

The impact of events on sports development: Exploring evaluation strategies

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Scholarly research on sports development has resulted in a wide spectrum about the purpose of sports development. From one end of the spectrum, sport development is about the development of sport for sports sake; while at the other, the use of sport and physical activity is a social instrument used to improve communities. In either case, sport development has become a central concern of governments and sport organisations around the globe (Girginov, 2008). While sports development is an ambiguous and contested term, the current paper focuses on sports development as a way to develop opportunities for entry into, and retention in the sport system. Policy makers and sport managers engaging in sports development must look for "better and more effective ways of promoting interest, participation and performance in sport" (Hylton & Bramham, 2008, p. 4).

Opportunities must be created for participation in sport at all levels, from grassroots mass participation programs to elite sport. Sporting events have been used as mechanisms for enhancing development initiatives such as economic development, tourism, community building, as well as sports development (Misener & Mason, 2006). This paper seeks to explore the relationship between sporting events and sports development. In order to do so, we examine various typologies of sporting events to derive how different types of events may impact sport development in different ways. From this examination, we have developed a theoretical typology of evaluating sports development outcomes according to different types of sports events. This will allow researchers to move beyond speculation about the connections between sporting events and sports development, towards a more concrete understanding of the value of events for sports development initiatives.

Sport development refers to the policies, processes, and practice of facilitating opportunities for involvement in sport (Hylton & Bramham, 2001). The Pyramid Model of Sport Development (Green, 2005) suggests that there are three levels of sport development: (a) mass participation which seeks to develop opportunities for everyone to participate in sport; (b) competitive sport which deals with peoples chances to achieve their potential in sport, from taking part for fun and health to competition; and, (c) high performance sport in which athletes are identified and developed for their performance potential. Thus, the three levels of sports development are: participation, performance, and excellence. The question to be examined here is to what extent different types of sporting events affect different levels of sports development.

Various scholars have offered different typologies of sporting events (e.g. Getz, 2007; Weed & Bull, 2004). Gratton and Taylor (2000) distinguished between type A, B, C and D events based on their level of economic impact, occurrence, and ratio of spectators versus participants. Type A events are "irregular, one-off, major international events, generating significant economic activity and media interest"; type B events are "major spectator events, generating significant economic activity, media interest and part of an annual domestic cycle of sport events"; type C events are "irregular one-off, major international spectator/competitor events generating limited economic activity"; and, type D events are "major competitor events generating limited economic activity and part of an annual domestic cycle of sport events" (Gratton & Taylor, 2000, p. 26). Wilson (2006) added so called type E events, defined as "minor competitor events, generating marginal economic activity and part of an annual cycle of sports events" (p. 68). This typology covers a spectrum from high performance/spectator events all the way to grassroots/participant events. Recently Dwyer and Fredline (2008) defined events that are held annually or irregularly as "special sport events", as opposed to events that comprise regular competitions, such as school or league competitions. These different types of events, may affect sports development in different ways. For the purpose of this paper, we focus on potential outcomes of sport development for three types of 'special events', i.e. spectator events (cf. type A, e.g. Olympic Games); spectator/competitor events (cf. type C, e.g. Pan American Junior Athletic Championships), and participatory events (cf. type D/E, e.g. Canadian Transplant Games). Major spectator events typically involve large numbers of elite athletes, and thus impact sports development at the highest level (Green & Houlihan, 2005). These events are also well known for their legacy developments which often include the construction of new sports facilities (Black, 2008; Hall, 2004). These facilities have the potential to benefit not only elite athlete development, but can provide opportunities for sports development for the local population after the event, thus impacting participation levels.

Sporting events often involve the local community; opportunities for participation in sport are being created through involvement, planning, volunteering and often consumption of events (Rohe, 2004). Thus, besides enhancing the performance levels of elite athletes these events may create awareness, interest, and desire among the local populations to become actively involved in sport. At the other end of the continuum of 'special sport events', participatory sport events may trigger a desire to pick up a sport, start training, and/or improve performance, and thus affecting participation at all levels. Filo, Funk, & O'Brien

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(2008) determined that the nature of participatory events such as charitable sport events fosters a sense of attachment and a desire for greater involvement in the sporting activities. The inherent participatory nature of these events, where members of the community are involved in staging, volunteering, and undertaking the sporting activity is highly influential for sport development on a mass participation scale. Events in the middle of this spectrum which involve both a large participatory component and a large spectator component would appear to have the potential for the greatest impact of sports development due to the combination of both legacy planning and community involvement. However, little research has explored the potential of this level of event to foster sports development.

Measuring the actual outcomes of each of the levels of events will be a step towards understanding the connection between events and sports development. More specifically, measuring both the supply and demand for sporting activities related to events presents a means of exploring the mechanisms that actually trigger sports development. While spectator events which 'supply sport facilities' may foster increased interest in sport participation, and participatory events foster community involvement and participation which inherently effects participation at all levels, logic would suggest that spectator/participation events have the greatest potential to impact sport development. Thus, we argue that future research is needed to examine the relevance of this typology, and to provide evidence in order to understand the mechanisms that actually trigger sports development outcomes.