Organisational Innovation in Sport for Development and Peace

Convenors: Per Svensson and Adam Cohen

Managing Sport for Development Facts

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Aim
With the objective to better understand the field of sport for development, this study conceptualizes how athlete data is translated into organizational performance accounts presented in annual reports. How data is translated into partner activation tools is discussed, and relationships between fact management, the qualifying of organizational performance and partner activation are proposed.

Theoretical Background and Literature Review
Although the field of sport for development (SFD) research has advanced significantly in recent years (Schulenkorf, Sherry & Rowe, 2016; Schulenkorf, 2017), more insight is needed on the design, process, and management practices in this field (Bruening et al., 2015; Schulenkorf, 2017). Clearly, operating in complex environments sustainably demands managerial adaptation and innovation. Moreover, as attracting and retaining vital financial partners often implies being answerable for claimed mission attainment, managing performance accounts is an ongoing concern for many sport for development agencies. Indeed, as SFD mission statements are not about "attracting large spectator audiences" (Cordery & Davies, 2016, p. 98), qualifying performance may be difficult when your mission is not just about winning a cup, a pennant or a medal.

As a case in point, one of the world's largest amateur sports organizations has been using sport to enrich the lives of people with intellectual disabilities for over 50 years now. With over 5 million athletes in over 169 countries, Special Olympics is a global force for change. Yet, qualifying and accounting for enriched lives is a process which invites greater academic attention. Accordingly, this study will follow Special Olympics Canada, which is one of the oldest chapters of this movement, as they craft their annual reports.

Research Design and Data Analysis
Latour's (2005) actor-network theory (ANT) is mobilized to retrace the connection between the actors who construct Special Olympics Canada's annual reports. Fascinating connections are traced and complex relationships emerge as actors enroll and activate others into contributing to the annual report. This approach also reveals, in rich details, the management functions required to translate aggregated datum about individual athletes into facts regarding mission attainment.

One important distinction with ANT is that an actor that mobilizes and activates other actors is viewed to be the same, whether it is human or non-human. For instance, as collating

massive amounts of data often requires technologies to be added to the network in a way that replaces humans. Thus, a database that contributes to collating efforts would be considered as an actor in this network. Accepting a database as an actor on par with a human coach may lead one to "struggle with the apparent complexities of ANT" (Feldman & Pentland, 2005, p. 92). Yet, in ANT, actors are all entities that instigate action in others and the email that reminds you that it is time to send in your contribution to the annual report is no different. The resulting connected entities that speak with one voice in the name of an organization, such as the 'Annual Report', are simply assembled, web like networks of actors. Thus, to better understanding such entities, scholars need to identify, disassemble, and retrace the social interactions between the actors that form these networks. This invites the ANT scholar to identify and observe the traces left by the social interactions between actors as they construct assemblages such as an annual report: memos, emails, notices, phone calls, meetings, etc. ─ all contribute to the traceability of the actor-network.

Findings and Discussion

Reassembling how actors prompt others into action and become, over time, embedded in stable networks, is what provides valuable insight about monolithic entities and their influence in society. This study proposes that: a) translating athlete data into presentable facts involves collecting, connecting, collating and communicating efforts; b) qualifying sport's contribution to quality of life forms the foundation of mission attainment accounts; and c) presenting mission attainment as fact is critical for convincing and retaining external funding partners.

Conclusion and Implications

This study's value is in its conceptualization of how, what, and why qualified facts concerning how sport enriches lives are established. Theoretical and managerial insight on the relationships built during the translation and transmission of facts about the enriched lives of athletes with intellectual disabilities are also provided.

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