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Event Governance: World Rally Championship Case Study

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Abstract

Processes of globalisation and the concomitant need to establish a presence in a globally competitive marketplace are frequently cited as factors underpinning national government involvement in the support of events. State government, and to a lesser extent, local government involvement in events is often justified by an event's ability to facilitate, among other things, regional development, destination branding and city imaging. Yet despite increasing involvement of such governments in activities aimed at attracting events, little attention has been paid to the way in which the different levels of government collaborate, and the quality of governance arrangements in place before, during and after the event. This paper addresses this gap in research by examining the governance arrangements that characterised the World Rally Championship event held in the Northern Rivers Region of New South Wales in September 2009.

The Rally was a controversial event from which lessons can be drawn that contribute to, and enhance understandings of, good event governance. In addressing this broad aim, the objectives of this qualitative study are, firstly, to identify the governance issues associated with the planning and management of the World Rally Championship event in the Northern Rivers Region, New South Wales in 2009; and secondly, to identify lessons for event planning and management practice that would enhance good event governance. The results of the study suggested that more effective event governance in relation to the planning and management of the rally could be achieved by addressing the numerous issues that were identified in this analysis.

Introduction

Processes of globalisation and the concomitant need to establish a presence in a globally competitive marketplace are frequently cited as key factors underpinning government involvement in the bidding for and support of major events (Gotham 2002; Reid 2006; Stokes and Jago 2007; Getz 2008). As the

arguments generally go, events provide a vehicle for attracting international and national attention, for consolidating place image and destination branding, and for stimulating business development and innovation (Yeoman, Roberston, Ali-Knight, Drummond & McMahon-Beattie 2004). There is also a range of socio-cultural benefits that may arise depending upon the scale and type of event (Small 2007). An increase in civic pride and national identity are amongst those benefits that politicians are often quite eager to be associated with (Wood 2002). Within this context, a government's role is commonly seen as facilitating the bidding for and staging of events by providing indirect support that will bring a proposed event to fruition.

Governments at all levels have become increasingly involved in activities aimed at attracting events (Whitford 2009). In particular, state governments, often driven by neoliberal agendas (e.g. pro-economic development, place branding and marketing initiatives) are driven by a perceived need to attract events and take a lead role in the bidding and negotiation associated with securing an event. However, events are not 'plug and play' economic development tools. Once an event is secured in a location, diverse roles and responsibilities for event planning and management are spread horizontally across different agencies and vertically across different layers of government. Business and community groups and individuals hold varying expectations and aspirations about the event, which have to be carefully managed.

There is a strong and growing body of literature that examines the planning, management and evaluation of events including Keyser (2008), Sherwood (2007), Schalteggar and Wagner (2006) and Conley and Williams (2005) among others. This literature has emerged predominantly from business, management and tourism studies to the point that it is now a separate field of study (Getz 2008) with several journals dedicated to event research (e.g. *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism*, *Event Management: an international journal*, *International Journal of Event Management Research* and *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*). Notwithstanding the general growth in interest in events research, intergovernmental relations and governance arrangements are relatively

under researched. Yet the way in which different levels of government collaborate, and the quality of governance arrangements in place before, during and after the event, can have a major influence on the overall quality of the event, and the net benefits from staging the event. This paper seeks to address this gap in research by examining the governance arrangements that characterised the World Rally Championship (WRC) event held in the Northern Rivers Region of New South Wales in September 2009. The Rally was a controversial event from which lessons can be drawn that contribute to, and enhance understandings of, good event governance practice. In addressing this broad aim, the objectives of the paper are:

(1) To identify the governance issues associated with the planning and management of the World Rally Championship event in the Northern Rivers Region, New South Wales in 2009; and

(2) To identify lessons for event planning and management practice that would enhance good event governance.

Major Events, Wicked Problems and Governance

Within the policy studies literature there is a growing body of research that explores the increasingly complex and overlapping roles and responsibilities of government, business and community. A range of processes commonly associated with globalisation and neoliberal public management have conspired to challenge the traditional understandings of public and private roles and responsibilities (e.g. Alford and Head 2008; Arentsen, Bressers and O'Toole 2000; De Bruijn, Ten Heuvelhof and In 't Veld 2002; Roberts 2001). As a result, the world is increasingly viewed as a complex multi-actor system where policy problems are wicked, multidimensional and outside the control of any single agency (Van de Riet 2003, Rittel and Webber 1973). While some might lament this lack of clarity, others argue that multiple actors and agencies can create a mongrel form of management that has the potential to be stronger and more robust than the responses of any single agency (Dredge and Thomas 2009; Runhaar, Dieperink and Driessen 2006).

The planning and management of major events exemplifies this wicked policy space. Major events provide the vehicle to promote local products and places to the world, and to stimulate investment and economic development (Dwyer, Forsyth and Spur 2006; Getz, Andersson and Larson 2007). They can also be tools to enhance civic pride and engagement (Arcodia and Whitford, 2006; Dwyer, Mellor, Mistilis and Mules 2000). However, events can also be characterised by a range of economic, social, cultural, environmental and political impacts that extend over space and time (Stokes 2006). As a result, it is not uncommon that multiple levels of government and multiple agencies within the same level of government can potentially have some role or responsibility in the staging of an event, or in evaluating and managing its impacts (Allen, O'Toole, McDonnell & Harris 2001).

Yet in addressing these roles and responsibilities, governments are increasingly influenced by neoliberal public management approaches. These approaches have dictated the adoption of responses such as downsizing and outsourcing of government responsibilities and greater collaboration with non-government actors and agencies in an effort to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of policy decisions and actions (Dredge and Pforr 2008).

But the forces of globalisation and neoliberal public management are not necessarily partners in the staging of major events. That is, major events are, more often than not, driven by strong economic imperatives: place promotion, investment attraction and employment generation are oft-cited justifications (Getz 2007, 2008; Van de Wagen 2005). However, the increasingly complex division of roles and responsibilities and the adoption of neoliberal public management philosophies have promoted a complex shared power world in which government has some influence but fewer resources, and it has limited capacity to act unilaterally. Whilst public-private collaboration is increasingly recognised in the literature as an important ingredient in the staging of major events (Whitford 2009), there is increasing evidence that governments are opting out of a governance approach preferring instead heavy-handed involvement, particularly in the bidding for and securing of major events (Stokes 2007; Getz 1990, 2008). The creation of separate events agencies (usually

statutory corporations) in Western Australia, New South Wales and Victoria demonstrate this trend. Moreover, recently introduced major events legislation in Victoria (*Major Sporting Events Act 2009*), New South Wales (*Motor Sports (World Rally Championship) Act 2009*), Western Australia (*Major Events (Aerial Advertising) Act 2007*) and Queensland (*Motor Racing Events Act 2000*) suggest that economic imperatives largely driven by processes of globalisation tend to outweigh the need for meaningful consultation and the collaborative governance of major events.

Within the context of an increasingly active government involvement, particularly in the securing of major events, issues such as participation, consultation and public interest emerge. Over 10 years ago Anthony Giddens (1998) warned that there was a crisis in democracy. Neoliberalism and its concomitant emphasis on economic objectives had led to a reworking of notions of public interest (Saul 1997). Rather than public interest being a 'rational-technical' value embedded in bureaucratic policy formulation, it had morphed into a value that was subjectively constructed within the regimes of powerful interests that influenced public sector decision-makers. In response, there has been increasing interest in a 'third way' politics project, which reflects a need for re-engaging local, bottom-up interests in decision-making, new forms of policy making where individuals and communities of interest take active responsibility for engaging in policy making (Dredge and Pforr 2008). It is within this context that the remainder of this paper focuses on the possibilities of governance as a tool to improve major event planning and management and to address increasing concerns over lack of democratic participation and consultation in decision-making.

Defining Governance

The concept of governance is receiving increased attention in a variety of academic and practitioner forums in a variety of policy spaces. For the purpose of this paper governance is conceptualised within a policy context to denote 'a more democratic, transparent and legitimate way of governing that requires an effective political framework conducive to achieving shared goals and responsible decision-making' (Dredge & Pforr 2008, p.68). It involves decentralised structures and practices of

decision-making that allow a multiplicity of stakeholders to be involved and a commitment to collaboration and shared ownership of important decisions (Colebatch 2002).

In tourism research, Dredge and Pforr (2008) observe that, whilst there is a growing interest in the analysis of organisational structures and relational characteristics, there has not been any consolidated attempt to explore the impact of governance on tourism decision-making nor to develop normative criteria to assist in the development of good governance principles. The same criticism could be levelled at the events literature, where research tends to be relatively fragmented (see e.g. Getz 2008). It is our intention in this paper to bring these streams of literature a little closer through an analysis of a particular event in order to better understand the challenges of good event governance and, by learning from practice, what might constitute 'good' event governance in this particular case.

Governance: An events perspective

The principles and characteristics of good governance are receiving increasing attention in a variety of policy sectors and normative guidance, in the form of principles and criteria, are emerging (e.g. Colebatch 2002; Good Governance Advisory Group 2004; Ladeur 2004; Verspaandonk 2001). To date however, there is a paucity of literature examining the nature of events governance (Yaghmour 2008) despite an increase in event specific agencies and policy. While the interrelated field of events policy has received a little more attention, understandings remain fragmented, and quite often, case study specific (Getz 2008). For instance, there is a small collection of work focusing on local government, institutions and/or policy networks including, Weed (2003, 2006); Pugh and Wood (2004); Thomas and Wood (2004); Whitford (2004a, 2004b) and Getz and Andersson (2008). Studies looking at policy analysis and public sector involvement in events include Ali-Knight and Robertson (2004) and Stokes and Jago (2007). Additionally, other research has examined the politics of place marketing and/or event policy and regional development (Gotham 2002; O'Sullivan and Jackson 2002; Reid 2006; Whitford 2009). Importantly, these studies may not represent an exhaustive list of research undertaken

on issues pertaining to public policy and events. They do however, provide a realistic indication of the scarcity of work undertaken in event public sector and policy research, which according to Getz, (2008, p. 62) " … is underdeveloped and has not proceeded systematically". This study on event governance then, makes a much-needed contribution to the literature in the field of events and public policy by facilitating greater knowledge and understanding of the significance and impacts of event governance.

Research Approach

In the development of his knowledge constitutive theory, Habermas (1973) once argued that research is not interest free, but is underpinned by one of three sets of human interest motivations:

- A technical interest that seeks to control and manage;
- A practical interest that seeks to understand; and
- An emancipatory interest that seeks to offer alternative understandings and liberate knowledge from falsehoods and domination (also see Tribe 2004 for application in tourism).

Whilst critical discussion of Habermas's knowledge constitutive theory has revealed it to be over-generalised and Eurocentric, it nevertheless empowers alternative modes of thinking to positivism and rational technical interests. In this paper, our interests are aligned with the latter two motivations, particularly a desire to develop more nuanced understandings about the role of government, politics, power and collaboration in events policy. However, we seek more than understanding and emancipation. We seek to improve, expand and add another dimension to thinking about events policy by highlighting the potential associated with the role, influence and contribution of good governance to event planning and management.

The approach adopted in this paper is method assemblage. Method assemblage, according to Law (2004) is the process whereby pre-existing understandings are reassembled, focusing on unexplored perspectives. Method assemblage is a 'combination of reality detector and reality amplifier…' (Law

2004, p.14). The objective is not to provide overarching explanation or certainty about what happened in this episode of governance, but to expand ways of understanding the world and the way in which this episode of event governance took place. In this sense, the job is not to determine with any certainty the precise nature of 'good' and 'bad' governance as this involves value judgements that the researchers are not in a position to make. Instead, the task is to interpret the social world, examine the situation or problem – in this case the governance of the rally event - and from these understandings, more creative and innovative practices and approaches may emerge. Our task is necessarily exploratory and descriptive, assembling various sources of data to better understand the way in which the episode played out, and why decisions were made and by whom. In adopting this approach, we draw from a range of predominantly qualitative data sources including parliamentary debates, Council minutes, print and multi-media, background reports, and participant observation.

Parliamentary debates were a key source of evidence in the development of this paper. They express the key ideas of members of the NSW State parliament, the key decision-makers associated with the event. These transcripts also provide insights into the evolution of ideas around the governance of the WRC event, the genesis of the *Motor Sports (World Rally Championship) Act 2009 (NSW)*, and the justifications, intentions and aspirations of decision-makers. Other stakeholders such as community groups, local tourism organizations, key individuals and local government actors contributed to these debates, and their voices and concerns are quoted and engaged within these parliamentary debates. For these reasons, these parliamentary debates provide powerful discursive insights into issues surrounding the rally governance, what worked and what did not work.

Analysis of parliamentary debates was undertaken by four members of the project team in order to counter inherent biases that would emerge if only one researcher was to analyse the debates. Parliamentary debates between May and September 2009 were analysed in terms of how event governance evolved and how decisions were made. In this exploratory approach, we chose not to identify key themes and search for evidence, but to let the voices within the debates speak. The

research team identified key issues that characterized this episode of governance; these were discussed and revised to become the organizing themes in the results section that follows.

World Rally Championship Case Study

Background

The WRC is an international rallying series organized by the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA). First contested in 1973, WRC challenges car manufacturers and drivers on various surfaces and conditions, ranging from gravel and tarmac to snow and ice. Hence it is widely regarded as the highest profiled four wheel motor sport championship after Formula One. The series currently consists of twenty four events, held through twelve countries over a two year cycle. Twelve events are held in six countries in one year and twelve events in other countries in the following year, on a rotating basis (Repco Rally Australia 2009).

The WRC is a high profile international event, therefore potential media coverage is a drawcard for governments' eager to undertake place promotion and develop international interest in local destinations. (Repco Rally Australia 2009)

In 2007, Events NSW, on behalf of NSW Tourism, entered negotiations with CAMS, for the entire Australian round series to be based in Northern NSW. Events NSW signed as a partner of the event and along with the Repco Group, became a major sponsor of the WRC's Australian round (Murray 2009; Repco Rally Australia 2009). After almost a year of closed door meetings, it was officially announced on 10 September 2008, that the event would be staged in the Northern Rivers region of NSW every second year until 2017, with an option to extend the arrangement for a further five events. The headquarters of the event would be based in Kingscliff and the majority of competition activity in

the ensuing five rallies, would take place in the Tweed and Kyogle Shires, with the first of the Repco Rally Australia[1] events occurring on 3-6 September 2009 (Repco Rally Australia 2009).

Due to confidentiality agreements, local residents of Tweed and Kyogle Shires only learned about the rally through the media and a letterbox drop that was carried out as the announcement of the event was being made. The initial response from the community was mixed. In a brief meeting one day after the announcement between Kingscliff residents and the Tweed City Council's General Manager and the CAMS Director, the GM indicated that the majority of residents could not wait for the rally 'to roar into town' (Dilaway 2008). However, it soon emerged that the GM of Tweed Shire:

> …is a member of the board of Rally Australia, yet Tweed Council does not seem to see this as a conflict of interest, even when the development application for the rally is still to be approved, despite ratepayers' disapproval. Mike Rayner's role with the Repco Rally appears to be a significant non-pecuniary interest and Tweed Shire Council's own code of conduct should preclude his involvement in the rally (Mr Ian Cohen, Parliament of NSW, Legislative Council 23 June 2009).

Local councils officially supported the Rally, citing not only the enormous economic benefits (i.e. $100 million over five events) of the event but also its ability to be utilized as a cost-effective way to develop brand awareness by showcasing the region to the world (*Richmond River Express* 17 September 2008, Murray 2008).

There is clear evidence that this support was far from consensual and harmonious with significant divisions between councillors in Tweed Shire and within the community in general. On 2nd March, 2009 one week after Rally organisers publicly rejected reasons for opposition to the Rally, about 100 people turned out at a "Rally against the Rally" protest. In April, a change to the race route, now some 340km, was announced to placate some resident criticisms (*The Northern Rivers Echo* 2 April 2009).

[1] The WRC Repco Rally Australia 2009 is hereafter referred to as 'the Rally'.

The route change however, was not enough to prevent another protest on 22 April (*The Daily News* 22 April 2009). A series of impact reports released in May did not help settle the debate, even when the socio-economic report predicted a $31 million boost for the economy and the ecological report found that any impacts arising from the Rally were unlikely to be significant in terms of both Federal and State Government assessment criteria (Turnbull 2009, Perkins 2009, *Tweed/Border Mail* 28 May 2009). The koala management plan gave rise to even more criticism, with Rally opposition claiming most protection measures would not be effective (*The Northern Star* 21 May, 22 May 2009). Unsettled concerns led to another protest in Murwillumbah on 28 May, this time attracting more than 300 people (*The Gold Coast Bulletin* 29 May 2009).

The State Government's top down approach also had negative effects on the community's acceptance of, and attitude towards, the Rally. The Tweed and Kyogle communities had to wait for the lodgement of development applications, expected in March 2009, to make a contribution into the decision making process (*Tweed/Border Mail* 2009). However, Turnbull (2009) alleges that Rally Australia delayed lodging the development applications, stating they had to wait for results of the impact assessment reports (Turnbull 2009). On 15 May, more socio-economic reports were released and in an interview with *The Northern Star*, Kyogle Council Mayor expressed concern that time was running out to consider the development application, which Rally Australia had still not lodged (Spinks 2009). Not surprisingly, many people were concerned about the prospect that the rally organisers were not embracing a full and transparent development assessment process, which was supposed to provide residents with an opportunity to consider documentation and provide informed feedback. This sentiment was strengthened by controversy surrounding the positioning of the Tweed Shire General Manager on the Rally Board, coupled with the over-confidence of Rally organizers that the event would proceed (*The Northern Star*, 25 April & 13 May 2009).

On 1 June 2009, the NSW State Government announced that it would introduce special legislation to facilitate the rally with the *Motor Sports (World Rally Championship) Bill 2009* introduced to

parliament on 17 June 2009. The proposed legislation enabled the State Government to declare a 'rally area' within which the rally event can be conducted to the year 2017. It authorised the rally promoter to carry out temporary works associated with the conduct of the rally and required the same to undertake reinstatement work as required. Importantly, the proposed legislation modified the application of a range of other laws including:

- *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*
- *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974.*
- *Fisheries Management Act 1994*
- *Local Government Act 1993*
- *Forestry Act 1916*
- *Water Management Act 2000*
- *Crown Lands Act 1989*
- *Motor Vehicle Sports (Public Safety) Act 1985*
- *Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Act 1999*
- *Roads Act 1993*
- *Road Transport (General) Act 2005*
- *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997*

The proposed legislation was passed on 24 June 2009 effectively removing the requirement for approvals normally required under the above legislation to be obtained by the rally organiser. Critics argued that the legislation 'robbed local councils of its capacity to participate in determining what happens' (I. Cohen, NSW Parliamentary Debates, Legislative Council, 23 June 2009) and that the removal of proper process effectively locked the community out of decision-making (T. Khan, NSW Parliamentary Debates, Legislative Council, 23 June 2009). In a final effort, Tweed Greens Councillor lodged an unsuccessful temporary injunction with the Federal Land and Environment Court on the grounds that the NSW Government's approval of the event was unconstitutional and would threaten endangered species protected under the *Environmental Protection and Biological Conservation Act*

1999 (Cmth). An Aboriginal elder from the Githabul people also appealed to the Federal Environment Minister to stop the rally on the grounds that it would have a detrimental effect on local indigenous heritage (*McMillan 2009*).

With legal objections exhausted, the rally took place on 3-6 September 2009 with one section of the course closed as a result of protest activity. Whilst evaluations are not yet conclusive, preliminary media reports from Kyogle Mayor suggest that the initial profit raised by volunteer groups for charities were $30,000 and one business recorded the weekend takings 'rise by 1000%' (The Northern Star, 17 September 2009). Given that the country town of Kyogle has few businesses that operate on weekends, the direct trading profit in real terms may in fact be quite small. The researchers' own field notes suggest a very small crowd and little additional retail activity in Kyogle and Murwillumbah during event times. This demonstrates that such claims need to be met with caution and a need for better understandings about how data can be used and misused within such debates.

Identifying the Governance Issues

The analysis of parliamentary debates, media, Council minutes and newsletters revealed a range of issues around the governance associated with the rally. One of the difficulties of working with this qualitative data was that there was much in the way of claims and counter claims, but little in the way of substantiated data on which to base claims. In what follows, we examine evidence from the parliamentary debates, and supplemented by other evidence, of how event governance played out, with a view to identifying key issues and themes in this episode. From this analysis lessons and insights can be drawn that can inform future event governance practice.

Participation

The good governance literature suggests that encouraging diverse participation in decision-making processes is an important aspect of good governance. This is particularly important given that events, as wicked policy issues, usually involve a wide number of community and business stakeholders, different agencies and levels of government with varying levels of interest and capacity in decision-

making. In this case study, the State Government consistently claimed that consultation had been 'extensive' and the seriousness with which they approached the task was demonstrated in a heads of agreement between the local Aboriginal Githabul people, and the State Government. Later, leaders of the Githabul people voiced concerns over the rally, denying that the agreement implied permission to run the rally through their lands. The agreement had required the State to consult with them over cultural impacts, but the State had not done so (*The Tweed Echo* 27 August 2009, p.3). At the same time, local communities argued they had been 'locked out of decision-making' (T. Khan, NSW Parliamentary Debates, 17 June 2009).

The difference of opinion was further exacerbated by claims in the Socio-economic Impact Assessment that certain interest groups had been consulted, which turned out to be false:

> Local people report that the Repco Rally SIA Report was based on interviews with seven people representing local groups nominated by Tweed Shire Council, and some of those say that the authors of the report misrepresented the nature of the consultation (I. Cohen, Parliament of NSW, Legislative Council, 3 September 2009).

This finding highlights different expectations and interpretations of *consultation*: the State and rally organisers interpreted this principally as informing the local community of its intentions, but local groups expected to *participate* in decision-making. With respect to participation, the lesson for practice is to clearly articulate and implement strategies for consultation and meaningful participation in decision-making. In this case, a clearer understanding of the community's profile, and consultation and participation strategies that respect this profile would help to alleviate the whirlpools of angst that were experienced unevenly amongst various interest groups across the region. Moreover, more nuanced understandings of the event bidding, staging and evaluation processes are required so that meaningful participation in decision-making in various stages of the process can be enhanced.

Rule of Law

Literature suggests that 'good' governance decision-making should adhere to established legal frameworks, and should embrace human rights and appropriate ethical standards. In this case study, special legislation was introduced to streamline the approvals process. The Minister for State Development, Ian Macdonald, explained:

> You need to be able to have legislation that can make the processes quicker and more expeditious and take the risk out of being able to hold these events. If we did not have the legislation in place, it's quite clear that some opponents up there would use the courts extensively to prevent the race being held (I. McDonald, Taylor 2009).

Opponents argued that:

> …The standards set to protect people and animals will be overruled by this bill that we are considering passing, so that people will have no right to complain—and that is wrong. Those standards were established for a purpose, and to remove them casually in this way is a great wrong (Reverend the Hon. Gordon Moyes, Parliament of NSW, Legislative Council, 17 June 2009).

Here, the rights and expectations embedded within various legal instruments to protect public interests (e.g. environment, community values, etc) and which have been established over many years, have been challenged. Whilst complex, this network of laws and regulations provide a mongrel form of management that has been developed under a liberal democratic system as a result of consultation and participation. The special legislation represents a threat to these democratic values. The lesson that emerges from this event is that special legislation, whilst it is increasingly being drawn up to deal with major events, should be used with caution and should not be used to override established mechanisms that protect public interests.

Transparency

Within a democratic society, there is an expectation that decision-making will be transparent and that data and evidence will be made available in decision-making processes. Within this episode of governance, there were three main issues pertaining to transparency:

(1) Despite the release of impact assessments, many other aspects about the rally were secret or commercial-in-confidence such as State Government financial contributions and the process of bidding for/securing the event:

> No development applications, no council meetings, no problems! Funding from Events NSW? Sure, no problem again—just keep it commercial-in-confidence so no one knows how much is being spent… (I. Cohen, Parliament of NSW, Legislative Council, 23 June 2009).

(2) The preparation of impact assessments and collection of data about the impact of the rally was undertaken by the rally organisers with no independent verification or assessment undertaken:

> Repco Rally's socioeconomic impact assessment was so poorly put together, without being substantiated or having verifiable projections or references, that in scientific, medical and management circles it would be flatly rejected. (Reverend the Hon. Dr G. Moyes, Parliament of NSW, Legislative Council, 17 June 2009)

Interestingly, there were no contributions to the debate that supported the impact assessment methods or findings. Parliamentary supporters engaged little with the actual impacts as defined in the impact assessment documents. The strength of criticism about the lack of independent evaluation led to the redrafting of legislation to include a clause (s.25) that required a formal independent evaluation of the rally after the first year.

(3) Twelve separate pieces of legislation were required to be modified or overwritten in order to facilitate the staging of the rally. Established expectations and practice norms about public consultation were disregarded, resulting in widespread claims that the process was not transparent:

> The community had expressed outrage about the rally prior to this, but its outrage was heightened by the fact that the local councils, Tweed Shire Council and Kyogle Council, had lost any control they had over the rally (T. George, Parliament of NSW, Legislative Assembly, 24 June 2009).

The lesson from this episode is that transparency comes in a number of different forms – transparency of process, transparency in the role of the state, transparency in data collection and impact assessment. Efforts should be given to explicitly address the transparency of all stages of event planning and management and making sure that this level of transparency is consistent with expected norms and practice. Conflict emerges where norms and expectations are challenged.

Responsiveness (to which interests?)

Good governance requires that decision-making occurs in a timely and efficient manner responsive to the needs of stakeholders. The parliamentary debates on the rally are replete with supporters' observations about the economic value of the event and the need to facilitate the event. As discussed previously, the complex legal environment that the rally organisers were required to navigate to seek all approvals would have required a considerable amount of time and expertise. The State Government introduced special legislation in an effort to streamline the process, illustrating responsiveness to the rally organisers. By corollary, the State Government also demonstrated a lack of responsiveness to community concerns:

> The purpose of these powers [to override councils, local communities and normal environmental approval processes] is to ensure that there is a simple one stop shop for obtaining necessary approvals for the rally event and the temporary works associated with the event (J. McKay, Parliament of NSW, Legislative Assembly, 24 June 2009).

The lesson from this episode is that responsiveness can be construed differently by different groups of stakeholders and trade-offs in the responsiveness to different stakeholders are inevitable. Whilst

outside the capacity of this paper, there is scope to develop a more nuanced understanding of the regimes of power that underpin major event planning and management to better understand how they influence government responsiveness.

Informed debate and reliable information

Good governance requires decision-making that is based on informed debate. In this episode of governance, there was some concern over the source, reliability of data and information that was being used within the debates. For example, the Minister for State Development declared: 'The rally organiser has advised that more than 85 per cent of the community support the rally being held and fewer than 5 per cent oppose it' (I. MacDonald, Parliament of NSW, Legislative Council, 3 September 2009). Several times it was questioned how this statistic was arrived, but no clear evidence was forthcoming.

Furthermore, $100 million was the mooted economic benefit of the event, but how this figure was determined also remained unclear:

> It is a dubious figure and I would like to know how it was arrived at and how much the taxpayers of New South Wales are expected to shell out to get this return. The same amount is quoted as the return that we can expect from the V8 Supercars event. I wonder if this is just a shelf figure that is trotted out for such events (I. Cohen, Parliament of NSW, Legislative Council, 23 June 2009).

Four days after the event, the Minister for State Development reported back to the legislative Council that the event was a 'resounding success', the global television broadcast was estimated to reach 51 million viewers in 188 countries, more than 70,000 people attended the event with the final numbers

expected to be around 90,000 (I. MacDonald, Parliament of NSW, Legislative Council, 8 September 2009)[2].

There were also issues around the impact assessments. The methodology for the Social Impact Assessment, as discussed above, came under criticism. Moreover, the environmental impact reports dealing with noise, dust and wildlife management were prepared by consultants contracted and paid for by the rally organisers. There was no independent assessment of these reports with the recommendations from these reports adopted by the rally organisers (T. George, Parliament of NSW, Legislative Assembly, Hansard 24 June 2009).

Accountability and the public interest

Accountability is closely associated with all of the above key themes to emerge from analysis of the parliamentary debates. In democratic systems of government there is an expectation that government acts in the public interest yet the system also promotes a discursive approach to defining what exactly those public interests are (Pal and Maxwell 2004). As a result, the notion of public interest is slippery and abstract. In the past, it has been underpinned by the notion that bureaucrats make decisions about what is in the collective public interest, but recent contributions argue that there are multiple publics and diverse public interests (Giddens 1998; Huntington 1991; King and Kendall 2004).

In this case study, public interests were conceptualised and discussed in different ways. For example:

As an ethical position associated with democracy and participation:

> In general, people are concerned that the legislation exempts the rally, and the actions of rally promoters and public authorities, from a whole raft of State laws that were designed to protect the public interest. Many feel that the provisions of the Act are antidemocratic, removing any

[2] Interestingly, in an earlier debate the same Minister revealed that in 2007 180 countries received television coverage of the event with some 51 million viewers for each round. The figures for this case study appear quite similar (I. MacDonald, NSW Legislative Council, 17 June 2009).

> ability for local communities to have input into processes and decisions that directly affect their quality of life (P. Draper, Parliament of NSW, Legislative Council, 17 June 2009).

As representing a set of scalar or sectoral (e.g. local, state, economic) interests:

> It [the rally] does not even pretend to benefit or serve the interests of local people. It is merely a commercial enterprise, a business. It does not share the ethos of the region and will offer nothing of value to the community (Rev. G. Moyes, Parliament of NSW, Legislative Council, 17 June 2009).

> This event will bring economic and tourism benefits to NSW. Events NSW has estimated the biennial event, which will run until 2017, will secure $100 million benefit for the NSW economy (J. McKay, Parliament of NSW, Legislative Council, 24 June 2009).

> We in this place should look at what is good for the local community, not try to destroy events on the basis of currying favour with small sectional interests…(A. Fazio, Parliament of NSW, Legislative Council, 3 September 2009).

As a focus of government activity and resourcing:

> People have asked me why are the taxpayers of New South Wales being asked to fund this rich people's sport? Why is the State Government promising this international commercial enterprise the free labour of hundreds of local volunteers, particularly, who are already overstretched by their efforts and services during two recent floods in the area? As well as the money paid to the Repco Rally organisers, the State intends to provide free of charge a number of bushfire brigades, 150 extra police, the services of the State Emergency Service, hospitals and all their associated staff on stand-by, on and on ad infinitum. This event will run at a loss for the State, but not for the organisers (I. Cohen, Parliament of NSW, Legislative Council, 17 June 2009).

The diverse ways in which public interest was conceptualised suggests that further investigation is needed into the way in which major events are conceptualised as being in the public interest, and in turn, the way in which governance structures and processes can be captured by particular interests.

Conclusions

The first objective of this paper sought to examine the governance arrangements that characterised the World Rally Championship event held in the Northern Rivers Region of New South Wales in September 2009. For the purposes of this paper, governance was conceptualised as a transparent and legitimate way of governing that uses an effective political framework conducive to achieving shared goals and responsible decision-making. Clearly, the governance arrangements characterising the Rally were highly controversial and attracted much criticism. Analysis of parliamentary debates, media, reports and other archival material revealed a highly politicised context in which the State Government's commitment to the economic benefits of the Rally to the NSW public sat uneasily against local community values and expectations. In this episode, short timelines and the complex legislative environment in which multiple approvals were required exacerbated the tensions and put relationships between State government, local governments and non-government groups to the test.

The paper took an exploratory, grounded approach to identify the governance issues that emerged from this episode of event governance. The governance issues that emerged from analysis of the data included concerns relating to participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, informed debate and reliable information, accountability and the public interest. Each of these issues has important implications for the way in which decision-making takes place, and the ownership over and support for the outcomes that emerge. However, this case study also illustrated that these issues need to be understood in terms of three different dimensions:

(1) a *scalar* dimension, i.e. stakeholders operate at different scales (e.g. micro, meso and macro scales), such that the way that each of these above issues plays out affects different groups of stakeholders differently;

(2) a *temporal* dimension, i.e. the issues and problems emerging as a result of the 2007 Rally (e.g. participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, informed debate and reliable information, accountability and the public interest) will no doubt have an effect on the way in which the governance of future rally events will play out;

(3) a *systems* dimension, i.e. together, these issues intersect and overlap so that the collective consequences of individual issues are compounded with potentially longer-term consequences for how stakeholders relate to one another in future episodes of governance.

Accordingly, there is a need to investigate the governance issues comprehensively in order to build better understandings for future event governance.

This study also clearly demonstrated that stakeholders had different expectations and understandings of what constitutes consultation and participation in various aspects of decision-making processes. These understandings and expectations had been built up over time and were deeply embedded in the existing structures and practices of government. They were embodied in legislation, in policy, and in practice by a variety of government and non-government agencies. In this episode of event governance, the adoption of special legislation challenged these established expectations, leading to a strong backlash from certain sections of the community. Moreover, as a result of this top down approach adopted by the State government within this episode of event governance, important questions about the role of government in events have emerged. Clarity around the role of government in various stages of the event planning and management is needed, which would go some way to

addressing the emergent issues associated with participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, informed debate and reliable information, accountability and the public interest.

The second objective of the paper was to identify lessons for event planning and management practice that would enhance good event governance. The following lessons emerged but are worthy of further exploration:

- To ensure meaningful participation occurs during policy and event development processes, strategies need to be developed and implemented that facilitate consultation, collaboration and co-operation between all stakeholders. Where multi-actor support is necessary for the staging of an event, a communication strategy that embeds consultation and collaboration needs to be developed. This strategy should consider the expectations of stakeholders with regard to their expectations for participation;

- Special legislation should be used with caution. However, when it is deemed necessary to introduce special legislation, the process should be transparent, responsive, informed and in the public interest;

- To define and articulate what constitutes transparency and responsiveness in relation to all stages of event planning and management;

- To provide opportunity for informed and meaningful debate, information and communication strategies should be developed and implemented. Furthermore, all research and/or reports relating to the event must be transparent, independent and substantiated by clear evidence of authorship and methodology;

- To facilitate accountability, a 'Public Interest Test' would help define who is 'the public', what are their interests and does the event address these public interests. In turn, this would not only assist in making the overall debate between stakeholders more balanced but it would

also demonstrate a bona fide commitment to achieving good event governance and replace shallow promises from spin doctors' rhetoric.

Finally, this paper represents an exploratory case study that is based upon one episode of event governance. As a result of this exploration, further research opportunities have emerged that would help to better understand the structures and processes of event governance and how it can be improved. These include:

- An examination of the way in which forces of neoliberalism, globalisation and local politics interact in the staging and management of major events. There needs to be more comprehensive understandings of neoliberalism including what it means and how it plays out at a local level so that the motivations and interests of governments can be better understood and accommodated within local policy-making;
- There is a need for further examination of the recent spate of new event legislation and associated trends, issues and underlying challenges and drivers that this legislative activity is seeking to address;
- An examination of the cycle of government involvement, roles and responsibilities in all stages of major event planning and management with a view to better understanding where and how government involvement should be targeted and what support should be given;
- An examination of the role and effectiveness of the Development Application [DA] process as a mechanism to assess major event impacts.

Whilst this list does not represent an exhaustive list of research opportunities, it illustrates that there is still much left to explore in the field of event governance.

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