Sport and Peace-building

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Introduction and Opening Observations

In this contribution I consider the real and potential capacity of sport as a vehicle for building and sustaining peace in the context of societies that are deeply fractured and which, resulting from these fissures, have experienced and/or continue to experience socio-political trauma and conflict across multiple dimensions of the social strata. The following statement draws extensively from my latest research monograph, written with Alan Tomlinson, entitled, *Sport and Peace-building in Divided Societies: Playing with Enemies* (Sugden and Tomlinson, 2017). The key issues addressed in this book cut across many if not all of the themes which have been stated as being of central importance in the brief for this meeting. At the heart of the book is a critical narrative of my career as a sport sociologist and how this career has informed and been informed by my engagement in practical fieldwork as one of the pioneers of SDP (Sport, Development and Peace) both as a theatre of practical engagement and a focus for academic research and scholarly endeavour. This narrative is constructed around critical reflections on three case studies in three regions that have experienced serious inter-community conflict and with varying degrees of success have or continue to be engaged with peace processes within which sport has played a more or less significant role. Those regions are: Northern Ireland; Israel/Palestine; and South Africa.

The book referred to above starts with a question which was asked of me at a staff and student research seminar at the University of Loughborough in 2006. The question was:' what difference does the fact that you are a sociologist make to your involvement in SDP work'? 'Of course it makes a difference', I answered, inasmuch as being a sociologist isn't just a job, it's more a vocation, that is a way of life, and as such as a sociologist everything you see and do stimulates and is filtered through and activated by your trained sociological imagination'. These words echo the American sociologist, C. Wright Mills, a major influence on my development as a sociologist and activist. This being the case, inevitably my role in the evolution of SDP and interpretation of that experience has been and continues to be an application of my particular 'sociological imagination', a perspective which has led me to articulate and mobilise the concept of 'critical pragmatism' as a central pillar to the theoretical and methodological paradigm that I will summarise in the conclusion to this statement.

This leads me to the first observation that I want to make: SDP does not flourish in an a-theoretical or methodological vacuum and has benefited greatly from gaining access to and drawing eclectically from the multi-disciplinary perspectives of: critical sociologists; social anthropologists; ethnographers; social historians and related academic fields of inquiry. likewise these academic fields themselves are enhanced when they draw upon the evidence and wisdom accumulated by practitioners and professionals working in in the SDP field; in this regard SDP is a praxis-based endeavour, that is to say, SDP is a flexible and dynamic enterprise wherein the construction and articulation of theoretical models and policy development and the undertaking of research and the evaluation of practical interventions and programmes undertaken on the ground are mutually inter-dependent. To begin with SDP is not a one-size-fits-all garment and no SDP initiatives should be undertaken before the agent or agencies involved in their design, delivery and promotion have undertaken an in-depth and thorough-going analysis of the transcending socio-political and ethno-cultural context within

which the initiative is planned to take place. Once furnished with this contextual information any given sport-based peace-building/conflict-resolution programme can be designed and tailored to fit the specific needs of the different communities that populate the regions and locales in question. This brings me to my next observation; as much as possible SDP work should be a bottom-up not a top-down undertaking. That is to say, having done the contextual analysis agencies should identify and work with local actors and peace-orientated activists and grass-roots organisations to help to frame the nature and content of any given sport-based intervention. As part of this collaborative framing process any major obstacles to peace-building should be jointly identified before looking through the lens of 'critical pragmatism', to chart a navigable route around and through such obstacles in ways that the advancement of human rights and the enhancement of social justice - key foundations that underpin and anchor any peace-building process - can be put in place. This collaborative framing process will necessitate building partnerships between external agencies and regional and local organisations involving a give and take of resources, ideas and technologies, a point to which I return in the conclusion to this statement. Ideally this will lead to the evolution of symmetrical power relations among external and local organisations. Evidence suggests that when local stake-holders have a shared sense of ownership of a particular project the chances of achieving sustainable success are considerably higher. In this regard rather than parachuting into a conflict zone bringing prefabricated apparatus to roll out sport-based peace-building programmes, external agencies should gradually build up knowledge-exchange relationships with local organisations whereby imported materials and know-how can be adapted and enhanced through local grass-roots input. It is worth adding a cautionary note.

Whilst partnerships are important they can come with costs to the extent that each partner may come to the table with differing interests and agendas which will need to be carefully juggled and balanced if equilibrium is to be achieved and maintained, so permitting the initiative in question to move forward with an even momentum allowing for progressive and cumulative learning and sharing to take place This is a prepotent and evolving procedure whereby learning gleaned in one particular theatre of conflict can be disseminated and shared to be adapted and implemented in other theatres. This I have referred to elsewhere as the 'snowballing process' as in the analogy of a child who starting with a small snowbal rolls it in a field to make it bigger so that eventually it is big enough to form the body of a snowman. During this process the snowball does two things: firstly it accumulates additional snow from the new terrain covered (let's call this 'learning'); secondly it leaves behind deposits of material that it has picked up on its journey across the lands covered (let's call this 'depositing'). Drawing upon my own experience one of example of how this snowballing effect works is revealed in the evolution and adoption of a values-based approach to teaching and coaching sport for peace-building in the Football4Peace (F4P) programme.

F4P and SDP: The Foundations

The roots of F4P reside in Northern Ireland where in the 1980s and 1990s I led the development of 'Belfast United', possibly the world's first ever sport-based peace-building project. Belfast United had a fairly simplistic approach at the heart of which was the view that using sport to promote friendly contact between the rival Loyalist (Protestant) and nationalist (Catholic) communities in Belfast was a step - albeit a small one - in the direction of resolving conflict that at the time was rife in the city and as such made a contribution to what was then a fledgling and more wide-ranging political peace process. In the mid-1990s circumstances took me from Northern Ireland back to my native England where for reasons explained in detail in the aforementioned book I became involved in a project that had

aspirations to use sport to help build peace among Jewish and Arab communities in Israel. Beginning with the template I had helped to develop for Belfast United, working with a team of colleagues and a small number of student volunteers we undertook a similar pilot project in the Galilee region of Northern Israel. The pilot project was deemed to have been successful. However in evaluation meetings that took place after the event it was agreed that more could be done with the content and quality of the sport-based contact experience to enhance and make more potent the peace-building potential of the cross-community contact. With this mind we determined that rather than simply focussing on the enhancement of technical aspects of the teaching/coaching experience, more might be achieved if the activities in question could be impregnated with a series of values which once imbided and absorbed by the participants could travel with them beyond the boundaries of the sports field, so making them more receptive to other ideas and strategies seeking to promote harmonious inter-community relations and peace-building. The values/principles that form the spine of this approach are: neutrality; equity and inclusivity; trust and respect. This values-based approach to sport-based peace-building work has become a central tenet of the F4P model and method as it has been further rolled out around the world and, through the snowballing process, the F4P model has been further elaborated and strengthened through working with partners in South Africa, Gambia, South Korea and Columbia before coming full circle to Northern Ireland where it all began.

Along with the propagation of the values-based model there is the need for and importance of competent and comprehensive training for those who get involved in the delivery of sport-based peace-programmes. To this end F4P offers bi-annual training camps for volunteers many of whom are undergraduate or postgraduate students studying on sport-related courses, some of which have considerable content directed towards SDP endeavours. In recent years there has been a considerable expansion of the number of institutions world-wide offering courses such as these, and there are several clear advantages to be gained by recruiting student volunteers into SDP programmes: with such backgrounds, they come into any chosen SDP programme with a grounding in some of the academic disciplines that as noted above feed into and strengthen SDP activity; many of them will also be well versed in the professional and practical skill-sets in areas such as physical education and sport coaching which will help them to meet and overcome challenges encountered when working in the field; and many if not most of such students will already have been vetted with regard to their suitability to work with children and young people, having undertaken child protection training. This is something that should be a minimum standard for anyone wo wants to work and/or volunteer in the field of SDP; also as part of their studies most of these recruits will have undertaken courses in research methodologies.

Research and evaluation is an important element of the F4P training curriculum. This means that overseen by more experienced staff, volunteers who have come through this sort of training programme can be placed at the sensitive sharp end of evidence gathering, helping to fulfil monitoring and evaluation strategies, perhaps helping reduce costs by avoiding exorbitant fees levied by outside consultants for monitoring and evaluation work. This training does not have to be exclusive for educated elites, but can and should be accessible to different varieties of grass-roots community organisations groups and volunteers. For instance, as well as recruiting and training students from a variety of academic institutions, F4P's SDP training is also done collaboratively and in situ with partner organisations in the various regions where F4P operates its programmes. These partner organisations may also send some of their own workers/volunteers to F4P training camps conducted in England and other countries. Through this sharing and cascading of appropriate training SDP programmes can become more professional, robust and sustainable. This raises the issues of

standardisation and quality assurance, the consideration and oversight of which may be taken on by an external overseeing body such as the U.N or one of its departments. The challenge here will be to introduce levels of oversight without turning it into a heavy-handed bureaucratic exercise undermining the autonomy, rich diversity, flexibility and creativity of the SDP field as it currently operates.

Working in conflict zones adhering to the principle of neutrality is of paramount importance. To be successful and productive SDP must be seen to be unshackled by ideology: those agents and/or agencies involved should be seen not to be associated with one particular religious creed or political philosophy. Taking sides cannot be an option for individuals or agencies engaged in SDP work. Any conflict-resolution initiative that is perceived by some to have adopted a prejudicial position or operate from a particular ideological perspective that favours one side or another is doomed to failure. The same code of neutrality should be applied to anybody who participates in a given SDP programme. For instance in the case of F4P those who take part, whether they be children, volunteer coaches, parents or local officials, must agree beforehand that they will leave their ethno-religious persuasion /affiliation and their politics outside the F4P venue; Not only should SDP be ideology-free, but it should also be idealistically free. In my view the credibility of SDP has been undermined by those myself and others (Coalter 2006) have referred to as SDP evangelists. These are people who regularly trot out the fabled mantra of sport as panacea, as having the 'capacity to save the world'. 'Sport has the power to save the world' was a phrase first uttered by Nelson Mandela (2000). While Mandela could rightfully draw from his own experience as someone who used sport as a vehicle to heal wounds and build peace in post-apartheid South Africa many of those who have subsequently and sometimes opportunistically invoked Mandela's sermon have failed to supply supporting evidence to lend credibility to their own forays into the SDP world. Just because a great figure says something it is not necessarily true! The same can be said of the utterances of celebrities. In this regard, the same criticism regarding the undermining of the case for SDP can be levelled at those individuals or organisations I like to refer to as the SDP celebrity chasers, those that adopt a publicity-driven celebrity approach to bolster the cases for their involvement in SDP work. This usually involves trying to cultivate and harvest the photo and sound-bite support and endorsements of current and has-been and never-has been sports stars and A and B-list film and media celebrities. In my experience while this may generate media exposure which might be used as bait to lure in corporate financial sponsorship, this is all too often done at the expense of putting less time and effort into engaging with and practising community-level grass-roots endeavours.

Critical pragmatism, social intervention and sport

The sociological imagination and thinking about peace processes

I had already come a long way in my quest to come up with a fully informed answer to the Loughborough question when I discovered John Brewer's monograph entitled, C. Wright Mills and the End of Violence (Brewer, 2003). I was drawn to Brewer's thesis not only because like me it adopted a Wright Millsian approach to interrogating and understanding peace processes but also because in doing so it focussed on peace processes in the same three regions in which I had worked.

In his book, Brewer uses the framework underpinning C. Wright Mills's concept of the sociological imagination as a means through which to make sense of the extremely complex web of circumstances that have led very different societies in serious conflict, down

corresponding roads towards peace and reconciliation. Brewer begins by observing that peace processes are exceedingly complex and unpredictable entities, making sense of which involves high levels of informed retrospection. 'Between God and chance you find sociology' says Brewer, arguing that Wright Mills's work shows us that sociologists are amongst the best qualified to engage with and make sense of a world in flux and turmoil. The task for the sociology of conflict-resolution and peace-building is not to 'discover' or construct a universal theory that explains all peace processes, but is restricted in its applicability to understand specified intersections of events that exist in real time and space. In this as I have already argued, context is everything Furthermore, argues Brewer, making sense of peace processes necessitates focusing on the intersection between biography, social structure and the political process: seeing and showing how in a given moment the actions and interventions of great, good, bad, ordinary and extraordinary individuals operate within the swirl of transcending institutional forces and movements to contribute to progressive social and political change. In this regard, it is important to show the interaction between the local and the societal by exploring how people experience conflict in their communities and consequently how this influences an agenda of social activism – what Wright Mills refers to as the dialectic between 'personal troubles' and 'public issues'.

Critical Pragmatism

As already discussed based upon my own reading of Wright Mills, I see it as our task to develop appropriate theoretical explanations and models for action by conducting a dialogue between empirical observations, lived-experiences, and relevant pre-existing bodies of knowledge. In this regard Wright Mills himself was no slave to theoretical dogma. Rather, he favoured a well-informed critical eclecticism He had a deep understanding of the classic tradition in sociology, dominated by the three heavyweights, Marx, Weber and Durkheim. In terms of his own ontological/epistemological positioning he was highly influenced by the subject of his doctoral studies, that is, pragmatism, which advocates the science of the possible whereby action and intervention are linked to outcomes that are themselves based upon a critical assessment of what can be achieved within a given set of situational circumstances. Critical pragmatism places emphasis on theoretical development and refinement through critical, practical, empirical engagement, rather than fixating upon abstract debate and unmoveable theoretical principles. This view recognises that the construction of society is not passively structural, but is an embodied process of individual and collective actions. An informed and engaged sociological imagination can determine strategies for progressive and pragmatic engagement with social problems, with a view to influencing local policies and interventions that could improve the conditions of society's most vulnerable groups.

Models of Practice in the SDP Field

Before we return to the consideration of sport as a vehicle for peace-building it is useful to look briefly at what can be learned from theories and models of practice that have been developed by other researchers and scholars working in the general field of conflict resolution and peace building. It is not my intention to provide a comprehensive review of all such interpretations and typologies, rather to consider those that are most relevant in informing and strengthening my own critical positioning. Many of these are based on the pioneering work of Paulo Freire (1970), who in his classic statement on the subject, The Pedagogy of the Oppressed, was one of the first to point out that development programmes implemented from outside to in, and top-down in nature, tend to augment rather than ameliorate the circumstances of exploitation and oppression felt by impoverished

communities in Brazil and Chile. Similarly Adam Curle drew on fieldwork experiences in the war-torn Balkans in the 1980s and 1990s to advocate the notion of 'peace building from below' – a strategy whereby external forms of intervention and mediation concentrate on facilitating the organic empowerment and active participation of local actors and agencies in conflict-resolution and reconciliation.

Galtung identifies the interrelationship between visible and less visible violence. In order to begin conflict transformation and achieve sustainable peace it is necessary to address less visible violence. Building upon this, Marie Dugan developed a 'nested paradigm' model which is a 'sub-system' approach linking the challenges of conflict-resolution to the broader necessity of peace-building. At a sub-system level, a peace-building strategy could be designed to address both the systemic concerns and problematic issues and relationships existing at a local level. The sub-system approach allows one to shape both grassroots relationships, as well as contribute to wider systematic change.

In concert with the thinking of Dugan, John Paul Lederach has also theorized a 'web approach' to peace-building. He encourages interventions that explicitly focus on strategic networking or 'web-making', a term used to describe the building of a network of relationships and partnerships with significant local entities and actors, what he refers to as the 'cultural modalities and resources' within the setting of conflict. The model he uses to help us envisage holistic and sustainable peace building is a triangle or pyramid, the apex or Level One of which represents international and national political actors. In the middle level are found regional political leaders and constituency representatives, including religious, business and trades union leaders and so forth who have connections with and access to Level One actors. Finally, at Level Three, the grassroots level, there is the vast majority who are most affected by the conflict on a day-to-day basis. Lederach argues that for a peace process to be successful and sustainable it must operate across and include all levels of the pyramid, especially Level Three where conflicts are routinely and regularly played out.

Critical for the success of model's like Lederach's is the facilitation and management of the flow of communication between the three levels. Gavriel Salomon refers to this as 'the ripple effect' through which the impact of peace education programmes spreads to wider social circles of society and eventually permeates overarching institutional and political frameworks. The key values in this process are represented by those middle-level actors who have one foot in community cultures and the other in higher-level policy-making circles. It is through their input and output that lessons taken from work taking place at the grass-roots can be translated and transferred into constituencies that make use of it in the framing of broader public polices and political agendas.

The ripple effect, covered in adapted form in more detail in the Conclusion, is most effectively created by identifying and building active partnerships with individuals representing organisations that have the proven capacities to operate between levels one, two, and three. As middle-level actors, they are ideally located to bring people together and weave dialogue, ideas and programmes across boundaries. By capitalizing on key social spaces, they are able to spin a web of sustainable relationships. Critical to all of these approaches is the praxis element and through it the empowerment of subordinate actors and groups through their active participation in peace-building programmes and processes. In other words creating structures through which those experiencing the 'personal troubles' that attend those living in conflict zones can turn these into 'public issues' and be part of creative programmes that allow them to contribute to progressive activities that can make a difference to their everyday lives. In these ways grass- roots civil society activism can be seen to be influencing

the thinking and manoeuvring of powerbrokers operating in civil society by creating a ripple effect that eventually washes over the shoes of those who walk in the corridors of power.

The critical sociology of sport and peace-building

Understanding the role that sport can play in the relationship between political and civil society is a key to understanding any role it can have in promoting progressive social change. It is also useful in helping us understand the underlying dynamics of peace processes which, in their own way, require a revolution in established social and political relations. While there can be little doubt that the final deals and treaties that are characteristic of the formal phase of a peace process are crafted and agreed in political society, this level of political concord cannot be achieved and successfully implemented without significant support in civil society. Cultural movements are not passive partners in this relationship. At times it is possible that events and movements shaped in civil society outpace and lead to radical change in the circumstances of political society.

Peace processes are messy affairs: hugely complex enterprises that move forwards or backwards according to conditions prevalent in the transcending social and political order. Usually they are driven by activities and actors in political society. However, if there are major social and cultural impediments, 'road maps to peace' that take account of the political sphere alone are doomed to failure. Changes of heart and mind do not ordinarily take place because of political initiatives. Peace is only possible when significant proportions of ordinary people are ready for and open to conflict resolution. By way of illustration, politicians may be in the driving seat but for the 'peace bus' to get anywhere meaningful along its road map there must be passengers willing to climb on board. This comes gradually through social and cultural engagement in everyday life. The challenge for peace activists is to discover ways to join up specific grass-roots, civil society, interventions with more broadly influential policy communities and those elements of political society that hold the keys to peace.

In this regard I have found it useful to think of peace processes as massive, multi-dimensional, jigsaw puzzles that have to be solved without the benefit of having a picture on the box. There are political pieces, economic pieces, military pieces and cultural pieces. For the picture to be imagined and completed all of these pieces will have a part to play and while some, for instance the political corner pieces, may have more significance than others, all the pieces will be necessary for the picture of peace to fully emerge. In the specific contexts of peace processes in deeply divided societies, like South Africa and Northern Ireland, retrospectively we can see that, while not being the most important pieces in each region's complex jigsaw of peace and reconciliation, sport can and often does occupy a significant place in each completed picture.

Identifying Sport for Peace's Moral Compass

Donnelly and Kidd among others have argued that 'those committed to opportunities for humane sport and physical activity ought to resort more systematically to the strategy of establishing, publicising and drawing upon the charters, declarations and covenants that enshrine codes of entitlement and conduct' (REF?). This begs the question which 'codes of entitlement' and who gives them authority. The United Nations Charter for Human Rights is one of the few touchstones for governing activism that has near universal approval. Article 26 of the U.N. 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: 'Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and
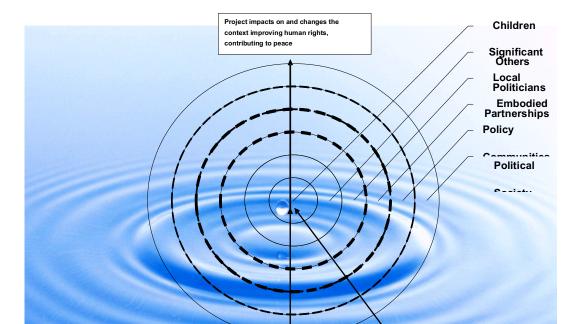
friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace'. The value of sport in furthering these goals is something recognised by the United Nations itself, which in 2003 empowered a Task Force to look into the role of sport in the context of development and peace, to encourage the global utilization of sport in the service of the U.N.'s Human Rights agenda. In 2005, the then Secretary-General of the U.N., Kofi Annan, launched the U.N.'s Year of Sport, specifically targeting its peace-building potential, declaring 'at its best sport can bring people together, no matter what their origin, background, religious beliefs or economic status. Not long afterwards the U.N. opened up a new office dedicated to SDP, however, for reasons that we may want to discuss here in this meeting this office has since been closed, As Coalter (2009) and others have argued, paper declarations and accompanying rhetoric are well-meaning but useless without intervention. I hope I have already made convincing arguments that sport in and of itself has no magical qualities, but is a very flexible crucible into which we can pour ideas and ideals based on notions of human rights and social justice.

Monitoring and evaluation

As Coalter has pointed out, realistic and objective evaluation is a crucial element of successful SDP programmes (Coalter, 2006). As already discussed, at every level of its articulation, applied research and evaluation are essential features of any credible SDP programme. The research has a complex, two-way dynamic: ongoing learning about the transcending social and political context that is used in the pragmatic design and development of the programme of intervention; and detailed evaluation of the impact of the project at each level, up to and including, where possible, tracking its influence on the transcending social and political context. Such circular and inclusive approaches to research and evaluation can enable projects to develop organically, from the bottom up, as the knowledge and viewpoints gleaned from all key actors and stakeholders are used to refine and reform interventions year on year. It has also helped to facilitate growth and development of local ownership and sustainability of the project as the communities themselves take increasing responsibility for the design and delivery of SDP events, as well as using ideas drawn from this experience in the development of programmes of cross-community cooperation outside of the SDP framework in question.

Conclusion: Maximising the Impact of SDP Interventions - the Ripple Effect Model

It remains for me to show how all of the different elements of thinking outlined so far in this paper are woven together to provide a theoretical and methodological reference point for practical engagement in SDP work. The following 'ripple effect' model draws on the ideas of critical pragmatism to depict how this form of praxis can be achieved:

In this diagram the outer circle represents a human rights context, the locus of which is framed by the prevailing transcending social and political context, including the status of the peace process in question, represented by the next circle. Taken together they provide a framework through which to make pragmatic and realistic judgements about the structure and content of any given project and its development goals. The two inner circles represent the actual programme itself. The innermost circle, the bull's eye represents the target participants, children and youth from different stakeholder communities, surrounded by adult volunteer coaches and significant others (relatives, teachers, community leaders, political figures etc.) from the local communities, including any international volunteers. The nature of the structure, organisation, management and delivery of activities and encounters taking place within these two inner circles is crucial in determining the outcome of any such sport intervention. In between, working from the middle outwards, the next circle represents the medium of knowledge transfer, comprising active representatives from a network of institutional partners through whom ideas and findings emanating from the project can be articulated within the wider policy community for sport. This in turn may act back upon and influence processes taking shape in the transcending social and political context and have an impact on the local human rights situation not only of those directly involved in the project but also further afield. Each level of the process is subject to research and evaluation and these findings are fed back to inform project modification, growth, and redevelopment. The different thicknesses and permeability of the concentric circles is to indicate that, just like a stone dropped into a still pool of water, the ripple effect of an intervention like F4P dissipates as it moves further from the centre where the impact is more obviously felt and more easily measured. However, as demonstrated by my inclusion at this United Nations SDP expert advisory panel meeting, ripples might indeed become waves with the potential to seriously influence policy development and implementation.

Of course, as Michael Mann (1986) reminds us societies 'are much messier than our theories of them' and the lived reality of any peace-building intervention is decidedly more fluid, complex and fickle than this rather simplistic, ripple-effect model might imply. In many ways the reality is more like the Lederach 'web approach' to peace-building discussed above, connecting the levels of actors and action. Finally we must remember that the above figure is a heuristic representation of what in reality it is an embodied process. The success and transferability of interventions or innovative practices will depend on the animation and agency provided by key actors operating across and between each level of activity set against the prevailing politics of the times. In summary, as it stands there is a plethora and veritable 'alphabet soup' of organisations and agencies inhabiting the SDP environment: a mixture of GOs (national Governmental Organisations), NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations), INGOs (International Non-Governmental Organisations) and BINGOs (Business-led International Non-Governmental Organisations), alongside specialist SINGOs (Sport-based International Non-Governmental Organisations, [Allison and Tomlinson, 2017]) and

numerous Higher Education institutions. Given this institutionally crowded setting it can prove to be very difficult for individuals and groups wanting to engage with 'hands on' SDP work to navigate a way through and establish robust and meaningful network relationships through which to gain access to shared knowledge, including training, know-how with regard to M&E strategies and practices and other important and proven skill-sets that include, vitally, access to advice on securing scarce resources and financial support. As touched upon earlier the United Nations may have a role to play here. While I am falling short of suggesting creating an international governing body for SDP, as has been written elsewhere (Sugden and Tomlinson, , 2007;2008;, 2017) governing bodies associated with sport hardly have glowing reputations. Nevertheless, the United Nations may be best placed to act as a proverbial 'honest broker' to moderate and harmonise relations among the interest groups that populate the world of SDP. This may be the right moment to reconsider the decision to close down the U.N.'s SDP office, with a view to reopening it backed by increased resources linked to allocated responsibilities concerning the facilitation, monitoring and evaluation of the SDP field.

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