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Title: Sport for Development and Peace: Power, Politics and Patronage

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Abstract

Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) is a rapidly growing field of activity in which sport is used as an intervention tool in order to pursue wider, non-sporting social goals. Organized into three main parts, this paper examines issues of power, politics, and patronage with respect to the SDP sector's organization and the implementation of programmes particularly in the global South. First, drawing on a sociological approach broadly derived from Pierre Bourdieu, we examine how the SDP sector is structured, featuring a variety of stakeholders with different interests and aspirations; we explore in particular the potential influence of relatively marginal campaign groups and new social movements. Second, we identify the complex issues and challenges of patronage and mutuality that arise in international SDP work involving the global North (donor) and global South (recipient) in the post-colonial context. Third, we consider how these issues impact upon the design, implementation and effects of SDP programmes with particular reference to relations of power between the global North and South. We conclude by advancing the case for a 'bottom-up', and more culturally and politically sensitive approach to be adopted by SDP stakeholders, particularly those based in the global North.

Introduction

Sport for Development and Peace (hereon, SDP) is a field of activity in which sport is utilized as an intervention tool in order to pursue wider, non-sporting social goals. These goals may include, for example, youth empowerment, peace-building and improved intercultural relations, health education, gender equality, and the social inclusion of people with a disability (cf. Coalter 2013; Schulenkorf & Adair 2014; Spaaij et al. 2014).

SDP has grown very rapidly over the past 15-20 years, so that there are now many hundreds of groups and organizations across the world engaging in relevant activities. Amidst this global emergence and institutionalization of SDP, some of the most salient milestones centre on the IOC and the United Nations. In 1992, the IOC established Olympic Aid, which was renamed Right to Play in 2001. Also in 2001, the UN established the role of Special Advisor on SDP to the Secretary-General, followed a year later by the Interagency Taskforce on SDP, and then, most significantly, the marking of 2005 as the UN's International Year of Sport and Physical Education. Expansion of the overall field culminated in 2013 with the establishment of 6 April as the UN's International Day of SDP.

Two additional opening points may be made here on the content and scope of SDP. First, it is worth highlighting here the subtle differences between *sport for development* and *development of sport*; the latter refers instead to developing sport in itself, for example through building sport facilities or promoting wider public participation in sport. However, there are important overlaps between the two fields - for example as 'sport for development' activities often require the provision of sport equipment, facilities and coaches – which should be borne in mind as we discuss SDP here.

Second, most discussion of the SDP sector focuses on intervention projects that are usually delivered by NGOs in the global South. However, in our analysis, as we shall explain, we envision the SDP sector as encompassing a much wider range of stakeholders and actors - including campaign groups and new social movements, and also activities such as public protests – which also operate in the global North as well as the global South. The inclusion of the global North here helps us to register sport-based interventions intended, for example, to reduce crime and gang violence, and to assist youth employment that are implemented in Europe and North America (Hartmann 2001; Kelly 2011; May 2015).

In the following, we examine critical political, cultural and organizational issues within the contemporary SDP sector. First, using a sociological approach that is broadly derived from Pierre Bourdieu, we set out in detail how the SDP sector is structured, featuring a variety of stakeholders with different interests and aspirations. Second, we turn to address the complex issues and challenges of patronage and mutuality that arise in international SDP work, and indeed in all aid or development work, between the global North (donor) and global South (recipient) in the post-colonial context. Third, we consider how these issues impact upon the design, implementation and effects of SDP programs, with reference, for example, to 'theories of change' that are utilized within projects, and to relations of power between the global North and South. We conclude by advancing the case for a 'bottom-up', and more culturally and politically sensitive approach to be adopted by SDP stakeholders, particularly those based in the global North.

The SDP Sector: A Contested Field

In order to explain the structure, policies and practices of the SDP sector, it is useful to draw initially on a Bourdieusian sociological approach. This enables us to view SDP as a 'field' of activity that is socially and politically constructed out of the interactions and political interests of different participants or stakeholders (cf. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). These stakeholders share a general focus in using sport to promote wider social benefits; but, as we explain below, the kinds of intended social benefits that are pursued may vary very significantly according to the aims and interests of these different stakeholders. Bourdieu's approach thus

encourages us to view the SDP sector as a contested field, in which the different stakeholders struggle to gain greater influence or status - 'distinction' – vis-à-vis the others, and thus to be in a stronger position to define the field of SDP *per se*, for example by defining what strategies and practices are to be considered 'legitimate' or 'illegitimate' within SDP. From a sociological perspective, if we apply an initial Bourdieusian analysis of SDP, then we are in a position to discuss the full spectrum of actors within this field, including those weaker or 'dominated' groups which might otherwise be ignored, excluded or defined as 'not SDP' by more dominant forces within the sector.

In prior work, we have advanced an ideal type model in order to examine this spectrum-field of SDP stakeholders. The model organizes these stakeholders into four broad categories each associated with specific types of policy and practice within the sector (Giulianotti 2011). To summarize, we have:

- Private sector contributions, ranging from local businesses through to transnational corporations (TNCs) which employ 'corporate social responsibility' (CSR) programmes (Breitbarth et al. 2015; Giulianotti 2015). TNCs are most readily associated with 'neo-liberal' approaches to human development, including through sport, as reflected particularly through intervention activities in developing countries, that may be funded through private philanthropy, or which seek to improve the self-control or job-competitiveness of individuals.
- Governmental and intergovernmental organizations which include national departments of development (such as the Department for International Development in the UK), education and sport ministries, national embassies in different countries which disburse funds for development projects, and international organizations such as the UN and its associated agencies, the European Union, and the Commonwealth Secretariat. These organizations are associated with a 'strategic developmentalist' approach, such as funding or guiding SDP work, bringing together potential partners to run projects, and acting as wider advocates for the sector. While they may be reasonably located in other categories here, sport governing bodies may be classified as governmental organizations within their specific sporting jurisdictions, and often play similar roles to states within the SDP sector.
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which come in a huge diversity of scales and ranges of activity at local, national and international levels. NGOs constitute the large majority of all SDP-related organizations, and are associated with a 'developmental interventionist' approach focused upon largely practical, 'on the ground' work that implements SDP projects. The largest NGOs – such as Right to Play, streetfootballworld and Laureus – have a transnational reach and often play leadership roles in guiding, supporting and directing finance towards SDP initiatives at local and national levels. In

some regions, we might add religious movements and organizations to this category, given their wider roles within civil society.

- New social movements and campaign groups focus on 'social justice' issues in relation to sport and development. These organizations hold a relatively radical agenda, and often concentrate on the promotion of social, civil and human rights, democracy, and political transparency; examples include Amnesty International, Play the Game, and War on Want, which often pursue international campaigns on rights-based issues. These groups may be significantly critical of other sport stakeholders, for example in campaigns against the treatment of sport merchandise workers in developing countries, or on the human rights records of host nations of sport mega-events.

Two further types of stakeholder to be considered in this model are independent individuals with high levels of symbolic capital (such as sport celebrities) and sport clubs (such as leading football teams). Both categories are active in SDP and harbour different scales of engagement. At transnational level, elite sport celebrities and clubs fall mostly into the first, neo-liberal, private category, playing significant philanthropic or promotional roles – such as by acting as UN Ambassadors or in endorsing specific SDP projects – while also contributing their resources (time, equipment, coaching skills, etc). At more everyday level, local athletes and public figures may be nearer to the third, NGO category, in terms of working more regularly and continuously 'on the ground' to deliver SDP initiatives, for example through running coaching clinics that contain health and other educational messages.

Most SDP activity is not undertaken in isolation by NGOs, but tends to emerge instead from their interaction, particularly across the first three categories, and which is heavily focused on funding, preparation and delivery of SDP projects. One example here might include the 'Ninemillion' campaign for young refugees, which was encouraged and overseen by a UN agency – the United Nations High Commission for Refugees – and included the participation of NGOs such as Right to Play and Grassroots Soccer, sport federations such as the IOC and FIVB, and corporations such as Nike and Microsoft. Interactions of private, governmental and non-governmental organizations are also evidenced at conferences and symposia, at which particular visions of the SDP sector are outlined and future partnerships explored.

SDP, Campaign Groups and New Social Movements: Signs of Change?

The upshot is that the fourth category of actors within this model – that is, new social movements and campaign groups – have tended to be relatively peripheral to much SDP activity, such as at SDP conferences or in the development and delivery of SDP project interventions. This marginality is due to a mix of reasons: some campaign groups engage infrequently with sport issues, such as in protests over the impact of

sport mega-events like the Olympics on local poor people; the specific focus of some campaigns may be heavily critical of other SDP stakeholders, for example in protests against the labour or environmental records of sport event sponsors; and, these campaign groups have tended not to unify much on major issues.

In recent times there have been clear signs of substantial change within new social movements and campaign groups, which have become more organized and engaged within the SDP sector. Three key drivers are evident here, and football provides perhaps the strongest illustrations of these processes.

First, important issues within sport – notably on the hosting of major tournaments and the lack of democracy within sport's governance - have emerged to inspire critical international attention, scrutiny and protest. The decision by FIFA to award the 2022 World Cup finals to Qatar resulted in global reports and subsequent condemnation of the conditions of migrant workers who are building sport facilities and related infrastructure for the tournament (Brannagan and Giulianotti 2013). At the 2013 Confederations Cup tournament in Brazil, tens of thousands of Brazilians took to the streets to protest against the high costs of staging the 2014 World Cup finals, and on wider social issues (Saad-Filho 2013). Moreover, a series of corruption allegations and scandals surrounding FIFA, culminating in the investigation and arrest of top officials from President Sepp Blatter downwards by American and Swiss legal authorities, have generated strong critical comment by anti-corruption and radical democracy groups such as Transparency International and Play the Game.

Second, several pressing global social and political issues have generated substantial international support for the 'progressive' political positions taken by campaign groups on human rights issues. One example is provided by the 2015 refugee crisis which saw over 500,000 migrants struggling to cross from Syria, Kosovo, Afghanistan and other nations into Western Europe. While European states adopted diverging positions towards accepting these populations – indeed, the UK Prime Minister David Cameron depicted these migrants as a 'swarm' - many sport organizations, such as football leagues and clubs, promoted a strongly empathetic approach, centred on protecting the rights and social integration of refugees. In Germany, for example, clubs such as Borussia Dortmund and Bayern Munich have invited refugees to join their fan groups and contributed support to refugee centres (*Telegraph*, 31 August 2015). It should be noted that the initial impetus for such a tolerant and humane stance came from grassroots supporter movements in Germany, which publicly welcomed migrants to join them at football matches.

Third, some NGOs which have some relatively radical campaign approaches have gained a significant foothold within the SDP sector or wider sport system, and are thus able to pursue their causes more effectively 'on the inside'. For example, Terre des Hommes, a global NGO based in Switzerland, advances the human rights of children and the principle of 'equitable development', and has produced critical

investigations of how the hosting of sport mega-events can have highly negative impacts on children living in poor local communities. Terre des Hommes have been keen to engage directly with key decision-makers within the sport system, for example by participating at the Soccerex event which hosts the 'football industry'. Elsewhere, Transparency International initially sought to work with FIFA to implement major reforms, but had to withdraw after two of its key recommendations were ignored by the governing body.

These three processes have helped to undergird the greater influence of campaign groups, which has been markedly strengthened in recent years in two key ways. First, these groups have become more collaborative. For example, the Sport and Rights Alliance (SRA), established in early 2015, brought together human rights and anti-corruption NGOs such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Terre des Hommes and Transparency International, labour organizations such as the International Trade Union Confederation and FIFPro, and fan movements such as Football Supporters Europe. The SRA is committed in particular to protecting human rights in relation to the staging of sport mega-events, arguing that these hosts must meet key minimum standards for example in relation to workers' rights.

Second, emerging issues and crises in sport have shone the critical international spotlight on sport governing bodies and sport sponsors, thereby providing campaign groups with some impetus to exert pressure for change. For example, in the midst of corruption scandals in world football, several leading sponsors dropped their partnership with FIFA, while the governing body's oldest corporate partner, Coca-Cola, echoed the calls of campaign groups for independent reform of the organization alongside respect for human rights standards. Notably, as a key source of financial support and symbolic validation, corporate sponsors play potentially critical roles in influencing the governance and culture of sport governing bodies, and so may be targeted by campaign groups to 'do more' to promote reform or to tarnish reputations through critical symbolism. For example, human rights protestors have utilized social media to circulate 'anti-logo' images that aim to shame sponsors of the 2022 World Cup finals in Qatar into withdrawing support for the event (*Independent*, 28 May 2015).

These two processes have opened up political spaces for campaign groups and new social movements to have greater impact within the SDP sector. In a broader sense, we would argue that these groups offer the greatest potential for substantial changes to occur within SDP, notably through the concerted injection of social, political, civil and human rights into the field of SDP. Such changes would centre on the distinguishing need for sport in full to take much greater account of its potential negative impacts on different populations, and for sport organizations to match their rhetoric on internationalism, transparency and human rights with action in terms of policy and practice.

Currently, at the everyday level, the SDP field continues to be largely shaped by the interface of corporate, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and to be characterized by the implementation of 'on the ground' projects in developing nations. We turn now to consider how questions of patronage and power lie behind the planning, implementation and impacts of these projects.

Issues of Patronage and Mutuality in SDP Relationships between Global North and Global South

As we mentioned above, the awareness of sport as a tool for promoting social development and peace in areas marked by conflict and/or poverty increased considerably from the 1990's and during the last decade in particular. It may be argued that sport during the same period has moved from a marginal position to a more privileged and strategic role in global policy-making. Despite recent and ongoing revelations about corruption at the top end of the sporting world, there is a wide global consensus on the benefits of sport among organizations and policymakers. To the extent we can locate disagreements about the positive outcomes of sport and development projects on a local level, such differences are often confined to a diverging focus on either development *of* sport or development *through* sport. While the former addresses the intrinsic values of sport in itself the latter focus highlights how sport can be applied instrumentally in order to achieve wider social and political goals.

A more significant factor here is how sport has come to play a role in an historical era of north-south relations marked more by cooperation and less by what was commonly defined as development assistance, often criticized for enhancing rather than alleviating post-colonial ties marked by dependencies and patronage. As a consequence contemporary sport and development projects generally mirror aspects of an ideology which stresses social over economic development and partnerships built on dialogue, reciprocity and equality. In African contexts, these types of project entail a greater focus on grassroots mobilization and sustainability aimed towards enabling local management rather than relying on external project management conducted by international development organizations. Significantly, sport is a popular activity through which a lot of children and young people can be reached. Economically sport is further widely regarded as a cost-efficient kind of development intervention by NGO's and governmental organizations with a universal set of game rules that are applicable across the world.

Sport entered the agenda of global policies as international aid work in general had moved from a focus on development assistance, largely financed and administered by agents in the North, towards a greater focus on local involvement and partnerships *between* agencies in the North and in the South (Chaturvedi, Fues and Sidiropoulos 2012). While this move has not prevented NGO's from the North from

initiating sports projects in local communities in the South with little local influence in how projects are run and financed (Coalter 2013), the typical model often consists of collaborative work between local sports clubs, schools or other local institutions facilitating sport and physical activities in communities in the South and NGO's based in the North. As an almost universal rule SDP projects are funded by donors or sponsors in the wealthier North, while local agencies to a varying degree are allowed to shape these projects themselves. A key question to address here is how the structural patronage in North-South partnerships affects the abilities of local communities in the South to actually influence projects sponsored by their Northern donors. Simon Darnell (2012) and others argue that this financial dependency is, at least partly, an example of a postcolonial continuation of the exploitations and dependencies created by colonialism.

Individuals in modern, democratic societies will be accustomed to the idea that partnerships need to be based on equality and equivalence in order to work in ways which will secure the interests and intentions of both parties. The exchange of food between neighbouring villages stands out as one of the oldest and most basic ways to strengthen social bonds and create peace for thousands of years. Such exchanges are structured around varying notions of equality where each party needs to bring goods of roughly equal value to the table. Failure to do so may terminate social bonds or reshape them into patron-client relationships. Marcel Mauss (1954) reminded us in his classic studies of how gifts not only underline reciprocal social bonds but also threaten to destabilize them. To give someone a gift also has structural implications: while 'the gift' may be charged with good intentions it also works as a social obligation. Failure to reciprocate the gift threatens to end the relationship or take the shape of patronage, typically similar to that of a father-son relationship. Translated to SDP and other international development projects, 'gifts' from the North carry a potential for patronage as they are rarely reciprocated in financial terms. Hence the partner in the South gets locked into a dependency on its 'equivalent' in the North which resembles the critique often launched at the politics of post-colonialism (cf. Crew and Harrison 2002).

It is possible to argue that in international sport and development projects, or indeed any international development cooperation project, the social exchange that takes place is different from the one that takes place in say, a traditional food exchange ritual. In a postcolonial context, the normal rules of reciprocity may not apply in North-South collaborations as centuries of exploitation have generated a sense of imbalance in the shape of guilt or indeed debt. Hence there is a wide historical dimension at play when North-South partnerships are formed, in which the partner from the North might think they 'owe' their Southern partner 'gifts'. This problem of patronage was highlighted over a decade ago by researchers such as the Norwegian anthropologist Knut Nustad (2003) and Swedish sociologist Maria Baaz (2005), who both argued that North-South collaborations are structured with a history that makes it tricky, if not impossible, to change the patron-client relations that exist between

them. Questions remain about how partners in the North and the South can cooperate to the benefit of both, as the wrapping of their joint projects in the South continues to bear the mark of a structured patronage in which the measure of what development is and which goals should be targeted are defined by the partners from the North (Crew and Harrison 1998). While numerous African nations have experienced economic and welfare growth in recent years, the socio-economic structures in many countries in the South depend on a neoliberal global capitalism which enhances their dependency on finances from the North (Baaz 2005)

The Kenyan, Nairobi-based, Mathare Youth Sport Association (MYSA), may serve to illustrate both the successes and challenges which SDP projects have enjoyed. Founded by the Canadian UN worker Bob Munro in 1987, MYSA was created on principles of grassroots action. During the 1990's the organization grew tremendously and developed an administration and an organizational structure with locally trained and educated employees and volunteers. The idea from the start was to combine community service in the shape of cleaning garbage from the Mathare shanty town in exchange for the chance to play football. To this day the organization has fixture lists for both football games and community service. League points for all the teams in the MYSA leagues are achieved from a combination of participation in garbage cleaning every Saturday morning, getting picked to figure as role models and winning football games. The organization collaborates closely with local schools and has built both club houses and libraries in which children can also get help with their homework in different parts of the communities around the Mathare Valley (Hognestad 2011). MYSA keeps around 25.000 children active and is also involved in a number of international exchange programmes. The organization has been widely regarded as the greatest success story among sport and development projects in Africa (Coalter 2013). Financially the organization depends on a number of agencies and donors from the North along with a couple of local businesses. When their main donor, the Strømme foundation, a Norwegian development organization, withdrew their support in 2012, this created huge challenges for the activities that MYSA run. Despite being able to run leagues, community services and make international partnerships, MYSA remain financially vulnerable and dependent on partners in the North. In this perspective MYSA may serve as an example of how structures of paternalism remain between the poor South and the wealthy North, despite their remarkable growth and undoubted success.

SDP Design and Implementation

A Bourdieusian approach to the SDP sector as a contested field reveals important issues, tensions and contradictions concerning the design and implementation of SDP programs 'on the ground'. This is evident in the way different stakeholders struggle over what relational, pedagogical and evaluation strategies and practices are to be considered 'legitimate' or 'illegitimate'. In this context, it is important to

acknowledge that SDP originated as a Global North in(ter)vention, growing out of the conditions created by neoliberal globalization yet building on a long tradition of the use of sport for development purposes. SDP is typically justified on the basis of Global North rhetoric and research, though some exceptions exist (e.g. Lindsey and Banda 2011). Moreover, SDP is arguably delivered primarily for donors who hold unquestioned beliefs in the power of sport to 'do good' in Global South contexts. Collison (2016) argues that SDP stakeholders have been seduced by sport and in turn use sport in rhetoric and image to seduce, engage and access target recipients, particularly youth. In doing so, argues Collison, SDP projects are at risk of forming a platform for social control that reinforces the marginal status of youth.

This critique raises broader questions regarding the design, implementation and effects of SDP programs. Four inter-related issues stand out.

First, SDP projects have often used what can be described as a 'fly in, fly out' approach to delivery. Many projects, especially those designed and run by Global North agencies, draw on professionals and volunteers from the Global North to facilitate change and impart their knowledge to recipients in Global South settings. In a number of countries this has involved the use of Global North volunteers, such as students, to undertake placements with NGOs and work in local communities delivering activities for a relatively short period of time. This approach can be in tension with the need to actively involve intended recipients and local communities in program design and implementation. Shared ownership and locally led and developed SDP projects are considered essential (Burnett 2015), and hence there is reason to be wary of the 'parachuting in' and 'voluntourism' that has characterized a significant part of the SDP sector. In so far as SDP projects are heavily dominated by external actors, favour externally imposed agendas, and undervalue local knowledge and the lived experience of recipients, they can be characterized as donor biased or neo-colonial (Guest 2009; Darnell 2012).

Second, similar issues and contestations can be observed with regard to the educational and pedagogical approaches used in the SDP sector. While the approaches used to deliver SDP projects have varied greatly, the dominant approach has been a didactic pedagogy in which educational content is delivered through a technocratic and pre-packaged curriculum primarily designed by external educators and 'change agents' (Schulenkorf 2010) with limited local knowledge. Alternative pedagogical approaches to SDP, such as critical pedagogy, problematize the way didactic teaching strategies favour externally imposed agendas and program content. Such strategies, it could be argued, provide at best raised levels of knowledge and skills for individual recipients, but are generally incapable of instigating or supporting social change at a more structural or community level (Spaaij and Jeanes 2012). In contrast, alternative SDP pedagogies favour a bottom-up approach that prioritizes the lived experience, local knowledge and collective action of learners as a starting point for SDP in order to make grassroots-led social change happen (Spaaij and Jeanes 2012; Spaaij et al. in press).

Third, the boundaries between SDP, high performance sport and sport business appear to be blurring. As noted earlier, SDP projects are often designed and funded as public-private partnerships that comprise NGOs, sport organizations, private sector agencies, sporting celebrities and international donors. While the official objectives of SDP projects are to contribute to ambitious development goals such as improved health, economic participation or conflict transformation, such projects are also identified by sport organizations as a conduit and platform for talent identification. In some cases it is questionable whether SDP programs amount to much more than an effort to spread and develop particular sports across the world based on a business case that emphasises the potential gains in terms of fan development, broadcast revenue, talent identification and sponsorship growth. Here, again, we see how the agendas and interests of different SDP stakeholders do not necessarily align.

Fourth, there have been extensive calls for enhanced evidence within the SDP field (Coalter 2013; Jeanes and Lindsey 2014). Recent years have seen an increased focus on systematic monitoring and evaluation as a means to obtain robust evidence of program impacts and outcomes. A significant aspect of this focus is the development and testing of the theories of change underpinning SDP interventions; that is, theories of how, why and in which conditions a desired change is expected to happen in a particular SDP context (e.g. Coalter and Taylor 2010; Van Eekeren et al. 2014). Efforts to assess the impacts of SDP projects focus primarily on personal development, such as changing people's attitudes, behaviour, skills, resilience and health literacy. This focus on individual-level outcomes rather than community-level development has meant that monitoring and evaluation often fails to fully recognise or address the wider structures and cultural complexities within which SDP projects operate and which constrain, or facilitate, development and social progress (Kay and Spaaij 2012; Collison 2016). It is also clear that sport cannot overcome such obstacles alone, and that to be effective, programs must be integrated with other interventions and services such as education, health and employment.

There is a strong belief among SDP stakeholders that increased evidence will legitimize the SDP sector, improve practice and enhance policy. Yet, SDP monitoring and evaluation is implicated in the aforementioned power relations and donor bias, which extend to the realm of knowledge production. Recent research highlights the need to address issues of power and positionality in monitoring and evaluation, including the impact that Global North/Global South power imbalances have on data (Jeanes and Lindsey 2014), and how local voices and ways of thinking and knowing are marginalized in monitoring and evaluation in the SDP sector (Nicholls et al. 2011). The latter has inspired critical scholars to call for the decolonising of monitoring and evaluation methodologies (Kay 2009), urging us to reflect on questions such as: Who develops, leads and controls monitoring and evaluation? Who sets, or has the power to determine, the monitoring and evaluation agenda and approach? Who controls or dominates the language and the language of possibilities?

These questions suggest a need to reconsider, for example, the relationship between donors and recipients in a way that would enhance the possibilities for authentic dialogue, transfer of decision-making and ownership, and democratic action within SDP projects and their evaluation (Spaaij and Jeanes 2012).

Conclusion

Behind the self-promoting rhetoric of SDP – such as on the ‘power of sport’ to change the world – we find critical questions of power at play which apply to relations both *within* the SDP sector and *between* organizations based in the global North and South. A Bourdieusian approach enables us to develop this perspective sociologically, to view the SDP sector as a contested field involving diverse stakeholders with different levels of long-term influence. In recent years, campaign groups and social movements have started to challenge their marginal status, in order to have some influence in pursuing issues such as human rights in sport. Nevertheless, most SDP activity continues to revolve around global North organizations delivering intervention programs in the global South; such a relationship, as we have argued, may serve to reproduce the corrosive, post-colonial donor-recipient divisions that also impact upon the wider development sector. Moreover, SDP projects may have some inherent debilitating weaknesses that undermine their potential impact, for example in employing short-term and inexperienced volunteers, having a competing focus on developing sport commercially, and targeting outcomes at the individual rather than community levels.

If it is to make advances with respect to long-term social benefits, the SDP sector needs to take more seriously the complexities of these built-in power relationships. Notably, global North SDP stakeholders should engage more fully with campaign groups that are active on the ground in order to understand the lived experiences of user groups, and thereby generate more culturally sensitive and potentially successful interventions. The position of local and national NGOs is critical here, and is best resolved through securing long-term funding and autonomy for their activities. Securing the interests and intentions of local communities is of course a prerequisite in order to reach such goals. While these are tangled up in wider social, political and cultural complexities and challenges, we believe that the monitoring and evaluation of SDP projects needs to consider carefully local and national perspectives rather than rely on predetermined criteria that are parachuted into culturally diverse locations. In our view, attention to these sorts of ‘bottom-up’, culturally empathetic and socially empowering approaches would represent the best way forward for the SDP sector, in terms of having deeper impacts on the lives and futures of its ‘user groups’ in developing regions.

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