process of creating sustainable Olympic sports development rules while setting at the same time 'the legacy deliverables' was stimulated by a mix of interventions including parliamentary hearings (HC CMS Committee 2007), contractual agreements between the UK government and voluntary sports governing bodies (Public Service Agreements, HM Treasury 2007) and public consultations (Sport England 2006). It was subsequently turned into a political promise by the UK government in a document entitled '*Our promise for 2012*' (DCMS 2007), which was spelled out in an 84 page action plan (DCMS 2008) detailing what needs to be done to achieve those deliverables. For example, promise three, "making the UK a world-leading sporting nation", envisages putting in place a range of institutional and normative arrangements before the end of

2008 including 225 competition managers, 5 hours of high quality sport for all 5 to 16 year-olds in England and 450 disability multi-sports clubs (DCMS 2008, p.21). Those plans and the agreements produced by the IOC, as well as various UK legacy agencies, assume the role of a rule. As all legacy objectives and indicators are designed to measure some form of development, the successful imposition of every new indicator establishes a new group of 'underdeveloped'. A classic example is the UK government endorsed rule of 30 minutes of physical activity three times a week, which according to Active People Survey automatically classes 79% of the UK population as physically inactive (Sport England 2007) and gives legacy enforces scope for expansion of their crusade. The key point here, to borrow from Becker again (1966, p.155), is that "with the establishment of organisations of rule enforcers the crusade becomes institutionalised". The significance of institutionalisation, as Berger and Luckmann (1971, p. 72) explained, is that "institutions..., by the very fact of their existence, control human conduct by setting up predefined patterns of conduct". Thus, to paraphrase Berger and Luckman (1971, p. 77), the institutionalized world of Olympic legacy creation is experienced as an objective reality.

The Olympic legacy framework turns the idea of sustainable sports development into an enterprise rationalizing and legitimizing its major stakeholders, organizations concerned with monitoring and measuring the legacy and a myriad of delivery partners. What Coubertin originally started as an educational project born out of disillusionment with an increasingly materialist culture and the poor fitness of youth has turned into a bureaucratic organization (both IOC and LOCOG) preoccupied with the enforcement of legacy rules and production of reports about promised benefits.

Human capacity to deal with the environment

Much of Olympic legacy thinking rests on human capacity to predict the future, which is based on a Western scientific ontology, predicated on the production of knowledge as a means of solving problems. The IOC approach to legacy highlights both the positivist (scientific analysis of the impact by establishing the 'facts') and constructivist assumptions (understanding the effects of actions) on which it is based as well as its political utility and is worth citing in full:

The idea for the OGI study was born from the IOC's desire to develop an objective and scientific analysis of this impact for each edition of the Olympic Games. By this means, the IOC will build up a powerful and accurate knowledge base of the tangible effects and legacy of the Games. In turn this will enable the IOC to fulfill two of its principal objectives as enshrined in the Olympic Charter: (i) to encourage and support a responsible concern for environmental issues, to promote sustainable development in sport and require that the Olympic Games are held accordingly; and (ii) to promote a positive legacy from the Olympic Games to the Host cities and the Host countries. The OGI study can be used as a management tool which allows the organizers and their stakeholders to have an overall vision of the impact of their activities and investments made in the framework of staging the Games. Used actively, the OGI study offers the organizers a means of understanding the effects of certain actions undertaken and to make adjustments if necessary. It can also be used as a tool to demonstrate the positive contribution of holding the Games in terms of local and regional development (personal communications with the IOC Olympic Games Department, May, 2008).

The IOC claim for 'objective scientific knowledge' merits further examination. First, it strives to produce research-derived knowledge for the purpose of informing legacy policies and promoting the positive impact of the Games. Second, it is grounded on a unitary causal logic, which assumes that if equipped with this knowledge, we can take certain actions that will result in desired effects. Both assumptions are hard to sustain and do not stand scrutiny. As demonstrated, conceptualising sustainable Olympic sports development legacy as a singular entity is highly problematic and unpractical. Instead, it has to be viewed as a range of possible outcomes (legacies) that accrue to individuals and communities within the right conditions. These include a number of outcomes and impacts such as enhanced self-esteem, fitness, family cohesion and reduced anti-social behaviour. Third, sports development is a complex social problem and as many studies on environmental policy have demonstrated understanding one aspect of the problem does not automatically result in advances in another (cf Dimitrov 2003). For example,

although our knowledge of the effects of exercise on the human body has vastly improved this still hasn't led to similar advances in the promotional strategies to motivate people to do more exercise. Finally, the IOC's own actions defy such claims, as the OGI framework has already imposed on London 2012 a set of policies without the scientific evidence that the Games can deliver a sustainable sport legacy. In fact, the UK government's position on the link between mega events and participation in sport is to the contrary: "it would seem that hosting events is not an effective, value for money, method of achieving [...] a sustained increase in mass participation" (DCMS 2002, p.75).

The above discussion suggests that the link between knowledge and policy is not simple and straight forward and both politicians and social scientists have cautioned about asserting the opposite. As Dimitrov (2003, p.126) observed "science cannot dictate policy since politics intervenes between knowledge and action, and the transition from information to interest formation is shaped by values, power and institutions". A statement from a Rand report is indicative of the limitations of both human capacity to predict and deal with the environment and the long distance between knowledge and politics. As the report put it: "London's bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games, like those of all its competitors, relied on a great deal of (sincere) guesswork" (RAND 2007, p.1). Following the analysis of the social construction of sustainable Olympic sports development legacy the next section examines the implications for policy research.

Towards a policy research agenda on sustainable Olympic sports development legacy

Policy research does not describe a singular activity and varies according to the problem being addressed, the academic discipline of the researchers, the funding sources and organisational settings as well as the style and judgements of the researchers. Majchrzak (1984, p. 12) defined policy research as "the process of conducting research on, or an analysis of, a fundamental social problem in order to provide policy makers with pragmatic, action-oriented recommendations for alleviating the problem." Policy research shares several similarities with policy analysis and basic research in that it deals with a fundamental social problem. However, policy research is unique because of its

orientation both to fundamental problems and action. Policy research therefore, has an expressed concern with generating applied knowledge in the form of development policies and implementations which has utility for policy-makers and practitioners (Bernstein 2006).

Legacy studies are inherently political for two main reasons – they are value laden and constitute a source of power. Hammersley (1995) convincingly argued about the political nature of social research by identifying value judgments and the exercise of power as the main aspects of the political. Research, as he suggested, “rests on a commitment to the goal of producing knowledge. In other words, it assumes that knowledge is in general preferable to ignorance”, hence “research must presuppose *some* valued goal” (1995, p. 110). Researchers, as Hammersley (1995, p. 105) added, also “claim expertise, and thereby authority, over some areas of knowledge. They claim a right to be heard and taken notice of in those areas. Furthermore, this is an asymmetrical right: their words demand more attention than those of lay people”. Indeed, as Haas (2004, p.587) put it, “knowledge can speak volumes to power”. The authority of research is exercised through epistemic communities, which Haas (2004, p. 587) described as “transmission belts by which new knowledge is developed and transmitted to decision-makers”. However, policy research is still faced with the problem of making its findings relevant to and acted upon by policy-makers, which is captured in the title of Haas’s (2004) study “when does power listen to truth?” In answering this question Haas raises an important epistemological and ontological issue with huge relevance to sport policy research. Since the ultimate aim of policy research is to provide applied knowledge there is an expectation that this knowledge will have utility for policy makers, otherwise it will be seen as undesirable and unhelpful. Haas (2004, p. 574) referred to this as ‘usable knowledge’ which is “accurate information that is of use to politicians and policy-makers”. This is an instrumental conception of the value of knowledge which presupposes that knowledge is of value only to the degree that it makes a contribution to practice. Sport policy researchers need to be aware and not dismiss on instrumental grounds the contribution which disciplinary research can make to legacy. As a comprehensive survey with UK social policy community demonstrated 53% of the

surveyed thought that it was “equally important for social policy research to have potential value for policy and practice AND to lead to an accumulation of knowledge”, compared to only 12% who believed that it was “much more important for social policy research to have value for policy and practice” (Becker, Bryman and Sempik 2006, p.7).

What follows from the conceptualization of sustainable sports development as a process with an unknown end point, the lack of sufficient knowledge about some of its key aspect, and the nature of policy research is that Olympic legacy policies can themselves be considered as experiments, which participants (e.g., IOC, LOCOG and Sport England) monitor and reflect on in order to improve over time. Not surprisingly, when in 2005 the IOC awarded the Games to London, the first reaction of the UK sport policy community, from the bid team to National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of sport, was “now what?” (personal communications with LOCOG, EVA and StreetGames key staff, 2008) Three years on sport legacy plans are still being drawn up including the city of London’s and LOCOG’s master plans. In this regard Hass (2004, p. 575) argued about the constructivists policy stance “that under conditions of uncertainty – such as are associated with contemporary globalization and highly technical issues – it is impossible to create ex-ante sufficient information to follow the policy analytic model...Alternatively, the key is to design policy analytic process from which actors learn about the world and about each other”. Haas’ argument offers a useful analytical device for understanding London 2012 legacy policies as these are being formulated in highly uncertain political, economic and social environments. It will suffice to mention the three-fold increase of the Games budget, from £3b to £9.3b between 2006 and 2008, the current global economic downturn and the £50 million gap in the funding of Team GB for the 2012 Games (UK Sport, 2008). Similar national and global uncertainties make any sustainable sports development plans problematic.

Clearly, given the complex and contested nature of sustainable sports development we need to consider the possibility that different types of knowledge may have uneven roles in informing collective decisions. Indeed, the IOC OGI framework only uses two indicators, number of participants and development of school sport, in order to capture

sustainable sports development in the host city and country. This information is of little value for policy-makers, as for example, they will not know what processes and conditions were responsible for those results in which places. Moreover, we also need to know which type of information is more important and knowledge about which aspects of sports development is most influential in decision-making. Following a lead from Dimitrov (2003) the legacy policy research-derived knowledge could be broken up into three basic aspects: (i) knowledge about the extent of the sports development problem, (ii) knowledge about the causes of the problem, and (iii) knowledge about its consequences. The value of disaggregating knowledge, according to Dimitrov (2003, p.128), is that “it helps us solve theoretical puzzles that previous approaches have not been able to address effectively”. A similar approach to knowledge production in sports development holds the promise of more effectively linking policy interventions to different types of knowledge informed by new gender and ethnic epistemologies. The elements of Olympic sport legacy construction identified earlier offer a useful guide for collecting and interpreting empirical data with each element posing further a number of interrelated theoretical and methodological considerations which are addressed below. Table 1 provides a summary of this relationship.

Table 1 about here

Researching the idea of sustainable Olympic sports development legacy

The idea of sustainable sports development has been framed through a political, academic and public discourse, which raises two important theoretical and methodological issues. These concern recognising sustainability as a complex issue which requires the use of a combination of perspectives for its understanding, and of the concomitant changing relationship between researchers and policy makers, including the practicalities of conducting research. A main challenge in understanding sustainable sports development as a process concerns how to reconcile two different forms and levels of analysis, interpretative/constructivist and critical. The interpretative perspective focuses on the question ‘what is sustainable sports development and how is it produced?’ and pays close attention to individual participants and their perceptions, relations and interactions in the local field. This processual and contextual emphasis invites the use of methods associated with ethnographic and interpretive approaches such as case studies, observations and

interviews. A limitation of the interpretative perspective is the potential loss of practical relevance and legitimacy for policy makers. The critical perspective has an agenda for social change and is more interested in understanding ‘how can we make the sustainable sports development process better?’ It draws on participatory methods and stakeholder involvement in order to promote particular values and understand the operation of power relations and distribution of resources (Greene 2000).

These two levels of analysis, however, are not to be seen as mutually exclusive but complementary. Balogun, Huff and Johnson (2003) showed how this can be achieved through the notion of strategizing. Whilst the traditional view of strategy focuses on macro level and long-term processes, strategizing is concerned with “the myriad, micro activities that make up strategy and strategizing in practice”, and it “implies engagement with lower level managers and non-managerial staff” (Balogun et al 2003, p.199). Similarly, in a rare study on constructing the Olympic dream, Pitsis, Clegg, Marosszky and Rura-Polley (2003) used a future perfect approach to the planning and delivery of an environmentally sustainable Sydney 2000 Olympic Harbour which revolved around the two shared assumptions of sustainability – process and participation. This approach presented an example of reality construction, as no similar project was ever attempted before in a context where no planning was practically possible. In the words of Pitsis et al (2003, p. 575) the use of future perfect strategy “combines forward-looking projection of ends with a visualization of the means by which that projected future may be accomplished, as an emergent rather than explicitly scripted strategy”. The success of the project was largely attributed to the creation of a shared culture that enabled all concerned with the project (engineers, local communities and authorities) to contribute to its outcomes in an imaginative way. Combining two levels of analysis urges us to reconsider the changing relationship between the researcher and policy-maker/practitioner. This entails researchers accepting that research questions, data ownership, analysis and writing should be undertaken in collaboration and shared with the organizations involved (Bologun et al 2003, Lincoln 2001).

Research implications for assigning functions to Olympic sports development

The discourse surrounding the idea of sports development created by various legacy promoters assigns functions to sport in general and the Olympics in particular. Three functions deserving particular attention concern sports development's capacity to: affect positive social change by tackling a range of social and economic issues; deliver tangible benefits to individuals and communities; and inspire people. Many of the current visions of sports development have actually been designed to compensate for the negative propensities of capitalism through the reconstruction of the social order by tackling class, poverty, gender and age inequalities (Coalter 2007, Collins 2003, Girginov 2008, Houlihan and White 2002). However, Coalter's (2004, p. 11) examination of London 2012 sustainable sporting legacy concluded that "most of the evidence suggests that major sporting events have no inevitably positive impact on levels of sports participation". This view is echoed by a UK representative survey with 20-70 years olds who believed that it should not have taken the Games to make those functions (commitments) possible (Crass Ross Dawson 2007, p. 7). Researchers, therefore, should question prevailing social and political discourses representing naïve, commonsense understandings of sport as well as the validity of some sport forms, and their capacity to deliver particular outcomes based on the notion of sport as 'self evidently a good thing'.

The functions attributed to sport are rooted in a positivist belief that social life can be improved by deliberate interventions based on scientific rationality and knowledge which is achievable through research. It tends to present sports development as a positive sum-game where "increasing physical activity by 10% could save 6,000 lives and £500 million per year' (Sport England 2004, p. 29). As demonstrated, sustainable sport development is not a well bounded, clearly defined, simple problem with regard to cause and effect. Instead, viewing sustainable sports development as a system acknowledges the primacy of the whole and helps transcend the positivist approach of cause and effect by employing a circular causation, where a variable is both the cause and effect of another. In other words, even if staging the Games directly increases the number of sport participants, which is the aim of most sports development legacy interventions, this may not automatically result in health benefits or reduced anti-social behaviour. For those gains to occur a number of cultural and structural changes need to take place as well. The

implication for sports development policy research is that the positivist logic of OGI and the myriad of other national documents that assign functions to sport, as claimed by a RAND Report (2007), sets the scene for evidence-based sustainable Olympic sport policy and determines what counts as evidence. Recently, Coalter (2007, p. 1) warned that the emergence of evidence-based sports development policy, or what he termed “objective-led management” is a threat to sport.

Research questions in conceptualising collective intentionality

As noted, collective intentionality in sport development concerns the intent of one source of agency, that is, the IOC, UK government, LOCOG and Sport England, to develop the capacities of another including local communities, schools and clubs across the UK. Relating Majchrzak’s (1984) claim that policy is not made but accumulates to the process of legacy construction implies that the exercise of trusteeship involves suggesting, implementing, evaluating and revising legacy policies. This process is to be conducted in a transparent manner that involves all stakeholders (legacy policy procedural foundation). Policy planning, as an expression of collective intentionality, should be based on an interdisciplinary approach (legacy policy substantive foundation). The procedural and substantive foundations of Olympic legacy policy are reflective of the tension between critical and interpretative research perspectives respectively outlined earlier and pose some theoretical and methodological issues which are considered below.

Engaging with participating members and groups representative of collective intentions based on common beliefs urges attention to two important conceptual points. First, because sports developers intervene on behalf of others this raises the question of the legitimacy of their claimed trusteeship (Cowen and Shenton 1996). In particular, what rights do those agencies have to develop others, and how accountable are they to those they are developing? Second, the diffusion of various sports development visions creates institutional difficulties by breaking down the symmetry between decision makers (the development community of trustees) and decision takers (communities and people subject to development). This results in neglecting the equivalence principle, which at its simplest suggests that “those who are significantly affected by a global good or bad

should have say in its provision and regulation” (Kaul, cited in Held 2006, p. 166). This principle bears important implications for matching circles of stakeholders and decision makers in sports development, for systematising the financing of global public goods delivered by sport, and for spanning borders and groups of actors in establishing the ownership and promoting the management of the strategic issues of sports development.

We conceptualised sports development as a moving target, an identity and space construction activity, a set of interactions, and a process of changing perceptions, all of which depend on learning. This renders it a cognitive enterprise, which involves social and personal learning and knowledge creation and management and raises the issue of what counts as knowledge and who is responsible for producing it. In this respect interpretive research can make a substantial contribution to policy. As Hammersley (1995, pp.135-6) maintained:

Such research provides knowledge of the perspectives and behaviour of actors who are the target for policy and practice. In this way it may allow practitioners to understand those actors in a deeper way than they currently do: to recognise their distinctive intentions and motives, and to see the logic of their perspectives on the world, including their views about practitioners.

Lorentzen (2005, p.1019) pointed out that “the social process of learning requires a social environment which encourages knowledge sharing among individuals and groups.” A central issue in considering the impact of collective intentionality on Olympic legacy construction with respect to sports development outcomes concerns understanding how knowledge is shared, created and utilized through interactions in a shared context (Nonaka and Toyama 2005). This attitude to learning clearly presents sports development as a knowledge-creating process where the new knowledge comes from the interactions between sport participants. Green (2008) vividly illustrates this point by asserting that relationship building and positive experiences are the two central factors that determine the success of sports development programmes. Sports developers, therefore, have to be very perceptive and to allow learning to take place by valuing all skills that are brought to the table and by encouraging contributions from all participants (Frisby and Millar 2002).

Moreover, they also have to develop the skills to synthesise the new knowledge so it can be applied in practice where it becomes a source for further knowledge generation.

In particular, the political process by which sustainable Olympic sport legacies are created calls attention to the ‘UNs’ of sports development and involves overcoming a perception of what one is not. The aim of sports development policy research then becomes understanding how to make underdeveloped sports developed, unsuccessful sport organisations successful, underrepresented age, gender, disability or ethnic groups represented or unethical sport behaviour ethical. To understand how to overcome those perceptions entails studying change at social, community and personal levels. Here the emphasis shifts to the ‘BE-comings’ of sports development concerning the construction of personal and organisational identities, as well as space and place meaning construction. Sport development policy research will need to consider ways to explore how social identities such as gender, ethnicity and class are linked to individuals’ desires and opportunities for involvement in sport within particular space and time and ensure that interventions will facilitate and reinforce positive identities (Hills 2008).

Research implications concerning creating collective rules

Social learning and knowledge development underpins the creation of rules for regulating the field as well as enabling new developments. Sport legacy policies represent experiments which developers monitor and reflect upon. Subsequently, this entails that a significant amount of rules regulating the behaviour of actors and the opportunities available to them will be created in the process of planning and delivering legacies. Thus, measuring and evaluating the sports development process through routine and non-routine monitoring channels concerns both the political and practical nature of sustainable development. Sports development is inherently a political project in which different visions contend for influence and produce material outcomes. Two examples illustrate this point and highlight how rules creation may have a different impact on actors’ opportunities for development. The UK government’s decision to raid Lottery funding to the tune of £65m to help pay the rising Games costs represented an 8% cut of Sport England’s (the main sport development delivery agency) budget, but because it levers in

£3 for every £1, it essentially means that £1.6 billion is not going to community sport and there will be less participants and coaches. The political significance of winning Olympic medals also impacts on rule creation with regard to NGB's developmental opportunities. The development potential of two UK mainstream sports of swimming and athletics was substantially impeded by a reduction of their funding by £1,300 000 and £1,750 000 following a 'failure' to deliver their medal targets from Sydney and Athens Olympics respectively (Girginov and Hills 2008). Policy research therefore, has to account for the effects of legacy rules creation on the development of different sports.

A major research challenge that arises here concerns the relationship between dominant development visions and process monitoring practices which are designed to legitimize and enforce those visions by creating rules. Process monitoring routine channels includes various report mechanisms, forms and deadlines established by those who act on behalf of others. The institutionalisation of the Olympic legacy enterprise discussed earlier poses both a research and management dilemma. As the number of legacy rules producers and enforcers increases so does the amount of information that needs to be monitored and processed. This runs against the very nature of most administrative systems, which can only successfully function if they reduce complexity. Hence, any excessive information gathering, particularly through ethnographic methods, tends to 'clutter' and 'dilute', that is, to increase complexity and because of that is viewed as unnecessary or as reducing manageability (Mosse 1998). The main research question then becomes how to design and use information generating and rule creation activities through interpretative and critical methods in a complementary way so new insights can be produced and the interests of all stakeholders considered.

Research questions regarding human capacity to deal with the environment

Following from the previous section, the creation of rules determines to a large extent the human capacity to deal with the uncertainties of the environment within which sport legacy occurs. Human capacities are complex and ever-evolving, and broadly speaking concern the acquisition of social, economic and physical capital in the form of self-esteem, knowledge, skills and social networks as well as structures and management tools

needed to support those (Adams 2008). Developing the personal and organizational capacity to create, test and maintain opportunities for sports development involves the use of local traditions and human potential within a constantly changing political and economic environment. Developing capacity for Olympic inspired participation becomes problematic when the background and histories of different groups and communities are considered. The average participation level of the five Olympic host boroughs is alarmingly low at 18.5%. (Sport England 2007) The problem is further compounded by a high level of deprivation and obesity levels of 20% for boys and 22% for girls aged 7-11. (Community Health Survey 2003) Clearly, for the people of East London sustainable sports development will have particular meanings and personal capacity implications than that of other communities in the UK. The same applies to different organizations and activities.

Establishing organizational structures and management models to assist in building the human capital needed for carrying out the functions of sports development produces a tension between the diversity of human sport experiences and formal organisations' tendency for simplification established earlier. The point here is that the institutionalization of sustainable sports development entails reducing complexity so the legacy enterprise can function, which largely ignores the diversity of human sport experiences and their capacity building potential. The main research question then becomes how to reconcile the diversity of sports development experiences, as a source of theoretical and practical knowledge, with organizational structures' and models' tendency to simplify those experiences so they become manageable.

Sustainable sport development will eventually be contingent on agencies' capacity to create and maintain opportunities. This capacity has to accommodate the uncertainties presented by changing funding and sport priorities and mechanisms as well as participants' interpretation of legacy and behaviours. It follows that different organizations and communities will have different needs for capacity development. For example, the sport governing body of volleyball (EVA) is facing the double task of expanding its club network and supplying regular elite tournaments to keep the public

interest in this sport. StreetGames, a community based organization, have been trying to create and maintain opportunities for participation under the framework of the Streetmark Award. Signing up to the Streetmark award establishes a formal partnership, provides agencies with a press pack, cut rate invites to events, and other opportunities. In this regard, the London Games is not going to have significant contribution for either organization (Girginov & Hills 2008). The research then focuses on how to align the sustainable Olympic sport legacy requirements for the use of certain management techniques with the specific capacity development needs of local organizations and individuals?

Conclusion

This paper has argued that it is necessary to view Olympic legacy policy development through the lens of constructivism. Considered in this way sports development must be conceptualised as a set of interactions and a process of changing perceptions. Promoting a positive legacy from the Olympic Games requires a complementary understanding of sustainability as a social construct and a set of processes that reflect collective and contested goals. The Olympic legacy concept presents a challenge to sport policy researchers aiming to investigate and promote policy interventions. This paper proposes a process oriented approach to sustainable Olympic sport legacy research. The key elements for consideration in such an approach include: the idea of sustainable sport development legacy, assigning functions to Olympic sports development; collective intentionality; collective rules; and, the human capacity to deal with the environment. Corresponding research questions centre on issues such as: definitions and possibilities of sustainability and sports development; how legacy outcomes are produced; what counts as knowledge and who is responsible for it; the link between sports development and rule creation; and, how to reconcile the diversity of sports development experiences with management techniques. In order to address these research questions a range of methodological issues emerge. Such an approach demands critical and interpretive methodologies that are capable of simultaneously analysing processes at macro, meso, and micro levels transcending more static, positivistic cause and effect models. The need to research with rather than on people is paramount to a constructivist approach enabling

locally meaningful experiences to feed into politically and practically useful policies. The approach argued for in this paper makes connections between the needs and capacities of people and organizations. This will support the development of national and international policies that enhance the impact of the Olympic Games on sports development and wider social and economic policies of the host country.

Table 1. A social constructivist process oriented research in sustainable Olympic sports development legacy: key elements, research questions, methodological issues and types of legacy policy-research knowledge

Key elements	Main research question	Methodological issues	Type of knowledge
The idea of sustainable Olympic sport development legacy	What is sustainable sports development and how is it produced? How can we make the sustainable sports development process better?	Linking macro, meso and micro levels of analysis Combining interpretive with critical approaches of inquiry Changing relationship b/n researcher and practitioner	Knowledge about the extend of the sport legacy problems
Assigning functions to Olympic sport development	How to determine what Olympic legacy outcomes are produced for which sports, groups and organisations	Transcending positivist cause-effect methodologies Viewing variables both as cause and effect of another.	Knowledge about the causes of sport legacy problems
Collective intentionality	What counts as knowledge and who is responsible for producing it? Who is in control of development?	Research with not on people, involving participants in exploring connections and causality; Studying change simultaneously at social, community and personal levels	Knowledge about the extend of the sport legacy problems
Collective rules	What constitutes the link between sports development interventions and rules creation? How rules creation impact on sports development legacy construction?	Making locally meaningful experiences politically and practically useful policies Using critical and interpretative methods in a complementary way. Enhancing the reliability of forecasting methods	Knowledge about the causes of sport legacy problems
Human capacity to deal with the environment	How to reconcile the diversity of sports development experiences with administrative systems' tendency to simplify those experiences so they become manageable? How to align the sustainable Olympic sport legacy requirements for the use of certain management techniques with the specific capacity development needs of local organizations and individuals? How to use routine and non-routine channels for information collection on sport development process evaluation?	Linking personal and organisational capacity in context; Understanding the relationship between different aspects of a sport development problem.	Knowledge about the consequences of the sport legacy problems

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