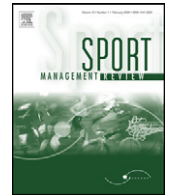




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## Sustainable community development through sport and events: A conceptual framework for Sport-for-Development projects

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### ABSTRACT

The number of aid organisations, NGOs and government agencies pursuing the Millennium Development Goals and seeking to improve the everyday needs and social life of disadvantaged communities has been growing over the past decade. Particularly in divided societies, Sport-for-Development projects have increasingly been staged to contribute to intergroup togetherness, social cohesion and community empowerment. While the analyses of individual sport and event initiatives highlights their capacity to impact positively on people and groups, they do not provide strategic guidelines, models or frameworks for community empowerment. However, such models are needed to foster practical research in the area of community development that can inform sport and event planning, management and leverage. In an attempt to fill this gap, this paper presents and discusses the Sport-for-Development (S4D) Framework, which can be used to guide the strategic investigation of sport and event projects and their contribution to understanding and measuring direct social impacts and sustainable social outcomes for (disparate) communities. The S4D Framework presents a holistic yet flexible management tool that can take account of cultural heterogeneity and program diversity, while shaping implementation, directing evaluation, and encouraging future planning of development initiatives. To conclude, this paper suggests different ways in which the S4D Framework can be empirically tested and validated through both qualitative and quantitative research.

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### 1. Introduction

For several decades, sport tournaments and special events have been acknowledged as contributors to feelings of national identity, social cohesion and communal pride. People have been attending sport events in the stadium, or have been following international competitions via the media to celebrate national achievements and 'historic' triumphs. For example, many political scientists and sociologists regard 4th July 1954 as the true birthday of the Federal Republic of Germany (Alkemeyer, 2003). Nine years after the end of World War II and 5 years after the official founding of the Federal Republic, the German national team beat the great favourites Hungary with a surprising 3:2 in the finals of the Football World Cup in Switzerland, after having been defeated by the same team 8:3 in a preliminary group match. It appears that the 'Miracle of Bern' was able to restore Germany's deeply shattered self-esteem and – for the first time in years – allowed its people to stand together and be proud of their country (Gehrmann, 1991; Heinrich, 2003).

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While positive social impacts of the 1954 Football World Cup came as a surprise to most of the German population, the excitement and symbolic power of sport and events have also been used purposely as a tool for reconciliation and reunification. In 1995, Nelson Mandela was famously wearing a Springbok cap and shirt following South Africa's victory in the Rugby World Cup. He symbolically demonstrated the need for the new 'Rainbow Nation' to work together and respect each other, highlighting that sport may be the new glue that can hold the South African Nation together (Jarvie, 2003; Jarvie & Reid, 1999). Arguably, the power of sport to unite people and nations was also one of the reasons why Football's Governing Body FIFA awarded the 2002 World Cup to former rival countries Japan and South Korea (Butler, 2002; Horne & Manzenreiter, 2002). UEFA might have thought along similar socio-political lines when awarding the 2012 European Football Championships to Poland and the Ukraine.

Overall, there is a large amount of anecdotal evidence suggesting that sport can combine disparate people, communities and nations. However, when trying to find empirical evidence that sport and events have actually contributed to intergroup togetherness and overall community development, it becomes obvious that a lot more qualitative and quantitative research is needed to either confirm or reject this claim (Chalip, 2006; Coalter, 2007; Kidd, 2008). This is not only true for large-scale or mega events, but also for smaller Sport-for-Development projects that are increasingly implemented as a community development strategy, particularly in the developing world and/or in culturally or ethnically divided societies. Here, different aid organisations, NGOs and grassroots initiatives have increasingly been staging sport and event programs to contribute to reconciliation and peace, and to pursue the Millennium Development Goals (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>).

For example, to improve the everyday needs and social life of disadvantaged communities, projects have been implemented to redress discrimination and encourage respect for 'others' (Brown, Brown, Jackson, Sellers, & Manuel, 2003; Meier & Saavedra, 2009); bridge social, cultural and ethnic divides (Gasser & Levinsen, 2004; Schulenkorf, 2010; Stidder & Haasner, 2007; Sugden, 2006); combat HIV/AIDS (Banda, Lindsey, Jeanes, & Kay, 2008; Webb, 2004); eliminate non-communicable diseases (Siefken, Schofield, & Schulenkorf, 2010); contribute to gender equality (Meier & Saavedra, 2009); and heal psychological wounds among traumatised victims of disasters, civil unrest or war (Gschwend & Selvaranju, 2007; Kunz, 2009). While such initiatives are laudable, project organisers and community workers are often left without suitable strategic frameworks or models that help guide the difficult and complex planning, management and leveraging of development projects for wider social outcomes. Just as significantly, project monitoring, evaluation and future planning of Sport-for-Development activities have been encumbered by a lack of systematic data collection and empirical analysis. Too often the claims of virtue put by development programs are not sustained by convincing evidence. In an attempt to fill that gap, this paper presents the Sport-for-Development (S4D) Framework, which can guide and facilitate much needed practical research in (inter-)community development, and in doing so validate the theoretical constructs that underpin program deployment.

## 2. Community development through participation

The term community comes from the Latin *communis*, which means common, public, shared by all or many. Williams (1976: 76), in his famous *Keywords*, describes community as a "warmly persuasive word", which can be applied either to an existing set of relationships or alternatively a new set which may be realised in the future. Similarly, Elias (1974: xiii) points out that "the use of the term community has remained to some extent associated with the hope and the wish of reviving once more the closer, warmer, more harmonious type of bonds between people vaguely attributed to past ages". A community is seen as a place where solidarity, participation and coherence can be found (Purdue et al., 2000; Taylor, 2003) and may be described as a network of social relations marked by mutuality and emotional bonds among its members.

In the literature there is an overall agreement about the distinction between *geographical* and *interest* communities. The former refers to the population of a particular geographical area – a territorial community, whereas the latter does not require physical proximity but rather focuses on people who share something in common – a functional community (Anderson, 1983; Willmott, 1988). Interest communities include people from different local regions or geographical communities that are in *Gemeinschaft* [togetherness] with others. Often, these ensembles share a combination of 'interest' and specific characteristics such as ethnicity, religion, political ideology, occupation, sexuality or leisure pursuit (Ife, 1995; Willmott, 1988). Examples are the Latino community, the Jewish community, the military, academic or sports communities.

Dedicated interest groups tend to show interaction and a common sense of identity even if the relationships among members are less personal and/or frequent than those between friends or relatives. Anderson (1983) describes this phenomenon as the 'imagined community', where people share deep sentiments or beliefs and through this make sense of their lives in what may otherwise seem a complex and anonymous world. Appadurai (1996) goes on to say that an imagined community can be simultaneously anchored in local places and transgresses localities, so that people may identify as part of the group even if they have never physically met, spoken or written to each other. Bauman (2001) highlights that the construction and development of communities and identities are indeed flexible and always amendable processes; however, he believes that the creation of inclusive communities and common identities depends on the activity, creativity and will of different social actors.

Similarly, philosopher Emmanuel Levinas argues that to achieve togetherness between diverse (groups of) people who are separated or divided – socially, culturally, politically, economically and/or geographically – they need to be brought together in consensual face-to-face contact and in social contexts where equitable interpersonal co-operation and group

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