

SPORT DEVELOPMENT IMPACTS AND STRATEGIC OUTCOMES FROM THE FIFA WOMEN'S FOOTBALL WORLD CUP 2011 IN GERMANY – THE CASE OF THREE HOSTING CITIES IN NORTHRHINE WESTFALIA

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There is only little research about the impact of sport events on sport participation and community sport development. That's amazing, because it seems to be so obvious to use sport events to build participation and profile for the presented sport, raise registration figures in sport clubs, improve the quality of infrastructure or build sporting networks. Chalip's leveraging approach (2004, 2006) explicitly claims for strategic leveraging of sport events to maximize their benefits for host communities. Actually, the community development agenda is perceived very differently between the cities (Misener & Mason, 2009). The aim of the paper is to examine the sport development impacts and strategic outcomes of a single-sport spectator event, the FIFA Women's World Cup 2011 in Germany. Following the leveraging approach, three research questions will guide the study: Did the idea of leveraging for sport development respectively for women's football legacy exist when the host cities bid for the Women's Football World Cup? What kind of strategies was used to promote the World Cup and support women's football initiatives? And does any short- or long-term benefit of the World Cup exist for local women's football development? For the subject of women's football tournaments, Barbara Bell's study (2012) of the longer term impacts of the Euro 2005 in the north-west of England on participation and club-based football is of great interest for the Women's World Cup research. Bell concludes relating to the legacy aspirations of Euro 2005, that, in general, the event can clearly be regarded as an important catalyst to the development of the games for women and girls in England. But lack in leadership and resource base had prevented to capitalize on the opportunity for local women's football development by the event. With respect to the World Cup tournament in 2011, three of nine hosting cities were selected to collect data, all located in Northrhine Westfalia, an area with long tradition in men's football. As a multi-method case study approach a couple of surveys were conducted. Qualitative interviews with the heads of the three local organizing committees before and after the WC explored the goals and results of the event from a community perspective. Furthermore, six administration officers of the regional football associations, responsible for the women's football development, were interviewed to describe the organizations' development plans and the expected benefits of the World Cup. As quantitative study, a representative part of all football clubs in Northrhine Westfalia, hosting female football teams, were asked (n=556) about the clubs' prospects for the World Cup and their plans to promote the event. Additionally, we conducted a questioning of the stadium and fan fest visitors during the World Cup in the three hosting cities (n=6,700) to evaluate the influence of the World Cup benefits from an individual perspective. Finally, documentary sources, like football development plans of the regional football associations, as well as hosting cities' marketing plans to promote the WC were analyzed. Not least, the football membership and teams statistics provide a picture of participation trends in women's and girls' football before and after the World Cup.

The results confirm the hypotheses that the cities' bid for the World Cup games were originally motivated from touristic and image building prospects rather than from community sport development ones. The organizers' overriding goal was to sell out the stadium and to get nice pictures for broadcasting the community nationally and internationally. Nevertheless, the hosting communities tried to follow the requirements of the German Football Association and the FIFA for women's football legacy. In two of three investigated cities, the local sports council as well as the regional football association pushed the professional men's football clubs to establish women's teams. But, two years after the World Cup, it is unsure how long these teams can survive. In one case, the residents' interest in attending games of the local women's football teams even decreased in the period after the World Cup. On the other hand, on a grass root level, the development plans for girls' football apparently succeeded. In the period directly before and after the WC the registration figures of girls in local football clubs definitely increased.

The example of the Women's Football World Cup 2001 indicates, that the specific sport can, in no way, benefit from hosting a major sport event. But in the case of club-based sport, a strong cooperation with national and local sports organizations is needed to maximize the benefits and to save the events legacy in the host community.

References

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