

SPORT, CONFLICT AND RECONCILIATION

CONFERENCE REPORT



SATURDAY 28TH APRIL 2012

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Introduction



As the UK was preparing for a year of celebrating sports with London hosting the 2012 Olympic Games, the Archbishop Desmond Tutu Centre for War and Peace Studies decided to mark this event by providing a reflection on the relations between sport and conflict.

Sport can be both a source of conflict and a means of promoting reconciliation and peace-building. This one-day conference examined theoretical debate and practical approaches to the role of sport in relation to conflict and conflict resolution.

Conference programme

9.30-9.45 – Introduction and welcome

9.45-11.00 – Panel 1: Sport and conflict (chaired by Stefanie Kappler)

Dawn Walsh, “Split allegiances, soccer and sectarianism: Is the FAI creating soccer sectarianism in Northern Ireland?”

Gareth Mulvenna, “Population movement and resistance identity: the Northern Ireland troubles in the 1970s and the emergence of Cliftonville FC’s ‘Red Army’ ”

Adam Benkwitz, “ ‘The city is ours’: Football fan rivalry, space and territory in Birmingham”

Davide Sterchele, “Football competitions in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina: fertile land or mined field?”

11.00-11.15 – Coffee and Tea

11.15-12.45 – Panel 2: Sport and reconciliation – the state and inter-state level (chaired by Terry Phillips)

Pompiliu-Nicolae Constantin, “The power of sport: conflicts and reconciliations between Romanians and Hungarians”

Anita Sterea, “Romania between the USSR and USA: the Olympic Games in Moscow 1980 and Los Angeles and 1984”

Ged Naughton, “Football and peacebuilding in Liberia: a case study of Millennium Stars FC”

12.45-1.45 – ‘Playing for Peace’ exhibition, followed by lunch

12.45-1.00 Presentation on the ‘Playing for Peace’ exhibition by Diane Hadwen, Education and Outreach Officer from the Peace Museum, Bradford

1.00-1.45 Buffet lunch

1.45-3.15 – Panel 3: Sport and reconciliation – grassroots interpretations (chaired by Liam O’Callaghan)

Simon Darnell, “Sport on the move: Situating physical culture within peace movement(s)”

Sarah Green, “ ‘We are not defined by our body’: The role of spirituality through sport in the identity adaptation of wounded British service personnel”

John Bennett, “Away goals count double: the English football play as conflict metaphor”

Alexander Cárdenas, “Sport for development and peace in Colombia”

3.15-3.30 – Coffee and tea

3.30-4.45 – Wrap-up session (chaired by Stefanie Kappler, Liam O’Callaghan and Michael Holmes)

Conference report



The conference brought together a wide range of papers, both in terms of geographical coverage and research questions investigated. Out of this diversity, the overall conference produced a number of shared cross-cutting topics.

The paper presenters particularly reflected on the relevance of sport as a tool for identity formation in complex ways. Dawn Walsh, for instance, looked at the manner in which football affiliation can be both a source of unity and of division in Northern Ireland.

Gareth Mulvenna also looked at football in Northern Ireland, though his paper focused more on the resistive potential of football at the club level. Looking at Liberia and from a practitioner perspective, Ged Naughton showed how football has helped to shape what he calls “Liberia’s new peace-time identity”. In contrast, Sarah Green’s paper pointed to the ways in which sport has shaped the processes of self-identification on the part of wounded British service personnel. These examples reflect the extent to which sport is an essential platform for identity formation, but at the same time we must neither romanticise nor glorify it as strictly constructive. Instead, the conference participants discussed the ambivalent nature of sport.

In this context, Davide Sterchele’s paper highlighted “the complex and ambivalent role played by the reunification of the Bosnian football landscape in affecting socio-political identities and power relations in the post-war environment”. Along similar lines, Pompiliu-Nicolae Constantin outlined the ambiguous character of sport in the context of conflict and reconciliation between Romanians and Hungarians. While both Simon Darnell’s paper, focusing on the connections “between sport and social movements of peace and non-violence”, and Alexander Cárdenas’ paper on the role of sport in development and peace practice in Colombia outlined the peace promoting potential of sport, Adam Benkwitz pointed to the rivalries associated with football in the city of Birmingham. With a focus on the elite level and political nature of sport, Anita Sterea talked about manifestations of revenge and boycott during the 1984 Los Angeles Summer Olympic Games. In addition, John Bennett analysed football related discourses in English drama, evaluating their conflictive power “against selected social and geopolitical benchmarks”.



Against this background, the conference participants discussed the spatial aspects of sport, in terms of how representation of class, gender and ethnicity are enacted and represented in space. This can

be seen not only in the Northern Irish context (Walsh, Mulvenna), but also in the ways in which, as Benkwitz claimed, football fan rivalry has divided the city space of Birmingham. To a certain extent, this seems to parallel the divisions of Bosnia-Herzegovina's national space (Sterchele). The growing space that sport organisations are occupying in peace activism (Darnell) can be considered to be one specific application of this. However, the imaginary space of sport is always vulnerable to becoming co-opted by nationalistic elites, as in the cases of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Sterchele) or the USSR (Sterea).

In that sense, sport can impose constraints set from the top down. However, it can also represent a space of grass-roots resistance, as the examples of Colombia (Cárdenas) and Liberia (Naughton) illustrated. The case studies presented at the conference therefore clearly reflected the double-edged character of sport. It can be a tool of conflict and a tool of peace. It can be disciplining or empowering, depending on the actors and agendas involved. Sport can thus divide and unify social spaces. It will therefore be necessary to further investigate the ways in which sport serves as a platform of social power, agency and resistance as well as the associated complex processes of identity formation.



Abstracts

9.45-11.00 PANEL 1: SPORT AND CONFLICT (chaired by Stefanie Kappler)

DAWN WALSH: Split allegiances, soccer and sectarianism: Is the FAI creating soccer sectarianism in Northern Ireland?

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The Football Association of Ireland (FAI) has a long history of scouting young players from Britain who are eligible to play for the national team of the Republic of Ireland due to the fact their parents or grandparents were/are Irish. In many ways these efforts have been understandable as a small country sought to supplement its own pool of talent. In most instances the English Football Association, who the players could have alternatively declared for, have had no reaction; in the majority of cases these players were unlikely to be included in the English team due to greater competition. However where the FAI has targeted players who could alternatively be playing for Northern Ireland and are eligible to play for the Republic due to special arrangements, the reaction has been very different. Some of this is due to the fact that as a small region, Northern Ireland's Ireland Football Association (IFA) cannot afford to lose players to the Republic.

However there is another problem with the FAI's effort to recruit these players. The players who declare for the Republic are almost entirely from the nationalist community. This drains the Northern Ireland team of talent from this community. This article asks if this pattern is leading to a soccer team for Northern Ireland that is not only unrepresentative of the nationalist community but is sectarian in nature. If so this represents a problem for those trying to build a shared identity and future for those in Northern Ireland and must be managed in a way that overcomes this while still respecting the freedom of those in Northern Ireland to choose their own identities.

GARETH MULVENNA: Population movement and resistance identity: The Northern Ireland Troubles in the 1970s and the emergence of Cliftonville FC's "Red Army"

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This paper frames the transition of Cliftonville FC from an amateur outfit to a professional framework within the context of civil disorder due to the ongoing Northern Ireland conflict in the early 1970s. It shall be demonstrated, using archival material from the Community Relations Commission Northern Ireland and local newspaper reports, how the rapid population movements in North Belfast following the introduction of internment without trial for terrorist suspects in 1971 led to an influx of Catholic Nationalists into the Cliftonville which had previously been a middle-class Protestant neighbourhood. This demographic change led to an upsurge in support for the previously

modestly supported football club and led to Cliftonville FC being regarded as the Belfast's 'Nationalist' football team in lieu of the famous Belfast Celtic from West Belfast who had withdrawn from the Irish League just over twenty years previously.

Cliftonville's support base came to be known as the 'Red Army'. The 'Red Army' image of itself was clearly in line with Castell's theory of 'resistance identity' which was used as a supporting argument in Giulianotti and Armstrong's *Fear and Loathing in World Football* (2001, p.270). The 'Red Army' became more than a mere fan base and can be viewed as a clear manifestation of Nationalist opposition to social exclusion and stigmatization within existing social and political frameworks in Northern Ireland. Government correspondence recently released under the 'thirty year rule' demonstrates the level of consternation that this new group was causing to officials in Northern Ireland.

In essence this paper brings to light an episode of Northern Irish sporting history that has been poorly understood and demonstrates how fandom and political identity became irrevocably entwined and thus a source of further conflict in an already toxic social and political atmosphere.

ADAM BENKWITZ: "The City is Ours": Football fan rivalry, space and territory in Birmingham

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Football's 'everyday fans' and inter-club fan rivalry have come into academic focus in recent years. The tensions between 'imagined communities' of fans are based on unique and complex socio-cultural and historical factors, and therefore each rivalry is unique and complex. This paper is based on a broader ethnographic study exploring those factors underpinning an important 130-year rivalry in the heart of England's second largest city between fans of Aston Villa and Birmingham City, which has not yet received any academic attention. It looks specifically at one of the key emerging themes, territory, finding that the struggle for control of space in the city represents a struggle for power and (perceived) superiority between the imagined communities, which creates tension and conflict and further reinforces fan rivalry. This informs our sociological understanding of this case study and further provides an in-depth analysis of the role territory plays in rivalry and conflict between groups.

DAVIDE STERCHELE: Football competitions in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina: fertile land or mined field?

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Drawing on ethnographic studies conducted in Bosnia-Herzegovina since 2003, the paper illustrates the complex and ambivalent role played by the reunification of the Bosnian football landscape in affecting socio-political identities and power relations in the post-war environment. On the one hand, by contributing to further unveil how ethnicity is instrumentally used by the Bosnian élites to

exploit the common good for their private enrichment, football reunification provides an arena where those who are disempowered by the current status quo can express their voice. At the same time, while confirming football's potential for the mobilization of public opinion, the Bosnian case shows how sport can also be easily used by the establishment to preserve the status quo. The partial autonomy of football from other social spheres seems still too weak in Bosnia and Herzegovina to challenge the hegemony of the political and criminal élites.

Nonetheless, whereas changes 'from below' find it hard to emerge, the partial autonomy of sport displays its effects 'from above' through decisions imposed by FIFA and UEFA on the unified Bosnian Football Federation, making it the first Bosnian institution to be headed by a single president (i.e. without the rotational balance system which has so far guaranteed each 'constituent people' not to be overpowered by the others, but also paralyzed the country through cross-ethnic mutual vetoes). Hence the new Football Federation could serve as a testing ground for possible transformations of the broader institutional apparatus, providing insights into crucial questions regarding the future social and political shape of the country.

11.15-12.45 PANEL 2: SPORT AND RECONCILIATION – THE STATE AND INTER-STATE LEVEL

(chaired by Terry Phillips)

POMPILIU-NICOLAE CONSTANTIN: The power of sport: conflicts and reconciliations between Romanians and Hungarians

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The political conflicts between Romania and Hungary have a long history, considering their proximity. The battle for Transylvania and the high number of Hungarians in Romania were always reasons for conflicts. Sport, as an important activity, has contributed to this duel. Sport disputes between them are well-known, but in the same time there are many cases when sport unites these groups or when Romanians appreciate role of Hungarians in the Romanian sport development.

The end of 2011 was marked by the hockey conflict from Miercurea Ciuc, a Romanian city with a significant Hungarian minority. The incident took place at the start of the ice hockey game that pitted Romania against Hungary. The Romanian players, who were mostly ethnic Hungarians, remained silent when Romania's anthem was played at the start of the game but then sang Hungary's anthem along with the Hungarian team. The scandal was huge and it sends to reflect about the way to solve this problem. Many voices blamed the political value of this conflict and offered examples about how sport was a way of reconciliation in Romania and an option for ethnic integration.

My paper wants to present the evolution of these Romanian-Hungarian attitudes in sport, after the First World War to our days, to understand better the role of sport and its relations with politics.

Also, I will present some personalities who are examples for the reconciliation in this time, like Luliu Baratky, Vasile Miriuta or Gabriela Szabo.

ANITA STEREA: Romania between the USSR and USA: the Olympic Games in Moscow 1980 and Los Angeles 1984

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In February 1980, President Carter decided that the United States of America would not send a team to compete in Moscow, and also started a campaign with other democratic states to join this American instigated boycott. More than 60 countries would support the United States in this decision, and when the Olympic Games started in Moscow, only 81 countries were to be at the starting line - a very small number if you look at previous Olympic editions. The USSR would not forget and forgive, consequently seeking revenge for this boycott four years later during the 1984 Los Angeles Summer Olympic Games.

During this period of time, Romania had been caught in the middle. In sport related fields, Romanian athletes presented a very important contribution, and simultaneously changed the history of sport - Nadia Comaneci's case is a perfect example of this. Romania sent a team to Moscow that year and took away very good results, but not without controversy. Surprisingly, Romania sent an Olympic team to the United States in 1984 and also generated excellent displays of sportsmanship.

In my paper I will analyse different aspects such as: why did Romania send a team to the USA? How did Ceausescu use this fact for his benefit and public diplomacy? How did Ceausescu negotiate the presence of Romanian athletes in the USA? Why did Ceausescu want to have diplomatic relations with the USA? How did political leaders from Moscow look at Romania's decision to send athletes to Los Angeles? For this research I will use documents from the Romanian Foreign Ministry Archives or Security (also known as the secret police in the Communism regime) Archives.

GED NAUGHTON: Football and peace-building in Liberia: a case study of Millennium Stars FC

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This is a case study of a 15-year project involving a grassroots football team from Liberia, Millennium Stars FC. Formed in 1997, during the Liberian civil war, football allowed them to distance themselves from and deal with their recent past. On a three-week tour to the UK in 1999, it gave them an opportunity to make connections to another part of the world. It continues to give them a sense of worth and a way to contribute to rebuilding. Football helped them not only to rebuild their own lives, but to contribute to shaping a vision for Liberia's new peace-time identity. Grassroots football has been in increasing use in the last three decades as a component of DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration) programmes with child soldiers in civil conflicts.

Non-governmental organisations particularly have found that football more than other sports appears successful when applied in a variety of cultures and contexts.

While empirical research is still scant, within the environment of SDP (Sport for Development and Peace) it is also acknowledged that 'football for peace' has shortfalls, limitations and negative as well as positive results. Benefits include factors such as increasing individual self-confidence and team spirit, appreciation of the 'other' and allowing children to re-claim their lost childhoods; while disadvantages include reinforcement of destructive macho stereotypes, creation of unrealistic expectations and the risk of isolating crucial peace-building work from the mainstream.

The story of Millennium Stars forces us to look beyond short-term rehabilitation. Liberia had 14 years of war, but more than 160 years of suppression and oppression. A study of Millennium Stars FC's history shows that the fundamental role for any grassroots project in Liberia, using sport or not, must be to tackle extreme poverty by creating long-term trust, opportunities, and social bonds at the most basic community level.

1.45-3.15 PANEL 3: SPORT AND RECONCILIATION – GRASSROOTS INTERPRETATIONS (chaired by Liam O'Callaghan)

SIMON DARNELL: Sport on the Move: Situating physical culture within peace movement(s)

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Recent years have seen increased attention paid to the connections between sport, peace building and conflict resolution. Significant portions of this literature have approached the topic from descriptive, proscriptive, and even functionalist perspectives in order to 'uncover' how and why sport can contribute to peace. Overlooked, therefore, have been the connections, both theoretical and empirical, between sport and social movements of peace and non-violence, and the implications of this relationship.

In this paper, I offer some initial connections between sport and various social movements that have organized and advocated for peace, pacifism and de-militarization in response to a growing Military/Industrial Complex in the 20th century. From a theoretical perspective, the paper explores whether, how and why the organization and experience of sporting forms has been understood and mobilized to resist militarism and contribute to peace. This is supported by an evolutionary analysis examining the origins of the peace movement itself, its connections to the United Nations, and its intersections with various other social movements such as workers and feminists. The empirical analysis focuses on, among others, the organization of the first modern Olympic Games, which looked to international sporting organizations as partners within the global peace movement, and compares and contrasts this orientation to contemporary movements working to build peaceful relations in areas of ethnic, environmental and economic conflict, such as the Global Peace Games begun in 2001 by the NGO Play Soccer. I conclude that scholars of sport would benefit from engaging with the complex social and historical antecedents of both conflict and political activism, particularly as it highlights the role of social movements in positioning sport in support of peace.

SARAH GREEN: “We are not defined by our body”: The role of spirituality through sport in the identity adaptation of wounded British service personnel

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By presenting a discussion of disability sport as a tool for dealing with post-traumatic injury, the focus will centre on whether participation in disability sport could have existential and/or spiritual meaning. The following questions will be addressed: ‘exactly how do traumatic personal injuries impact the identity and the meaning of life for injured Servicemen and women?’ and ‘to what extent can sport play a spiritual role in the adaptation of self-identity during the rehabilitation process for injured British military personnel?’ Underpinning this overall investigation is the recognition, based on the current literature, that disabling injuries often require the re-adjustment of identity and the impact of sport in this transformation needs to be better understood.

In sum, this research frames in a microcosm the existential nature of mortality where traumatic personal injuries and their impact on identity and the meaning of life for injured Servicemen and women are at the forefront of investigation. Examples of the themes to be explored include: understanding military culture as its own social enterprise (Hall, 2011); the experience of disability and transition to post-war society (Hamil, Carson and Dorahy, 2010); the ambiguities of masculinity, disability and the ‘norm’ (Green *et al.* 2010) and the significance of disability sport as a spiritual tool for physical and psychosocial adjustment.

JOHN BENNETT: Away goals count double: the English football play as conflict metaphor

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Beginning with Harold Brighouse's recently-revived drama *The Game* (1913) and finishing with Marie Jones and Martin Lynch's *Dancin' Shoes: The George Best Story* (2010), this discursive presentation examines 100 years of the 'Beautiful Game' as performed on the English stage. It will consider the much cited premise that 'all drama is conflict' and locate this trope within aspects of narrative studies discourse. It will also consider representations of class and race as sites of sporting and theatrical conflict and interrogate the potential of the 'football play' to attract an atypical theatre audience across the theatre threshold. It will suggest a three-part taxonomy of fictional/eponymous/team portrayal and attempt to evaluate efficacy and impact against selected social and geo-political benchmarks.

ALEXANDER CARDENAS: Sport for development and peace in Colombia

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The role and impact of sports in society has been debated for centuries. Historically associated with competition for pride and glory, sport has recently become a tool for conflict transformation, peace

building and development. In the last twenty years, a worldwide movement made up of governments, UN agencies, the private sector, international and national NGO's has become increasingly supportive of the idea that sport is indeed a valuable means to address issues concerning social justice and equality.

Furthermore, a new strategy for social intervention in disadvantaged communities known as sports for development and peace (SDP) has recently become a platform for the implementation of development and peace programs and the design of research that recruits sport and other forms of physical activities to the realization of international community goals such as the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). The concept of the use of sport to bring social change within the SDP framework is embedded in the realization that sport possesses unique qualities that enable it to contribute to peace, conflict transformation and development initiatives. As one of the most powerful international communication mediums, sport has the ability to connect people in an extremely effective manner. In addition, SDP supports the idea that sport can be utilized as a way to advancing human rights, human health, development and wellbeing.

This presentation will introduce the historical processes that prompted the emergence of sport for development for peace as well as the latest developments in the field. Furthermore, this presentation aims at presenting current SDP initiatives in Latin America, particularly in Colombia where a multi-sector project, the football and peace network, has adopted the use of sport as a strategy to promote social transformation and peace in the nation.

Outputs

Based on the success of this conference, the Archbishop Desmond Tutu Centre for War and Peace Studies has launched its first working paper series entitled "Sport, Conflict and Reconciliation". This can be accessed from our website at <http://www.hope.ac.uk/warandpeace/workingpaperseries/>. The Centre is also currently working on a special issue to be submitted to a renowned academic journal.

Following a demand from the conference participants to carry on discussing and cooperating on the conference topic, the Centre has created a yahoo group (tutucentre) where people can continue to share their opinions and work on this issue. Interested individuals are welcome to join at <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/tutucentre>.

List of participants to the Conference

Name	Affiliation
Savandie Abeyratna	Liverpool Hope University
Ayodele Oluwasegun Olalekan	Shygun Sports
Adam Benkwitz	University of Cumbria
John Bennett	Liverpool Hope University
Bill Blazek	Liverpool Hope University
Ian Brittain	Coventry University
Alexander Cardenas	University Jaume I
Anthony Cawley	Liverpool Hope University
Pompiliu-Nicolae Constantin	University of Bucharest/Université Libre de Bruxelles
Órla Cronin	Órla Cronin Research Ltd
Simon Darnell	Durham University
Sam Dilliway	University of Bradford
Bryce Evans	Liverpool Hope University
Sarah Green	Coventry University
Diane Hadwen	Peace Museum
Liz Harris	Liverpool Hope University
Michael Holmes	Liverpool Hope University
Stefanie Kappler	Liverpool Hope University
Duncan Light	Liverpool Hope University
Edozie Madu	Liverpool Hope University
Mike Malloy	Liverpool Hope University
Joe McFadden	Liverpool Hope University
Martin McFadden	Liverpool Hope University
Michael Mulqueen	Liverpool Hope University
Gareth Mulvenna	Northern Ireland Assembly/Queen's University Belfast
Ged Naughton	Newcastle University
Liam O'Callaghan	Liverpool Hope University
John Oso	Liverpool Hope University
Sarah Oxford	University of Bradford
Edward Parr	
Terry Phillips	Liverpool Hope University
Chas Raws	Society of Friends
Nick Rees	Liverpool Hope University

Davide Sterchele
Anita Sterea
Emily Vest
Dawn Walsh
Maeva Zimmermann

University of Padova
University of Bucharest
Brunel University
Dublin City University
Liverpool Hope University

Acknowledgments

The Archbishop Desmond Tutu Centre for War and Peace Studies would like to thank all the participants for their contribution which made this conference a successful event. A particular thank you to Prof Pillay, Vice-Chancellor of Liverpool Hope University, for officially opening the “Playing for Peace” exhibition which was displayed at Hope University the week preceding the conference.



Thank you also to our partners for their support:

- Emerald Journal
- the Peace Museum from Bradford who lent the “Playing for Peace” exhibition to the Centre.

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