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ZEIGLER LECTURE

"What Have I Learned . . . " and How Did I Get There? Reflection on a Research Journey

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Receiving a lifetime award allows one to pause and reflect on one's research journey. In the spirit of Earle Zeigler himself, I reflect on: "What I have learned . . . " on my research journey, and more specifically on how I got there. My research has always focused on the interaction between sport, economics, and society and evolved: "From socio-economic impacts on sport participation to socio-economic outcomes of sport events." To cover 40 years of research, I am highlighting how: (a) "triggers," (b) "influencers," and (c) "lessons learned" intermingled to push my research agenda forward. This reflection proved to be a very gratifying exercise. I can highly recommend it to all researchers. Perhaps, this can become a stepping stone to be promoted to the rank of Prof. Emeritus or Emerita. Either way, sharing our experiences may trigger, inspire, and advance the learning of future generations of sport management scholars.

Keywords: sport events, socio-economic impact, sport participation, leveraging, subjective well-being

It is an immense honor to stand here today as the recipient of the prestigious Zeigler Lecture Award and to be recognized alongside many highly esteemed and prominent scholars in the field of sport management. Receiving a lifetime award toward the end of a career allows one to pause and reflect on one's research journey, and that in itself is a tremendous privilege! In the spirit of Earl Zeigler's book (2012), I will reflect on: "What I have learned . . . " on my research journey, and more specifically on how I got there. Forty years of research is a long time. There is so much to tell and share, but to say it with the eloquent words of a terrific storyteller, Isabelle Allende (2022):

> . . . memory is made up of the unexpected events that mark your course. These are the things worth passing on. (p. 117)

To tell the story of my research journey in a compelling but a concise manner, I was inspired by two radio programs (indeed, I am a radio fanatic). One is a Flemish program called "De Rotonde" ["The roundabout"], in which the host talked to a well-known Fleming about significant turning points in their life. In this presentation I borrow this idea to reflect on significant triggers that made me take turns in my research journey. The other radio program is a Canadian show, called "Under the influence" (2023) which "gives listeners a rare backstage pass into the hallways, boardrooms, and recording studios of the advertising industry . . . connecting the dots . . . . " I use this idea to demonstrate how people influenced turning points in my research journey and advanced my learning. Thus, in this lecture, I will highlight how: (a) "triggers" [T*], (b) "influencers" [I*], and (c) "lessons learned" [L*] intermingled to push my research agenda forward, and I will use the symbols between the squared brackets as identifiers.

My research has always investigated the interaction between sport (events), economics, and society. Initially (prior to 2005), I investigated the impact of society and economics on sport participation, but over the past 20 years I focused on how sport and particularly events impact society and economics. Although I focus my lecture primarily on the latter part of my research, I will also briefly outline the lead-up to that research. Thus, my research has evolved:

> From socio-economic impacts <u>on</u> sport participation to socio-economic outcomes <u>of</u> sport events.

My Research Journey Prior to 2005

My first independent research project started in 1984 in the context of my Bachelor thesis on *Reliability and Validity of Rhythm Tests* (Taks, 1986)—my practicum specialty at the time was dance; my theoretical specialty was sport management. However, from that early on, I identify Prof. Roland Renson as the first influencer [I*] of my research journey in the realm of sport management. During his Social Kinesiology class in my Physical Education program at KU Leuven (1981–1985), the social status pyramid of sports in Belgium (Renson & Vermeulen, 1976) was a trigger [T*]. The pyramid represents social stratification in sports demonstrating "upper-class," "middle-class," "status-neutral," and "lower-class sports" (i.e., sports that are proportionally more participated in by people in these layers of society). The pyramid was developed and designed by Renson himself and was based on the socioprofessional status of Belgian fathers with a son in the first year of high school (13-year-old boys). The empirical data were collected in 1969 as part of the Leuven Growth Study on Belgian Boys. I found this graphic representation of social stratification in sports fascinating, but at the same time confronting because it seemed contradictory to the Sports for All philosophy I grew up with. To me, "Sports for All" equally means "*every* sport for All," but this status pyramid revealed a social stratification that represented social inequality [L*].

The social status pyramid from 1969 stimulated me to such an extent [T*] that I decided to explore it further in my doctoral thesis in the late 1980s and early 1990s. I collected new data in 1989 through the "Study on physical activity of the Flemish Population anno 1989" (Taks et al., 1991). This time, the pyramid was based on the socioprofessional status of fathers of 6- to 18-year-old boys

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and girls in Flemish schools. A similar social stratification of sport participation emerged, distinguishing: upper-class, upper-middle class, lower-middle-class, status-neutral, and lower-class sports. To better understand this social stratification in sport, I took a two-tiered, social and economic approach, and embarked on my thesis entitled: *Social stratification in Sport: A matter of money or taste?* (Taks, 1994). To unpack the "taste" side (or social perspective) of the equation, I employed Pierre Bourdieu's theory (1979) and his notion of "habitus."

In analyzing the economic perspective of sports, my focus centered on understanding the pricing aspects. However, determining the true cost of participating in sports proves to be a challenging task [L*]. Unlike a straightforward purchase of a tangible item from a store, engaging in sports involves a multitude of expenses. These encompass various subcomponents, such as membership fees, entry fees, tournament costs, lessons, clothing, equipment, travel expenses, refreshments, personal care items, and so on. Collectively, these elements contribute to the overall sporting experience. As a result of this investigation, a comprehensive model was developed to capture consumer expenditures in sports (Taks, Renson, & Vanreusel, 1994; model reproduced in Taks & Misener, 2015—with second edition forthcoming).

This model prompted new opportunities [T*], notably to determine the economic significance of sports at the aggregate level, a project which I developed with my Ph.D. cosupervisor Stefan Késenne [I*]. We collected primary data from Flemish households, who were surveyed about their sports expenditures based on the same model and estimated the economic significance of sport in Flanders [L*]. This became my very first North American Association for Sport Management (NASSM) presentation in 1999 [T*], and subsequently my first *Journal of Sport Management* publication in 2000 (Taks & Kesenne, 2000). Before I continue to talk about my research itself, it is important to highlight some "unexpected events that marked my way."

NASSM 1999: An Important Trigger in My Research Journey

It was Chelladurai [I*] (also known as "Chella") who encouraged me to come to NASSM. I had known Chella since 1993 when the *European Association for Sport Management* (EASM) hosted its first conference in Groningen (the Netherlands).[1] He has played a central role in my relocation to Canada (see below) and remained a true supporter throughout my career. His encouragement, together with successfully obtaining a travel grant, allowed me to attend my first NASSM in 1999. The conference was hosted by the University of British Columbia and organized by none other than the esteemed sport management scholar and my dear friend Lucie Thibault [I*], who years later inspired me when I became the Editor of *European Sport Management Quarterly* (ESMQ) (2009–2011) and remained a very supportive colleague during all those years.[2]

It was during NASSM 1999 that I was approached by Bob Boucher [I*] and Gordon Olafson, enquiring if I would be interested taking on a position in Canada. This idea was reinforced when Chelladurai invited me to stay with him in Columbus (Ohio) after the conference. From there, Chella took me on a road trip to London (Ontario), over to Bowling Green University (Ohio) and the University of Windsor (Ontario), visiting sport management colleagues along the way [T*]. Moreover, the idea of relocating to Canada gained further traction during EASM 1999 (hosted in Thessaloniki, Greece [T*]) when Jim Weese [I*] inquired if I had already decided about my plans to move to Canada. At that time, Dr. Weese was serving as the dean of the Faculty of Human Kinetics at University of Windsor.

Transitioning From Europe to Canada

After the NASSM 1999 conference, I returned home to my Alma Mater, the KU Leuven in Belgium. Because of my work on the economic significance in sport, I was approached by Haruo Nogawa (from Japan; [I*]) requesting to collaborate on a pilot study on the economic impact of the 2000 Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) European Football Championship (also known as Euro 2000), because it was the first event of this size being hosted by two countries, namely Belgium and the Netherlands. Similarly, the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) 2002 World Cup would be hosted by two countries for the very first time 2 years later (i.e., Korea and Japan). So, I did. However, in the meantime, the offer from the University of Windsor came through. The fact that the field of sport management was more advanced in North America at the time compared to Europe attracted me, and I decided to go for it. In 2001, the whole family moved to Windsor, Ontario, where I took up a new position as associate professor in the sport management group at the University of Windsor; the place where NASSM was founded in 1985.

The transatlantic move brought about important personal and professional changes. From a personal perspective, there was a need to adapt to a new society with different customs and habits. Luckily, as a family, we felt quickly welcomed in Canada, allowing for a smooth transition. Professionally, I entered a different work culture. A first noticeable difference was a better work–life balance, which I appreciate to this day. From a pedagogical perspective, an important difference regarding teaching included the way in which students were assessed. In Belgium, a course mark was based on one final exam worth 100% of the score, while in the Canadian system, a series of assignments, midterms, and final exams made up the final score. This disparity necessitated a change in mindset on my part and a substantial amount of new preparation. Fortunately, I received great support from my new colleagues who graciously passed along their former course syllabi to help me get on track.

Besides variations in work culture, there seemed to be a noticeable disparity in the approach to sport management. For example, in Europe, sport and sport management have a broader scope, with a significant emphasis on voluntary sport participation and nonprofit organizations (club sports), as opposed to professional and university sport, which tended to be the dominant realms in sport management in North America at the time. This distinction affected both my teaching and my research. While delving further into this difference is beyond the scope of this lecture, I will provide some insights into how it influenced my research.

In addition to some differences outlined above, I soon began to realize that the size of a country such as Canada also strongly affected my research approach in sport management. For example, it was standard practice with my previous research in Europe to strive for representative samples at the regional or national population levels when collecting primary data. This no longer proved to be realistic in a vast country such as Canada. Similarly, sport participation is organized and delivered in very different ways because of the country's size. For example, the notions of "house leagues" and "travel teams" are nonexistent in Belgium. All youth teams in Belgium can easily travel to compete face-to-face in regular competitions against teams from other clubs. This shift made me realize that starting to understand how sport was delivered locally was probably the best

course of action to continue my research in Canada. Hence, the hosting of the 2005 Pan-American Junior Athletic Championships (PanAmJacs) [T*] by the University of Windsor together with my evolving experience in economic impact studies from events presented itself as a unique opportunity and became another important trigger to continue my research trajectory.

The idea of hosting the 2005 PanAmJacs emerged in the early 2000s, when Bob Boucher and Jim Weese recognized that the University of Windsor was in dire need of a new track-and-field stadium. They decided that bidding for the PanAmJacs could help them reach that objective. They put in a bid and were successful in obtaining it, and a new stadium was built. I remember Dr. Weese knocking on my office door probing me to do an economic impact study on the event. This seemed a good idea, and I put together my first Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) grant proposal. Unfortunately, I was not successful [T*]. The feedback was that the research project was just "another economic impact study" [L*]. Clearly, I had to come up with a more ambitious plan. This led to the next trigger: NASSM 2004 in Atlanta, Georgia [T*]. I shared my setback with Dr. Laurence Chalip [I*] and Dr. Christine Green [I*]. We brainstormed and decided to add tourism components into the mix. I also reached out to Stefan Késenne, an expert and strong proponent of cost–benefit analysis (CBA) of events, to expand the standard economic impact analysis approach. We submitted a revamped SSHRC proposal in 2004 and were informed in the spring of 2005 that we were successful.

My Research Journey Post 2005

When we embarked on the 2005 PanAmJacs research, graduate students Ryan Snelgrove and Laura Wood were research assistants on the project. Snelgrove investigated motives and identity of spectators at the event (Snelgrove et al., 2008). A line of research that was continued by another graduate student, Inge Derom, who examined leisure experiences of participants during the 2008 Canadian Transplant Games, also hosted in Windsor (Ontario; Derom & Taks, 2011).

Economic and Tourism Impacts From Events

The ambiguity surrounding event impacts and outcomes is largely shaped by the complexities involved in measuring these impacts. Two methods used for measuring economic impacts are the standard Economic Impact Analysis and CBA. The more common standard Economic Impact Analysis gauges the economic impact by assessing the total additional visitor, operational, and capital expenditures that arise within a defined area as a direct result of hosting the event. However, this method tends to highlight only the positive outcomes. In contrast, the CBA breaks down the costs and benefits of hosting the event. On the cost side, it considers factors such as opportunity cost, which involves diverting investments from other projects, and crowding out regular tourists, among others. On the benefit side, it incorporates the consumer surplus, which reflects the additional value that spectators or host residents may experience (willingness to pay more) beyond the price they pay to attend or experience the event. While both methods present challenges and limitations, the CBA offers the distinct advantage in that it allows for identification of the net benefits associated with hosting a sport event. In many cases, these net benefits are generally low or even negative, shedding light on the true economic implications of hosting such events [L*] (Késenne, 2012; Taks et al., 2011, 2013).

By now we have established that we must consider opportunity costs when considering economic impact of sport events. Besides that, we cannot be blindsided by the negative economic impact of major sport events. Events' opportunity costs and negative economic impacts also generate opposition, riots, and protests because residents feel that the large amount of public money invested in these sport events should be spent on other, much needed basic infrastructure and services such as hospitals or schools (e.g., Brazil with the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games; e.g., Jepson & Walters, 2021; Maharaj, 2015).

Regarding tourism, we studied flow-on and future tourism, particularly in relation to information search (Taks et al., 2009). Here we learned that one-time sport events must enhance their efforts to integrate destination experiences with the event to generate some form of sustainable tourism [L*]. Strengthening cooperation between event organizers and destination marketers can be one such avenue, which was later supported when examining a series of other events hosted in the Windsor region between 2013 and 2014 (e.g., the 2013 International Children's Games, the 2014 Ontario Summer Games, and the 2014 55 + Ontario Summer Games [55+]; Wood et al., 2018).

In short, we found no evidence for substantial economic or sustainable tourism impact [L*], and related scholarship produced similar evidence (Agha & Taks, 2019; Solberg & Preuss, 2007; Zimbalist, 2020). These findings triggered the next steps [T*]. Given that the focus of my research is on one-off sport events that rely heavily on public funds, we continued our pursuit searching for positive outcomes for host residents, following the line of thought presented in this quote by Chalip (2006): " . . . those of us who study and promote events tell each other over beers to convince ourselves that there is more going on than bread and circuses. But is there?" (p. 111). Consequently, we redirected our research focus toward exploring the social and sport participation impacts of events, which encompass less tangible outcomes. Before sharing "What I learned . . . " in these realms, I must introduce a set of other triggers and another series of events entering my research space.

New Triggers and Events Entering My Research Space

We continued to find triggers as the city of Windsor was host to various types of events: 2012 Skate Canada International, the 2013 International Children's Games, the 2014 Ontario Summer Games, the 2014 Ontario 55 + Summer Games, and the 2016 FINA World Swimming Championships [T*]. This is the time when Laura Misener [I*] joined the team as a newly hired professor at the University of Windsor. Chalip, Green, Misener, and I became a solid foursome, setting out on a journey of sport participation research related to events for many years to come. In parallel, I focused on social impacts, collaborating with Laura Wood [I*] and Ryan Snelgrove [I*] who in the meantime became assistant professors and were embarking on a SSHRC-funded project: *Managing sport events to maximize positive impacts* (e.g., Derom et al., 2023; Snelgrove et al., 2019, 2022; Wood et al., 2018).

During that time, another trigger came my way: SMAANZ 2014 [T*]. Invited by David Shilbury [I*], I presented a keynote on: *Linking Sport Events to Sport Participation: What we Know and Need to Know*. During the conference, I was approached by Benoit Séguin and Milena Parent about a sport management position coming up at the University of Ottawa. Somehow, I always felt a good fit with Ottawa because of the bilingualism,

but also because of its location in the Capital, with easy access to the federal level of government (Sport Canada) and headquarters of multiple National Sport Governing bodies. In addition, I was joining a group of experts who all studied events, be it from different angles: Séguin [I*] examined sponsorship, marketing, and ambush marketing related to the Olympic Games; Parent [I*] focused on management and governance of events; and MacIntosh [I*] investigated athletes' experiences in the context of events, whereas I studied events from the residents' perspective. In 2016, I accepted a new position at the University of Ottawa [T*], where I continued my work on social impact and sport participation impacts from events.

In the meantime, research on event impact was shifting focus from: (a) *large to small events* (e.g., Agha & Taks, 2015; Taks, 2013), (b) *tangible to intangible* (e.g., Preuss, 2015), and (c) *legacies to leveraging* (e.g., Chalip, 2018). Before addressing *intangible impacts* in the context of social impacts and *leveraging* in the context of sport participation impacts, I first make an important side note on the notion of small and large events.

From Large to Small Sporting Events

As a strong proponent of small events, I firmly believe that the impact of one-off, smaller-sized sport events, though seemingly local with limited global reach, can yield substantial positive outcomes. The advantages of these events become apparent when considering their resource requirements, as they demand fewer resources, thereby offering better potential for economic and environmental benefits. Additionally, their ability to forge a profound connection with the local community leads to enhanced potential for social outcomes, setting them apart from large-scale events. Furthermore, a multitude of smaller-sized events are being organized on a global scale. Consequently, when considering the aggregate level, the overall benefits derived from one-off, smaller-sized sport events may prove to be more substantial, more lasting, and more global and enduring compared to large events [L*] (Taks, 2013).

For some time, I struggled with defining the one-off, smaller-sized events I was investigating. When I edited a special issue with Chalip and Green on: "Impact and strategic outcomes from non-mega sport events for local communities" for the *European Sport Management Quarterly* (Taks et al., 2015), we referred to these events as "non-mega sport events." In this context, we considered them to be the smaller counterparts of mega sport events, akin to their "brother or sister" in scale. Our description of these events was as follows:

> While there are no universal definitions of different types of events, non-mega sport events are generally smaller in size, scale, scope, and reach than their mega counterparts (e.g., the Olympic Games, the World Cup, the Euro Cup, and the Commonwealth Games). However, like mega events, they are one-off, discontinuous, and out of the ordinary. (p. 1)

As I contemplated the various types of events I have investigated thus far, it became evident that the focus extended beyond merely "smaller-sized events." It was during my collaboration with Nola Agha [I*] that I gained a clearer understanding of my research scope. Specifically, we redefined events based on the resources they necessitate, including financial, physical, and human resources required for hosting. Smaller events typically draw fewer visitors and receive less business and government support, resulting in lower resource requirements. On the other hand, large events, due to their high profile and extensive global reach, tend to attract more visitors and enjoy greater support from businesses and governments, hence demanding more resources [L*]. We coined this concept as "event resource demand" and compared it to the notion of "city resource supply" (Agha & Taks, 2015, 2019).

When host cities (or regions or countries) do not have the necessary resources to supply these needs, events create a "city resource deficiency," making cities rely on larger proportions of government support, including taxpayers' money to stage the event. Thus, public funding becomes necessary when the event resource demand surpasses the host cities' resource supply (Agha & Taks, 2015), thereby making these sport events publicly funded major sport events, regardless of their size and scope (e.g., local, national, and global level) [L*]. These publicly funded sport events are generally one-off events, out of the ordinary, and create a shock in the host community because of the number of resources they need. Whether mega or non-mega sport events, they all require substantial public funding from one or more levels of government (e.g., national, regional, and city levels). Thus, the types of events that I have been interested in all along are publicly funded sport events. It remains a challenge to attribute exact amounts of government funding to sport events particularly when it comes to infrastructure projects (e.g., Sant & Mason, 2015). Nevertheless, the examples in Table 1 demonstrate local, regional, and/or national governments support for hosting major sport events with

Table 1 Examples of Public Funded One-Off Sport Events and Levels of Government Funding

Event	2013 International Children's Games	Vancouver 2010	2019 Canada Games	2021 Road World Championships
City	Windsor	Vancouver	Red Deer	Leuven
Country	(ON, Canada)	(BC, Canada)	(AB, Canada)	(Flanders/Belgium)
Overall budget	Est. CA$89 m	Est. CA$7.0b	CA$44.3 m	€21.3 m
Total govt. funding	Costs of hosting (11 m + $78 m aquatic complex)	CA$2b-4b	CA$30 m	€16.3 m
Federal govt.		*CA$1.2b*	*CA$11 m*	—
Regional govt.		—	—	*€13 m*
Provincial govt.		*CA$2.1b*	*CA$11 m*	*€0.4 m*
City govt.	*All*	*CA$140 m*	*CA$8 m*	*€2.89 m*
Source	Anderson and Taks (2019)	Bakhsh et al. (2022) and Hume (2013)	Bodin and Taks (2022b)	Helsen et al. (2022)

Note. Sum of $ = total government funding; b = billion; m = million.

public resources; hence, positive returns (societal outcomes) for host residents are expected to justify financial investments.

In summary, my research has focused on exploring various impacts of publicly funded sport events. Throughout my investigations, a key concern has been to ensure that those investing in these events (i.e., taxpayers) derive meaningful benefits. As part of this endeavor, I delved into both market-related impacts, such as economic and tourism effects, and nonmarket impacts, encompassing social and sport participation outcomes. My ultimate goal was to understand the potential for these events to lead to sustainable outcomes. Having now established the types of events I studied, let us delve deeper into our findings regarding social impacts, which marked a transition from tangible to intangible aspects. Additionally, we will explore the impact on sport participation, highlighting the shift from legacies to leveraging opportunities.

Social Impact From Events

Although my research focus shifted toward measuring less tangible outcomes like social impacts, it is essential to acknowledge that measuring these impacts also presents challenges. The lack of a consensus on what exactly constitutes social impact further complicates the matter. Nevertheless, recurring dimensions of social impact include community spirit, social cohesion, social capital, community involvement, as well as aspects related to disorder and conflict, and feelings of (un)safety. Community spirit pertains to the feelings of pride and happiness instilled by an event and is sometimes referred to as the "feel-good factor" or "psychic income." Social cohesion gauges how individuals perceive an event's influence on connectedness within the community. Social capital reflects how the event impacts residents' broader community relationships and engagement. Community involvement, on the other hand, assesses the extent to which the community is engaged in event hosting, and whether their input is actively sought and appreciated. For a comprehensive overview of studies, theories, and measurements related to social impact, I refer to the work of Taks et al. (2020).

When we first presented our work in this area (Littlejohn et al., 2016; Taks et al., 2016) during EASM 2015 [T*], it was a serious discussion with Bob Heere [I*] that made us realize that "wording matters." As a result, we began distinguishing between two types of social impact items: "other-referenced" and "self-referenced." Other-referenced items are perception-based, reflecting subjective opinions or attitudes, akin to "public opinion polling." For example, they are worded as "Events create new friendships in the community." On the other hand, self-referenced items are experience-based, portraying the impact from the first-person perspective. An example of self-referenced wording is: "Because of the event, I create new friends in the community" (Oshimi et al., 2021, 2022; Taks et al., 2020; Taks & Rocha, 2022). Utilizing self-referenced wording allows for a more accurate reflection of reality, capturing event impacts when aggregated.

I collaborated with Claudio Rocha [I*] on Rio 2016 (Taks & Rocha, 2022), worked with Ann Pegoraro [I*] and Jordan Bakhsh [I*] on the 2019 National Basketball Association Finals hosted in Canada (Kennedy et al., 2023); Daichi Oshimi [I*] for the 2019 Rugby World Cup and Tokyo 2020, both in Japan; and Nola Agha joined our team along the way (Oshimi et al., 2021, 2022; Taks et al., 2020). Of note, Bakhsh [I*] included self-referenced social impact items in his dissertation on "Understanding Residents' Social Return on Investment from Hosting a Major Sport Event: The Case of the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Winter Games" (Bakhsh et al., 2022, 2023), and Kerri Bodin [I*] included self-referenced social impact items in her work on "Host community residents and long-term event outcomes: The role of trust, knowledge, and power in the public/government relationship" (Bodin & Taks, 2022a, 2022b).

Collectively, these studies systematically indicated that both other-referenced and self-referenced social impact items (be it positive or negative) are overrated preevent compared with postevent, and that other-referenced social impact items were significantly higher than self-referenced social impact items pre- and postevent, indicating that self-referenced items tend to be less overrated. This is particularly relevant postevent, where self-referenced social impact items become a more accurate reflection of the lived experience [L*] (see Table 2).

We also found that self-referenced social impact better predicts peoples' support for future events (Oshimi et al., 2022). It was notable that overall, social impact scores were low preevent and even lower postevent (after the experience). Postevent, all social impact scores were below the midpoint of the Likert scale, except the self-referenced feel-good factor [L*].

As was the case for economic impact, social impacts can also be negative. Researchers have investigated aspects such as disorder and conflict (i.e., to what extent an event disrupts residents' daily lives and traffic congestion) or feelings of unsafety (e.g., threats of terrorist attacks). These types of negative social effects tend to dissipate as the event concludes. However, there are others that leave lasting repercussions long after the event has ended. Examples of these enduring negative impacts include displacement and gentrification, such as the displacement of entire townships during the FIFA World Cup 2010 in South Africa. Moreover, some events have been associated with violations of human rights, such as the LGBTQ protest during FIFA World Cup 2018 in Russia, and human rights issues surrounding FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar. These long-term negative consequences warrant close attention and consideration in the evaluation of social impacts from events (Jepson & Walters, 2021).

In summary, sport scholarship has yielded limited evidence supporting significant economic and tourism returns [L*]. As a result, our research focus shifted toward exploring social impacts, yet the question of sustainability persisted. To address this concern, we redirected our efforts toward examining residential well-being as a potential positive and sustainable outcome. We speculated that social impacts might influence subjective well-being, serving as a pathway to achieve greater sustainability in major sport events and thereby justifying their public funding.

Table 2 Wording Matters: Other-Referenced Versus Self-References SII Pre- and Postevent

Positive and Negative SII	Preevent		Postevent
Other-referenced (e.g., "Events create new friendships in the community")	Overrated	>	Overrated
	∨		∨
Self-referenced (e.g., "Because of the event, I create new friends in the community")	Less overrated	>	Lived experience

Note. SII = Social Impact Items. Summary of findings from Taks et al. (2020), Oshimi et al. (2021), Oshimi et al. (2022), and Taks and Rocha (2022).

Sport Events and Subjective Well-Being

Subjective well-being refers to general levels of happiness, and/or aspects such as quality of life, satisfaction with life overall and various life domains (e.g., work, family, health, and leisure time) which all contribute to higher levels of well-being (Fabian, 2022). Not surprisingly, the measuring challenges continue. Some studies investigating the impact of major sports events on the subjective well-being of host residents have used a single-item measure, such as measuring general feeling of *happiness*: "Taking all things together, how would you say things are these days—would you say you are happy, quite happy, or not very happy?" (Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010, p. 160), or *Quality of Life* to reflect one's overall's life satisfaction: "Overall, taking everything into account, I am very satisfied with my quality of life" (Kaplanidou et al., 2013, p. 636). The use of a single item is popular in event studies because it can be easily included in a survey, and/or a form of these items is available in national or international population surveys. However, using a single-item measure of subjective well-being may pose certain drawbacks, such as reliability and validity concerns, and its inability to fully encompass the intricate nature of subjective well-being.

In a series of our studies (Littlejohn et al., 2016; Taks et al., 2016; Taks & Rocha, 2022), we adopted a holistic approach to measure subjective well-being, aiming to gain a more comprehensive understanding of its complexities. Individuals may, however, interpret subjective well-being differently based on their personal understanding of happiness and cultural background. For instance, in Western Societies, wealth often correlates with higher levels of happiness, while in Eastern cultures, personal relationships may play a more significant role in people's happiness, and some studies suggest that even individuals with lower economic status might experience higher levels of happiness.

To address this issue of interpersonal incomparability, we utilized a hypothetical baseline measure to contextualize respondents' concepts of well-being and happiness. Before rating their own level of happiness on a 6-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = *not at all happy* to 6 = *very happy*), participants were presented with a vignette (Hopkins & King, 2010) describing a hypothetical individual with theoretically high happiness. This vignette primed the participants to evaluate the happiness of this fictional character, "Sam," who is depicted as an outgoing person with a secure career, a loving home, good health, and a consistently cheerful disposition, satisfied with life. By first assessing the presumed happiness of Sam, we provided a reference point for participants to gauge their own happiness in a similar manner: "Taking all aspects of your life into account, please select your current overall level of happiness." This approach allowed us to navigate the potential disparities in how individuals perceive and evaluate their subjective well-being, thus enhancing the validity and reliability of our findings.

We then proceeded with various components of subjective well-being as proposed by Diener (2000), such as: life satisfaction (e.g., "Overall, how satisfied are you currently with your life?"); satisfaction with important life domains (e.g., "Rate your current level of satisfaction with each of the following domains": life at home, health status, employment status, leisure time, ...); and high positive and low negative affect (e.g., "How have you generally felt during the past week?": Happy, Frustrated/annoyed, Depressed/blue, Hassled/pushed around, Warm/friendly, Worried/anxious, Enjoying myself, and Tired). This approach has been applied in the context of publicly funded major sport events, for non-mega (Taks et al., 2016) and mega sport events (Taks & Rocha, 2022).

Other studies concerning publicly funded mega sport events (e.g., Schlegel et al., 2017) have assessed subjective well-being using the well-being index of the World Health Organization, commonly known as the WHO-5, which includes emotional states such as feelings of cheerfulness, being in good spirits, calmness, relaxation, vigor, and feeling refreshed and rested. Regardless of whether a single-item or multidimensional approach was employed to gauge subjective well-being, the evidence consistently demonstrates that the "feel-good factor" or the sensation of happiness tends to be the most empirically validated and predominantly positive aspect. However, it is essential to note that this effect is temporary, typically peaking during the immediate period leading up to the event, reaching its height during the event itself, and may persist somewhat after the event has concluded.

Subsequently, the focus of our research team shifted toward exploring potential mechanisms to determine whether social impacts could positively influence subjective well-being, thus promoting a more sustainable outcome for major sport events and justifying their public funding. Schlegel et al.'s (2017) study identified a modest yet positive correlation between the celebratory atmosphere and subjective well-being, both before and during FIFA 2014. However, due to the absence of postevent measurements, it was challenging to confirm a lasting effect on the subjective well-being of host residents. Nevertheless, the study highlighted perceived celebratory atmosphere as a mechanism that bolsters the transient feelings of well-being during the event.

In our investigation of Rio 2016 (Taks & Rocha, 2022), we explored the impact of self-referenced social experiences on subjective well-being, both during and after the events. Surprisingly, no discernible difference was observed in the effect of social impact on subjective well-being between these two time periods. In short, no significant boost from social impact to subjective well-being was found postevent either. By delving into these potential mechanisms, our research aimed to shed light on pathways to foster positive effects on subjective well-being during major sports events, ultimately supporting the case for their public funding and contributing to a more sustainable and meaningful experience for both event attendees and host communities, but so far evidence is indecisive [L*].

Comprehension of factors that influence the subjective well-being of residents during publicly funded sport events is still in its infancy. Sport management research recommends several key strategies that can potentially enhance residents' happiness in such events. These strategies include increasing residents' awareness of the event, utilizing effective communication approaches that evoke feelings of pride and belonging (e.g., Doyle et al., 2021), and fostering a celebratory atmosphere in the lead-up to and during the event (e.g., Chalip, 2006; Schlegel et al., 2017). However, to this day there is no substantial evidence that these recommendations create long-lasting effects on residents' well-being, regardless of whether the event is a mega event or a non-mega sport event. Additionally, it is essential to acknowledge that (sport) sociologists have identified potential long-term negative effects on residents' well-being resulting from major sport events. These negative effects include the displacement of marginalized groups, gentrification, and the neglect of other societal needs, as mentioned earlier (Jepson & Walters, 2021).

In summary, the empirical evidence regarding the impact of publicly funded major sport events on subjective well-being remains inconclusive. Significant questions persist about their effectiveness in producing meaningful and sustainable outcomes for subjective well-being and the extent to which these outcomes

can be achieved. As further research and evaluation are conducted, a deeper understanding of the true implications of publicly funded sport events on community well-being might emerge. This knowledge is essential for making informed decisions about future investments and ensuring the overall welfare of host communities.

In my continued pursuit to further explore meaningful returns to host communities from publicly funded sport events, our research team turned our attention to sport participation impact from events. Another research avenue of event impacts gaining traction in the past decade.

Leveraging Sport Participation From Events

To remain true to our focus to investigate the possible positive outcomes of publicly funded sport events for residents, we started on a research trajectory related to the so-called "trickle-down," "demonstration," or "inspiration" effect from events (e.g., Weed et al., 2015). Notably, whether and how sport events have the potential to stimulate sport participation. To do so, we first embarked on a three-phased study in our SSHRC-funded project entitled: *Leveraging sport events for sport development.*

In Phase 1, the evaluation phase, we assessed leveraging tactics and outcomes of past events: the 2005 Pan-American Junior Athletic Championships held in Windsor (Ontario, Canada), and the 2005 Canadian National Figure Skating Championships held in London (Ontario, Canada; Misener et al., 2015; Taks et al., 2014). In Phase 2, the planning phase, we assembled a panel of experts (i.e., practitioners and academics from various relevant fields) to determine how these effects can be planned. This process resulted in the creation of a model for leveraging sport events to promote sport participation (Chalip et al., 2017). In Phase 3, the implementation phase, we embarked on event leveraging. The chosen event to be leveraged was the 2013 International Children's Games, with a focus on stimulating participation in athletics and gymnastics. This phase led to developing an event-leveraging framework (Taks et al., 2018), shifting away from the notion of legacies and recognizing that events must be leveraged (Chalip, 2018). In other words, desired outcomes must be strategically planned for, well in advance of the event taking place, and the plan must be appropriately implemented to generate potential sport participation outcomes.

Overall, we found no evidence for new participation in sport created by the publicly funded sport events under investigation.[3] Our findings aligned with Weed's (2015) conclusions, that effects are limited: (a) Those people who already do a little sport can be inspired to do a little more, (b) those people who have played sport before can be inspired to play again, and (c) some people might give up one sport to try another [L*]. Our implementation efforts were unsuccessful because the local sport organizations (LSOs) lacked the necessary skills and resources, and they had their way of doing things. Nevertheless, LSOs remained convinced that events can help them build their sport [L*]. These findings triggered [T*] us to embark on the next SSHRC-funded project entitled: *Building Capacity for Sport Participation through Events.*

Through a Participatory Action Research approach (Frisby et al., 2005), we: (a) assisted LSOs build capacity to integrate sport events into their marketing mix to stimulate sport participation, and (b) evaluated processes and outcomes. Here we found that even when desired outcomes were collectively expressed at the onset of each project, Participatory Action Research's attempts to help LSOs embark on new strategies to build their capacity and attract new participants in their sport, whether an event was included in the strategy or not, was obstructed because of intraorganizational dynamics and other priorities (often protected by gatekeepers). Although LSOs gave lip service to the need to increase participation, the effort and resources required to do so mitigated any action on their part. In sum, we did not find strong support that assisting LSOs build capacity to integrate events in their marketing strategies increased participation [L*]. If growing participation in their sport is an important objective, initiatives other than events may be more effective and efficient.

Nonetheless, we have observed compelling evidence on sport development resulting from these events, particularly in terms of personal growth and skill development for individuals already involved in the sport system. This underscores the capacity of events to propel the advancement of the entire sport system, benefiting both individuals and organizations. While I have not elaborated on the role of revamped and built sport infrastructure for events, "white elephants" serving no practical purpose after the event should be avoided, stimulating sport participation can be achieved by prioritizing residents' needs, as they play a central role in the success of these initiatives (e.g., Taks, 2013) [L*].

Looking ahead, sport organizations can strategically plan for the future by identifying areas for improvement within their organizations, devising action plans, setting key performance indicators, and evaluating their progress postevent to assess the attainment of predetermined goals and targets. As we move forward, my focus will remain on sport participation, with the upcoming 2026 World Championships Wheelchair Basketball [T*] in Ottawa serving as the next impetus for exploration. I am excited to collaborate with former Ph.D. Student Georgia Teare [I*], whose expertise promises to influence new avenues of learning in this field (Teare & Taks, 2021).

Then What Are the Socioeconomic Benefits From Events?

To wrap things up, let us shift focus to the "benefits" derived from events. On the economic and tourism front, we observe tangible gains for various stakeholders, including some developers, some players in the hospitality industry, some retailers, some local, provincial, national, and/or international sport federations, some sponsors, some advertisers, and some broadcasting networks. When it comes to the intangible aspects, such as social impact and sport participation, we find evidence of a short-lived feel-good factor experienced by many. However, the most significant beneficiaries are those already entrenched in the sport system, both individuals and organizations (see Figure 1).

To ensure accountability to their residents, governments must take two essential steps. First, they must be transparent about the utilization of public funds invested in supporting events. Second, they should be honest and realistic in their portrayal of the promised event outcomes, while also effectively leveraging these desired outcomes to maximize benefits. By being upfront about the investment and outcomes, governments can demonstrate responsible stewardship of public funds and ensure that the benefits generated from these events are both meaningful and sustainable for the well-being of the host communities.

Concluding Remarks

In this article, I have shared the story of my research journey and how it evolved from "From socio-economic impacts on sport participation to socio-economic outcomes of sport events." I

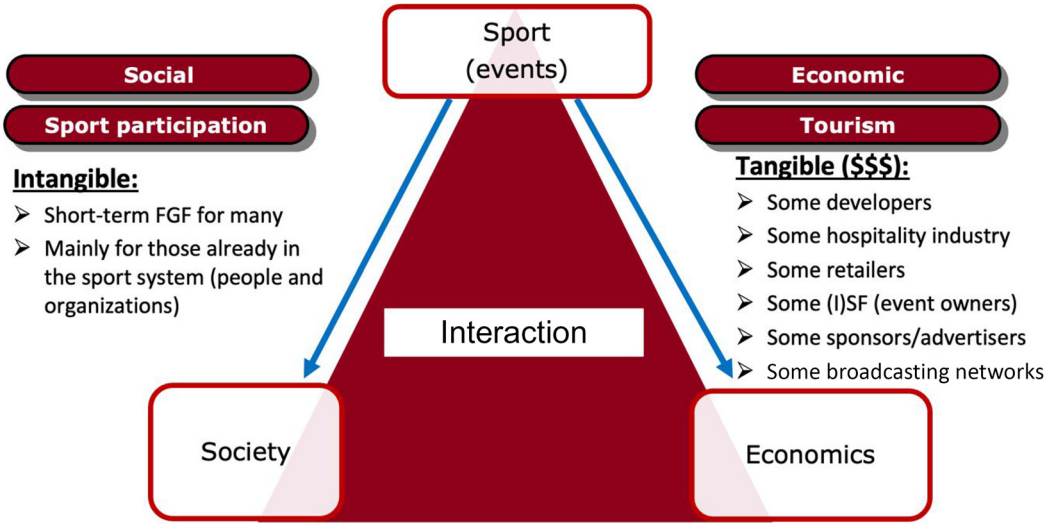

Figure 1 — Socioeconomic benefits from events. FGF = Feel-Good Factor; (I)SF = (International) Sport Federations.

highlighted the unforgettable events and inspiring people, who triggered twists and turns in my research journey and advanced my learning. As I reflect, it becomes evident that triggers [T*], influencers [I*], and lessons learned [L*] intermingled through this journey.

The triggers [T*] I identified can be described as striking, and sometimes unexpected phenomena that stimulated my curiosity. I recognize that these can take place in academic and nonacademic settings. The triggers I highlighted in my research journey were primarily academic such as: striking contents during a university course, remarkable international conferences, changing institutions, academic setbacks, and new research findings; they all advanced and stimulated my research journey. Nonacademic triggers included, in my case, a relocation to a new country and adapting to different cultural, educational, and geographic perspectives. Other nonacademic triggers can encompass any other salient phenomenon happening in the world around you, including personal and family-related issues.

The influencers [I*] on my research journey were the people who motivated and inspired me, and who had a profound effect on my academic journey. Upon reflection, I categorize them in two groups: (a) influencers who caused triggers (e.g., Renson and Chelladurai), and (b) influencers I reached out to and invited them to help me unpack my curiosity (e.g., Kesenne, Chalip, Green, Misener, Agha, Oshimi, Rocha, ...). In the category of influencers causing triggers, I have primarily pinpointed to colleagues within the academic realm, although it is clear that nonacademic influencers such as prominent media figures, environmental activists, family members, and so on, can also cause significant triggers.

When reaching out to influencers to join me on my research journey (i.e., the second category of influencers), I posit that the dynamics among members of a research team undergo a transformation; it ceases to be a unidirectional influence and instead becomes a space where all members mutually influence one another (bidirectional or multifaceted influencers) creating the necessary environment to achieve outcomes that surpass the sum of individual contributions, thereby elevating higher levels of knowledge and learning. Here too, research team members can be from an academic (e.g., colleagues, undergraduate, and graduate students) and/or nonacademic environments (e.g., community groups, members of professional sport organizations, and affiliates of athletic departments).

When it comes to: "What have I learned ... " [L*], I see two levels of learning. Level 1 is where curiosity is unpacked through the multifaceted interaction and collaboration with outstanding influencers in a research team, thereby advancing academic knowledge. Level 2 is the life lessons learned throughout this research journey more broadly. More specifically, triggers will come your way; learn to be alert, see the opportunities, dare to take risks, absorb setbacks, alter your course of action, step out of your comfort zone, be receptive to advice from others, and do not hesitate to reach out to others. It is this broad learning that makes one grow as a person and as an academic. This broader reflection about the intermingling of triggers [T*], influencers [I*], and lesson learned [L*] in a research journey is presented in Figure 2.

To sum things up, I would like to end where I started, with a free adaptation (in cursive) from Allende's (2022) work:

> *There are intersections in our research journey which* we don't notice in the moment they occur, but *in retrospect, after many years* they become clear in hindsight. At each crossroads or fork, we must decide which direction to take. These decisions may determine the course of *the rest of our research journey.* (p. 254)

It was a gratifying exercise to reflect and unpack how my research journey went and why. We could consider making this type of reflection a stepping stone to be promoted to the rank of Prof. Emeritus or Emerita. Food for thought .... Either way, sharing our experiences may trigger, inspire, and advance the learning of future generations of sport management scholars.

In conclusion, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to all influencers who crossed my path, including the very special people in my life who have been instrumental in all my accomplishments. To my beloved spouse, Walter, our cherished children, Adinda, Lisa, and Rik, as well as my sons-in-law, Brady and Adam, and our precious twin granddaughters, Celeste and Danica—each one of you has been a tremendous influencer, a source of motivation and

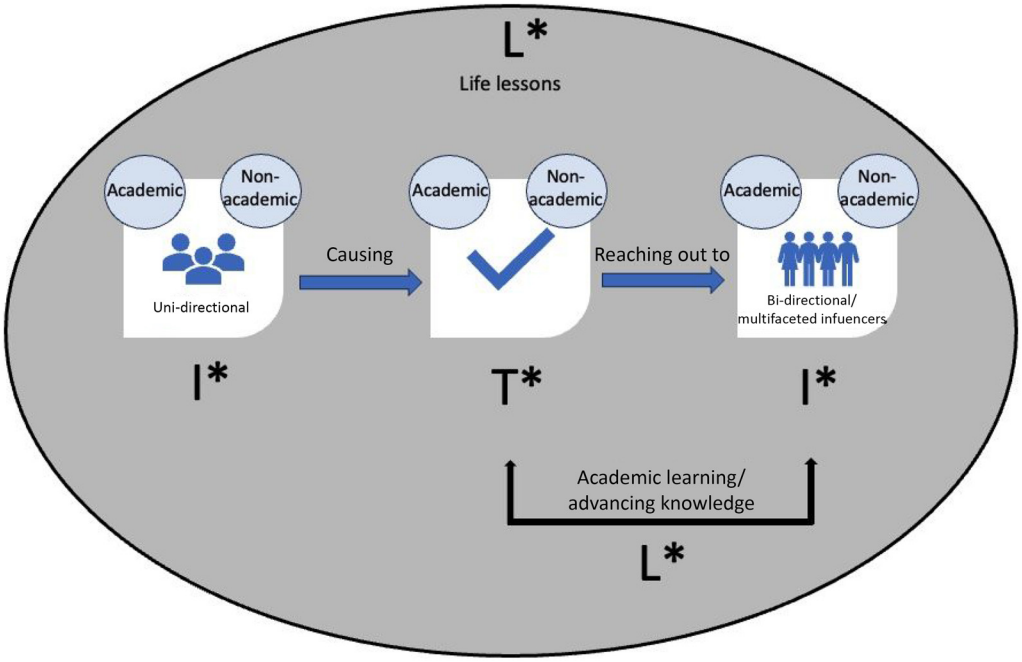

Figure 2 — The intermingling of triggers [T*], influencers [I*], and lesson learned [L*] in a research journey.

inspiration. I have learned invaluable lessons from and through all of you. Thank you, with all my heart!

Notes

1. Fun fact about *European Association for Sport Management* (EASM) 1993: Chelladurai and I both published the first two papers in the very first issue of the "*European Journal for Sport Management,*" the predecessor of *European Sport Management Quarterly* (ESMQ)! Chella, with his 1993 EASM's keynote on: "Sport Management, defining the field (Chelladurai, 1994); and I with my conference presentation on: 'The consumer cost of golf and soccer'" (Taks, Vanreusel, et al., 1994).

2. During my editorship of the *European Sport Management Quarterly* (ESMQ) from 2009 to 2011, we initiated the adoption of Manuscript Central as our submission platform. Journal of Sport Management had already implemented this system, and I received valuable assistance from Lucie Thibault, who was the editor of Journal of Sport Management at that time. Later on, Dr. Thibault became my Dean and remained a source of inspiration with her exceptional leadership qualities when I assumed my roles as Vice-Dean Research and Associate Vice-Provost Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies at the University of Ottawa.

3. Applying the event leveraging model, Chalip (2018, p. 261) discovered positive participation outcomes for the 1984 Olympic Games in Atlanta. It is worth mentioning that these games were unique as they were not supported with public funds. The unexpected surplus generated from these Olympic Games was reinvested in a newly established fund aimed at fostering sport participation in the region and state of California.

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