



PARASPORT CONTRIBUTION TO GROWTH OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

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ABSTRACT

Disability sport has arisen and exceedingly grown in popularity in recent decades, as people with disabilities have enhanced their rights, status, perceptions of opportunity in society and access to sport as an essential human right. The literature on sport and social capital is scarce with no particular focus on parasport. PURPOSE of this study is to examine the various complexity of para sport in contribution to social capital. As social capital is concept of a compound nature, we will encompass four areas - Building alliances, Access to places, Attitudes and Events. METHODS: The analysed data is extracted from seventeen annual reports published by the International Paralympic Committee from 2004 to 2020. The basic assumptions and facts of the parasport paradigm are examined through documentary analysis based on the functional approach of social capital. RESULTS: Nowadays parasport and developmental aspects of society are in complex relationship and also parasport serves for different purposes - as pathway for achieving personal excellence, human right advocator, to trigger of social inclusion. CONCLUSION: Modern parasport has reached a level of self-reinforcing process with great contribution to a number of social development areas that can improve the explored areas of building social capital.

Key words: International Paralympic Committee, Paralympic games, Paralympic movement

INTRODUCTION

Sport for people with disabilities has arisen and exceedingly grown in popularity in recent decades. It has the universal power to unite people, to overcome political, cultural and social barriers and to develop human personality (1). Sport has been turning into an instrument used by people with disabilities for achieving variety of purposes related with rights enhancement and status improvement, extension of opportunities for participation in social life and society as whole. In addition, sport for people with disabilities has turned into a defender of the

access to sport as an essential human right. This complex nature of sport for people with disabilities had been predetermined at its core many years ago with the birth of idea of the neurologist sir Ludwig Guttmann “to introduce sport into the rehabilitation of disabled people”(2) and organized sport events named Stoke Mandeville games prototype of the Paralympic games. He has also stated “the aim of the Stoke Mandeville Games is to unite paralyzed men and women from all parts of the world in an international sports movement...” (2). Guttmann is “The father of the Paralympic movement” which governing body is the International Paralympic Committee (IPC). Tracing the development of IPC through the years, we can see that from a relatively small disability sports body the organization has progressed to one of the most highly respected sports organizations in the world. In addition the games born out of the

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small sport event in the latest 1940s for servicemen injured during World War Two, now-a-days under the name Paralympic games are the world's third biggest sporting event, beaten only by the Olympics and World Cup in terms of global ticket sales(3). According to Darcy et al. (2017) each successive Paralympic Games has made its contribution to the growth of variety of areas as new sports introduction, more countries attendance, increased scope of broadcasting, record ticket sales, and involvement of alternative media channels to promote the event and its athletes(4). Philip Craven's mantra which turns into a vision of Paralympic committee "enabling Paralympic athletes to achieve excellence and inspire the world" could be considered as 'mission accomplished' with thirty eight more nations competing at Rio 2016 compared to Sydney 2000, and TV audiences swelling from about three hundred million to over 4.1 billion during the same timeframe. Paralympic movement has spread far beyond the sporting excellence. Parallel to the pursuit of excellence it creates a truly inclusive society and it is delivering change for the world. The literature on sport and social capital is scarce with no particular focus on parasport. Our previous study has found that the concept of social capital has a compound nature (1). The most useful description related to the sport outcomes we have found in the research of Robert Putnam. He describe social capital as a blend of social life, such as networks, trust and norms, which allows participants to act together to pursue shared objectives. Put differently it can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating

coordinated actions (5). The contribution of sport to creation of social capital and the countering of social exclusion is highlighted by the capacity of sport to bring groups of people together that might ordinarily remain apart. In our previous study we found that the researches on sport and social capital are rare, discussions are fragmented due to diversity in definitions and the role of sport as a social capital contributor. The sustainable development of the Paralympic movement during last twenty years could be documentary traced but as the IPC President says "...the coming years could be our most exciting and impactful to-date" (6).

The aim of this study is to examine the various complexity of para sport in contribution to social capital.

METHODOLOGY

The analyzed data is extracted from seventeen annual reports published by the International Paralympic Committee from 2004 to 2020. The basic assumptions and facts of the parasport paradigm are examined through documentary analysis based on the functional approach of social capital. As social capital is concept of a compound nature, we focus on four areas - Building alliances, Access to places, Attitudes and Events.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

At the first stage of our study, we developed a conceptual-theoretical model of analyzed clusters of social capital to facilitate our further research presented on **Figure 1**

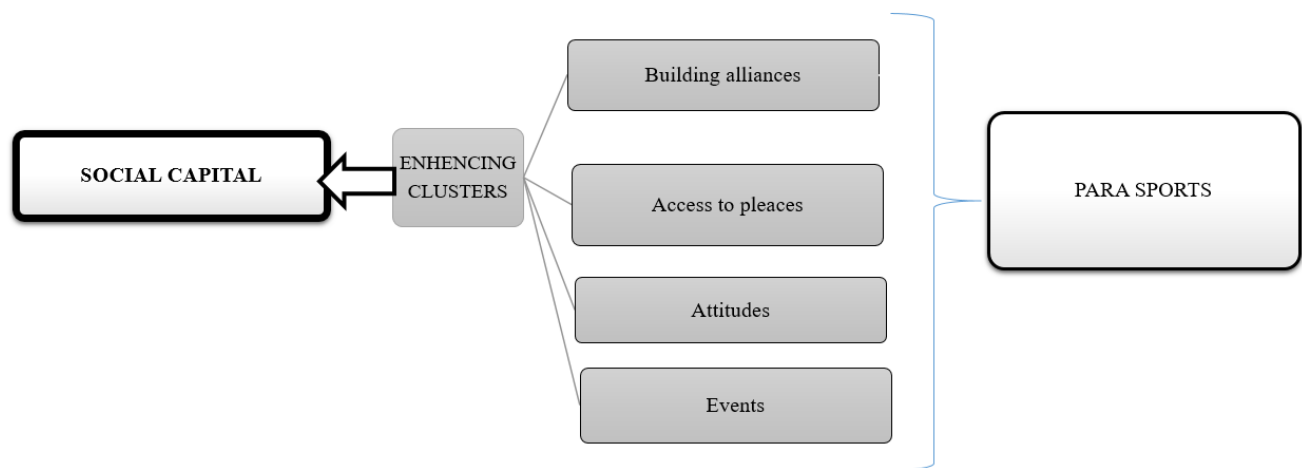


Figure 1. Conceptual-theoretical model of analyzed clusters of social capital.

Sir Philip Craven defines the agreement signed with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 2000 as the most impactful act. Paralympic Games would not have grown into the event it is today without the 'two Games, one city' model" (3). The strategic partnership between IPC and IOC remains as a core objective during the last twenty years. With the election of the current IPC President Andrew Parsons the alliance with IOC turns into number one priority together with the secure future of the Paralympic movement(6). Parsons confirm Cravens statement about the first formal agreement from 2000. All following steps are leading to the historic long-term partnership agreement with IOC that will run through until at least 2032. This strategic alliance allows the Movement to grow beyond all recognition. The partnership leads to enhanced and closer collaboration on Games preparation. Another extend is the commercial benefit partnership with Bridgestone and long-standing partner Visa. However, the most important is that the relationship and the well-balanced interaction between the IPC and IOC management teams who works together for the good of global sport. Another strategic partnership is bring us back in 2004. The IPC and the European Commission worked together as part of the 2004 European Year of Education Through Sport (EYES). This partnership enabled the European Commission to utilize the social and educational values of Paralympic Sport to meet the objectives of the EYES project - to increase knowledge, skills and social capabilities such as teamwork, solidarity and fair play (7).

To preserve the integrity of the Paralympic sport in January 2004 the IPC established the IPC Anti-Doping Code in conformity with the general principles of the World Anti-Doping Code, to prevent, in the spirit of fair play, doping in sport for athletes with a disability. The IPC Anti-Doping Code provides for the prohibition of doping. IPC works with the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) in several capacities in the fight against doping (7). The key educational and social strategic partner of IPC is Agitos foundation. In terms of sponsorship, the current worldwide Paralympic partners are Airbnb, Atos, Bridgestone, Ottobock, Panasonic, Samsung, Toyota and VISA. The most resent and historic

Co-operation Agreement was signed between IPC and the International Disability Alliance (IDA) in 2020 in order to advance the rights of persons with disabilities and jointly commit to use parasport as a vehicle to drive the human rights agenda forward (8). Initially the strategic partnerships were foreseen in specific areas as fundraising, education, scientific researches, logistic, media and more. Currently it is hard to distinguish between them because all partnerships are closely linked together to form a truly strategic alliance.

The issue of accesses have been essential part of the entire process of ensuring the right of persons with disabilities. To ensure the fundamental right for accesses the IPC in 2006, established an "Accessibility Working Group", bringing together experts from different parts of the world, to develop an accessibility guide, which would have the dual role: respond to the need of the host cities' of Olympic and Paralympic Games to have a comprehensive set of standards to follow when designing venue and services. In addition, the Guide should respond to the enhanced requirements created by the scope of the Paralympic Games, an event with excessive demand on accessibility than any other event in the world (4).

The issue of attitude is becoming truly evident throughout the preparation process of London Paralympic games. We found that the IPC learned that attitudes towards people with a disability in Great Britain are improving and could be one of the legacies of London 2012. Research findings showed that four in ten people believe the London 2012 Paralympic Games will bring a lasting breakthrough about the way people with a disability are viewed (9). Sebastian Coe proves this hypothesis by his word during the closing ceremony "We will never think about sports the same way and we will never think of disability the same way"(10).

At Rio 2016's Games Organizing Committee launched the Paralympic Friends Programme in order to mold attitudes toward parasport integration within the organization (11).

Remarkable impact toward positive changes of attitudes is documented in IPC I'mPOSSIBLE

project. In early 2017 Japan was the first country to pilot I'mPOSSIBLE (12). The project aims to challenge and change the perceptions and attitudes of how young people perceive people with a disability. In 2020 Report, we found that 36 countries around the world have already signed an agreement to implement I'mPOSSIBLE.

Paralympic events are studied in double-lair concept. In one, hand Paralympic games are second largest sport event in the world today – second only to the Olympic Games. Paralympic games achieving a sustainable progressive development with every game being better than the previous one. Of a great value are described year-round side events. The Athlete Support Programme makes a huge difference to many athletes, helping to provide classification and qualification opportunities and to attend training camps. 337 Global Para athletes helped through the Athlete Support Programme in 2019. 25 NPC delegates trained at the Arafura camp in 2019. The NPC Development Programme powered by Toyota aims to close the gaps in Parasport participation in terms of gender, sport, impairment and region. In total, 548 Para athletes and coaches from 90 NPCs have benefitted from the initiative between 2017 and 2019 (12). In 2017 IPC started NPC Development Programme (NPCDP), powered by Toyota. In its first three years 137 of the 149 eligible NPCs have engaged. Since becoming a Worldwide Paralympic Partner, Toyota has proactively encouraged its employees to engage with the Para sports of wheelchair basketball and boccia. In October 2019 the IPC signed a landmark agreement with the UN SDG Action Campaign, the special inter-agency initiative of the UN Secretary-General mandated to scale up, broaden and sustain the global movement of action for the Sustainable Development Goals (12). These are just few but very informative examples of the tremendous work that IPC is managing. There is no better evidence of how concerned is the movement about every single athlete, coach or official. This is an example for action oriented work towards equality among all IPC members.

CONCLUSION

Nowadays parasport and developmental aspects of society are in complex relationship and also parasport serves for different purposes - as pathway for achieving personal excellence, human right advocator, to trigger of social inclusion.

The Paralympic Movement is using its global position and influence together with all it's events and activates to challenge the stigma related to disability, empower social transformation trough education and make more inclusive society for all.

Modern parasport has reached a level of self-reinforcing process with great contribution to a number of social development areas that can improve the explored areas of building social capital.

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