

**Contextualising Research in Sport:
An International Perspective**

Edited by

Christos Anagnostopoulos

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Contextualising Research in Sport: An International Perspective An Introduction

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Sport is an increasingly important industrial sector that is thought to account for as much as 3 per cent of global economic activity (Chadwick, 2011). Organisations within the sector are also increasingly prominent and dynamic economic, commercial, social and managerial phenomena. In the context of sport's growth, development and magnitude, in 2001 the Athens Institute of Education and Research (ATINER) - later in collaboration with the Pan-Hellenic Association of Sports Economists and Managers (PASEM) - made the decision to create a scholarly platform where researchers from all over the world can engage with contemporary thinking on sport and enjoy lively discussions and debates, inside and outside of the formal sessions, of its annual conference.

This book, which is the sixth volume devoted to sport as the key thematic point, draws on papers from the three sport conferences that were organised in 2010, 2011 and 2012. In total, 114 contributors produced 66 papers over the three years, thus rendering these gatherings amongst the best international forums held in Europe that concern the sport scholarly community. Given these numbers, the selection of the papers to be included in this volume was anything but an easy process. I believe, however, that the 20 peer-reviewed papers included here will provide the reader with a modest representation of the variety of topics discussed during these three meetings in Athens.

'Contextualising Research in Sport: An International Perspective' is the title given in this book and this, of course, has not been a precipitate decision. By choosing this title, the aim was first to encapsulate the ATINER's prime ideal and scope of establishing this international forum, but at the same time to underline the importance of context when conducting and/or reading research with sport as the foremost point. With the contributors in this book coming from four continents and 14 different countries (Switzerland, UK, Italy, Iran, Norway, USA, Germany, Belgium, Hungary, Turkey, Australia, The Netherlands, Czech Republic and Spain) the international perspective was not hard to achieve. As for the context - although it is a more difficult element to be adequately discussed in such a brief introductory note - Johns (2001) argues that one of the most compelling reasons for researchers to pay attention to it

resides in its capacity to explain organisational phenomena. Johns' later argument is that "unless we understand the various aspects of a situation we will not be able to grasp person-situation interactions" (2006:388). I would add that such an exercise does not restrict itself in taking into account contextual parameters and features when conducting research, but it also applies to reading (research) papers and trying to make sense of the point(s) authors' make. By using the word 'contextualising', therefore, this book employs a quite broad definition of the term context, which is best offered by Byers, Parent and Slack (2012). These prominent scholars in the field of sport management recently defined context as the term that is used "to describe a variety of elements or features which together provide explanation for the existence of a phenomenon or variation between phenomena" (p.21). Irrespective of whether the contributors in this book have explicitly or implicitly taken context into account, readers are advised to pay particular attention to all these contextual features that the following chapters clearly manifest or subtly hide. For example, why sport participation in women in Turkey has been a matter of concern (Chapter 15)? What are the underlying reasons that make the concept of CSR more and more relevant in European football (Chapter 3 and 4)? What might be the cultural and organisational differences between Norway (Chapter 6) and South Africa (Chapter 7) when it comes to hosting events and what impact might those differences have in local communities and on potential visitors? Or why do some countries do better than others in elite sport despite similarly adopted sport policies (Chapter 17)?

With this brief note on the title of this book, the remainder of this introductory section presents in a concise fashion the 20 papers included within. The papers have been grouped into five sections that are named by a generic one-worded title: Part I, Strategy; Part II, Events; Part III, Personnel; Part IV, Participation; and Part V, Performance.

Part I: 'Strategy'

The five chapters included in Part I discuss strategic decisions and actions that have been taken (or that should be taken) in their corresponding settings in their core discussions. The opening contribution by Jan Pieper and Erwin Verbeek (Chapter 1) analyses FIFA's mixed strategy of partly negotiating directly with broadcasters and partly selling the rights in packages to specialized intermediate agencies, who resell the rights to broadcasting stations in their respective territories. The authors conclude that such a strategic approach seems to give FIFA sufficient control over the exploitation of its broadcasting rights, by adding that even if the

flexibility of choosing between both options may reduce FIFA's potential profits in the short-run, FIFA's increased bargaining power towards intermediate agencies seems to justify this approach in the long-run. The transaction cost issue alongside the vertical integration strategy is continued in Chapter 2 with Andrea Mangani, who examines the relationship between Formula One (F1) teams and engine suppliers. The author explains that engine manufacturers have now acquired contractual power with respect to the teams and they can choose between maintaining the role of supplier and managing a proprietary F1 team. In that respect, some engine producers have directly entered F1 with their own team, buying out an existing team or creating a completely new organization. The argument put forward by Mangani is that neither the neoclassical theories of vertical integration nor the theory of transaction costs can fully explain this process. Rather, the process of vertical integration may be explained by reputation issues which are emphasized by widespread media coverage and that arise in the division of negative surplus in the case of poor results. According to the author, this is an aspect that is not regulated by the terms of vertical agreements. The theory of property rights, although focused on the residual control rights over tangible assets, can instead be applied to explain the process of vertical integration. From 'mere engagement with the idea of corporate social responsibility' (CSR) to a 'sports-specific managerial roadmap' that facilitates strategic implementation of CSR in football is the issue that the contribution by Tim Breitbarth and Lothar Rieth deals with (Chapter 3). Drawing on German professional football organisations, the authors propose the so-called '3S-Model', which suggests that Strategic alignment, Stakeholder support and organisational Structure are those drivers that can enable football organisations to go beyond PR-based exercise and towards seeking opportunities within an ever-increasing competitive business environment. The examination of CSR within the football sector continues in Chapter 4 through Christos Anagnostopoulos' empirical contribution on the matter. The argument put forward by the author is that relationship is a more apt description than responsibility when it comes to social engagement in the context of football. This chapter therefore corroborates the previous one in that reinforcing the relationship with key stakeholders (the second 'S' in Breitbarth and Rieth's model) is the best way for achieving a more holistic and strategically-based CSR engagement. Supporting his arguments in an empirical way, Anagnostopoulos highlights three actions football organisations need to undertake to achieve this: (a) create a cross-departmental collaboration that really encompasses CSR thinking with the focus being on both existing and future stakeholders; (b) concentrate on the wider area where the football club resides in order to build the 'bridge' between the past and the future and (c)

adopt a genuine communication strategy that acknowledges the relationships that have been built over the years with different stakeholder groups and openly convey the message of how these relationships can be mutually beneficial in the future through value creation as a result of the CSR engagement. The final paper of Part I draws on a widely used model for measuring strategy formulation and implementation, namely the Balance Scorecard. Loghman Keshavarz in Chapter 5, therefore, attempts to empirically demonstrate strategic issues of the Iranian National Olympic Committee by arguing that the adoption of the Balance Scorecard can be a useful strategic tool for better results for the Iranian sporting scene.

Part II: 'Events'

The set of papers included in Part II address issues associated with the management, organisation, value creation and impact of hosting events. Harry Arne Solberg and Arne Morten Ulvnes, in Chapter 6, ask the question whether it is worth spending resources on hosting major events. The authors address this question by collating Norwegians' opinions about the prospect of hosting three potential events, namely the Winter Olympics, UEFA's Championship for national teams and FIS World Skiing Championship (Nordic games). The key finding of this paper is that people who supported the idea of hosting the events, are not necessarily willing to participate in funding them by earmarked taxes. Although Solberg and Ulvnes provide us with a descriptive account of how local residents perceive the hosting of major events, Victor Mathewson, Thomas Peeters and Stefan Szymanski link the hosting of major events with tourists' visits in the host nation (Chapter 7). This paper examines the past 10 years of foreign tourist arrivals in South Africa, the host of several major recent international sporting events, to determine the effect of these mega-events on the number of international visitors to the country. Without neglecting the contextual features that South Africa represents, the authors question the ambitious claims often made by organising committees and consulting firms on the positive impact on tourism that such events have by empirically observing net increases in foreign arrivals into South Africa during the 2010 FIFA's World Cup tournament which were at best less than half that of the original estimates and at worst less than a quarter of expectations. Based on such observations, Mathewson and his colleagues caution Governments looking to bid to host these events to take into account overly optimistic 'boosterism' as well as the possibility for crowding out of non-sports fans during the event. The examination of 'is it worth it?' continues in Chapter 8 with Tamás Gyömörei

approaching the matter from a politico-economic perspective. The author's concerns relate to the commercialisation of the Olympic Games, the role of the Government in the process of bidding, the hosting and exploiting of such a major event, and by drawing on Hungary's case, he attempts to offer responses on the abovementioned rather complex matters. In Chapter 9, the discussion moves away from whether events should be hosted and focuses on the way they are organised and managed. Luisa Varriale, therefore, approaches the matter from an organisational perspective and, by drawing on a specific event ('Sportdance') that was held in 2009 in Italy, she argues that the success of an event very much depends on the capitalisation of the experience that a permanent team of management brings along. The last contribution in Part II concerns the relationship between television and the attendance of sport events (Chapter 10). More specifically, Marco Di Domizio examines whether demand determinants for televised sports are the same as those for live attendance. He does so by investigating the main features of a single sports event (football match) able to influence TV audience. The author draws on the Italian Serie A and focuses on the significance and impact of several independent variables on satellite television shared by an econometric investigation of the 380 matches played in Serie A during the 2008/09 season. Di Domizio underlines contextual parameters which do not necessarily apply to other European settings, yet he questions whether certainty can be assumed as to whether a more competitive balance environment implies more interest, particularly for the couch potato audience. From his empirical research, it seems that fans' loyalty processes determined a hardcore base of supporters/audiences aside from competitive contexts, which implies that the presumed uncommitted nature of the couch potato is not confirmed.

Part III: 'Personnel'

All successful (sport) organisations and (sport) events rely on people who make things happen. Part III of this book then consists of three chapters that refer to key personnel that have a great bearing on the contemporary sporting environment. In Chapter 11, Lynn Ridinger explores the construct of involvement as it pertains to sports officials (referees). She does so by firstly pointing out that much of the research on sports officials has focused on issues related to stressors, responses to these stressors or has included an examination of both stressors and motives. The crux argument in Ridinger's paper, however, is that involvement extends beyond individual motives and mere participation. Given this, the author provides qualitative evidence of involvement along with its

antecedents and outcomes with the belief that a better understanding of the construct of involvement will help sport administrators develop recruitment and retention strategies that are more focused on the relevance or meaning of officiating within the context of an individual's overall outlook on life. Giambattista Rossi (Chapter 12) then takes the discussion to, arguably, the driving force of the contemporary sport industry, namely the sporting personnel (i.e. players). Rossi empirically examines the theoretical prediction that once a player has signed a long-term contract, s/he may become lazy and expend less effort. Put differently, the analysis investigates whether the length or remaining duration of a contract has a negative effect on a player's performance. The empirical evidence provided in Rossi's paper reveals that offering long-term contracts to a player may have a small advantage for the club, but the real impact of the contract will depend on what type of player is receiving it. Moreover, there is likelihood that players will perform badly based on free agent incentive effects, therefore clubs can be justified in focusing more on the player's performance over the last year of his contract rather than putting weight on the performance over the duration of his entire contract. Based on his findings, therefore, the author proposes that clubs should perhaps offer contracts that include incentives for players to perform well, in order to avoid a sharp decline in performance before negotiating new possible contract renewals. The final chapter of this section brings in the notion of leadership and its role in sport organisations. Robert C. Schneider (Chapter 13) draws on several goal achievement theories (i.e. achievement goal theory, path-goal theory and Berryman-Fink and Fink's hierarchy of seven needs to motivate) and argues that if the sport leader proves capable of synthesizing the various approaches to goal achievement, selecting the appropriate approach, and then effectively implementing that approach, s/he will be positioned to lead the organization to a level of prominence and respect.

Part IV: 'Participation'

The three chapters included in Part IV broadly deal with the issue of participation and discuss benefits, constraints, marketing and challenges of penetration that physical activities, specific sports or sporting exercise in general demonstrate. In Chapter 14, given the rapid increase in the number of older adults throughout the world, which has led to major implications for agencies and providers of recreation and leisure services, Gayle Workman argues that recreational dance for older adults is a sustainable activity and provides five key recommendations for leisure service providers that wish to implement and increase participation for a dance program

for older adults: (a) identification in their own constituency of the part-time residents comprised of vacationers, retirees, and 'snowbirds'; (b) collaboration with other organisations and agencies committed to offering healthy physical activities for older adults; (c) developing programs that are cross-cultural, sustainable, economically affordable, and physically accessible will encourage maximal participation among this demographic; (d) willingness for allocating the people and financial resources necessary to support the programs that will achieve their strategies and (e) evaluating all outcomes based on measurable objectives. For Ayşe Atalay and Ç. Polat the broad question is whether the environment of media has a bearing on women's decisions to take part in sport and physical activities (Chapter 15). Their paper offers a descriptive account of how women perceive (sport) media in Turkey in relation to their decision to participate in sport, with the main point being that although (sport) media in that particular country is male-biased and male-dominated, it is other reasons (mainly family and friends) that boost women's participation in physical activities. The authors emphasise, however, that a much more effective institutional policy (i.e. governmental policy) is required that further supports female sport participation. Lisa Wise and Spiridon Cariotis in Chapter 16 provide us with some useful background knowledge of traditional martial arts and they use the Australian context to demonstrate the challenges that exist for promoting this type of physical exercise, something that, in turn, impacts upon participation.

Part V: 'Performance'

Part V closes this collection of papers by generally looking at the construct of performance. Veerle De Bosscher, Simon Shibli and Maarten van Bottenburg open this part by illustrating how a scoring system (SPLISS: Sports Policy factors Leading to International Sporting Success) was developed in order to compare the elite sport policies of six nations objectively (Chapter 17). The authors argue, however, that quantitative findings alone are not sufficient to assess the quality of elite sport systems. For this reason, the scoring system proposed in their work should be seen as a supportive and tangible way of understanding elite sport policies more broadly in relation to sporting success, rather than an isolated competitiveness measurement or ranking system on its own. Moving away from this macro-perspective examination of 'performance', Jessie Brouwers, Veerle De Bosscher, Popi Sotiriadou, Jasper Truyens and Hebe Schailleé's paper examines the relationship between tennis performances at young ages and later success, and identifies to what extent performances at young ages are important to reach later elite sport success (Chapter 18). The main conclusion drawn by

Brouwers and her colleagues' empirical research is that performances at U14 youth tournaments can be an indication for performances at senior level, but good performances at the age of 14 are no condition for senior success. It is the financial performance of Czech professional sport clubs (football and ice hockey) the issue pursued by Jiří Novotný and Alexandr Ščiklin in Chapter 19. First, the authors offer the readers a descriptive picture of these two sports and subsequently place Czech football clubs in comparison with some of the main European ones. Novotný and Ščiklin conclude that from a financial perspective most of the top Czech professional football and ice hockey clubs are in volatile and unbalanced economic conditions. In the case of the football clubs, in particular, the chasm in revenues generation compared to the major European ones, partly illustrates the reasons why, offering simultaneously food for thought for potential unexploited business opportunities. The final chapter of this book (Chapter 20) by Manuel Espita-Escuer and Lucía Isabel García-Cebrián analyses the difference between the points system and knock-out system found in sporting events and their influence on the efficiency of the participating teams. The authors conclude that in a league system competition, like the Spanish football league, the most efficient sports teams perform better; while in a knockout system, like the UEFA-Champions League, there are no major differences in the levels of efficiency reached by the participating teams. Based on their empirical findings, Espita-Escuer and García-Cebrián put forward the argument that improvement in sporting results in each case would be different: for the domestic league, improvement can be achieved a more efficient use of resources, while improving sporting results in the UEFA-Champions League requires an increase in resources used.

Concluding Note

The 20 papers briefly introduced here are written by a diverse body of scholars, who live and work in different contexts from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds. As pointed out at the beginning of this introductory chapter, the inclusion of those works in the book at hand has been a purposeful exercise as it aims to be a mirror image of the ATINER's scope; which is to be an international platform where scholars from all over the world gather together and push the research boundaries of their disciplines. It is hoped that through this book, the platform grows and its messages reaches a much wider audience. I would like to thank all contributors for their chapters. Their timely response on our calls during the editing process has been crucial in making this publication available just a few months after the 2012 conference. That being said, the reader,

however, while going through these works should have in mind that as per the consistency of style and presentation, a sympathetic and modest effort has been made by the editor while reviewing the manuscripts and less emphasis has been given to issues associated with punctuation, spelling and grammar. Moreover, I wish to express my appreciation to Coventry Business School, and particularly to the Sport and Event Management Department for granting me the necessary flexibility to pursue projects such this. I could not let this opportunity pass without extending particular thanks to Gregory T. Papanikos (ATINER's Director) for assigning me the responsibility to heading the Institute's Sport Unit as well as to editing for the second time in a row the sport book. Furthermore, I will have to thank the organising and scientific team who make the ATINER sport conferences the success they are every year. Thanks are also due to Afrodete who, in a professional and enthusiastic way, co-operated fully throughout. As a final note, it should be mentioned that the views expressed by the contributors in their papers are not necessarily those of either the Editor or ATINER.

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