

## THE SOCIAL LEVERAGE OF LE GRAND DÉPART TOUR DE FRANCE UTRECHT 2015: DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE SIDE-EVENTS PROGRAM

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### AIM

For over a decade the City of Utrecht tried to bring Le Grand Départ of the Tour de France to the fourth largest city of the Netherlands. Le Grand Départ is the festive start of the biggest cycling event in the world. On the 7th of November 2013 the city council approved the bid and a the budget of € 6 million by the local government, which at least should be matched by partners. The total contemporary budget is € 15,2 million. One of the objectives of the organizing committee is to leverage Le Grand Départ into a social, cultural, sportive and economic legacy. For Le Grand Départ in Utrecht a link between the elite sport event and legacy goals is created by organizing an ambitious side-event program, leveraging existing local government policies and programs. Between 150 and 250 side-events are organized from a year before the event, with an objective of at least 50.000 active participants, 250.000 visitors and a budget of € 2 million. Where event evaluations traditionally focus on short term impacts or long term legacies, event leverage is focused on the identification of strategies and implementations that optimize desired outcomes and build on existing policies (Chalip, 2006). The aim of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the side-event program, with the focus on social, cultural, sportive and economic objectives. Further, the aim is to gain insight in how an major elite sport event can be socially leveraged through a side-event program.

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Earlier research on social impacts of hosting the Grand Départ showed that residents perceptions towards these events are mainly supportive. Social and cultural impacts are mentioned by residents as one of the main factors in willingness to host the event again in the future. (Bull & Lovell, 2007; Balduck, Maes & Buelens, 2011) Balduck et al. (2011) suggest that developing strategies for maximizing positive impacts might be beneficial for obtaining social leverage. Studies that explored event implementations that optimize desired event outcomes (leverage) suggest that the creation of ancillary social events, informal social opportunities, theming (Chalip, 2006), partnerships with community organizations (Misener & Mason, 2009), involvement of stakeholders and the empowerment of local communities (Schulenkorf & Edwards, 2012) are possible social leverage strategies. Dickson, Benson and Blackman (2011) created an overall framework for evaluating sport event legacies based on Preuss' (2007) five legacy building stones (planning, structure, tangibility, time and space). Evaluating leverage and legacy is still difficult because the various legacy dimensions (social, cultural, sportive, economic) require different methodologies.

### METHODOLOGY

A mixed-methods methodology is used to create stronger inferences (Van der Roest, Spaaij & Van Bottenburg, 2015) in assessing the social impact and evaluate the process of social leverage strategies contributing to this impact. A database of all side-event activities is created as a basis for the social impact assessment. A clustered random sample is taken by surveying active participants and visitors of a representative sample of side-events and triangulated by doing short qualitative interviews. A multiple case study of 10 side-events is used for assessing various leverage strategies. Within the cases organizers, participants, visitors, volunteers and residents are interviewed for completeness. A focus group with a selection of stakeholders involved in the overall side-event program is conducted for evaluating planning, structure, tangibility, time and space.. Qualitative and quantitative data on both social impact and social leverage are integrated in the data analysis and interpretation phase of the research.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result of this study is a quantitative description of the social impact of Le Grand Départ and the side-event program on participants/visitors of the various activities and on the residents of Utrecht. Further the interviews, case studies and focus group will be used to gain insight in the working mechanisms for maximizing the positive

social impacts by evaluating the organizing process and use of social leverage strategies. As Le Grand Départ in Utrecht takes place from the 1st till the 5th of July, and the focal point of the side-event program is in the 100 days before, the results will be presented at the conference. Further, both the used methodology and the generalizability of the outcomes of this study for other contexts and events will be discussed.

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