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A walk down the path of benevolence: Sport and international development from a Scandinavian horizon

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ABSTRACT

The ‘Sport for Development and Peace’ (SDP) sector emerged during the twenty-first century, which conceptualizes sport’s contribution to international development. Two Scandinavian SDP programmes serve as examples in this article: *LdB FC for Life* in South Africa (football and HIV/AIDS prevention) and *Open Fun Football Schools* in Moldova (football and peace building). Although there is a growing body of research highlighting a correlation between sport and socio-political benefits, it is acknowledged that more needs to be done to understand this connection and the impact sport can have. Furthermore, many SDP initiatives fail to translate ideas into action. Consequently, this illustrates a discrepancy between intention and implementation. On this basis, the aim of this paper is to analyse *LdB FC for Life* and *Open Fun Football Schools* from the initiators’, sponsors’, and donors’ perspectives. Accordingly, it seeks to explore the relationship between rhetoric and practice surrounding both projects.

Introduction

The last decade, especially since the United Nations launched its Millennium Development Goals, has seen a significant expansion in the use of sport as a means to initiate social change throughout the world.¹ Projects involving sport have included attempts to educate young people about health concerns, discourage anti-social and criminal behaviour, increase gender-awareness, and assist with the reconciliation of communities in conflict.² Scholars refer to this trend as Sport for Development and Peace (SDP), which implies the intentional use of sport, physical activity, and play (not least football) to attain specific development and peace objectives.³

The idea of using sport as a means to facilitate change is not entirely new. Sport and physical activity have long been considered as having the potential to help induce social order and, to some extent, economic development. During the early 1980s the Nordic countries, above all Norway, entered the field of sport development aid focusing on grassroots initiatives and ‘sport for all’. This corresponds to a long Scandinavian tradition of international aid. However, the current expansion of SDP programs is particularly a result of the recognition that mainstream policies of development (e.g. Developmentalism, Dependencia, and Neoliberalism) have failed to deliver their objectives of resolving social problems.⁴ Although there is a growing body of research highlighting a correlation between sport and socio-political benefits, it is acknowledged that more needs to be done to understand this connection and the impact sport can have. Furthermore, in spite of many sport projects, good intentions research has highlighted the question of self-interest given the high frequency of commercial partnerships through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).⁵ In addition, it is argued that SDP is a paternalistic phenomenon underpinned by postcolonial power structures,

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especially due to the amount of western initiatives in third world countries.⁶ Research has also stressed that many tend to emphasize the development of sport rather than address broader social issues. This dichotomy is labelled *sport development* or *sport plus* (i.e. activities designed to enhance participation and performance in sport as an end in itself) versus *sport for development* or *plus sport* (i.e. activities designed to use sport as a vehicle to achieve a range of other social, economic, and political objectives).⁷

As an illustration of the latter, two Scandinavian SDP initiatives can serve as examples: Swedish *LdB FC for Life* in South Africa (football and HIV/AIDS prevention),⁸ and Danish *Open Fun Football Schools* in Moldova (football and peace building).⁹ Although their main objective, along with the vast majority of other SDP initiatives, stems from a notion of sport as a means to address broader social issues, research shows that it is difficult to translate this idea into action.¹⁰ This indicates there is often a discrepancy between intention and implementation. On this basis, the aim of this article is to analyse *LdB FC for Life* and *Open Fun Football Schools* from the initiators', sponsors', and donors' perspectives. Consequently, it seeks to explore the relationship between rhetoric and practice surrounding both projects. To fulfil the purpose of the article, the following questions guide the analysis:

- How do initiators, sponsors, and donors describe *LdB FC for Life* and *Open Fun Football Schools*?
- Which are the explicit motives underpinning their actions?
- Do their descriptions correspond to the practical conditions that exist?

Theoretical framework

With the ambition of highlighting the discrepancy between intention and outcome, the article takes a neo-institutional theoretical approach. In this respect, John Meyer and Brian Rowan's theory of *decoupling* and *rational myths*,¹¹ Nils Brunsson's theory of *organizational hypocrisy*,¹² and Mark Suchman's theory of *moral legitimacy*,¹³ constitute the bearing pillars in the analysis. On a general level, neo-institutional theory is suitable when studying the social interaction between organizations and their environments. Given the article's aim and explicit focus on two SDP organizations, it thus becomes appropriate to use neo-institutional theory as well. According to the theory, formal organizational structures arise in a highly institutionalized context, meaning organizations are driven to incorporate the practices and procedures defined by dominant, rationalized concepts of organizational work deeply rooted in society. Organizations that do so will increase their legitimacy and chance of survival independent of the effectiveness of the attained practices and procedures. Meyer and Rowan claim that institutionalized products such as services, programs, and policies, just to name a few, function as powerful myths, which many organizations adopt ceremoniously; that is, unreflectively and without critical review. In this respect, their legitimacy is primarily gained based on assumptions that they are rationally effective. Conducting business based on rational myths thus generates credibility, even if it often conflicts sharply with efficiency criteria. As a result, organizations tend to protect their formal structures by becoming loosely coupled (i.e. creating a division between supposed outcomes and actual results).¹⁴ According to Brunsson, this means two organizational structures evolve. One is the formal organization, which obeys the institutional norms and can easily adapt to current trends, fashions, or laws. In this way, organizations can use a different structure in 'reality' to coordinate action. This is generally referred to as the informal organization. Similarly, two forms of organizational processes arise where one generates action, and the other does not. The two forms are, nonetheless, kept for the purpose of demonstration or display to the outside world. In that regard, rational myths play an important role since they give organizations much needed legitimacy. Furthermore, the separation of formal and informal structures is important, even necessary, ingredients in any modern organization that wants to act according to current demands in its environment, while at the same time produce coordinated action.¹⁵

In connection to this, Brunsson makes a distinction between so-called *action organizations* and *political organization*. The former implies there is a consistency between ideology and action, while the latter suggests the opposite. Organizational hypocrisy is thus a fundamental type of behaviour for any political organization: to communicate in one way that satisfies one demand and act in another to satisfy other demands. It is, nonetheless, important to stress that organizational hypocrisy is not an end in itself. Rather, it is a necessity for all organizations dealing with contradictory demands in their environment, especially in their quest for legitimacy and survival.¹⁶ Here, Suchman's thoughts on moral legitimacy become relevant since they reflect a positive normative evaluation of an organization and its activities. As a result, it rests primarily on assumptions that a specific activity, or activities, undertaken by an organization are the 'right' thing to do.¹⁷ In this respect, one could argue that both *LdB FC for Life* and *Open Fun Football Schools* acquire moral legitimacy by the mere fact that they promote something that most, if not all, perceive as righteous, good, or honourable in society as a whole, namely sport and charity.

Methodological approach

The article is predominantly based on data constructed through fieldwork in Sweden, Denmark, South Africa, and Moldova during a period between 2011 and 2013. The methods used are qualitative, ranging from observations to semi-structured interviews. In addition, homepages and documents relating to the two projects were analysed. A case study research methodology was applied and the way of collecting data was inspired by ethnography. Case studies are suitable when focusing on specific existing social phenomena (e.g. organizational processes) to generate in-depth knowledge about things in a particular case. Moreover, they enable an inductive methodological way of working. Since the article seeks to explore the relationship between rhetoric and practice within *LdB FC for Life* and *Open Fun Football Schools*, the case study methodology thus fills an important function.¹⁸ As aforementioned, the method of collecting data for this article stems from an ethnographic research tradition. As a research strategy, ethnography has its origin in social anthropological methods with the aim to study sociocultural aspects from an in-depth perspective. On this basis, the objective is to understand and explain these aspects from the perspectives of those involved, usually through detailed descriptions.¹⁹ Another significant feature is that the researcher is on site to gather information, often during longer periods of fieldwork.²⁰ Consequently, the groundwork of examining both projects in Sweden and Denmark, as well as the trips to South Africa and Moldova, was crucial since it generated valuable insight of the two projects through observations and interviews.

To be able to understand *LdB FC for Life* and *Open Fun Football Schools* from an international development perspective, a contextual overview needs to be undertaken. This will be done firstly by describing the socio-political situation in South Africa and Moldova, and secondly by accounting for current projects in accordance with SDP.

LdB FC For Life in South Africa

As with many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has devastated South Africa. With over six million people infected, it stands out as one of the world's most exposed countries.²¹ In KwaZulu-Natal, the poorest of South Africa's nine provinces and with the highest number of young people, nearly 40 percent (1, 6 million) of the population is infected.²²

As in other parts of the continent, young South African women are at particularly high risk, becoming infected earlier and at higher levels in comparison to their male counterparts. This can partly be explained by biological differences between the sexes, where women are more likely to be infected.²³ It is, however, also a result of existing patriarchal structures.²⁴ Traditionally, the number of wives and children has been a measure of men's wealth and social status. This has resulted in negative attitudes towards contraception amongst South African men.²⁵ Studies also indicate

a widespread destructive masculinity that leads to risky and violent behaviour in sexual relations, making women particularly vulnerable to violence and without codetermination in sexual matters.²⁶ This hampers the spread of HIV/AIDS from being restrained.²⁷

There have been several attempts to address sexuality education in South Africa.²⁸ Similar to broader health education initiatives, SDP programs deliver education through sport. Swedish *LdB FC for Life* is one example. Between 2007 and 2013 it operated in rural KwaZulu-Natal, near the border of Mozambique. With the use of football, the programme aimed to empower young women and teach awareness about HIV/AIDS. Consequently, it aimed to strengthen their self-esteem and social reputation by challenging traditional gender barriers.²⁹ In many respects, the idea of mitigating the spread of HIV/AIDS through sport rests on assumptions that the epidemic depends on the absence of relevant information resulting in a lack of informed choice and risk-taking sexual behaviour. Furthermore, an implicit assumption seems to be that participation in sport leads to strengthening of perceived self-efficacy and the confidence to make positive decisions. Accordingly, the idea is that increased knowledge, understanding, perceived self-efficacy, and self-esteem amongst participating women will lead to changed sexual behaviour.³⁰

LdB FC for Life was implemented at several high schools throughout KwaZulu-Natal, involving hundreds of coaches, leaders, and volunteers, all trained by the former Swedish women's football club LdB FC Malmö.³¹ The club was founded in 2007 and experienced rapid growth and prosperity in contemporary women's football. The base of the club stemmed from a branch of the club Malmö FF, which is a historically recurring top-performing football club in the men's premier division in Sweden (i.e. Allsvenskan).³²

Initially, LdB FC Malmö worked exclusively with the project in cooperation with another Swedish stakeholder, an event company called World Village of Women Sports (also based in Malmö). However, additional stakeholders from the local community showed their support as the project became successful. As such, the South African ministries of Health, Education, and Sports, the South African Football Association (SAFA), and the National School Football Association (SASFA) can be mentioned.³³

As previously mentioned, *LdB FC for Life* was established when LdB FC Malmö was founded as a football club in 2007.³⁴ This marked a new beginning of a commercialized brand (i.e. Lait de Beauté, a renowned skin care brand) marketing women's football as a product with the aim to attract women consumers by accenting a feminine approach.³⁵ Consequently, it had to be associated with different forms of value-creating measures, mainly through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Given the club's primary target group at the time, *LdB FC for Life* thus filled an important function.³⁶

Open Fun Football Schools in Moldova

The collapse of communism in the Soviet Union caused several conflicts in its former satellite states, including Moldova. The majority of these conflicts are subsumed under the heading 'ethnic'.³⁷ A historical retrospective is required to understand the situation in Moldova. Due to its strategic position in Eastern Europe, the geographical area forming Moldova has endured several invasions over the years, initiated mainly by Romania and Russia. After the Russian Revolution, Bessarabia (today's Moldova and parts of Ukraine) proclaimed its independence. In spite of this, the country's dependence on Russia remained significantly high. As a result, it was annexed by the Soviet Union after the Second World War under the name Moldavian SSR (Soviet Socialist Republic). During the Soviet collapse it became independent again, under the new name Moldova,³⁸ and the Moldovan government passed a law-making Moldovan (Romanian) the official language. This gave rise to political controversy and ethnic tensions between Moldovans and Russians, especially since the latter constitutes the largest ethnic minority group in the country. Another tension fuelling the conflict was the idea of a merger between Moldova and Romania due to a long and common cultural and linguistic history between the two countries. This worried the Russian population in

Moldova's eastern parts, a region called Transnistria. Here, people opposed all political reforms considered threatening to Russian identity. As a result, Transnistrians wanted to break free by establishing an independent Soviet republic. The conflict escalated in 1992 through civil war resulting in hundreds of deaths. Even if the tensions have calmed down, a peace agreement between the Moldovan government and political representatives of Transnistria is still missing. This primarily has to do with the fact that Moldova, along with the international community, still does not recognize Transnistria as an independent republic. The reality is, however, that the Moldovan government lacks political control of Transnistria, making it an autonomous region with its own government, legislation, and currency. In 2021, the border between Moldova and Transnistria is guarded by Moldovan, Transnistrian, and Russian military. The European Union and the United Nations have also assisted with help to stabilize the political situation.³⁹ In addition, efforts like *Open Fun Football Schools* have been launched to facilitate dialogue between members from both sides.

Open Fun Football Schools (OFFS) is a humanitarian project using joyful and pedagogical football activities for children to promote peace, unity, and social cohesion in former war-torn countries. The schools are currently conducted in 14 countries, including Moldova, the Republic of North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Croatia, Georgia, Armenia, Lebanon, Tunisia, Jordan, Ukraine, and the Republic of South Sudan.⁴⁰ OFFS is operated by a Danish non-governmental organization (NGO) called the Cross Cultures Project Association (CCPA). In a five-day football program, organized in the summer during school vacation, OFFS brings together children from different ethnic and religious groups to play football. Using a variety of games and exercises, OFFS works to develop the participant's confidence, skills, and ability to work together as a group.⁴¹ The program is primarily funded by the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), the Nordic countries (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden), the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), and the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO).⁴²

OFFS was first launched in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1998 after the break-up of former Yugoslavia. In 2006 OFFS expanded to Moldova. Since then, over 30000 children aged 6–12 have participated. In addition, thousands of coaches, leaders, and parents have been involved. As of today, the project is still in progress.⁴³ OFFS is based on the concept of 'fun football', developed by the Danish Football Association. The philosophy derives from a Scandinavian sport culture characterized by a strong local focus, democratic principles, volunteerism, parent support, and the basic principle of 'sports for all'.⁴⁴ Historically, the Scandinavian sport culture derives from popular movements (i.e. people's movements) and amateurism.⁴⁵ This institutional background has resulted in a stronger ambivalence towards elite sport. It has also put a stronger emphasis on sports for all through joy and fellowship.⁴⁶ Consequently, the fun football concept constitutes a cornerstone in OFFS and has been developed closely in detail. The element of competition has been toned down to preserve the joyful and playful aspects of the game, resulting in the schools becoming more inclusive.⁴⁷

All schools were initially organized by each municipality, but in 2000 OFFS adopted a 'twin city' approach, meaning that neighbouring municipalities with different ethnic, political, and religious orientations were forced to cooperate in organizing each football school. This broadened the utility of OFFS as a means to build peace and facilitate unity, applying it not only to promote contact between children, but also between adults in terms of coaches, volunteers, and spectators from antagonistic communities. OFFS thus aims to engage all participants sufficiently to help them forget the fear and discomfort of crossing the lines.⁴⁸

Results

To answer the first question – *How do initiators, sponsors, and donors describe LdB FC for Life and Open Fun Football Schools?* – the findings show that football, first and foremost, is used as a means to solve two socio-political problems. In the case of *LdB FC for Life*, football seems to have the potential of reducing the infection of HIV amongst young South African women. In this respect, football appears to break down gender barriers by strengthening women's self-esteem, independence, and social reputation, which in turn gives them increased control over their own sexual health. For that reason, the prevailing view is that the participating women will gain courage through football and not engage in unprotected sex. As one of the project's administrative staff members states:

Our activities make an impact off the pitch. For one thing, the participants have gained better self-confidence and self-esteem since we started. You can already see the progress. They have become much stronger in their personalities, both on and off the pitch. The effects stretch all the way from home to school.⁴⁹

In the case of *Open Fun Football Schools*, football seems to have the potential to create political stability in Moldova by reducing tensions between two ethnic groups: Moldovans and Transnistrians. Football appears to facilitate a neutral platform for dialogue where participants from both sides of the conflict can engage in joyful activities based on a common interest. Accordingly, football seems to give rise to new affiliations not marked by ethnicity, political views, or which side of the conflict they belong. Following statement by a representative of the Cross Cultures Project Association express this view:

If we take a society that is divided into two sides due to war and conflict then it is obvious that we make an important contribution, especially since people from both sides actually meet on the pitch. Participating in *Open Fun Football Schools* will open their eyes. Now they can see and talk to each other. In that sense, it is evident that we make a difference.⁵⁰

To answer the second question – *What are the explicit motives underpinning their actions?* – the findings show that *LdB FC for Life* and *Open Fun Football Schools* are driven by idealism and self-interest, with a certain emphasis on the latter. Initiators and sponsors have explicitly expressed this view. The spokesperson of the Norwegian construction and civil engineering company Veidekke, a significant sponsor of *LdB FC for Life*, captures the essence of this duality:

There is a great deal of self-interest. We should be honest about that and not try to deny what is in it for us. It is about doing good things that make you feel good. It is nevertheless wonderful to make a positive contribution to the world. Ultimately, it is about rewarding yourself, to do things that make you feel good. That is the main driving force.⁵¹

A corresponding view can be found through the former Norwegian state-owned energy company Statoil, a major sponsor of *Open Fun Football Schools* in 2013:

It is important to give something back to the local community. It is also important to have a good reputation by building strong brands. By sponsoring *Open Fun Football Schools*, we can achieve both.⁵²

LdB FC for Life and *Open Fun Football Schools* thus embody a mix of humanitarian and commercial elements given their close ties to the business community. Furthermore, the incentives underpinning both initiatives have shown to be guided by two main principals. The first and perhaps most significant is that involved stakeholders want to make the world a better place by committing to a good cause. The second is that they want to demonstrate socially important values through CSR, namely by setting a good example. As another spokesperson of Veidekke formulates it:

From a larger global perspective, the business community has made unimaginable profits by exploiting Africa or any other continent with the right resources. This is our way of paying back and making things right. I think there is some kind of justice in that.⁵³

Both initiatives, however, also function as a way of creating differentiation by representing something unique. A former employee of LdB FC Malmö explains this further:

It is simply not enough for us to recruit the best players, the best staff, or establish the most lucrative sponsorships. As a commercial enterprise, you have to offer something extra. Without this, sponsors will take their money elsewhere. Through *LdB FC for Life*, we can offer an additional dimension through CSR. In this respect, it fills an important function.⁵⁴

From that perspective, it is nevertheless possible to view *LdB FC for Life* and *Open Fun Football Schools* primarily as a means to generate lucrative advantages in a competitive market, not mitigate the spread of HIV amongst South African women or bridging the divide between two ethnic groups in Moldova. Subsequently, both initiatives allow for initiators and sponsors to build strong brands, which in turn signals credibility and legitimacy. Furthermore, both operations, albeit to different degrees, express a strong belief in market-driven solutions. As a result, a neoliberal view on international development comes into play with the perception that the business community has an exclusive liberating ability over initiatives launched by the State. Moreover, this rhetoric provides an expression of individual freedom through empowerment (i.e. that people can shape their own destinies if the right resources are available). The following quote from one of *LdB FC for Life*'s administrative staff members strengthens this view:

The girls have to work hard on the pitch to earn our help. They get prizes and food if they do well in tournaments. They know when there is a reward. I think that is the biggest difference compared to traditional development work where you just donate money. The money will most likely never end up where it belongs. It is better to work yourself through it.⁵⁵

A concluding and perhaps more relevant underpinning incentive relates to the rational myth of sport and development that initiators, sponsors, and donors take for granted that *LdB FC for Life* and *Open Fun Football Schools* will generate positive societal outcomes. This is assumed routinely and without much critical reflection. As one representative of the Cross Cultures Project Association puts it:

All people love to play football because it is a joyful game. In the old days, you had God, today you have football. I mean the pope today is Platini, and it is something that we all believe in . . . Through sport, you can find a way to build communities and that is what it is all about, building communities.⁵⁶

To answer the third and final question – *Do their descriptions correspond to the practical conditions that exist?* – the findings show there is indeed a discrepancy between theory and practice. There is a gap between intention and implementation, meaning that initiators, sponsors, and donors do not exactly practice what they preach. This inconsistency has been explained by the use of the theoretical concepts of decoupling, legitimacy, and organizational hypocrisy.⁵⁷ A common feature of *LdB FC for Life* and *Open Fun Football Schools* is that they position themselves as *Plus Sport* initiatives using sport merely as a means, not an end. This can be illustrated by their objectives, which is to mitigate the spread of HIV/AIDS and create political stability. However, from observations and interviews on site in South Africa and Moldova, an opposite picture emerges, namely a strong focus on the development of sport through training and competition. As one of the football coaches in South Africa puts it:

The physical conditions of our young players are extremely good. Already as children, they learn how to run and play barefoot with the ball. They also know how to train hard. This means they have what it takes to make it as professional footballers. Through this program, we can thus develop South African football.⁵⁸

Similar reasoning can be traced to one of the Moldovan coaches:

This program helps women get involved as coaches and leaders. In the villages, they start to see that girls can play football and that football is interesting. We hope this program will help develop women's football further. As for me, I saw the opportunity to travel and broaden my horizons through football. That motivated me to train harder. It is not very common for Moldovan women to travel abroad but I could do it through football.

I earned my own money because football was my job. All this motivated me to train hard to become as good as possible.⁵⁹

Even a representative of the Cross Cultures Project Association provides a clear emphasis on sports development:

It is seemingly fair to say that we laid the foundation for Dzeko (a famous footballer) to build a professional career. I would be lying if I said we developed or created him, but without us, the local football club he belonged to never would have received the resources needed to boost his career. *Open Fun Football Schools* gave not only Dzeko but also many other talented players the ability to grow. So, in some way we definitely laid the foundation.⁶⁰

On this basis, it is fair to say *LdB for Life* and *Open Fun Football Schools* resemble the features of *Sport Plus* initiatives (i.e. activities exclusively designed to enhance participation and performance in sport as an end in itself). In addition, the empirical findings show that both initiatives serve as a means by which initiators and sponsors can create lucrative advantages in a competitive market. As the spokesperson for the Danish sportswear company Hummel, a major sponsor of *Open Fun Football Schools*, puts it:

We are a small clothing company in comparison to multinational enterprises such as Nike or Adidas. In order for us to be unique, we have chosen to focus our sponsorships on socially disadvantaged communities around the world. We started in Afghanistan mainly because Nike and Adidas did not dare to conduct business due to the political situation. As a result, we saw a chance to make us competitive by being unique. The same thing goes for the sponsorship of *Open Fun Football Schools* in Moldova.⁶¹

Corresponding views can be found through LdB FC Malmö. As one of the club's former representatives puts it:

Companies can put a value on themselves through different forms of social commitments. Sponsoring *LdB FC For Life* can thus be seen as a value-enhancing measure. It all boils down to the old marketing cliché 'if you are not seen, you do not exist'.⁶²

In this respect, the use of CSR plays an important role as it gives the initiators and sponsors legitimacy and an opportunity to establish credibility and reputation by building strong brands. Moreover, the undertaken activities function as a means by which they can be associated with something that the general public considers good: social responsibility. Given this background, *LdB FC for Life* and *Open Fun Football Schools* illustrate two fragmented initiatives where both intention and implementation seem to have been lost. The article shows that decoupling and organizational hypocrisy (i.e. separation between talk and action) occurs because organizations in their quest for survival constantly need to deal with conflicting demands in their environments. As a result, they often do not have a choice other than to act in certain ways depending on a specific situation; that is, acting in one way that satisfies one need and in another way to satisfy other needs. Translated into this article, the decoupling and hypocrisy function as a means for *LdB FC for Life* and *Open Fun Football Schools* to gain legitimacy from different environments. In Sweden and Denmark it is important to appear credible, otherwise the support will withdraw. Accordingly, they repeatedly need to convince the public and other relevant stakeholders that they make a difference, primarily by emphasizing the altruistic dimensions of the conducted activities. By doing so, they will obtain legitimacy, which in turn ensures their organizational survival. However, in South Africa and Moldova *LdB FC for Life* and *Open Fun Football Schools* gain legitimacy in a different way. Here, both organizations need to emphasize the competitiveness of sport through training and matches, given their close affiliation with the football federation in each country. From the federations' perspectives, developing the prerequisites for South African and Moldovan football thus motivates their support as it gives them legitimacy. Consequently, Mark Suchman's theory of moral legitimacy comes into use since all organizations strive to reflect socially acceptable or desirable standards in the way they act.⁶³ In this respect, *LdB FC for Life* and *Open Fun Football Schools* can be said to give rise to two sorts of moral legitimacy: one in Sweden and Denmark and one in South Africa and Moldova. As a result, decoupling not only becomes a means by which this

double legitimacy can be obtained, but it also enables organizational hypocrisy to occur, since conflicting demands need to be handled according to existing conditions in different environments.

Conclusions and considerations

Having summarized the findings and answered the aim and questions, an incoherent picture of two SDP initiatives emerges, particularly due to an obvious conflict between talk and action. Even if both strive to make the world a better place, it is evident that the proclaimed objectives do not match the practical outcome. They have also proven to be driven both by idealism and self-interest, especially the latter given the initiators and donors desire to build strong brands, differentiate themselves from competition, and obtain lucrative benefits. Based on this, it is reasonable to raise the question of whether or not organizational hypocrisy is a legitimate argument to shut down both operations, or if it is a logical outcome of all organizational activities that simply needs to be accepted. Since this article shows that the difference between talk and action is a question of dealing with conflicting demands, the empirical examples of *LdB FC for Life* and *Open Fun Football Schools* shows that organizational hypocrisy is an inevitable consequence of this handling. Consequently, the discrepancy between rhetoric and practice is not an argument to shut down the operations. Above and beyond, it would probably not be possible to implement the activities at all without a certain degree of hypocrisy. To put it differently: the initiatives would never have gained legitimacy for their cause if they focused exclusively on issues concerning HIV/AIDS prevention in South Africa or integration and political stability in Moldova. Rather, they have been forced to adapt to given conditions. Brunsson's theory of organizational hypocrisy is thus an important contribution to a more general discussion about whether SDP initiatives ought to be seen as either idealistic and good on the one hand or commercial and evil on the other – the duality constitutes two sides of the same coin. At the same time, the article paints a nuanced picture of SDP initiatives given the perception of sport as a universal remedy for peace and prosperity. From that perspective, it shows how the dichotomy between idealism and self-interest as well as *Sport Plus* versus *Plus Sport* comes into practice and how they can be analysed and further problematized. As a concluding remark, the article shows that the notion of sport as a means for different societal outcomes can be both praised and criticized. It also shows that the current notion has the features of a rational myth according to Meyer and Rowan's way of reasoning.

Regardless of what the empirical examples in this article prove, the amount of SDP initiatives continues to grow. As of today, there are over 400 examples where sport serves as a means to make the world a better place.⁶⁴ From that perspective, sport has become more than just sport, or, to quote the Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga, the game has become serious.⁶⁵ Even if *LdB FC for Life* and *Open Fun Football Schools* have good intentions, more research has proven crucial to justify the existence and magnitude of many of today's SDP programs.⁶⁶ Only then is it possible to examine whether they make an actual difference or not. This article has aimed to contribute to that discussion, mainly by examining the pros and cons of two specific examples. Consequently, it hopes to fill the parts of a missing gap.

Epilogue

LdB FC for Life and *Open Fun Football Schools* are still operating in South Africa and Moldova. The major difference is that *LdB FC for Life* changed its name to *Football for Life* in 2013 when *LdB FC Malmö* became *FC Rosengård* (also based in Malmö). As a result, there is no longer any connection to the brand *LdB* (*Lait de Beauté*) or *World Village of Women Sports*. Moreover, *FC Rosengård* provides football activities for both sexes, representing a women's team in the premier division (*OBOS Damallsvenskan*) and a men's team in the second division. In 2015, Veidekke funded a development centre for women's football

in KwaZulu-Natal. The centre facilitates *Football for Life* and host training camps, courses, and workshops.⁶⁷

Notes

1. See for example Beutler, 'Sport Serving Development', 359; Kidd, 'A New Social Movement', 370; Kidd, 'Cautions, Questions and Opportunities', 603; Giulianotti and Armstrong, 'Sport, the Military and Peacemaking', 379; Hayhurst, 'Corporatising Sport, Gender and Development', 533.
2. Levermore and Beacom, *Sport and International Development*, 1.
3. See for example Darnell, 'Sport for Development', 7; Kidd, 'A New Social Movement', 370; Darnell and Black, 'Mainstreaming Sport', 367; Donnelly et al., 'Sport for Development', 591; Njelesani, 'Preventive HIV/AIDS Education', 436.
4. Levermore and Beacom, *Sport and international development*, 1–2; See also Straume, "'Sport for All" in New Settings', 4, 97.
5. See for example Beacom, 'A Question of Motives', 88–89; Levermore, 'CSR for Development', 236.
6. Darnell, 'Sport for Development', 33–35.
7. Coalter, 'Sport for Development', 5; Beacom, 'A Question of Motives', 84.
8. LdB FC Malmö, *Official Website*, 2011, <http://www.itsawomensworld.se/ldb-fc-for-life/> (accessed 2 December 2011).
9. Cross Cultures Project Association (CCPA), *Official Website*, 2013, <http://ccpa.eu/what-we-do/open-fun-football-schools/> (accessed 12 November 2013).
10. Coalter, 'Sport for Development', 43, 183–184.
11. Meyer and Rowan, 'Institutionalized Organizations', 340.
12. Brunsson, *The Organization of Hypocrisy*, 14–27.
13. Suchman, 'Managing Legitimacy', 579.
14. Meyer and Rowan, 'Institutionalized Organizations', 340–341, 347.
15. Brunsson, *The Organization of Hypocrisy*, 6–7.
16. *Ibid.*, 14–27.
17. Suchman, 'Managing Legitimacy', 579.
18. Yin, *Case Study Research*, 25; Denscombe, *Good Research Guide*, 92–94.
19. Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, 1; Denscombe, *Good Research Guide*, 84–87.
20. Fetterman, *Ethnography: Step by Step*, 2; Wolcott, *Ethnography: A Way of Seeing*, 44.
21. Shamagonam et al., 'The Impact of an HIV and AIDS Life Skills Program on Secondary School Students in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa', 282.
22. Shasha et al., 'A Situational Analysis', 293; Welz et al., 'Continued Very High Prevalence', 1468.
23. Ackermann and de Klerk, 'Social Factors', 163–164.
24. *Ibid.*, 64–170.
25. Red Cross, *Official Website*, 2014, https://www.rodakorset.fi/sites/frc2011.mearra.com/files/tiedostolataukset/h%C3%B6gstadium_samh%C3%A4llsl%C3%A4ra_3b%5B1%5D.pdf (accessed 28 November 2014).
26. Wickström, 'Kärlek i virusets tid', 45.
27. *Ibid.*, 46.
28. Shamagonam et al., 'The Impact of an HIV and AIDS Life Skills Program on Secondary School Students in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa', 281.
29. Interview with a representative of LdB FC for Life, 6 February 2012. See also Shasha et al., 'A Situational Analysis', 1468.
30. Coalter, 'Sport for Development', 103–104.
31. Interview with a representative of LdB FC for Life, 6 February 2012.
32. Melkersson, *Identities and Images in Football*, 200.
33. Interview with a representative of r LdB FC for Life, 6 February 2012.
34. Interview with a representative of LdB FC Malmö, 8 March 2012.
35. Melkersson, *Identities and Images in Football*, 200–201.
36. Interview with a representative of LdB FC Malmö, 8 March 2012.
37. Kolstø and Malgin, 'The Transnistrian Republic', 103.
38. Chinn and Roper, 'Ethnic Mobilization', 292–293.
39. *Ibid.*, 294, 296–298, 304–312; Roper, 'Regionalism in Moldova', 118–119.
40. Cross Cultures Project Association, *Official website*, 2015, <http://ccpa.eu/what-we-do/open-fun-football-schools/> (accessed 12 November 2013). See also Cross Cultures, *Activities 2020, 2021*, <https://ccpa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Statistics-overview-2020-FINAL.pdf> (accessed 10 September 2021).
41. Gasser and Levinsen, 'Breaking Post-War Ice', 457–472; Janssens, 'Education Through Sport', 203.
42. Gasser and Levinsen, 'Breaking Post-War Ice', 457–472.

43. Interview with a representative of the Cross Cultures Project Association, 17 September 2012. See also. Cross Cultures, 'Where do we go? 2021', <https://ccpa.eu/programs/open-fun-football-schools/> (accessed 13 September 2021).
44. Gasser and Levinsen, 'Breaking Post-War Ice', 457–472; Bergsgard and Norberg, 'Sports Policy and Politics', 567–582. See also interview with a representative of the Cross Cultures Project Association, 17 September 2012.
45. Peterson, 'The Professionalization of Sport', 3.
46. Tuastad, 'The Scandinavian Sport Model', 341.
47. Gasser and Levinsen, 'Breaking Post-War Ice', 457–472; Bergsgard and Norberg, 'Sports Policy and Politics', 567–582. See also interview with a representative of the Cross Cultures Project Association, 17 September 2012.
48. Gasser and Levinsen, 'Breaking Post-War Ice', 457–472.
49. Interview with a representative of LdB FC For Life, 17 February 2012.
50. Interview with a representative of Open Fun Football Schools, 18 September 2012.
51. Interview with a spokesperson of Veidekke, 7 February 2012.
52. Interview with a spokesperson of Statoil, 20 November 2013.
53. Interview with a spokesperson of Veidekke, 7 February 2012.
54. Interview with a representative of LdB FC Malmö, 8 March 2012.
55. Interview with a representative of LdB FC For Life, 17 February 2012.
56. Interview with a representative of the Cross Cultures Project Association, 17 September 2012.
57. Meyer and Rowan, 'Institutionalized Organizations'; Brunsson, *The Organization of Hypocrisy*; Suchman, 'Managing Legitimacy'.
58. Interview with a South African Football Coach enrolled in LdB FC for Life, 4 February 2012.
59. Interview with a Moldovan Football Coach enrolled in Open Fun Football Schools, 23 July 2013.
60. Interview with a representative of the Cross Cultures Project Association, 17 September 2012.
61. Interview with the spokesperson of Hummel, 4 October 2013.
62. Interview with a representative of LdB FC Malmö, 27 February 2012.
63. Suchman, 'Managing Legitimacy', 579.
64. Straume, "'Sport for All' in New Settings", 2; See also. Sportanddev, *Learn More*. <https://www.sportanddev.org/en/learn-more> (accessed 13 September 2021).
65. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 5.
66. Hafen, *A Walk Down the Path of Benevolence*. See also. Coalter, 'Sport for Development', 20–22.
67. Football for Life, <https://fcrosengard.se/football-for-life/> (accessed 10 September 2021).

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