

How do stakeholder's influence stadium-led regeneration?

A summary of PhD research undertaken by Mark Panton*

Abstract

Research question: How do stakeholders influence stadium-led regeneration? .

Research methods: Two case studies involving semi-structured interviews with a wide range of stakeholders (27), as well as participant observations at meetings (32), questionnaires (3) and secondary documents from the two case study sites were used.

Results and findings: A new framework is developed based on twelve concepts sets out how stakeholders in East Manchester and Tottenham sought to influence stadium-led development through, for example, mobilisation, protest and use of media.

Implications: The stakeholder influence framework demonstrates the wide range of triggers; strategies and means used by stakeholders. Community groups and large organisations need to consider how the framework can be used to achieve their goals.

1. Introduction

The use of sports stadiums in regeneration is a recent phenomenon in the UK, with the breadth of literature in this field relatively limited. However, it is an area of growing interest with numerous other sports stadium regeneration projects being proposed. This short article summarises previous literature on stakeholders and stadium-led regeneration before setting out an overview of the results, discussion of those findings and concluding comments.

At the start of this research, in 2011, Manchester City Football Club, having moved into the Commonwealth Stadium in East Manchester eight years previously, was about to embark on a further significant development on an area of land immediately across the road from their stadium. The proposals involved a large training complex, the *Etihad Campus*, with a number of facilities open to the community; a walkway connecting the Campus with the main stadium; a proposed sport-science unit; and a new sixth-form college.

During the same period, Tottenham Hotspur Football Club had set out and was negotiating its own plans to build a new stadium within what was to become known as the Northumberland Development Project (NDP). This project involved associated developments that proposed a public square, new retail facilities, new homes on the site of the existing football ground, establishment of a university technical college and an increased role for the Tottenham Hotspur Foundation – a charity connected to the football club (THFC website: new stadium plans). As part of the NDP, Haringey Council also proposed to build a walkway to connect the new stadium with a re-developed train station on the other side of the High Road, which would involve the demolition of many homes and retail businesses.

In order to gain an in-depth understanding from the perspective of the stakeholders involved in stadium-led regeneration a series of interviews and participant observations with different individuals and groups was carried out over a period of three years. All individuals participated in the research on the basis of anonymity, although some spoke publicly and on the record through various media formats.

2. Stakeholders and stadium-led regeneration

The existing literature on community involvement in regeneration suggests it is not easy to balance wider community or stakeholder participation with successful developments. Regeneration agencies often limit participation to groups seen as legitimate, or most in tune with its objectives (e.g. Harvey and Schaefer, 2001) and participation is often constrained by the belief of local people that they will not be listened to by focal organisations (Imrie and Raco, 2003; Jones, 2003, quoted in Henderson *et al.*, 2007: 1446). Although it has been observed that:

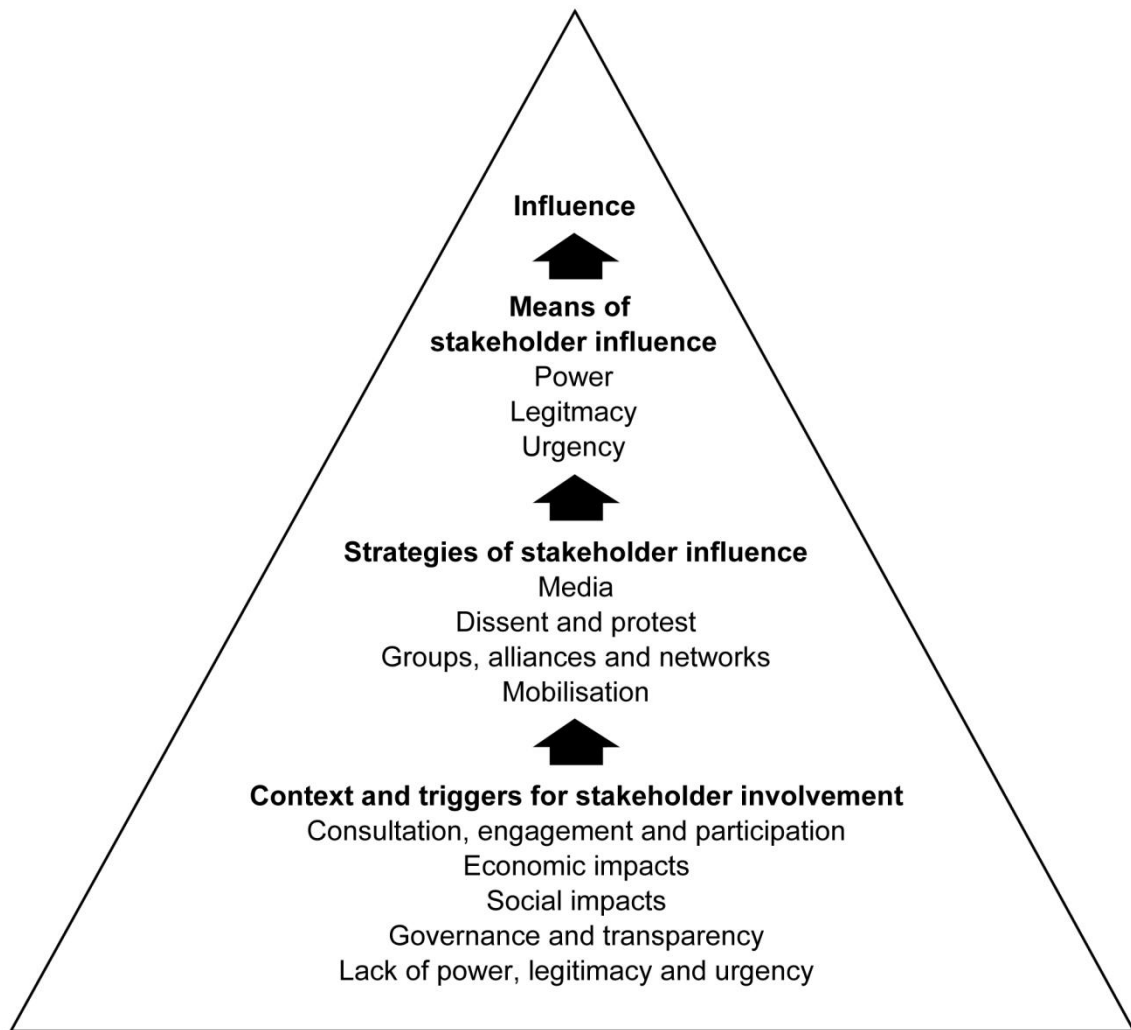
“Often the process of empowerment can be stimulated by the community itself, for example, when the community is under threat from a major development proposal,” (Colenutt and Cutten, 1994: 246).

In the USA and Canada, from 1990 to 2010, 104 new sports facilities were built for Major League Baseball, National Football League, National Basketball Association, National Hockey League and Major Soccer League teams, (Coates and Humphreys, 2011: 65). This has led to a wide literature and debate around the issues related to stadium-led regeneration. The most basic argument put forward by advocates of stadium-led regeneration is that any public costs involved will be exceeded by their economic benefits. Following increased unemployment due to de-industrialisation, this proposition was adopted in the 1980s and 1990s by a series of American cities, with early examples in Cleveland, Denver, Indianapolis and Phoenix. Notwithstanding the contentions of many “boosters”, repeated studies and commentaries (Baade and Dye, 1990; Noll and Zimbalist, 1997, Aaron *et al.*, 2004) have found little economic impact for new stadiums. Despite these findings, the North American trend has emerged as a model for regeneration projects in the United Kingdom in the last fifteen years.

3. Results

The interviews and participant observations carried out for the research yielded a great deal of data related to how stakeholders try to influence stadium-led regeneration projects. The framework developed from the results and data analysis presents the twelve concepts most strongly linked with influence on stadium-led regeneration. Figure 1 provides the high-level graphic representation of the concepts identified in the final stage of the data analysis and summarises the three-stage process of stakeholder influence on stadium-led regeneration that emerged from the data. The concepts and overarching themes were linked to produce the emergent framework to answer the central question of the thesis as to how stakeholders influence stadium-led regeneration.

Figure 1 Stakeholder influence framework



4. Discussion

4.1 Context and triggers for stakeholder involvement

“They didn’t ask me what I wanted; they didn’t ask my husband and all the shopkeepers in our parade. They didn’t ask them what they wanted ...” (L, local resident and business owner, Tottenham, interview with author, 23.07.13.)

For many stakeholders in Tottenham a lack of power, legitimacy and urgency with focal organisations became an important trigger for their involvement. Many local people, whose own homes and business premises were sign-posted for demolition, were shocked at the lack of genuine consultation and influence of their views on regeneration proposals. The idea of lack of influence also fed into local stakeholder’s views about the economic and social impacts and lack of transparency around the regeneration process.

In East Manchester, despite some individual perceptions about the power of the football club, the overall context appeared less threatening to stakeholders. Issues around consultation, engagement and participation, together with economic and social impacts did provide triggers for stakeholders to become involved in the discussions about stadium-led regeneration, but lack of transparency and governance issues were less significant than in Tottenham.

4.2 Strategies of stakeholder influence

A range of strategies were used by stakeholder groups involved in the stadium-led regeneration process to try to gain salience with focal organisations at both of the research sites. Mobilisation and the formation of groups, alliances and networks were still in progress in Tottenham during the research period, but they quickly moved on to making use of the media in its different forms together with various forms of dissent and protest.

“We don’t have one strategy; we have a whole range of strategies: lobbying, protesting, planning, support alternative planning ideas, we’ve got a positive charter, we’re supporting groups and networks,” (participant observation at community meeting in Tottenham, 06.08.15).

In East Manchester many community groups had existed for much of the previous fifteen years due to the longer process of stadium-led regeneration in the area, but these phenomena were still relevant for their continued salience with the focal organisations.

“The groups that are well organised [are most able to influence football clubs] and most likely to embarrass the club if they don’t get their own way. Social media savvy, well connected” (Y, executive of community sport trust, Interview with author, 07.11.13).

4.3 Means of stakeholder influence

Although this research was open to considering new variables, as part of an inductive approach, other means of stakeholder influence were not found to be as strongly supported in this research as those originally advanced by Mitchell *et al.*, (1997). The extent to which stakeholders were able to influence stadium-led regeneration in Tottenham and East Manchester is considered in the conclusion.

5. Conclusion

Community groups in Tottenham managed to gain some power, legitimacy and urgency with focal organisations over the period of this research, but there were limits to the extent of the salience and their overall impacts on the stadium-led regeneration. The power of focal organisations in Tottenham, such as the council and the football club was sufficient to resist major changes to the most significant of the stadium-led regeneration plans. On 16 December, 2015, Haringey Council granted full planning permission for a re-designed 61,000 seat stadium and a 22-storey hotel; allowing for the demolition of three locally listed buildings. Outline planning permission was also granted for the construction of four residential blocks providing up to 585 units, none of which would be sold as affordable housing. It should be pointed out that Tottenham Hotspur’s new stadium is entirely privately financed and the investment of over £400 million into the area was welcomed by many people.

In East Manchester, stakeholders were able to exert influence on the original City of Manchester Stadium, built in 2002 and reconfigured for the football club in 2003, through community groups that had been supported by the New Deal for Communities programme, rolled out in 1999. Some of these community groups still possessed salience with focal organisations and were able to exert influence over the ongoing stadium-led regeneration of the area that included the building of the Etihad campus. This was evidenced by the bi-monthly residents and local community groups meetings held at the Etihad Stadium and chaired by a representative of Manchester City FC. On alternate months, the football club also met with local businesses and larger stakeholders such as Sport England. Due to the chronology of the developments stakeholders were also able to see some genuine social and economic benefits resulting from the stadium-led regeneration.

From the results of this research, it is argued that it is vital to have in place genuine consultation processes that allow stakeholders to participate in the decision-making process with their views being used to influence stadium-led regeneration. For stakeholder groups and focal organisations the results of this research provide evidence of the issues that are likely to drive people towards trying to influence regeneration projects. It also sets out the type of strategies that can be effective for stakeholders in gaining responses from, and salience with, focal organisations.

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