

**Semmelweis University of Budapest, Faculty of Physical Education  
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## **CONTRIBUTION OF SPORT TO REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**



**Abstract of PhD theseses  
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## **Contribution of Sport to Regional Sustainable Development**

### **1 Introduction**

Nowadays the ongoing social, political and mainly economical processes are often related with each other like the endangering factors relating the civilisation and our planet. Where is our civilization going? What will be our future? – these questions are put by the average people, but also by those scientists who feel themselves responsible for the humanity. Can we talk about social/economical development at all? If so, in which sense?

The main institutions of the EU stress the harmonically, balanced prosperity, the social -economical cohesion, and the idea of sustainable regional development as important strategic goals of the Community. In practice this must/should be present in advance of the citizen`s quality of life; in the rise of quality and quantity of services and the opportunity to access to them within the framework of a prescient rational farming and society organization structure. Accordingly it is important to consider a permanent development concerning each section of society, which in its perspective, and in its interdisciplinary entirety, is able to guarantee the advance of the quality of life, the subsistence of secure life conditions. This is the substance of sustainable development.”

Sport as multifunctional phenomenon has become significant factor of society with enormous potential. It has been declared as a main social movement in Europe as many millions of Europeans consider sport as an important part of their every day life. It has a major role in intercultural communication and through this it has effectively supported the European integration processes. These spheres are an inherent element of active citizenship and participation. Their impact is immense in terms of occupying the media and also in social and economic terms. Without doubt this social subsystem is basically the bearer of human value orientations as well. Most sport sociologists agree that modern sport could play an ever more significant role in our world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The question turns up of necessity; in what form and rate can the potential sphere of sport contribute with its inherent involvement with sustainable development, and the advance of the quality of life of communities and individuals living in the given region. In reference of this the current dissertation gives answers to many of the questions in this area and perhaps inspire others to find answers to others.

Further reasons for choosing this research theme were based on my own experiences in many different areas of sport. I feel that I am in position that has a wide overview about the role and the potential of sport nowadays. Primarily - of course - I was interested in my home County Vas – conditions. I was concerned about the paradox situation,

which unfolds in Hungary, between the theoretically formulated sport political strategic and its practicability. It is difficult to understand why the potential of this sphere has not been - and still it is not properly – utilized as much as it could be in Hungary. Another overall aim of my dissertation was to focus attention on this controversial situation.

To be able to formulate more diverse insight into my research questions, I have enlarged my investigations from County Vas to the neighbour/region Burgenland – Austria as well. The results of my research were mostly analysed and discussed with the arguments of the EU regional policies in mind

## **2. Objectives**

The “aim of this thesis is” to give answers on the four following questions;

- Which role sport plays in the regional development plans according the opinion of Hungarian and Austrian coaches, PE teachers, development officers, mayors, sport journalists and tourism experts.
- Which way does sport serve the quality of life of people according the opinion of Hungarian and Austrian coaches, PE teachers, development officers, mayors, sport journalists and tourism experts.

- How sport does contribute regional sustainable development according the opinion of Hungarian and Austrian coaches, PE teachers, development officers, mayors, sport journalists and tourists experts.
- What kind of role sport does play in County Vas and in Burgenland according the opinion of Hungarian and Austrian coaches, PE teachers, development officers, mayors, sport journalists and tourism experts?

### 3. Hypotheses

According to the above listed objectives my empirically tested hypotheses are the following;

- Political spheres and development policies of planning with respect to sport is not satisfactory according to the attitudes and opinion of Hungarian and Austrian coaches, PE teachers, development officers, mayors, sport journalists and tourists experts.
- Sport can serve the quality of life of people on many way, but first of all its role at health protection is the most significant role of it according of Hungarian and Austrian coaches, PE teachers, development officers, mayors, sport journalists and tourists experts.

- Sport can contribute significantly the regional sustainable development at all 3 - social, economical and environmental - dimensions of SD according the opinion of Hungarian and Austrian coaches, PE teachers, development officers, mayors, sport journalists and tourists experts.
- The judgement of the role of sport is significantly different in the two neighbour regions according the difference of the social and economical development level of the two countries.

### 4. Methods

Sport contribution to regional sustainable development may be determined by many factors and we should consider it as an extraordinary complex and interdisciplinary topic. Because of these it requires more methods. In my work I used the following methods;

#### *Document analysis*

I study with this method all those economical, social and environmental factors and issues that is relevant to the judgement of role in society. These were region and community, sport development plans and documents, studies, programmes and project descriptions relating sustainable development in the EU and EU regional policy.

### ***In-Depth Interviews***

This method should be considered as an additional method to be able to interpret more subtle the data of the Survey. These were carried out with; sport experts, sport and regional and community development officers.

### ***The Survey Method***

#### ***Population and Sampling***

The research was carried out in two regions, County Vas and Burgenland. The sample population included: coaches/PE teachers N=120, sport development officers N=38, regional development officers N=24, mayors and sport journalists N=31 and tourism experts N=27 from the two regions. This is a sample that has a personal, political and professional interest and knowledge of how sport and society should develop; The sample was selected step by step randomly: sub-region, settlement of different sizes.

A specially designed questionnaire was used to sample attitudes/opinion to sport and sustainable development, policies and planning in County Vas and in Burgenland. N=120 –120 in each area. The questionnaire included 30 “closed” single,- and multiple- answer questions. The questionnaires were sent out and returned electronically;

## **5. Results**

Following the structure of my research objectives and hypothesis I find summarizing the following:

a./ It is considered that sport seems to be an under-represented sphere in different regional development policies particularly in Hungary. Sport experts are in many cases not well informed about the compatibility of sport to the potential of different policies and also regional and community development officers have no imaginations about how sport might be a supportive part of integrated development projects. Taking consideration the sub-territories of sport we can say that the requirement of leisure sport and sport tourism are relative determinative factors at designing regional development projects.

b./ In the mirror of the opinion of the sample population we can emphasize that sport can play a significant role in the improvement of the quality of life of the individuals and also of the population in many ways. Among these should be stressed the protection of health foremost. First of all leisure sport, school sport and sport tourism are those particularly sub-territories which have the main responsibility in this aspect.

c./ According the data we can declare that sport can contribute the sustainable development of a region very effectively in each of its dimensions. Nevertheless the potential link between sport and environmental dimension could be qualify as “not enough known and used” according the opinion of the sample population. Considering the sub territories of sport we can tell that leisure sport and sport tourism are the two most frequented ones which have the biggest opportunities to be involved in integrated development projects. In the mirror of the data we can see that sport’s main functions seems to be the development of a health –conscious (health-oriented) attitude of the population and the support of creation of local communities. But it can play also an significant role in the improvement of the economical competitiveness of a settlement and of a region (e.g. sport product manufacturing, development of sport infrastructure). Besides the two above mentioned two sub-territories of sport (leisure sport and sport tourism), it should be set off the potentials and requirements of top sport relating local sustainable economical development according the data.

d./ Comparing the opinions the Hungarian and Austrian sample of population the data show the summarizing the following: the expert of the two region gave similar answers relating the increasing social significance of sport, but according the data the economical importance

of sport (particularly sport tourism and leisure sport) seems to have more importance in Burgenland. The most spectralucar difference was found at the judgement and appreciation of leisure sport and sport tourism in favour Burgenland.

## 6. Conclusions

On the basis of my research it can be said that hypotheses of given research have become essentially justified:

**Firstly:** Sport seems to be quite under-represented sphere in the regional development policy . The data showed that the potential of sport is - generally speaking - not utilized properly in the opinion of our sample. It would be suggested and advisable if regional development plans (projects) should include the sphere of sport as part of integrated development projects and its benefits should be exploit more intensively at the realization of development objectives. It would be reasonable as sport has evidential horizontal links to different socialisation and development process relating other subsystems.

**Secondly:** It may be not queried that sport (and its sub territories) could be an important factor at improving the quality of life of individuals and communities. It san fulfil this function on many different ways. The most evident and significant way is to help to develop a health-oriented way of thinking and life style of people at every age categories. It can be declared that this should be considered as its primary function.

**Thirdly:** It could be conclude that sport as subsystem is definitely able to contribute sustainable development on every administrative levels ( local, regional national, European). According the data we can declare that it could be an supportive factor at the realization of all 3 dimensions - social, economical and environmental - of sustainable development though it should be add that it may do it on different effectiveness. Concerning the social functions of sport it should be emphasize its health protection seems to be the most significant function among the many others. According my research it should be conclude that sphere of trade and industry may have enormous benefit from sport and it may be a supporting territory at improving the economical competitiveness of a region.

**Fourthly:** In the mirror of the opinion of the sample population it may be conclude that because of the different traditions, culture patterns and – mainly economical state of development – there are significant differences between the judgement of importance of the different sub territory of sport in the two regions. The most important difference may be found at the compatibility of leisure sport and sport tourism to different spheres and its appretiation by the decision makers in sport and development branch. In the mirror of the opinion of the Hungarian and Austrian sample it may be emphasized that the trust and

cooperation of sport-, and regional development experts has been realized more effectively in Burgenland than in County Vas.

## **7. Recommendations**

According my researches I would suggest the following recommendations for further possible directions of investigations:

- Challenges of Regional Sport Administration
- Aspects of an Sustainable Functioning Sport Structure
- The Role and Opportunities of Sport in Integrated Development Plans and Projects
- The Social Aspects of Sport and Sustainable development
- The Economical Aspects of Sport and Sustainable development
- The Environmental Aspects of Sport and Sustainable development
- Sustainable World Sport competitions

## **8. Some important publications by the author on the topic of the thesis**

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