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**Using Sport as a Tool for Sustainable Development: International Organizations and Sustainability**
Abstract:

For hundreds of years, sports have provided a platform of entertainment that serves its main core purpose of bringing groups of people together. Today it is a global tradition that promotes an inclusive society and allows an educational experience for the athlete and the fan. Sports are a possible catalyst in striving for global objectives. The United Nations created the Millenium Development Goals which were eight goals proposed in the year 2000. Aimed to work toward the biggest problems we as a
global community face. Fast forward fifteen years and the new Sustainable Development Goals are created. They consist of seventeen goals that crave action by every country and cover a broad range of subjects. Sports can directly serve as a bridge in raising awareness of issues surrounding the goals. Athletes, sporting event staff, travel tourism companies, fans, and International Sports Federations have not always put the environment or social inclusion efforts first when it comes to sport. However, it has the power to change the world, once said by Nelson Mandela, a South African political icon who believed the power of sport can do the unimaginable. Sustainability is challenging for sporting events that host competitions with numerous crowds, or sports like biathlon, that previously used harmful wax for the skis and that are reliant on exact amounts of snow at the right time. Even though they have solved the issue by using artificial snow, the climate isn’t getting any better and those methods take up resources. International and local sports organizations deal with sustainability issues environmentally, socially, and economically. Practicing innovation in these three pillars of sustainability and implementing them into a sports organization or event creates value directly for the organization, the surrounding area, its fans, and the environment. Having sports entities use sustainability as a foundation in their practices is crucial to sports innovation.

Preface:

Before beginning this research, I had minuscule knowledge of International Sports Organizations and how much they affect their sport and act as a leader for smaller organizations across the globe. I also was not heavily educated or involved in learning sustainability practices and how they are implemented not just in sports but in big corporations. I interviewed a local Non-profit organization while on an excursion in Athens, Greece about how sports can be used to create a bridge for marginalized peoples into society. They along with many other countries train homeless individuals to play in a street football tournament. I took away a valuable lesson that sports are meant for everyone and not just people who have access to courts, equipment, or the money to play. I knew that if
homeless individuals had their own world cup, the sports sphere would be full of possibilities. Sports
deserve to be accessible. Believe it or not, they are often not. Not everyone has access to the education
sports provide due to the lack of facilities or neglect. This initial study fueled the intuition of researching
how international and local organizations can provide sustainable development practices economically,
environmentally, and socially to promote a better world through sport. Some of that statement is part
of the International Olympic Committee’s motto, “Creating a better world through sport.” The IOC has
been under question for years on whether they are really striving for sustainability. They started to
require International Federations to implement sustainable practices in the foundation of their event
models but continue to partake in unsustainable practices. A reason for choosing this topic is because of
the extensive number of International Sports Federations and their leader, The International Olympic
Committee, here in Switzerland. Lausanne, Switzerland. Around forty-five organizations call Lausanne
their home. This provided a first-hand glimpse of certain projects that organizations deal with and
insight into innovating themselves. Switzerland is also named the most innovative country on the planet
for years. Sports are a part of billions of people's lives whether an individual plays a sport or not. It
affects their livelihood, economy, environment, etc. Sports have stuck with me throughout my entire life
as well. I have played multiple sports growing up, volunteered for disabled individual sports leagues,
worked a collegiate golf tournament, and was a brand ambassador for a sports tourism package. Sports
has many different sectors because it is so vast, and it connects with the social responsibility and finance
aspects of the program. This topic suits my background and will allow me to delve into many different
areas of sustainability practices in the sports world.

**Acknowledgements:**

I would first off like to recognize Michael Akerib for his mentorship and helping guide my research for
this project. His guidance was crucial to the success of reaching individuals for gathering information
through a series of interviews. He provided real world sustainable scenarios I was unaware of that I
could then connect the sports world with such as the water usage with textiles, and how sports organizations could even combat this issue. As a professor for many years, and a guest speaker for the program, he was able to provide me with strong areas to focus on concerning ethics due to his work with commodities.

I would also like to thank the participants willing to be interviewed and further my knowledge in innovation and sustainable development as well as learning about non-sustainable practices that are not just in sports. Also, how sports can be a catalyst and platform for promoting and implementing social, environmental, and economic sustainability. It was my pleasure to interview a group of extremely genuine people who care about their work. I was able to acquire a deep understanding of how sustainability chairs for international federations ponder situations and how to innovate their sports, as well as driving others as well. Even hearing about what travel tourism packages say on an international level about sustainability. This was a rare opportunity for an American student to interview individuals at an elevated level and be able to learn about sustainability in sports, that could be used elsewhere in the field of business and society. It was unquestionably kind for these individuals to take their time out of the day and allow me to interview them. I will forever be grateful for them in furthering my academic excellence and providing a professional experience.

I would also like to recognize my Academic Professors and Coordinators, Aigul Jarmatova, Apostolis Apostolidis, and Goran Jovanovic for facilitating the relationship between my mentor and I as well as helping me form the layout of this project. This subject matter has never been researched through the SIT program and they were thrilled at my interest in sports and the intuition to learn about the sustainability sector which made me even more excited for creating the project. Alongside my Academic support, I was challenged by my classmates and was supported through the process of writing this research paper. I have never had to interview individuals and then draft a paper about my findings. Especially a nine-thousand-word paper, away from my country of origin, and over a subject I have never
researched in my academic career. I would not have been able to complete a project to this extent if it were not for the Interviewees, classmates, family, mentor, and academic coordinators and I extend a great deal of gratitude to them.

**Introduction:**

When people think of the word “Sustainability,” they immediately assume it involves saving the environment. Sustainability is much more than just the environment. Sustainability contains three pillars: Economic, Social, and Environmental. It can be applied to anything we as humans partake in, and historically, we are not particularly good at it, at least in some sectors. Social sustainability is promoting a healthy environment and creating places that promote wellbeing. For example, the NHL took a big step back in 2014 and investigated preserving ice ponds for aspiring hockey players. When I was in Greece, I researched how street soccer can allow homeless individuals a sense of inclusion and how the Homeless World Cup gives them meaning. The Homeless World Cup Foundation is a perfect example of social sustainability in sports. I will speak about other social sustainability matters below. Economic sustainability is simply providing long-term economic growth without negatively impacting the social or environmental elements of the community. Reusing materials or infrastructure is how sports can be economically sustainable, however, some are abusive and draw attention by creating massive unnecessary arenas that negatively impact economies and the environment. Environmental sustainability is the act of protecting natural resources and ecosystems. The International Biathlon Union recently took part in a project of planting one hundred thousand trees to raise social awareness of climate change and to give back to the natural setting their sport needs to function. Climate change is one of the key issues that the globe is facing and hopes to become carbon neutral by 2050 or the planet will enter a state of no return. Some people believe it has already entered that state. I agree with them.
How can sports become a catalyst in driving social change in this ongoing issue? Education, Media awareness, and innovation. All which sports have provided in the past and must going forward.

Switzerland has been named the most innovative country on the planet every year since 2011 by the Global Innovation Index. Innovation is measured by multiple different means such as market sophistication, infrastructure, knowledge and technology outputs, human capital and research, and the list goes on. Innovation positively impacts sustainability performance (Efrat, 2014). Switzerland is also the home of the International Olympic Committee, the governing body of all International Sports Federations that compete in the Olympics and oversee making sure their sport is developed worldwide. Lausanne, Switzerland, the Olympic Capital, is home to around sixty-five International Federations and contribute large amounts of money to the Swiss economy year after year. The IOC actively recruits federations around the world to move their headquarters to Lausanne. They have also said to pay a newcomer’s rent for two years and help their workers find homes. Housing is exceedingly difficult to manage in Switzerland. These organizations along with the IOC are on a mission to create a better world through sport. Every pillar of sustainability is engraved in the foundation of these institutions which is needed to provide leadership for their sport worldwide. These federations have more of an impact on the globe than we realize. If a sport wants to become a legitimate sport, they must be recognized by the IOC and have their own IF. The Olympic Games have been ongoing since the first modern Olympics in 1896, which occurred in Athens, Greece. Enormous stadiums have been built for the range of sporting events and have run into problems dealing with environmental and economic sustainability and have had questions raised on whether the IOC is achieving the mission they state, ethically at least. Sports can have a direct impact on environmental sustainability by means of event management, infrastructure, travel tourism practices they use, the type of textiles they use for uniforms and staffing gear, and also sponsorships. Organizations are taking initiatives with banning certain sponsors that offput heavy carbon emissions and are adopting a framework that thinks more about the climate. Sports have been a
main driver in promoting social change, such as working towards diversity and inclusion goals. The NBA along with various other national leagues in America have promoted movements like, Black Lives Matter and other equality initiatives. This was sparked by police brutality in the United States and the American sports industry reacted accordingly to raise awareness due to the scale of the problem. I am not comparing issues, yet I believe if we have an ongoing climate crisis and it is worldwide, then sports can be a catalyst in driving change across the globe for humans to develop a more sustainable culture. International Federations have been seen creating unsustainable infrastructure, officials being corrupt, and events depleting economies. I would like to explore how international organizations practice sustainability, their role in the Swiss economy, and local organizational approaches to sustainability. I believe this topic and the questions I will ask pertain to the social responsibility aspect of the SIT program as well as other areas. Sport is a big business and economically important to countries' revenue streams and national reputations as well. Sports are much bigger than a winner and a loser.

**Literature Review:**

The introduction included a brief analysis of sustainability and connecting each pillar to the sports sphere with examples of how sports can impact the planet socially, environmentally, and economically. I will go more in depth of the three pillars and how sports correlate to them but highlighting how sports engage marginalized groups of people and how it can benefit society. My research in Greece involved individuals who are homeless and how sports can benefit their lives. In this research I will ask the question how sports can help other marginalized groups of people including disabled individuals. How the local organizations use sustainability as a foundation of their business model to create a more inclusive society.

**Positionality:**
As an American student it is crucial to recognize my bias to the topic. Sports play a huge role in American culture, even if the sport is not as popular in other countries. In Europe, the sport with the most revenue generation in terms of leagues is Soccer. American leagues hold the top three spots for leagues with the most revenue generation in the world. And they are different sports. This allows more room for sustainability, positive and negative practices. It is a bigger business in America, but that doesn’t necessarily make it better. Sports can be used as a catalyst in driving global objectives, and often promote practices of sustainability, and I explore practices in the United States and also in Europe. Different sports sustain themselves differently also. Indoor and outdoor sports organizations have different approaches. I find it a positive for European culture to rely more on public transport to attend larger sporting events as well. Depending on how large the event may be, it varies on how a fan goes from his or her home to the event. Also, the prominence of tailgating in America compared to Europe is incomparable. I believe this is due to the fact that many European schools do not have sports teams and leagues and the sheer size of the United States and lack of diverse cultures and languages. I also recognize I have never taken a sustainability class, but only have had lectures. My goal for this project is to allow the reader to understand different ways small and large corporations handle sustainability and hopefully influence the reader to involve sustainability in the foundation of their circumstances. I also interview athletes as well to see whether sustainability is prominent to their organizations or how exposed athletes are to the ideas and issues of sustainability. Social sustainability is more prominent with the athletes I interviewed.

Methods:

The freedom of conducting an independent study project about sustainability directly correlated with the social responsibility focus of the program. It also happened to be a great location for this research being that Switzerland has been named the most innovative country on the planet since 2011 and the overwhelming amount of sport federations and sporting activities in the country. This research
took place in a six-week period between the dates March 17th to April 28th. Gathering information on the subjects mentioned I used primary, secondary, and media sources.

The interviews were considered primary sources that involved experts in the field of sports or sports business that pertained to relevant questions I had and wanted to answer in this project. The subjects interviewed ranged from the head of sustainability in the governing organization of their sport, leaders in organizing local events for disabled individuals, a coach of a street football team for homeless individuals, and even a Vice President for a sports travel tourism company who connects the Chinese to the largest sporting events on the planet. To find these experts, I was guided by my homestay father, who organizes a sailing team for disabled individuals, and my mentor who helped organize my research and mentioned various organizations with a focus on social sustainability. He also sent me various articles to read about sports and inclusion. To reach out to individuals, I expressed my passion for sports and how it has the power to do much more than just create revenue as well as entailing that I am an American student abroad with a unique opportunity to learn more about the sports sphere. I was urged to conduct six primary interviews with the majority being face to face and two allowed online. Interviews were in cities in Switzerland like Lausanne which is the Olympic Capital to Athens, Greece while in the early stages of the program. I interviewed these due to their expertise in the sports sphere locally in their country of origin and internationally. They have different perspectives due to living in a different country than me, their different interests in the genre of sport, and their past experiences working in other sports organizations. All interviews were conducted in English and in a formal setting such as an office space. The interviews were semi structured, and I was transcribing notes while the interview was taking place. None of the interviewees were paid during this research and I informed them that the only people with access to their exact quotations were the other interviewees and the academic director and my project mentor. Secondary sources consisted of reports published online and books or journal articles.
**Ethics:**

When conducting research for this project, I followed an ethics policy which organized the approach of setting up interviews and informing individuals about what is expected of them. I was expected to notify individuals in person or by email and first receive consent while explaining the details of my project and how I was going to use the research. I informed them about the atmosphere of the interviews, their right to remain anonymous, and who would have access to the interviews. The majority of interviewees request that I relay my project to them after I have completed my research in which I followed through on that word. Many possible interviewees denied an interview due to a busy schedule or not being interested in participation. Others have denied due to not being qualified on subjects I cover in the paper.

**Presentation of Results/Findings:**

**The Three Pillars of Sustainability**

Sustainability is a very broad definition that is being tossed around by large corporations for a positive public image. Recently in the global economy, it is important for a company or business entity of any kind to be sustainable due to coming to conclusions that we are destroying the planet. Sustainability is heavily fronted for hoping to establish a good reputation when a company is not sustainable at all. There are so many ways to measure sustainability and it is hard to maintain a fully sustainable organization. So what are the three pillars of sustainability and what do sports have to do with any of them? Economic, Environmental, and Social terms are used to cover sustainability. What is Economic sustainability and what is its role in sports and how is it measured?

Economic sustainability is a practice that supports long-term economic growth without negatively impacting the environmental and social aspects of the community. Being economically sustainable is hard. And usually, if a company claims they are, often they are only a little bit. Examples of
entities being economically sustainable are local recycling centers, eBay, vintage t-shirt shops, and anywhere the reuse of a material is the foundation of the business. In the past, the Olympic Games have been used as a scapegoat for their unsustainable way of using the sporting infrastructure. The 2015 London Olympic Games are a perfect example of how to combat the previous problems with hosting an Olympic Event. The aftermath of the 2016 Rio Games was devastating, forcing families to leave the area and the infrastructure being built to one day rot. In London however, the facilities were reused for other sporting events and turned into a local park for the community that they could actively use. Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park was designed with sustainability in mind. After the games, it was made presentable to visitors with beautiful landscape design and boat tours in the heart of the park (Tsang, 2018). This reuse of venues for sporting events is what all international sport venues should have in mind when planning to build infrastructure in major cities. However, this is not the case. FIFA has recently announced the 2022 World Cup venue in the country of Qatar on the Persian Gulf. If you asked yourself the question, “Does Qatar have hot weather conditions. How do soccer players play in that hot of an environment.” Well, the stadium is going to be fully enclosed and will be air-conditioned. How is that sustainable? It is not. And who would use an enormous soccer stadium in Qatar after a world cup? Good question. Sports is big business and sustainability often isn’t a core issue which needs to be fixed. I understand wanting to offer the world of sports on a bigger stage to different countries, but sustainable plans should be at the forefront of whether which country or city gets the bid to host the event. Post Rio Olympic Games, venues were not used because they did not have the economy to support them and according to an outside perspective, “I believe Paris has the opportunity to become a problem as big as Rio, especially with the uncertainty of how the new president may influence the country” (Gornall-Thode, 2022). Sports bring jobs to local communities, money from tourists, infrastructure for sport museum opportunities, and a platform for social awareness about world issues. This paper does not accomplish the goal of measuring the exact economic impacts of sports on the economy, but a brief
understanding of how sports have the opportunity create an impact in a sustainable manner. In Madrid, Santiago Bernebau is one of the most visited museums in Spain and helps generate revenue for the economy when sports games are not being hosted and provides jobs. Sporting events need tangible environmental goals to be able to become economically sustainable. Becoming zero waste as a sporting organization influences the growing population of fans and promotes caring for the world so it can become a better place for all of us. When many people think of sustainability, they think of saving the planet in an environmental manner. How are sports organizations reacting?

Environmental sustainability is interacting with the globe and maintaining its natural resources. Within the last couple of decades, environmental sustainability has been one of the globe's main problems due to the rise in temperatures on the planet due to air pollution, landfills, plastics invading our oceans, overwhelming amounts of GHG from tourism, among others. This is due to humans acting in an unsustainable manner such as not recycling and reusing, global consumption patterns, negative manufacturing methods, just to name a few. A problem has also been the amount of water it takes to produce certain textiles such as a pair of jeans. It takes around 10,000 Liters of water to produce a pair of blue jeans. With a growing population, more land will be used for residential use, and more products and clothing will be manufactured and sold so clothing companies are becoming more adept at sustainability initiatives and are implementing innovative sustainable practices in the foundation of their company. At least that is what they say. Many brands claim they are green and sustainable but are not. This is called Greenwashing. Many high-volume corporate polluters are now investing and sponsoring well known sports teams which is called sports washing. Sports are a main victim of a climate crisis, due to rising temperatures, yet they are being sponsored by companies who make the air for their athletes to breath even worse (Taylor, 2021). Andrew Simms, the co-director of the New Weather Institute, stated, “Sport has been a gamechanger in raising awareness and rapidly shifting opinions and policy on vital issues ranging from child poverty to racism, and now it could be set to do the same for climate
change." There will always be the opportunity for sports to act as a catalyst in driving change. Partnerships and sponsorships create a vast majority of revenue for organizations, so organizations and their sponsors are focusing on creating projects and events to combat the contemporary climate crisis. One example of a positive sustainable initiative from an international organization and its sponsor is the event, The Ocean Race helped by 11th Hour Racing who uses the power of sport to raise awareness and support ocean health initiatives. The Ocean Race is an around the world sailing event and uses ‘Racing with Purpose’ as the sustainability program opened by 11th Hour Racing. The program appeared in the 2017-2018 season and has been up and running ever since (Saleh, 2021). Purpose-led sponsorships and sustainable programs can create change in the environment and socially benefit the world, even at the same time. I will now discuss briefly Social Sustainability and how it directly correlates with sports.

According to ADEC ESG solutions, “social sustainability is a process that occurs in sustainable places and promotes wellbeing, by understanding what people need from the places where they live and work. Socially sustainable communities are equitable, diverse, democratic, and provide a good quality of life” (ADEC ESG Solutions, 2022). Examples of social sustainability issues include empowerment, volunteering, health, human rights, fair labor practices etcetera. Social sustainability thrives in the sports sphere. I had the opportunity to interview the coach of a street football team with each member of the team being homeless. I wrote a short seminar paper on how sports can create a sense of inclusion for marginalized individuals. Each member of the team was affected by the Greek financial and economic crisis. Drug addicts are not allowed to participate, the players were individuals who were forced out of the everyday liberties of life. “Sport is a liberty that everyone deserves access to,” said the coach of the football team. This is a fitting example of social sustainability. Another example of social sustainability in sports is an organized event for disabled individuals to learn how to sail. My host father, one of my interviewees, is a coach and helps direct races for individuals who are specifically in wheelchairs and want to compete in a sailing race. They have also been donated sports
gear from an unused pro team named “Alinghi.” Sport is a perfect platform to promote diversity and inclusion as well. In the midst of police brutality protests in America, the Sports world reacted by promoting Equality through various methods. Whether it stamped the Black Lives Matter logo on the courts of the NBA, Letting NFL stars have words on the back of their helmets in professional American football games, sports provide a big enough platform to change the culture for the listener. Social sustainability is important for the employers, employees or participants, sponsors, and for influencing positive change. I interviewed a man who has worked for the International Olympic Committee and now for Shankai Sports, a luxury travel tourism company that connects the Chinese with major sports matches. “The idea of celebrating and attending major international sporting events is new to many parts of China and as a travel tourism company, we want to provide the best possible experience” (Gornall-Thode, 2022). Connecting cultures through sport is basic, but inclusion falls into the category of social sustainability as well. Why would sports or a sports organization what to be socially sustainable? Have sports always been socially sustainable? Not necessarily and are still battling the issue in terms of diversity and inclusion. Many social inequality issues have arisen, and sports have been a catalyst in raising awareness through media and projects. Although I am mainly focusing on disabled individuals and empowerment in the section below, the empowerment of women and raising awareness for health issues involving breast cancer is a large campaign in the world of sports. Including pink in a uniform or changing the part of a uniform to support the Susan G. Komen campaign is a countrywide movement in the United States. I am informing the reader about different initiatives of social sustainability to help understand how vast the sector is.

With furthering my knowledge in the sustainability sector in sports, Switzerland is the capital of International Federations, so it was an ideal opportunity to learn different methods and innovative ways a sport that is reliant on the environment thinks about sustainability and how they practice the idea as well. By explaining the three pillars of sustainability and their foundation I will now analyze an
international organization's sustainability approach. I have been privileged to sit down and speak with the director of sustainability, Riikka Rakic, for the International Biathlon Union, the governing body for the sport of Biathlon at the Olympic Games and for the sport on a national level.

**The IBU’s Sustainability approach**

Biathlon is a sport that mixes cross-country skiing and rifle shooting. A sport that is heavily reliant on snow for athletes to be able to compete and it is in danger due to climate change. The IBU is now looking into ways in which the sport can adapt event management and influence other sports as well. The International Olympic Committee is the leading governing body and the IBU is a front runner of sports impacted the most due to climate change. The IBU faces challenges because snow is melting faster, and the season is being cut short. Although temperatures are rising, and seasons are being cut short, they are using machines that create artificial snow. They have also announced taking an initiative in carbon fiber singularity on Earth Day, 2022 (IOC, 2022). This project hopes to reuse more carbon fiber to create a better solution for sports equipment. The interviewee from the IBU shared the 2020/2021 sustainability report that covers objectives looking into the future for 2030. Three subjects that most of the attention is on is growing the sport by athletes and focusing on the youth, decreasing the carbon footprint by 50% and becoming carbon neutral, and doubling the income of the sport. Director Riikka Rakic was thrilled to tell me about highlights in the past year and what the IBU wants to accomplish moving forward. There was a big emphasis on being a leading member in sports surrounding sustainability. A project they had in 2021 was a climate challenge that revolved around the launch of their mobile app. Led by star Biathletes, and sponsored by the fitness app, Active Giving, it created stars and their fans an opportunity to transform their workouts into planting Mangrove trees. Thirty-two million calories were burned (IBU, 2022). A sustainability initiative like this is a perfect way to provide an
incentive for a healthy lifestyle while benefiting the environment. A question often when it comes to biathlon or snow sports is how do federations manage snow that is not natural? The IBU along with other sport federations have met with the company, Techno Alpin, a leader in snow making technology. The use of artificial snow requires it to be melted in certain parts which require salt. This is a key discussion on the impact of soil and how to not harm the environment. Snow managing meetings discuss salt use and water use for the snow machines.

What can the sport of Biathlon do moving forward? The IBU was responsible for around 5 tons of GHG emissions in 2021 which is down 25% from the previous year, and they hope to be carbon positive by 2034. Madame Rakic mentioned potential bans on lead bullets used in the rifle shooting and instead using laser guns. She says many advancements come into fruition due to new laws being imposed from the environment and since events are broadcast on major levels, they must have good governance and must hold themselves accountable. The reuse of materials has been on the rise due to the new wave of corporate social responsibility and sustainability movements. For the IBU, reusing materials is important especially for the younger generation so unused or barely used materials do not end up in landfills (Rakic, 2022). She mentions a potential partnership between IFs and a United Kingdom carbon company with the idea of reusing old carbon from bicycles and sending it to whoever in need. However, the process of innovating how materials are being used the IBU states its biggest organizational impact on the climate is from travel and only has three hybrid vehicles in its fleet. It looks like it will double this in the next year and is implementing a new travel policy where it uses public transportation as much as possible. As long as planes are powered by fossil fuels many sports organizations’ biggest impact on the environment will be travel if the sport is prone to a longer season and required to travel decent distances. I was wondering if there was a solution for leisure as well, but an interviewee of mine who works for a sports travel tourism company stated that the problem was in the hands of the sports organization responsible for the event (Gornall-Thode, 2022). He also mentioned
the number of parking lots the United States has for sporting events compared to Europe. In Europe, most events and stadiums can be reached by means of public transportation. This issue implies the need for more public transport infrastructure in the United States and electric planes. “My mission with the IBU is to try to leave no trace in nature when we leave the event and to have a positive effect on the community from a sustainability perspective” (Rakic, 2022).

**International Sport Organizations Role in Switzerland**

Without creating a whole different impact study, I will briefly explain some of the impacts international sports organizations have on the local economy in Switzerland, where this research is taking place. Lausanne, Switzerland is the home of the IOC since 1915 and around fifty International Federations and provides more than 1.5 billion CHF annually (Ruiz, 2016). The AISTS (The International Academy for Sports Science and Technology) created an impact study on Sport Organizations in Switzerland from 2014-2019 and found that the organizations and their visitors contributed around 1.68 billion a year which benefited the construction, business tourism, and employment sector (Stricker and Derchi, 2021). International Organizations Three-quarters of global governing bodies call Switzerland their home. They thrive in the Canton of Vaud where tax breaks are alluring. The IOC actively recruits members to move headquarters and often succeeds due to the innovative culture of Switzerland and being right in the middle of Europe. Geneva is also a global hub in the field of international diplomacy and is a short train ride away from Lausanne. Obviously, the amount of Sport entities in Switzerland is going to benefit the economy, because of the jobs it provides, and the tourists the Olympic Committee Museum brings. The IOC makes its money from marketing and advertising rights as well as event revenue. International Federations are the members of the IOC and the official governing body of their sport. When conducting the interviews for the project, I met an interviewee in the heart of Lausanne.
where the Olympic rings are represented on the street signs to the uniforms of the Policemen. The leader of Sports Organizations in Switzerland is, of course, The International Olympic Committee. The President, Thomas Bach is from Germany and won a gold medal for fencing in 1976. The IOC, FIFA, and UEFA are the biggest International Sport Organizations in Switzerland and employ up to 65% of workers in the international sports sector. The IOC is also exempt from the 20% income tax since it identifies as a Nonprofit. It has a tremendous influence on its members and sets the tone of issues the members focus on. The IOC has been in center stage multiple times for hosting events which are unsustainable, so it and its members are always acting in ways to increase positive public image in that sector. The IOC is always up to date on core issues surrounding the globe and tries to provide solutions for social matters and sustainability matters. They have a news page connected straight to their website informing the public about recent work and projects the IOC or its members are participating in. Most recently, involving the Russian Ukraine war, The IOC has supported Ukrainian athletes through the tough times and has banned all Russian athletes from participating in any events relating to the Olympics. Sports Organizations across the globe are doing the same thing. The interesting idea behind this issue is that the IOC directly reflects the country of Switzerland. Switzerland being a neutral country, this is raising eyebrows and asking questions about whether it is still neutral. Switzerland became neutral back in 1815 at the conference of Vienna and has always shied away from many key conflicts (Westfall, 2022). They have always been a mediator for conflicts, but this time it is different. Russia has been sanctioned by the majority of the globe due to invading the country of Ukraine. Switzerland has reacted and so have the IOC and its members. The Russian conflict hasn’t really benefited them in any regard and is being stripped of opportunity in every sector of business. Russia has been in the spotlight for doping incidents in the Olympics which forced Russia to identify as a different team than their actual country. Russia was scheduled to hold the 2023 World Hockey Championships as well but has been stripped of the privilege by the International Ice Hockey Federation (Mather, 2022). This illustrates the power of the sports
sphere and the country of Switzerland have in global decisions that affect media and public image, not of raising awareness on social issues, but also by stripping countries of opportunity. The majority of sports federations have placed sanctions against the country of Russia or Russian athletes and the movements are often being pushed by athletes just as much as the governing bodies of the sport. This is a big step as Switzerland and its federations recognize wrongdoings from a country and have chosen methods of acting upon unacceptable behavior. Sports organizations benefit the economy and create a positive image for the country in recognizing social goals the globe must strive for in the future.

**International Sports Tourism and Major Event Sustainability issues**

In this section I will briefly highlight sports tourism issues and cover the differences between the London and Rio sustainability measurements. Sports tourism can be from a spectator standpoint and as an organization and teams travelling. “Each Athlete has about two supporting staff traveling with them, which then translates to around six-hundred people traveling for a major event in Biathlon” (Rakic, 2022). This is how travel impacts the IBU GHG emissions and leads the category in emissions. Sports tourism is a major producer in emissions, especially when individuals are travelling long distances for events such as the World Cup or the Olympic Games. Travel is an issue, but when major events with rotating host cities such as the Olympic Games take place, sustainability promises do not always meet expectations. The Olympic Games often leave a devastating impact on host communities such as the infamous Rio Games. Immediate positives for sports tourism is the exposure to unfamiliar cultures, benefiting the local economy, image enhancement and can create important infrastructure for the city. Infrastructure for sporting events can be beneficial to the economy, but it gets tricky when the Olympics are hosted only one time and the city has no use for it afterward. Comparing and contrasting the London and Rio Olympic Games are perfect examples for how host cities should decide if they have the capabilities to host major events such as the Olympic Games. As for the World Cup, Qatar is the next destination and sustainability is not a critical issue being that the stadium will be enclosed and air-
conditioned. The up-and-coming Paris Olympic Games will feature an Olympic Park with an opening ceremony with 600,000 viewers watching a parade of boats float on the Seine River through the heart of the city. I am no expert on the effects an event could have on a city, but I would believe the economic impact would be positive, yet the effects on the river could become devastating. Risk is highly likely.

The London Successful plan of the London Olympic games allowed the venues funded by the IOC to develop the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. The city of London knew of the risks of accepting an Olympic bid yet believed it could add value to the city if they knew how to use the arenas afterwards. They chose an area of the city that needed development, specifically the Stratford district of east London. Accepting the bid for a 2012 Summer event, the economic crisis was amid the globe and sustainability and the reuse of infrastructure became even more important. The games would only bring in so much money from tourism, so how could London use the Games as a catalyst for economic growth and replenishing a neglected industrial environment? Arenas were built, tourists came for the games and London was left with wonderful infrastructure. They had the people to fill jobs and create a beautiful part of the city. Venues were used for hosting large rock and roll concerts, Shopping malls, tech hubs and even used for American sports matches. A man venue in the park is now where the West Ham United football team plays. To me, London took the bid with a more developed plan and realized they had the capital an area that needed to be redeveloped. Other hosts cities use London as a scapegoat for whether they should apply and accept an Olympic Bid. Obviously, there are more details in whether taking an Olympic Bid and if it can benefit a city if meticulously planned, but these are basic details without creating a whole impact study on this particular issue. Cities have also used the Rio Olympic Games as an example of what it can do to a host city. It is a lot less appealing as well. London Venues are still being used today and the Park is a well developed part of the city, but Rio arenas were abandoned after just six months (Tsang, 2018).
The 2016 Rio Games promised a greener outcome than what was proposed, and many say they were a missed opportunity for creating a more sustainable city and raising awareness in regards of pollution (Russell, 2016). The games were based around raising awareness about the rising sea levels and climate change but forgot to execute a sustainability strategy when hosting the games themselves. The amount of controversy that surrounded these games was tremendous. From claims saying it was rushed into and not well thought out especially the state of the economy, forcing people out of their homes and relocate elsewhere in the city, to using none of the arenas just six months after the Event took place. It was a shear disaster. “It didn’t take a Nobel prize economist to see Rio’s pitfalls back in 2009, when the IOC was selecting a new host” (Armour, 2017). Brazil’s economy was in fair shape at the time, but they had also planned the world cup that costed fifteen billion dollars scheduled for 2014. With Rio, Athens, and Sochi as scapegoats for the negative effects an Olympic Games can have on the economy, increased members are dropping out of the bidding process. This forces the IOC and its member federations to have sustainability on the forefront and act intuitively and have the best public image possible so that Cities will give the Olympics a chance.

**A Swiss Parasailing Organizations Sustainability Approach**

The idea of sports and social sustainability has been proven to be a match made in heaven when you look at how professional sports impact youth, events like the Paralympics, and volunteer opportunities in local communities. Social sustainability can also be used as a unit of measuring a business’ positive and negative impacts in other sectors besides sports. It is important because it can create relationships between local communities with brands and organizations, not just sports organizations. Diversity and Inclusion has recently been highlighted in social sustainability movements in the United States with equality projects across professional and collegiate sports. As for the IBU, its plan is to focus on the youth and provide for the next generations wellbeing.
How can sports be an asset for a country amidst an economic and fiscal crisis? While abroad in Athens, Greece we learned firsthand about the Greek economic and monetary crisis and took an invisible tour through the city. The Invisible tour was to make the invisible become visible. We walked the streets of Pangrati and our tour guide was a homeless man who has faced life on the streets for years. There were plenty of soup shelters, but one NGO stood out to me, The Shedia Magazine. I was fascinated with their innovative ways to help marginalized citizens any way they could, and they became the organization I interviewed. They help Homeless individuals sell cheap street newspapers to make some quick cash instead of handing them money. It allows them to work for the money they make hoping to help them regain their sense of financial discipline (Sarri, 2021). The Homeless World Cup Foundation is this idea, but across the globe with each country having a nonprofit act as the organization’s members. It is also a restaurant where the menu is in braille and has a bar that is accessible to disabled individuals. When I saw this type of innovation, I caught my first glimpse of social sustainability in action in a place where it was needed most. It was evident the city lacked recreation for disabled individuals and Shedia Magazine is helping fill the gap. I wanted to write my paper while in Athens about social sustainability and sports and it so happened to be that a man who worked for the magazine also coaches a street football team for homeless individuals. “The overall goal is to create a better life for the players, not to become better footballers” (Spyros, 2022). This was my first glimpse at the power of sport and sustainable action. I was able to interview the man in charge of directing a disabled sailing team under an hour away from where research is being conducted for this project.

How are other international organizations providing for the social sustainability movement? The Paralympics are notorious for hosting games for the best athletes with disabilities, but not everyone is playing sport to compete. They want to feel a part of something bigger than themselves. I was able to interview a man who directs a local special sailing team that competes in races on lac Leman. It is called “handy sailing and the league is called “Swiss disabled Sailing Association”. Harold Syfrig helps disabled
individuals learn how to sail, provides a community, and allows them to have access to liberties that are often taken for granted. Professional sailing squads have donated the teams their own gear to make sure they are doing their part for the giving to those in need. Using a word-of-mouth approach for staffing events, each event is staffed with certified instructors for sailing and one mental health coach per boat. The mental health coach has also passed an assessment verifying his legitimacy. Sponsors are usually local companies and being in Switzerland is an advantage for funding due to the number of other sports organizations that are headquartered here. UEFA is a main sponsor of the Swiss parasailing team in Nyon, where the rest of this research is being gathered. The main I interviewed regarding social sustainability, Harold Syfrig, saw an opportunity and is doing his part to help individuals that have faced a wide variety of health issues. With a small budget of fifty to one hundred thousand a season, the team invests only in the materials it needs. They have youth and adult sailors who pay a small fee per season to help the guides and certified instructors acquire a salary. The team is the official parasailing team for Switzerland and travel to a major event for a national cup. The Swiss team won the cup the last time the tournament was held in 2019. Usually there are twenty-five teams and around twelve countries compete. The events are usually staffed between ten to twelve individuals for the local events on Lac Leman and try to think about environmental sustainability too, being that the foundation of the business is a socially sustainable concept. This is not a new concept, but it is not offered everywhere.

**Athlete Perspectives & Looking Forward**

Looking forward, I believe Host cities no matter if it is for an International Event or a local event, individuals and cities will become more adept to sustainable practices, especially with the initiative striving to combat climate crisis. Social sustainability is a main pillar the sports sphere has executed around the globe to create more inclusive communities. Even though the accessible restaurant in
Greece does not involve sports, this is the type of socially sustainable thinking that can fill voids in Developing countries. “Richer and more developed countries worry more about sustainability. It is a Rich countries problem” (Syfrig, 2022). I found this quote and the idea interesting in looking more into the role sustainability plays in the world, especially if initiatives are targeted to be achieved in the year 2050.

I interviewed a college rowing athlete for Duke University that was encouraged to help paralympic rowing teams. The team offered their own facilities to aid their financial needs. In terms of social sustainability, the program offered a program called, “Learn to Row” which provides a goal of exposing underprivileged communities to a new sport or opportunities. The boathouse directly funds the program. They also offer volunteer opportunities for collegiate athletes to coach the individuals. They were paid, but the emphasis was more on helping people instead of making money. The sport of rowing relies on the environment, so sustainability means something to the sport. A recurring theme is that sustainability is a core issue to individuals at lower levels than the athlete making the most money or organizations providing the platform for others to watch. Obviously, because they can’t buy everything at lower levels and reusing is a more frequent practice. “Sustainability is especially important to individuals who compete in a sport that is reliant on nature or the environment, because we want it to be experienced for generations to come as well” (Anonymous, 2022).

I also interviewed a collegiate Lacrosse player for Washington and Lee University from the United States who says the recent phrase, “Grow the Game,” is commonly used frequently because it is an expensive sport and is still relatively small. Raising awareness about the game is discussed often among players which is Why volunteering is also a popular form of raising awareness. Teaching the sport as a collegiate athlete to young children about the values the game has to offer while enjoying the sport is what it is all about. These two interviews were fitting and fall right into the Social Sustainability category. In Lacross, equipment is expensive, so the players often use a supplier called, “Sideline Swap,” which buys and resells equipment (Anonymous 2, 2022). Although it is not localized, at least it is being
reused instead of thrown away. It is an expensive sport, so many efforts are going towards making it affordable and introducing it to many people as possible.

Both athletes showed particular interest in the next generation which is a crucial next step in innovation of sustainability in sports. A ground-up approach and teaching young individuals sustainability practices provides education on critical issues around the globe while growing their work ethic through a sport. In the world of sports, athletes, coaches, Event Organizers, and governing bodies have the opportunity to highlight the three pillars of sustainability with the platform they are given. Not every organization has a developed sustainability plan, but it provides value and creates a more transparent outlook on the company. It is a classroom outside of a classroom and looking forward, the sports sphere is becoming more sustainable the more the globe realizes the impacts it can make. International Organizations such as the IBU are taking frequent and innovative sustainable approaches that snowball onto smaller entities. IFs and the IOC provide a framework for others to follow and to reach the goal of, “Creating a better World through Sport.”

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, sports are a terrific way in raising awareness about sustainable development and Switzerland plays a key role in providing a tax-friendly environment for these federations to succeed. The International Olympic Committee is an important leader in promoting ideas and practices involving the three pillars of sustainable development and actively strives for innovation in sustainability surrounding the sports sphere. The goals of this project were to introduce the three pillars of sustainability and display how International Organizations and a local European organization handle sustainability and their practices. Answering questions on how Major events had better outcomes than others, basic questions on how different sports become sustainable and their projects, American
athletes’ perspectives on sustainability, and the impacts International Organizations have on Switzerland due to it being the hub of IFs and the most innovative country for eleven consecutive years. The International Biathlon Union is a key federation in sustainable development on an international level for its sport as it is directly impacted by climate change. They have worked and are continuing to create projects to benefit the environment in hopes to become carbon positive in the next decade. The IOC and its members serve as a leader to local organizations in the sports sphere and other sectors of business in promoting sustainability to influence future generations and, “create a better world through sport.”

Switzerland is the hub of International Sport Organizations with prevalence in cities such as Lausanne, which annually produce a hefty amount to the Swiss economy.

This Independent Study project opens potential research in many different areas involving internal issues with sports federations in terms of governance to identify why and whether sustainability is a rich country’s problem. Sustainability will be an increasing discussion even more than it already is due to global efforts aimed to tackle issues by 2050. Sports will always be a main part of many cultures, no matter what sport, and will provide opportunities to create a better world instead of focusing on a winner or a loser.

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