

LEADING COMMUNITY ROLES IN THE "WORLDWIDE EXPERIENCES AND TRENDS IN SPORT FOR ALL"

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The book "Worldwide Experiences and Trends in Sport for All" (DaCosta & Miragaya - Eds) has recently been launched by its publisher: Meyer & Meyer Sport. This new source of information focuses on physical activities, leisure, health promotion, and sport development in 36 countries from five continents. This publication is simultaneously a Data Bank and the largest international comparative investigation ever done in the sports area.

The book also represents a breakthrough project of research development promoted by Trim and Fitness International Sport for All Association – TAFISA – with the support of IOC, UNESCO and Editora Gama Filho (Brazil). With the aim of providing data from national cases on history, management, culture, marketing, sponsorship, finance, target groups, settings for activities, strategy of promotion and social changes as related to Sport for All (SFA), 87 authors (46 PhDs and 16 Ms included) raised information from their countries, which account for 47% of the world's population.

The SFA Data Bank was primarily planned to offer researchers and students not only general trends by continents but also trends in context, putting together point-specific collected data from just one country or group of countries. Selected features of SFA-like activities may be reviewed by cross-analytical searches applied first to general trends and then to idiosyncrasies identified in particular contexts.

The category "community" represents a typical demand to be made in terms of SFA general assumptions in cross-continental reviews, presupposing the key role of communal gatherings in sports for leisure and/or health promotion. In this concern, a significant approach to community roles is met in several categories and sections of the data bank. The first one appears in the category "History and Culture" (pp. 758 - 765) of the various chapters of the data bank: "local communities" rank second only to "government" among five alternatives of SFA management during the 1970 - 2000 period.

In the section "Institutions" of the same source (pp. 765 - 767), the variable "non specialized institutions" emerges as dominant from 1945 onwards, referring to institutional insertions of SFA initiatives with 35 occurrences in 5 continents. Other institutions identified from information delivered by respondent countries were "multi-layered sport system" with 30 occurrences; "Sport for All roof organizations" (16 occurrences) and "leisure and recreation institutions" (15 occurrences). In other words, the SFA approach to community has been basically the preferred focus of sport development for the local government and for the local private initiative. According to DaCosta & Miragaya (2002), the interpretation to this detected fact is that "there is some articulation between a macro perspective (government and business) and a micro perspective (local management and volunteers)" (p. 762).

Furthermore, the target group approach taken by the Data Bank also focuses on communities at large when listing preferred options from respondent countries regarding the 1970 - 2000 period. Table 1 depicts "poor people" with the lowest degree in targeting as compared to the six other groups despite the high index of this variable detected in Africa and Latin America. In short, the accumulative experience of SFA worldwide has been revealing a local community accomplishment in the last three decades; however, the development of activities and programs is today a targeting enterprise.

Moreover, in underprivileged regions, communal development and targeting seem to overlap when they face specific social needs.

Table 1 - SFA Data Bank – Target Groups

Preferred Options from Respondent Countries – 1970s/1990s*

Frequency = (total of occurrences of variables in all countries of the continent) **

CONTINENTS / VARIABLES	ELDERLY	CHILDREN & YOUTH	FAMILY	WOMEN (*)	PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS	WORKERS	POOR PEOPLE
ASIA	(8)	(4)	(4)	(6)	(4)	(5)	(2)
AFRICA	(1)	(2)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(2)	(2)
EUROPE	(15)	(13)	(4)	(12)	(11)	(11)	(1)
L. AMERICA	(6)	(6)	(3)	(0)	(3)	(2)	(5)
N.AMERICA	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)
TOTAL	32	26	14	20	20	21	11

* N=36: Asia - 8; Africa - 2; Europe - 17; Latin America - 7 and North America - 2

** Variables occurrences per country: 0, 1 or > 1

When this conclusion is matched with the data from the category "Settings and Activities", it is possible to observe that the role played by the community in SFA has become clearer in its evolution since 1970. By far, the options "sport facilities", "schools", "workplaces" and "nature & parks" are more frequently found in continental comparisons, except for Africa and Latin America, where "streets & roads" are important as SFA settings (p. 773). Actually, today's local focus of SFA is the natural result of availability and opportunity of facilities near the participants' residential places. Unsurprisingly, the growing concern for "social inclusion", as ascertained in the Data Bank section "Strategy" (p. 775), represents the confirmation of the community's leading role in the SFA process of development. In summary, "social inclusion" stands for a synthesis of local management as it refers to appropriate targeting and facilities made available to people who need to share an active lifestyle.

In addition to the intervention rationales of local SFA, "social inclusion" is a matter of communal belonging as Table 2 is taken into account. This last exhibition was collected from the section "Social Changes" of the Data Bank, aiming to provide positive perceived repercussions of SFA in the year 2000

(p. 777). The most detected variables in this comparative arrangement have approximately the same quantitative value (20 to 18 occurrences in each continent) and are all related to a new lifestyle commitment. While "healthy life" and "positive attitudes" are linked to the "diffusion of SFA", the variable "changes in participation profile" has the meaning of reshaping SFA from "national to local, mass to individuals, leisure to health and target groups to non-compliers" (p. 782).

Table 2 - SFA Data Bank - Social Changes

Positive Perceived Repercussions from SFA – 2000*

Frequency = (total of occurrences of variables in all countries of the continent) **

CONTINENTS / VARIABLES	CHANGES IN PARTICIPATION PROFILE	MORE CONCERN WITH HEALTHY LIFE	POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS SFA	PENETRATION AND DIFFUSION OF SFA
ASIA	(5)	(7)	(6)	(4)
AFRICA	(0)	(0)	(1)	(0)
EUROPE	(10)	(8)	(7)	(7)
L. AMERICA	(3)	(2)	(2)	(5)
N. AMERICA	(2)	(2)	(1)	(2)
TOTAL	20	19	17	18

* N=36: Asia - 8; Africa - 2; Europe - 17; Latin America - 7 and North America - 2

** Variables occurrences per country: 0, 1 or > 1

Summarizing, these trends can be understood as community development on account of a typical link between them: from general participation to specific inclusion. Thus, should "inclusion" be submitted to an updated review, it might rather stand as the core meaning of communal belonging, at least concerning participation in sport.

Of course, these continental trends reveal different formats and approaches when we examine the different categories of comparative analysis, which has put together the 36 participating countries of the research. For instance, the financial appreciation of SFA interventions concluded that local activities have had a strong support from the participants themselves, which reinforces the interpretation of communal belonging attributed to sport for health and/or leisure (pp. 769 - 771). For

a final assessment of this finding, here follows a transcription of the Data Bank as found in the section "Sponsorship and Finance" (p. 770):

"Although the state has controlled the direction and, sometimes, the management of SFA in all continents, the financing of these activities has been done through various sources, including the important participation of non-governmental institutions. In both North America and Europe the financial commitments of non-governmental institutions have been practically the same to the ones that come from multiple sources. However, the financial support to SFA at the local level – generally governmental – is becoming more like that of the other alternatives or even taking up the most part in the cases of North America and of Asia. The participation of sponsors in the activities of SFA in the period that goes from the 1970s to the 1990s was registered in all continents as being equivalent to those done at the local level, except for Latin America, which mobilized more resources from sponsors and for Asia, which used fewer sponsors. The appreciation of the variables identified by this section all together reinforces the hypothesis that most of the expenditures of SFA are covered by the participants of the activities once only the variable that refers to local government investments is explicitly committed to the State".