



**SIMON DARNELL**

# **SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE**

**A CRITICAL SOCIOLOGY**

B L O O M S B U R Y

GLOBALIZING  
SPORT  
STUDIES

# Sport for Development and Peace

A Critical Sociology

Simon C. Darnell



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## Sport for Development and Peace

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# Globalizing Sport Studies

## Series Editor's Preface

There is now a considerable amount of expertise nationally and internationally in the social scientific and cultural analysis of sport in relation to the economy and society more generally. Contemporary research topics, such as sport and social justice, science and technology and sport, global social movements and sport, sports mega-events, sports participation and engagement and the role of sport in social development, suggest that sport and social relations need to be understood in non-Western developing economies as well as European, North American and other advanced capitalist societies. The current high global visibility of sport makes this an excellent time to launch a major new book series that takes sport seriously and makes this research accessible to a wide readership.

The series *Globalizing Sport Studies* is thus in line with a massive growth of academic expertise, research output and public interest in sport worldwide. At the same time, it seeks to use the latest developments in technology and the economics of publishing to reflect the most innovative research into sport in society currently underway in the world. The series is multi-disciplinary, although primarily based on the social sciences and cultural studies approaches to sport.

The broad aims of the series are to: *act* as a knowledge hub for social scientific and cultural studies research in sport, including, but not exclusively, anthropological, economic, geographic, historical, political science and sociological studies; *contribute* to the expanding field of research on sport in society in the United Kingdom and internationally by focussing on sport at regional, national and international levels; *create* a series for both senior and more junior researchers that will become synonymous with cutting-edge research, scholarly opportunities and academic development; *promote* innovative discipline-based, multi-, inter- and trans-disciplinary theoretical and methodological approaches to researching sport in society; *provide* an English-language outlet for high quality non-English writing on sport in society; and *publish* broad overviews, original empirical research studies and classic studies from non-English sources, and thus attempt to *realise* the potential for *globalizing* sport studies through open content licensing with 'Creative Commons'.

Sport (broadly defined to encompass physical activity, physical education and even physical culture) has increasingly been seen as having a role to play in contributing to the resolution of enduring societal problems, especially in the Global South or developing world. In 2003, the United Nations (UN) adopted resolution 58/5, which formally recognized the contributions that sport can make to meeting

international development goals, and followed this with the international Year of Sport and Physical Education in 2005. Sport has since gained both international recognition and political traction within development initiatives, notably the United Nations' millennium development goals that seek, for example, to eradicate extreme poverty and achieve sustainable gender equality – particularly in the Global South – by 2015. There are currently dozens of sport-based international development programmes and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) listed on the International Platform for Sport and Development, and organizations like Right to Play enjoy a strong international profile and support from government, multinational corporations and celebrity athletes.

*Sport for Development and Peace: A Critical Sociology* brings a sociological view to bear on such initiatives and the momentum behind 'sport for development and peace' (SDP). Simon Darnell does not seek to discredit or, as he says, 'derail' SDP, the related notion of sport-for-development (SFD), or any of the contributions that sport might make in meeting development goals, but rather raises critical questions about the political and social implications of SDP. The book considers the institutionalized relationship between sport and international development by using insights drawn from critical sport sociology and critical development studies.

Chapter 1 examines the ways in which sport, and SDP in particular, can be understood through contemporary social theories (notably Gramscian, Foucauldian and post-colonial theory), and Chapter 2 outlines a brief history of the politics of international development. Chapters 3 and 4 employ the theoretical perspectives outlined there to analyse data from original research into the experiences of young people on an international development programme and interviews with various stakeholders and programme officials working within SDP organizations. Chapter 5 shifts the focus to consider the role of sports mega-events in the field of SDP, particularly as they are increasingly hosted by cities and nations in the Global South. Darnell assesses the claims that sustainable international development can be ascribed to such events. Chapter 6 looks specifically at the phenomenon of sporting celebrity and offers analysis of the implications of celebrity athletes as SDP activists and stakeholders. In Chapter 7, Darnell argues for a commitment to solidarity with marginalized people as preferable to the discourse of empowerment that aligns with, and is susceptible to, the hegemony of neoliberal development philosophy.

Darnell suggests that those interested in SFD and SDP need to consider the implications of linking sport to the development paradigm and asks questions such as who are the targets of SDP, what kind of world view is championed through SDP, and what inequalities exist and how does SDP respond?

'Sport for development and peace', 'sport-for-development' and associated slogans have risen in popularity in the past 20 years; this is the first coherent book-length attempt to understand some of the implications, assumptions and ideologies underpinning these developments.

John Horne, 2012

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Bob Sparks and Brian Wilson at the University of British Columbia first introduced me to the role of the cultural researcher and intellectual and to methods for thoughtful and cogent social analysis. Their lessons have stayed with me to this day. Peter Donnelly and Bruce Kidd at the University of Toronto facilitated my grounding in the critical study of sport, policy and the public good. Sherene Razack from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education moved me towards post-colonial theory and studies of Whiteness by modelling her thorough and rigorous critique. Special mention is owed to Margaret MacNeill who not only supervised my doctoral research but also consistently supported my scholarly ambitions and confidence. During my time as a postdoctoral researcher at Dalhousie University, David Black and Owen Willis helped to confirm for me the importance and legitimacy of studying sport and its place in social and political life. Finally, John Horne showed interest and faith in this project through its various stages. His editorial guidance, and the feedback of anonymous reviewers, proved essential.

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And last, but by no means least, there is Sandy, with whom everything in life seems possible and for whom I am forever thankful.



# Acronyms

Brazil, China, Russia and India (BRIC Nations)  
Business International Non-governmental Organizations (BINGOs)  
Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)  
Commonwealth Games Canada (CGC)  
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)  
Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA)  
Football Association (FA)  
General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)  
Human immunodeficiency virus and/or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS)  
International Development through Sport program (IDS)  
International Financial Institutions (IFIs)  
International Monetary Fund (IMF)  
International Olympic Committee (IOC)  
Kicking AIDS Out! (KAO!)  
Low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)  
Mathare Youth Sport Association (MYSA)  
Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)  
Monitoring & evaluation (M&E)  
National Basketball Association (NBA)  
New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)  
Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)  
Olympic Advocates Together Honourably (OATH)  
Open Fun Football Schools (OFFS)  
*Sociology of Sport Journal* (SSJ)  
Sport-for-development (SFD)  
Sport for development and peace (SDP)  
Sport-in-development (SID)  
Sports Sans Frontières (SSF)  
United Kingdom (UK)  
United Nations (UN)  
United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)  
United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace (UNITSDP)  
United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP)  
United States (US)  
World Trade Organization (WTO)

# Contents

Series Editor's Preface vi

Acknowledgements viii

List of Acronyms ix

Introduction: Situating Sport-for-Development and  
the 'Sport for Development and Peace' Sector 1

1 Social Theory, the Sociology of Sport and the Study of SDP 22

2 International Development Studies and SDP:  
Syntheses and Opportunities 40

3 The SDP Intern/Volunteer Experience 63

4 Development History and Politics: Investigating SDP 83

5 Sport, International Development and Mega-events 103

6 International Development and Sporting Celebrity 121

7 Conclusion: Critical Praxis and Pedagogy in SDP 143

References 158

Notes 171

Index 180

# Introduction

## Situating sport-for-development and the ‘sport for development and peace’ sector

### Connecting ‘sport’ to ‘international development’

In October 2009, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted by consensus two resolutions regarding sport (document A/64/L.2 and A/64/L.3, United Nations General Assembly, 2009a, 2009b). In the first, they recognized the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver as an opportunity to build ‘a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal’ and to ‘uphold’ sport as a sector of society concerned with, and active in, the promotion of peace, inclusivity (particularly among the Aboriginal peoples of Canada<sup>1</sup>) and sustainable legacies for future generations. In the second, the UNGA welcomed and recognized the historical, social and developmental dimensions of the 2010 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup held in South Africa, the first time the event had been hosted on the African continent. In particular, the second resolution drew attention to the opportunity for sport – in this case association football (or soccer) – to support peace, solidarity and socio-economic development in South Africa and across the continent. In turn, the South African delegate to the United Nations (UN) extolled the social virtues of the World Cup as an opportunity for all citizens, of South Africa as well as the world, to be part of a single family, one unencumbered by the enduring human divisions of race, class, gender, skin colour, age or religion.

In this short and perhaps underreported or under-acknowledged pair of resolutions, the United Nations highlighted a series of important dimensions and connections between sport and the challenges of international development, dimensions that are increasingly recognized and institutionalized. Of particular note were the following.

One, the resolution invoked a recurring notion that the social dimensions, construction and organization of sport are particularly suited for bridging or overcoming the social divides that underpin many of the challenges and difficulties of international development. For example, in places where racial or ethnic conflict, post-war reconciliation, religious strife, gender inequality or divisions between rich and poor exist (or even predominate) and prevent the realization of sustainable and equitable development for all people, sport offers a way to bring stakeholders together to work towards the securing of international development goals. This convening ability is often

ascribed particularly to football, given its popularity across diverse social and geographical contexts and its construction as a 'universal language'.

Two, the resolutions referenced the enduring and often seemingly interminable and intractable challenges of international development and its traditional failings, and invoked the role of sport as a response. From this perspective, sport is increasingly understood to be able to make a contribution to the enduring global problems that have yet to be solved in the 'development era'. One may take the starting point for this era to be the colonial impulses and practices of nineteenth-century Europe or the modernist version of contemporary development most often attached to United States (US) President Harry Truman who argued for the northern, 'developed' states to usher in a new era of post-war prosperity by participating in the development of the 'Third World'. In either case, much of the efforts ascribed to and mobilized through the efforts of international development have failed to achieve the long-term and sustainable changes imagined, if not promised. Thus, the current mobilization of sport-for-development (SFD) can be understood as a response to the failure of development's traditional orthodoxy and a role for sport in filling a development void (Levermore and Beacom 2009).

Three, particularly with regard to the FIFA World Cup in South Africa, the resolutions spoke to the importance of the Global South, geographically, politically and even discursively in relation to Global sport. In this sense, even in the cases where the notions of development as a southern issue, or a project of benefits to be delivered from the North to the South, has been contested or rejected, there is still a sense of the South, both materially and metaphorically, as the quintessential site of development. On the one hand, there are objectively higher levels of, for example, poverty in the southern hemisphere and therefore the South is, in the materiality of the everyday, a disproportionate site for development initiatives and struggles. On the other hand, the South continues to be the site of the North's 'development imagination', one that is regularly informed by stereotypes as well as the relations of power that serve in the construction and maintenance of the political economy and a process of Othering. It is revelatory, then, that development (in this case through sport) is most oft-constituted or referred to as 'international development', given that it invokes the notion of development as a process required and performed in 'Other' parts of the world.

Four, the resolutions spoke to, or captured, the instrumental or functional notion of sport in relation to international development (see Coalter 2009). From this perspective, sport is increasingly positioned as a 'tool' or a means by or through which to achieve development goals. This stands in distinction to the notions of sport as an activity or pastime, sport as a sociocultural construction and/or sport as an intimate part of the processes by which the social and political world is negotiated and formed. From the functionalist perspective, sport is recognized by the cultural role it fulfils and, in the case

of the UN resolutions, considered a relatively benign cultural institution that serves to bring people together or even transcend the dogged social and political challenges of international development that have largely prevented the achievement of development goals. From a critical perspective, its function is but one way to theorize sport in society.

Five, the resolutions invoked the idea that sport may be a politically palatable, non-threatening and/or effective tool for bringing together diverse people within and across the borders of nation states. The connection between sport, nationalism and the building of nations in this sense is positioned as an opportunity to work towards the inclusive and peaceful achievement of a functioning and prosperous nation-as-community, one that bypasses or usurps racism, patriarchy or material inequalities that have so often proved difficult in the construction and operation of inclusive and peaceful communities and nations.

Six, the incredible popularity of sport around the world, as the focus of physical and consumer activities, was recognized in the resolutions as part of its utility and contribution to meeting international development goals. From this point of view, sport as a popular dimension of culture, and a dimension of popular culture, holds social significance and sport organizations enjoy undeniable political clout. Put differently, given that sport is such an important part of the social experiences of so many around the world, sport is understood to have a potential role in improving the lot of marginalized people in different geopolitical contexts and contributing to the process of overcoming the dogged development challenges of our time.

Seven, the resolutions recognized the increasing development potential and importance attached to major games or sports mega-events. Whereas previously understood as a means primarily or even exclusively to celebrate athletic achievement and a way by which cities and nation states can establish and assert their international reputation, increasingly sports mega-events like the Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup are understood to serve a development purpose both soft – building social cohesion, increasing community participation, positive national identification etc. – and hard – mobilizing public funds, improving infrastructure, attracting foreign investment etc. From this point of view, sports mega-events, their organization and funding are intimately tied to international development issues.

All of these dimensions of the two UN resolutions speak to the social and political challenges of mobilizing sport to meet international development goals, particularly the attainment of equitable, sustainable, healthy and self-determined livelihoods for the world's disadvantaged peoples. These kinds of initiatives are now often described as SFD programmes, given that they explicitly engage and organize sport to improve the lives and life chances of the world's poor and marginalized, often in the Global South. The purpose of this book is to bring a sociological view to bear on such initiatives and the

burgeoning 'sport for development and peace' (SDP) sector that is made up of many of these international organizations that support and implement SFD programmes.

The text takes as its starting point that while important socio-managerial work has been, and will continue to be, done regarding what the mobilization of sport can do to effect sustainable social change in various contexts around the world, there are important theoretical and critical questions that need to be asked of the SDP sector. These are not questions that seek to discredit or derail the momentum of SDP, the notion of SFD or any contributions (potential or actual) of sport to meeting development goals, but rather questions that are concerned with the political and social implications of SFD and SDP. These questions also proceed from an idea central to critical development scholarship, namely that questions and critical analyses of power and politics make for better policies and programmes (Nustad 2001).

The book is written from the perspective that every scholarly endeavour is beholden to the political and practical utility that it creates or attempts to carve out for itself. As Alcoff (1991) has argued, where a text goes, for whom it is intended and why it is needed are of central importance to the activity that is critical scholarship. While this text is not written as a manual or set of best practices for how to do SDP work, it is inextricably linked to the question of what sport, physical activity and sport culture can do to make the world a more just and equitable place, and it is these concerns for social justice that inform the analyses. A sociological understanding of power is key. Relations of power underpin sport and international development, respectively, and are therefore of central importance to the study of SDP. This is the 'praxis' of the book, by which I refer to the mobilization of theory and analysis towards critically informed practice.

The main argument of the book then is twofold. One, from a sociopolitical perspective, I suggest that those interested in SFD and SDP would be well served to think of the sector as more than a process requiring 'monitoring & evaluation' (M&E) or managerial refinement in order to determine how best it works. While M&E is no doubt important, I argue that without an associated critical analysis, a strictly managerial approach can slip into the theory of development as a process of linear improvement or modernization, which has serious limitations given that it regularly fails to challenge the relations of power, privilege and dominance that result in a small number of international haves and a large number of international have-nots. Rather, I argue that we need to think of the implications of hitching sport to the development paradigm and ask social questions (e.g. who are the targets of SDP?), political questions (what kind of world view is championed through SDP?) and material questions (what inequalities exist and how does SDP respond?) of the SDP sector.

Two, from a perspective of theory and research, there is genuine potential to consider the implications of the increasingly institutionalized relationship

between sport and international development by deliberating on the insights of critical sport and critical development studies, both respectively and in conjunction. That is, the critical study of SDP need not reinvent the theoretical or methodological wheel in order to construct a sound, comprehensive and cogent framework for analysis. We need, rather, to consider the potential connections and synthesis between critical studies of sport and development, a modest contribution that I take on in the following pages.

To do so, I do focus primarily on the activities within SDP as they are currently mobilized along the traditional lines of northern organizations and southern beneficiaries. I am not proposing, in this short text, to explore all of the possibilities, theoretical and practical, of connecting sport to development initiatives, though much important work remains to be done in this regard. Rather, I am most focused in this book on the international bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have taken an increased interest in SFD in recent years. While this does something of a disservice to the myriad conceptions of development itself that are possible in relation to sport, a notion that I explore to a degree throughout the text (also see Hartmann and Kwauk 2011), this focus is justifiable and important for at least three reasons: One, this focus on northern organizations is where critical scholarly attention has lacked in recent years, given the propensity to focus on the recipients or targets of SDP initiatives and to do so, in some cases, at the expense of broader relations of power. Two, this focus does not undermine southern agency, given that southern agency is rarely included in northern representations and regimes of power in development (see Biccum 2010). And three, it provides a basis from which to theorize new or previously unexamined connections between sport and international development to the benefit of future research, practice and activism.

In sum, the text is guided by an ethical and political investigation of SDP and the current mobilization of SFD. I follow Gasper (2004: xii) in this regard who argues that the ethics of development can be conceptualized in three stages: ethical concerns about development policies and the experiences they afford, ethical examinations of the core concepts and theories employed to understand those experiences and actions, and then the ethics of development practice. Also similar to Gasper, this text focuses primarily on the first two stages, with the third (which speaks more to 'development ethics' than 'the ethics of development') largely beyond the scope of the book and requiring a methodology (i.e. ethnographic fieldwork) beyond the historical, textual and interview methods employed here. This is not to suggest that the development ethics of SDP are not important; indeed it is hoped that the analysis offered in this book will go some way towards a more theoretically and critically informed body of future SDP research.

The remainder of this introductory chapter proceeds in seven parts. Next, I offer a brief discussion of key terms and tenets in SDP, and the

major stakeholders involved. This is followed by a short historical/political overview of the momentum underpinning SDP, particularly at the supra- and international level. I follow with an introduction to the theoretical framework employed in the text, an outline of some of the social and political paradoxes that underpin SDP and a discussion of SDP amidst theoretical understandings of social movements. The Introduction concludes with a preview of subsequent chapters.

### SDP: Terms and tenets

In general, sport-for-development – sometimes used interchangeably with sport-in-development (SID) – describes the specific mobilization and implementation of sport as a means of meeting the goals and challenges of international development. Important here is the understanding that SFD and SID are distinct from ‘sports development’, which refers to the social and political processes by which the organizational and institutional world of sport is formed. Whereas sport development is principally concerned with improving the world of sport (from which broader social development is often presumed to follow), *sport-for-development* takes issues of development as its primary focus and sport as a means of tackling them.<sup>2</sup>

Coalter (2009, 2010a, 2010b) has described this distinction as ‘sport plus’ versus ‘plus sport’, where a sport plus approach focuses on sport development and plus sport takes development as its goal and positions sport in support of achieving development. While both sport development and SFD (or sport plus and plus sport) can and do find their way into the topics and examples covered in this text, the book is focused primarily on SFD and plus sport. I am interested in unpacking and analysing the implications of positioning and mobilizing sport as a means of achieving development, a perspective not necessarily captured in and through sport development processes, policies and literatures.

To that end, throughout the remainder of the text, I follow Kidd by using the term ‘sport for development and peace’ to describe the momentum and organization of and interest in SFD. I am in favour of this term for several reasons: First, it captures the SFD or plus sport perspective under a tidy title. Second, it includes a distinct reference to peace building or conflict resolution, a topic that needs to be included within international development but is not reducible to international development. And third, it considers SDP, in the manner constructed and described by Kidd, in relation to New Social Movements, an important characteristic and one that I analyse in more detail below.

It is also important to acknowledge the diversity of programmes and policies that exist under the title of SDP. While SDP programmes range in size,



scope and focus, all incorporate sport – understood, in the broadest sense, to include play and physical activity – to promote social change within a paradigm of international development. Levermore (2008: 56) has provided important classificatory analyses of SDP and posited that SDP programmes fall into seven categories defined by the development outcomes that they seek in and through the organization and mobilization of sport and physical culture. These are conflict resolution, cultural understanding, infrastructure development, educational awareness, the empowerment of marginalized groups, encouragement of physical activity and health, and driving economic development. In addition, several organizations, like Commonwealth Games Canada and Right to Play, offer internships or volunteer opportunities in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) in the Global South.<sup>3</sup>

Levermore's classification illustrates the breadth of initiatives and organizations that fall under the broad catchment of the SDP title, and SDP organizations can be found that fall under each of his seven categories. For the purposes of this introduction, however, I follow the UN Inter-agency Task Force on Sport and Development and Peace (United Nations 2003: 26) that suggests that SDP programmes fall into three broad categories – social, health and economic development. As context for the analyses that follow, I provide a brief (though by no means complete or exhaustive) overview of the three categories and examples of organizations that fit therein.

## Social issues

Social issues attended to in international development and SDP include poverty, lack of education, gender inequality, human insecurity and displacement, and conflict. Arguably, Right to Play enjoys the highest profile among SDP organizations concerned with such social issues. Originally known as Olympic Aid, the organization grew out of the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, due in part to the athletic success of its founder, Norwegian speed skater Johann Olav Koss. Koss parlayed his performance in Lillehammer into donations used to deliver sport and play opportunities for children living in poverty, primarily in Africa. In 2001, as a non-governmental organization, Olympic Aid began direct programme implementation to facilitate physical and social development among marginalized youth in the Global South. Olympic Aid transitioned to Right to Play in 2003. By the end of 2009, Right to Play was providing regular weekly sport and physical activity to 700,000 children supported by 15,000 local coaches and leaders (Right to Play 2011). The organization also benefits from an 'International Team of Athlete Ambassadors', including many celebrity athletes, that lend support and prestige to Right to Play's efforts (Right to Play 2011).

Other humanitarian organizations also hold sport as their central mandate. PLAY SOCCER Nonprofit International has been operating since 2001 and