

Session: **Sport policy V.**  
Abstract nr: **EASM-0246**

**Sport and urban regeneration: Theory, policy and practice. A regional case study of North West England, UK**

*L. Davies<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>*Sheffield Hallam University, Sport Industry Research Centre, Sheffield, United Kingdom*

[l.e.davies@shu.ac.uk](mailto:l.e.davies@shu.ac.uk)

**Background**

In recent years, there has been a favourable shift in UK urban policy towards the use of sport as a tool for regenerating declining areas. Sporting infrastructure has been constructed in various British cities with a view to addressing the dual aims of sporting need and urban regeneration. However, despite the increasing use of sport within regeneration programmes, and its increasing presence in policy rhetoric, the role of sport in the regeneration process is little understood and evidence to support the notion that sport can underpin regeneration goals is highly variable.

**Objectives**

The paper will explore the growth of sport-related regeneration in the UK and using a regional case study of the North West of England; critically examine how sport has been used to address the urban agenda. It will attempt to explain and understand how sport can be used to achieve broader regeneration goals within society by examining the frameworks for understanding sport-related regeneration in theory and in practice.

**Methods**

The paper will draw upon qualitative research carried out with individuals and organisations in the North West region of England, involved in the planning and implementation of policy relating to sporting initiatives (from both an urban and sporting perspective). Using data collected from semi-structured interviews, it will examine how sport has been used to address regeneration goals and how successful it has been at achieving these.

**Results**

The paper will suggest that while there is growing evidence of the positive role that sport can play in the regeneration agenda, there is an urgent need for greater clarity in the evidence base,

which at present is fragmented and difficult to access by those working to implement sport-related regeneration schemes. Using evidence derived from the interviews, the paper will present the research findings as follows:

- Sport and links to urban regeneration outcomes
- Evaluation and monitoring of sport-related regeneration strategies
- Future role of sport in achieving regeneration targets

### **Conclusions/application to practice**

The paper will conclude by suggesting that the 'golden decade of sport' in the UK, including the 2012 Olympic Games; the 2014 Commonwealth Games; the 2015 Rugby World Cup; the 2019 Cricket World Cup and potentially the 2018 FIFA World Cup, is likely to produce increasing opportunities to utilise sport across a wide range of regeneration and other public policy agendas. However, for these non-sporting benefits to be maximised, there is a need for policy makers to develop a greater understanding of how sport can be used to address these agendas and furthermore how it can be evidenced, to secure support and sustained funding in the future.