

THE ANTICIPATED POTENTIAL OF INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FOOTBALL TOURNAMENTS FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

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Synopsis:

This paper investigates development potentials following international youth football tournaments. Through interviews with team-members and organisers at Norway Cup (Norway) and East Africa Cup (Tanzania), we offer empirical insight on the anticipated potential of such tournaments for urban youth development in the Global South.

Abstract:

AIM OF PAPER

In recent years there has been a growing trend and interest in international development concerning Sport for Development and Peace (SDP). This interest stems from the anticipated ability of SDP to positively influence the lives of individuals and groups in different societies. A key feature of the field is thus the belief that in simple, low-cost and effective ways, sport has the ability to influence a broad range of development objectives. Following this, several researchers have addressed a variety of SDP issues that are analysed from different theoretical and methodological angles (i.e. Darnell and Huish 2014), and on international youth football tournaments in particular (i.e. Engh, Agergaard & Maguire 2013). However, little is known about the potential of international youth football tournaments for urban development in the Global South. The purpose of this paper is to offer empirical insights in an endeavour to address this shortcoming.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH METHOD

Despite the fact that a growing amount of critical research voices to the functionalist neo-liberal ones are being heralded (e.g. Darnell 2012; Giulianotti 2004), the UN and SDP organisations and policy makers (or 'sport evangelists' as Giulianotti (2004) terms them) continue to lend praise to 'the power of sport'

discourse. Several researchers claims that this is problematic in that it suggests that the sporting experience is inherently positive and constructive and thus compatible to meeting development goals both on an individual level as well as in the society as a whole (e.g. Coakley 2011, 2012; Darnell 2012; Giulianotti 2004). Further, such a narrow view of sport is limited in explaining the processes that leads to social change, and may consequently depoliticise the SDP sector (Darnell 2012; Hayhurst 2009). We support this criticism, as will be addressed in our analysis.

The paper is based on a study conducted for the UN Human Settlement Programme concerning the anticipated social and economic potential of international youth football tournaments. The tournaments under study were East Africa Cup, annually hosted in Moshi, Tanzania, and Norway Cup, annually hosted in Oslo, Norway. The study was carried out through employing a triangulation of qualitative research methods namely document analyses, interviews and field observations. The written documentation comprise of data from the two tournaments websites as well as information brochures, seminar material and promotional material. In June 2010 one author travelled to East Africa Cup. She conducted interviews with a total of 12 team-members, four tournament organisers and two facilitators as well as informal conversations with donors and other relevant partners. In July/August 2010 both authors visited Norway Cup where interviews were conducted with 11 team-members from the Global South, and one Norwegian representing the organisers of the tournament. We were able to get in contact with the informants through the tournaments organisers as well as through assessing the participant lists and tournament programmes. Team-members were then approached in the field where we also conducted the interviews. Additionally interviews were held with two Norwegian policy makers concerned with international sport cooperation including that of SDP. From December 2014 to February 2015 follow-up interviews were conducted with four representatives from East Africa Cup and one representative from Norway Cup. Both Norway Cup and East Africa Cup are international tournaments, and this is reflected in our informants that were from 11 different countries. The interviews were conducted in Norwegian, English and Swahili, and all were recorded following the informants consent, and then transcribed verbatim. Further, the interviews were fed into Nvivo, coded and analysed.

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The functionalist neo-liberal notion of SDP was expressed both by tournament organisers and participants, thereby indicating that both tournaments had the potential to be advocates for youth development in the urban Global South. The benefits that were brought up were education and awareness; cultural understanding and exchange; empowerment; community development; and poverty alleviation. We found that in addition to playing football, information and educational programs were among the most important arguments for participating in the tournaments particularly at the East Africa Cup. Thus, according to our empirical data, through strategic and well-structured programmes, international football youth tournaments were reported to have the potential of assembling youth, raising awareness and informing about important issues particularly relevant to urban youth in the Global South, such as health, education and poverty. Our findings further show that East Africa

Cup appears to have a stronger emphasis on development issues concerning urban youth in the Global South than is the case with Norway Cup. As such our findings correspond with those of Hayhurst (2009) who shows how a reproduction of the SDP functionalist discourse "continue to be leveraged through sport and sealed into the success story of SDP" (p. 222). Consequently, our findings may contribute towards further illuminating current challenges and potential misconceptions associated with the entire SDP sector, particularly those related to the strong dominance of the Global North on SDP ideologies and discourses.

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