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## **CSD-SSD Chapter one: A different ball game? In pursuit of greater collaboration between sport-specific and community sport development**

The book's stated commitment to inclusive sport development is consummated in this and the following chapter as we consider the strategic implications of developing truly inclusive sport. What, if anything, is intrinsically different about the strategic development of sports compared to development through sport? How does this impact upon strategic decision-making and implementation? This chapter argues that assumptions of an irreconcilable division between community sport development (CSD) and sport-specific development (SSD) are conceptually flawed, and that attempting to work in either of these settings in isolation from the other impairs progress. We will examine the common weaknesses of the two approaches and consider how greater collaboration may lead to improved strategic outcomes.

Before attempting to address these questions it is helpful to briefly consider the unique characteristics of the national governing bodies (NGBs) (as the largest stakeholders in SSD) and their sports as well as the nature of CSD. The bulk of SSD occurs within what is now commonly referred to as the third sector, traditionally known as the voluntary sector. Historically, the codification and organisation of sport in the UK largely has its origins in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Initially the establishment of governance arrangements for sport would reflect the structure of society, with those in positions of wealth and authority assuming control over bodies such as that which would become the Royal and Ancient Golf Club (Houlihan 1997). Resistance to this ruling class domination of sport eventually emerged, one famous example of which being working class rugby league's breakaway in 1895, as the Northern Rugby Football Union, from the RFU (see Collins 1998). Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century NGBs became a significant part of a growing movement of leisure-related voluntarism which became increasingly enshrined in legislation. This suggests that for a long time there has been evidence of bottom-up movements within sport not only in specific sports, but also in community settings.

Outside of physical education and school sport the overwhelming majority of sporting opportunities in the UK are offered by third sector sports clubs, usually as part of the NGB system. It is difficult to envisage a NGB not wishing to ensure that the delivery and development of its sport is inclusive. Despite this a number of NGBs are routinely criticised for the apparently unrepresentative nature of participation and performance in their sports. For instance recent Active People research (Sport England 2011a) indicates that just over 1% of the 16+ population of England participate in tennis at least once a week. The highest participation rate was in London at 1.42% whilst in the North East of England, a less economically prosperous region (Department of Communities and Local Government 2011) the rate was 0.55%. Elsewhere in the development continuum it is well known that British tennis has struggled to produce players capable of competing at the highest levels, and those who have reached the upper echelons of the sport were privately funded and coached or born elsewhere (The Guardian 2011). Whilst it would be irresponsible and intellectually lazy to attempt to assign responsibility for these disparities in participation and elite performance to any single organisation or phenomenon, it is plainly the preserve of the NGB, in this case the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) to lead the process of addressing it. An array of organisational and individual stakeholders across all sectors and walks of life interact in pursuit of a

supposedly common goal: to enable athletes with the requisite levels of talent and motivation to progress and prosper in their chosen sport, but significant opportunities are missed without an acknowledgement of the potential strategic contribution of CSD.

CSD as a practice can be identified as originating in the late 1970s in response to concerns about urban unrest and the health of the nation, in addition to a recognition that the users of sports centres and other facilities tended to be middle class, white males (Hylton & Totten 2008). It was viewed as a form of practice that challenged traditional ways of providing access to sport and recreation. As a result the 1980s saw the emergence of National Demonstration Projects designed to target under-represented groups, and Action Sport designed to combat rising levels of tension in inner-city areas (Houlihan & White 2002; Hylton & Totten 2008; Collins 2010). Later, increasing levels of financial support via a raft of Sport England programmes such as the Active Communities Development Fund led to the employment of a new batch of CSD practitioners focused on increasing access and tackling social exclusion. The majority of these CSDOs were employed by local authorities, with a remit to work in partnership with community groups and utilise community development principles in their work. Further recognition of the value of CSD work came with the emergence of the StreetGames charity which has promoted the value of 'doorstep sport' and lobbied, with some success, for an increase in resources for this type of approach (StreetGames 2011).

Shortly after Houlihan (1997) highlighted the accusation that many NGBs practised isolationism, outmoded managerial practices and paternalism, sport in the UK under New Labour experienced a period of heightened governmental interest accompanied by unprecedented levels of investment. New Labour's 'strategy', 'A Sporting Future for All' (DCMS 2000) implied that community sport and SSD were part of the same development system. Unfortunately this was not borne out in practice as a division steadily emerged between practitioners who developed sport(s) and those who developed communities (Green 2006). This has ultimately resulted in an ineffective, fractured development system, which has comprehensively failed to substantially increase participation levels (DCMS/Strategy Unit 2002; Sport England 2011a), or make sustainable changes within disadvantaged communities (Long & Sanderson 2001; Coalter 2007).

Attempts have been made to remedy this situation, reinforced by a culture of performance management, resulting in Sport England's (2008) landmark refocusing of National Lottery resources towards selected NGBs and their Whole Sport Plans. We can query whether this is due in part to renewed confidence in NGBs as result of modernisation of their strategic practice, or merely a reflection of the failure of countless alternative approaches to increase mass participation. Do the 'chosen few' NGBs to receive Lottery funding display exemplary, inclusive strategic management influencing all levels of their sports? What about the numerous sports outside of the funding mainstream or local authorities? The 2010 change in government from New Labour to the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition once again impacted upon sports development with a series of budget cuts particularly affecting grassroots provision delivered by local authorities. Whilst the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games afforded protection to NGBs and their Whole Sport Plans, they still felt the force of these cuts due to the reduction in resources experienced by key partners at

local levels. Changes of this sort accentuate the need for a coordinated approach to both the development of sport and the development through sport. This will firstly require a change in mindset to view what has previously been seen as separate, even dichotomous activities as part of the same practice, and secondly the recognition of poor strategic practice that has blighted both approaches in the past.

## **Different Approaches?**

This section critiques many of the commonly assumed differences between sport specific development and community sports development, and questions whether the two approaches are as different as often perceived. One approach targets wider societal outcomes, and the other is focused on developing clear pathways to support athletes through to elite levels of performance: superficially these could appear to be mutually incompatible goals, but is this actually the case? We next look more closely at some of assumptions made about the two approaches:

### *CSD works in communities; SSD is focused upon a sport*

In sports development settings the use of the term 'community' is often applied selectively, and seen as the preserve of community sports development practitioners who are perceived as working at the cutting edge of inclusive practice within marginalised, disadvantaged and disenfranchised, geographically bounded communities. However, definitions of 'community' accommodate a far broader range of activity. Hylton and Totten (2008) argue that community encapsulates a notion of collectivity, commonality, a sense of belonging or something shared. This shifts the focus beyond geographical confines and recognises communities based around interest and shared experiences, a definition which would incorporate those traditionally served by NGBs and their constituent clubs, in addition to sport specific activity that occurs outside of the formalised structures of NGBs. The Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government spelled out a localism agenda and plans for a 'Big Society' underpinned by a perceived need to

... reform public services, mend our broken society, and rebuild trust in politics... these plans involve redistributing power from the state to society; from the centre to local communities, giving people the opportunity to take more control over their lives (Conservatives 2010:5)

This was followed by the severe budget cuts to local authorities that impacted significantly on leisure departments and sport development teams, and to QUANGOs such as Sport England, which saw a 30% reduction in its funding from central government (Conn 2010). This exacerbates the need for greater collaboration to make the best use of limited resources, the majority of which are channelled through NGBs at present (see below), in order to ensure that local groups and communities are supported to realise their sporting goals.

### *CSD is more focused on grassroots than SSD*

Whilst CSD is undeniably a grassroots-based practice, the work of SSD at grassroots is often overlooked. This may be due to the association of sport specific work undertaken by NGBs, with the 'national' element skewing perceptions. It could also be argued that the media focus on international success and the attribution of

this success or otherwise to NGBs again plots them as makers of national pride, less concerned than their CSD counterparts with more localised, grassroots development. However, the core business of NGBs could be argued to be supporting their members: sports clubs, volunteers and participants who not only belong to a sporting community but who frequently ply their trade at a grassroots level. It is now estimated that two million adult sport volunteers contribute at least one hour a week (Sport England 2011a) as part of a network of many thousands of sports clubs, mostly volunteer-led and mostly under the auspices of a 'parent' NGB. In recent times the expectations and burdens placed by the public sector establishment upon the shoulders of sport volunteers have increased significantly. Whilst it is undoubtedly the case these days that the benefits of volunteering are more clearly recognised and articulated (e.g. Cuskelly, Hoyer and Auld 2006) with extrinsic rewards offered, volunteers are also expected to acknowledge an array of legislative demands. It is relevant to enquire of both SSD and CSD whether their work is genuinely bottom-up, involving their communities in decision-making regarding strategic developments and the development of initiatives and activities. Whilst they both function at grassroots level, the challenge is to ensure grassroots representation when making strategic decisions.

*SSD is better resourced than CSD, particularly in the forty six focus sports*

A key motivation for the shift in National Lottery priorities towards the NGBs was the aspiration, integral to London's bid to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, to become the first host nation to achieve a tangible mass participation and volunteering legacy (Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2008). As a consequence of this shift, forty six sports were awarded Lottery investment via Sport England totalling over £480million, a condition of which was that a four-year Whole Sport Plan should be produced, for example covering the period 2009-13 (Sport England 2011b). The strategic leaders of each of the chosen sports agreed headline targets in the accordance with the themes of the Sport England (2008) "Grow, Sustain, Excel" strategy. For instance the English Table Tennis Association (ETTA) was charged with growing participation from a 2009 baseline figure of 75,700 to 92,200 in 2013 (Sport England 2009). This has far-reaching implications for the voluntary workforce: this target would need to be achieved through a collective effort on the part of almost 3000 affiliated clubs (ETTA 2011).

CSD in comparison does not have a stable source of funding, frequently relying on local authorities investing in this type of work and providing often limited resources for its delivery. This is supplemented by external, time-limited sources such as Sport England grants, or funding via initiatives such as those managed by StreetGames. As a result of the 2010 budget cuts the core support (offered via local authorities) for CSD was vastly reduced, with the amount of potential external funding also negatively affected as sports development agencies were forced to tighten their belts (Conn 2010; Elder 2010). Cuts at a local authority level have been made easier by the disparate nature of CSD provision and a lack of focus at governmental level by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition. In essence the strength of a CSD approach with its tailored, flexible methods focused on meeting individual community needs has in fact become a convenient excuse for a lack of significant resourcing and ultimately significant cuts in funding, as CSD has failed to provide a set of standardised, measurable outcomes across the UK which can be compared to more

conventional sports development approaches. This has resulted in an uncertain future for CSD, and once again stresses that if we are serious about the role of sport (and individual sports) as an agent for meaningful social change there is a need for greater collaboration between SSD and CSD. This not purely to secure a future for CSD work but also because enhanced cooperation will result in better strategic outcomes all around. There remains a need for improved coordination throughout the entire sports development system from grassroots to elite level. Since no comparable funding stream to WSP monies exists for CSD, a significant departure is required from the 'silo mentality' exhibited by some NGBs (which, sadly is encouraged to an extent by the WSP regime). NGBs, as the custodians of the greater share of central resourcing need to demonstrate advanced leadership and openness in order for the strategic outcomes desired by sporting stakeholders to be realised.

### *CSD is and should be more politicised than SSD*

The origins of CSD lie in state-sponsored activity; however more recent writing on CSD has strongly supported its role as a mechanism through which power relations can be challenged (Frisby & Millar 2002; Hylton & Totten 2008; Partington & Totten 2012). The assumption follows, therefore, that people who practice CSD are intrinsically politically motivated by the desire to combat social inequality and tackle the hegemonic structures which perpetuate it. The work of SSD practitioners, meanwhile, is heavily influenced by mainstream political processes, but it could be argued that their focus has been on navigating their way through these political waters instead of directly confronting them. As a result of this, most sport specific development programmes are not transformative, having to seek state authorisation for their work via controlling mechanisms such as Whole Sport Plans, which act to subordinate NGBs within the boundaries of the state. This has served to stagnate the services offered by NGBs. Clearly, there has been a failure to generate a significant increase in participation levels or increase the engagement of under-represented groups in sport. Although it should be recognised that it is not only NGBs that fail to achieve sustainable change, there is a significant need for sport specific development officers to become more politically aware and develop a critical consciousness of how power structures within their sport and also broader society contribute to social inequalities, which in turn influence people's abilities and motivations to participate in sport. Ironically, this is essential if the sport development profession is to achieve ambitious increases in participation levels such as those in the Game Plan document (DCMS/Cabinet Office 2002) or anticipated in the aftermath of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games (DCMS 2008). As discussed throughout the book it is also necessary for strategy documents to reflect greater attention to flexibility in order to survive the inevitable and ongoing changes to which NGBs are subjected as a result of the political cycle.

### *SSD is well planned and professional, whilst CSD is more ad hoc and spontaneous/informal*

The dominant policy discourse, despite notions of sport for good, remains shaped by the requirement to construct talent pathways: this is witnessed in much more stable governmental support for NGBs which has allowed them to undertake strategic planning, relatively safe in the knowledge that they have a reasonable period of time

accompanied by more regular funding with which to achieve their strategic goals. In comparison, CSD has been characterised as lacking clear policy direction and subjected to fragmented funding regimes, which have emphasised the “sustainable vulnerabilities of small scale projects with funding dependencies in delivering broader sustainable change” (Partington & Totten 2012:nn). The Audit Commission (2006:58 in Green 2006:235) warns that “if councils fail to adopt clear comprehensive approaches to strategic decisions they will fail to meet participation targets and community needs.” Yet Green acknowledges that there has been little guidance to local authorities on their role as deliverers of sport and recreation activities. The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) in a report entitled ‘More Than a Game’ (2011) argues that all of this has undermined the ability of CSD to achieve social objectives, and resulted in fractured, isolationist delivery which has been criticised as ineffective in generating long-term change (Long et al 2002; Coalter 2007). Ultimately, the lack of structured resources for CSD, both nationally and then subsequently locally, prevents CSD practitioners from undertaking meaningful strategic planning. CSJ (2011) argues that this situation must change as sports for sports sake is not a sustainable policy stance, and the only justifiable stance is to advocate and support development through sport. It calls for improved funding arrangements and clear policy directives from central government for CSD.

There is evidence to suggest that these arrangements would provide much needed stability and direction for CSD. This is supported by the improvement witnessed within elite athlete development, where changes to development structures over a sustained period transformed what Green (2006:218) describes as changing a “fragmented, makeshift and unplanned state of affairs” into a clear, legitimised and well structured system that begun to bear fruit. For instance England Hockey (n/d:8), discussing the achievement of its strategic vision and objectives, recognised that its “ambitious proposals will require an 8-10 year plan for implementation.” Support of this duration is presently a pipe dream for CSD. Similar support for CSD would offer opportunities for a more strategic collaboration between CSD and SSD to develop, and make what is at present a sporadic link between talent pathways and grassroots development an achievable reality.

*SSD is more output driven than CSD and has better evidence of impact*

Whilst we are arguing for recognition of the importance and value of community sport as an end in itself, we acknowledge that increasing pressure to provide robust monitoring and evaluation data to evidence impact against a range of targets has in essence marginalised its importance to those in positions of power. There is significant pressure for work in SSD and CSD to make a contribution to either social policy goals, in particular challenging health inequalities, or to develop talent pathways and improve the performance of national teams. Whole Sport Plans placed increasing emphasis on adopting a target-driven culture to develop sport, requiring NGBs to report annually on their progress against participation and excellence targets, and against their financial status biannually. This in essence removes an element of flexibility, with jobs depending on the attainment of the targets set out in these plans.

In comparison, CSD has been heavily criticised for taking a ramshackle approach to performance management, hiding behind a façade of social benefit, but frequently

failing to provide real evidence of impact (Long & Sanderson 2001; Long & Bramham 2006; Coalter 2007). The tightening of monitoring procedures in local government as a result of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment and more recently the Comprehensive Area Assessment required CSD practitioners operating at that level to gather much more robust evidence and data relating to the impacts of their work. The increasing focus towards tackling health inequalities and subsequent increase of partnerships between local authorities and health authorities once more placed a requirement on CSD practitioners to provide clear evidence of their work. Despite this, there are still strong arguments that evaluation often ignores the real benefits and outcomes of CSD work such as community empowerment and the development of social capital, in favour of providing outputs to satisfy the needs of the state, rather than the real change that is occurring at grassroots level (Partington & Totten 2012).

As these discussions indicate, both SSD and CSD are required to evidence their work, although there is a lack of standardisation to the approaches taken which limits practitioners' ability to compare, contrast and collaborate.

### *There's no role for SSD in tackling community issues or social concerns*

Bloyce et al's (2008) research into sport development officers within local authorities found that the majority of officers felt that there was a link between increasing opportunities for people to play sport and improvements in elite level performance. They saw a clear link between the work they were involved in at grassroots level and that of elite development, despite feeling pressured to evidence their work in terms of social outcomes rather than sporting ones. This again demonstrates the confusion that exists within the sports policy arena: if those responsible for the development of sport are unclear as to their remit, it is no surprise that sport development is ineffective and regular fails to meet ambitious national targets. Bloyce et al (2008, p.36) argue further that

Given the relatively powerful position of Sport England and their greater capacity to set the government's policy agenda for local authorities, it was not surprising to see that the current policy focus on health issues was cited widely as a justification for re-orienting sport development activity away from the development of sport *per se*, towards using sport and physical activities as vehicles of social policy.

However, are these not one and the same thing? If more people are supported to become active, then participation levels in sport and physical activity increase which will contribute to both policy objectives of improved health and increased participation. The emphasis on health outcomes effectively masks what is still a Sport for All agenda. We still need to engage under-represented groups who in the main still live in the same communities, with the same issues and barriers that were targeted in the 1980s! The difference between then and now is the need to wrap up this type of work as meeting social policy goals, with the result that it is seen as different to the work undertaken by NGBs who have been 'authorised' to focus on increasing participation levels in their sports in order to meet medal targets rather than social outcomes. This slight difference in rationale has created an ideological gap between SSD and CSD practitioners which has effectively constrained them from working together.



The need for greater collaboration was recognised by government and Sport England when, during the New Labour administration, a conceptual model of “Single System for Sport” (later referred to as the “Delivery System” was extensively promoted by Sport England (2007). This mechanism included the creation of Community Sport Networks (CSNs), each of which was intended to serve as a decision-making body and clearing house for the delivery of all sport in a given geographical area. Many of these have survived the withdrawal of direct funding and operate under a variety of guises (eg Brent Community Sport and Physical Activity Network; St Helens Sport and Physical Activity Alliance), usually coordinated by the County Sports Partnership or local authority, neither of which is a direct recipient of core, WSP funding. They do provide a ready framework for the greater integration of SSD into deprived and disadvantaged communities, potentially beyond a focus on purely club-based activities. Vail (2007) points out the significant parallels between SD and community development: both wish to help groups of people to improve their life conditions and both are concerned with facilitating a process of change. However, the difference between SD and community development is that the latter is frequently self-determined by the targeted community (Pedlar 1996 in Vail 2007:572). In other words it is bottom-up rather than predetermined by SD professionals, either at national level or in local authority sports development teams acting in the ‘best interests’ of communities.

### Common weaknesses

The preceding section aimed to dismiss a number of assumptions held about differences between SSD and CSD that we feel prevent effective collaboration between the two approaches. To further progress the discussion, this section aims to identify common characteristics between SSD and CSD, specifically in relation to poor practice and weaknesses shared by both approaches in terms of working with their communities. Butcher and Robertson (2007) identify a number of problems and weaknesses related to the organisational management of community practice that are applicable and relevant to both SSD and CSD. These are shown in the table below.

Figure One: Problems and Weaknesses of the Management of CSD and SSD  
(adapted from Butcher & Robertson (2007, p.104)

	<b>Challenges, Problems and Weakness</b>
<b>1</b>	‘Short-termism’ and a reactive approach to planning and delivery
<b>2</b>	Ah-hoc project and programme-based approaches.
<b>3</b>	Bureaucratic models of service provision: policies and plans are devised in a ‘top down’ manner and practitioners fail to involve or consult with communities.
<b>4</b>	An insular and inward-looking organisational stance: ‘silo mentality’.

5	A one-solution-fits-all approach that ignores differences between communities.
6	Deeply entrenched ways of delivery: 'this is how we do things around here'.
7	A focus on operational issues and contingencies, and a lack of flexibility in planning or delivery of services.
8	Initiative overload: too many programmes, policies and demands being juggled at the same time, resulting in ineffective delivery.
9	Staffing of interventions and programmes often lacks consistency due to reliance on casual and part time staff. These staff can also lack the necessary skills to work in communities.
10	Poor quality monitoring and evaluation of interventions and programmes, resulting in a lack of evidence of impact, and a lack of consistency in approaches to monitoring and evaluation between CSD and SSD.

By recognising that practice in both SSD and CSD is affected by the challenges outlined above, we hope that this chapter will enable readers to use the ideas presented to critically reflect upon their own practice and understanding of SSD-CSD, in order to develop the 'critical consciousness' discussed in chapter seven (Ledwith 2005). The development of this will result in more effective sports development programmes, as an improved conceptual understanding of SSD and CSD will lead to better strategic outcomes.

### **Weaknesses in strategic approach**

Hylton and Totten (2008:80) define community sports development as "a form of intervention in sport and recreation, which in some way addresses inequalities inherent in more established, mainstream sports provision."

Whilst an accurate description of CSD activity, the term 'intervention' could be interpreted as a paternalistic input from 'we know best' practitioners, rather than a true bottom-up approach involving the target community in the design, delivery and management of activities. Taking this a step further, we might also infer from the existence of a body of literature focused on CSD as a separate practice a schism between sport for sport's sake and development through sport. As Vail (2007) argues, often traditional SDOs (brought up on a diet of mainstream SD) do not appreciate the importance of community champions and the benefits of their involvement in the delivery of sports programmes. She argues that there is a 'philosophical chasm' between the development of sport and development through sport. Development of sport and traditional approaches to this appear inflexible, rooted in short-termism and focused on promoting the sport above all else, whereas collaborative ventures in communities, built around addressing the needs of communities through common goals will sustain themselves (if strategically planned) over time.

We therefore now turn to the key, theoretical principles presented earlier in the book to assess the strengths and weaknesses of CSD and SSD practitioners' strategic practice. Strategic plans and documents are ubiquitous in sport development and often produced as a requirement in order to access funding, as is the case with Whole Sport Plans. This leads us to consider 'who are these plans written for?' In discussing strategies written for regeneration programmes such as the Single

Regeneration Budget, Turner (2009:232) argues that these present an “alternative agenda, defined centrally, by government” and by people from outside of the community and social context for which the strategy is targeted. It also provides a partial explanation for the lack of strategic innovation or significant change in levels of sports participation despite millions of pounds of investment. The dynamic nature of the organisational environment led writers such as Herbert Simon and Charles Lindblom to advocate for a less pseudo-rational, more flexible approach to strategy and strategic management (see for instance Clegg et al 2011). The application of emergent approaches to strategic thinking, discussed in chapter two, would surely provide communities and promoters of specific sports with a more context-sensitive approach. We acknowledge that the terms and conditions of Exchequer or Lottery funding often mitigate against this, with national key performance indicators to be met and regular monitoring of progress via the Active People Survey (Sport England 2011a), but if anything, the presence of these constraints exacerbates the need for innovative strategic thinking.

As we have shown in earlier chapters strategic innovation is underpinned by a keen appreciation for the organisation’s internal and external environments. In an internal sense Butcher (2003) discusses organisational management in relation to community practice, arguing that frequently the organisational and management systems are not suited to the task and do not facilitate quality work outputs. Certainly there has become a trend of setting up sports development units in local authorities in a highly structured manner with staff responsible for specific job roles such as coach development or club development. In effect this compartmentalises aspects of work and reduces the likelihood of joined-up work within the team, let alone in a community. In role cultures (Handy 1993) a higher sense of organisational purpose can be diminished as practitioners pursue their personal targets. Externally the political cycle often militates against effective long-term planning, and nowhere is this more apparent than in SSD. In keeping with its predecessors, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition adopted differing priorities for sport to those of the outgoing New Labour regime. In the wake of the global financial crisis of the preceding two years the coalition chose to make swingeing cuts across the UK public sector (HM Treasury 2010), including the discontinuation of funding support to the Youth Sport Trust and by implication the School Sport Partnerships (SSPs) programme (Elder 2010; Hart 2010). Many links forged between schools and sports clubs were initiated and maintained as a consequence of the SSPs (Loughborough Partnership 2005), leading to concerns that clubs would lose this ready supply of new members. To many NGBs it seemed that, not for the first time, politicians were asking for them for an ever-greater contribution to public health and ‘national pride’ agendas whilst withdrawing the material support which might enable them to achieve this. CSD’s ongoing struggle for resources was worsened by the cuts with the savings required of local authorities having an especially strong impact, for example forcing the closure of local sports facilities that provided training spaces for sports teams and recreational sports provision for local communities (False Economy 2011). The need could hardly have ever been greater for CSD and SSD practitioners to make strategic choices which would insulate against these sorts of environmental shocks and lead to sustainable outcomes.

Despite both CSD and SSD being focused ostensibly on the sustainability of long-term change it is often the last thing considered in the planning of a programme.

Thus there has been much criticism of the short-term nature of sport development programmes and interventions (Long & Bramham 2006; Coalter 2007; Partington & Totten 2012). For many sustainability is seen as an end product, not something that requires planning from the outset. The financial pressure on local government has led recreation departments to make the 'strategic' choice to focus much of their work on income generation, in the process denying access to services to those unable to contribute to revenue streams (Reid et al 2002 in Frisby & Millar 2002:226). Ironically many CSD and SSD strategies discuss tackling social exclusion without the recognition that they are subconsciously perpetuating it. Frisby & Millar (2002) highlight that for excluded people who may have to demonstrate their poverty in order to access reduced rates, well intended gestures such as leisure cards can prove tokenistic rather than inclusive. Choice of strategic partners, a major determinant of a sport organisation's success, is also compromised when funding becomes the principal driver. Robson (2008) and Bloyce et al (2008) discuss how partnership arrangements become less consensual and how control is lost by the SD practitioner when, for instance, local authority SDOs increase their networks of partners to include more financially secure local organisations such as NHS primary care providers. Bloyce et al question whether this shift has actually damaged the ability of sport development to meet participation targets, as much time is spent developing partnerships, adapting activity to meet the goals of both organisations to the extent that its impact can become blunted.

Finally for this section we consider the delivery and evaluation of CSD and SSD through strategic implementation and performance measurement. Vail (2007), discussing Canada but with many parallels to the UK, discusses how SD has often taken the form of top-down, national or regional initiatives delivered in uniformly for a fixed period. Communities are exposed to such initiatives in a 'shotgun' manner for a period of time with the hope they will deliver sustainable change. These approaches have frequently failed to deliver increases in participation or tackle social exclusion, an example of which is the national Sport Unlimited programme. Sport England (2011c) claimed that this was an innovative programme, intended to cascade funding for sport to local communities. In reality whilst the scheme often involved local sports clubs, the performance measurement arrangements (mainly quantitative KPIs such as ethnicity, attendance levels and participant retention (Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Sport 2011)) in addition to the pressure to deliver the scheme in the tight timeframe meant that attempts to engage excluded young people were limited. It was also very ambitious to think that ten-week programmes of taster sessions such as these would result in long term, sustainable changes in participation.

Ledwith (2005) describes this practice as 'thoughtless action', when plans are implemented without critical thought, often resulting in ineffective programmes. 'Thoughtful action', conversely is based on the development of critical consciousness where practitioners develop an understanding of how structures in society continue to privilege certain groups and disadvantage others. We can readily apply this to a CSD context with its focus on tackling inequality but it is also applicable to SSD, especially in terms of the representation of disadvantaged and minority groups on talent pathways and in senior management positions. The monitoring and evaluation regimes of programmes such as Sport Unlimited make it even more difficult for CSD and SSD to avoid accusations of tokenism. The pressure on deliverers to 'prove' sustainability diverts the focus from ultimately achieving an appropriate mode of

delivery with a genuine legacy towards delivering outputs in the timeframe provided. This inevitably results in minimal long-term impact on participation levels or exclusion.

## **Towards Greater Collaboration**

Whilst not wishing to argue for collaboration between all SSD and CSD activity, this chapter urges a greater relationship between the two practices when it is mutually beneficial. We are arguing for a more inclusive approach to SSD, achieved by its practitioners working collaboratively with CSD colleagues to increase the diversity of people accessing pathways and playing recreational sport. For meaningful change to occur SSD practitioners must also be open to authentic, bottom-up decision-making processes in collaboration with excluded communities. In addition, we are also campaigning for a less isolationist approach to CSD, with benefits from this of accessing longer-term resources and providing clearer exit routes for participants. Green (2006) returns to the findings of the 'Impact of Sport for All Policy 1966-84' report by McIntosh and Charlton (1985:193), which concluded that

sport as a means and sport as an end are not mutually exclusive. There is a continuum of emphasis from extrinsic to intrinsic rewards and from sport as a useless enjoyment to sport as social machinery.

In addition, Green (2006:224) describes sport for good and sport as an end in itself as "increasingly distinct storylines". He argues that the 'Sport for All' policy has been neglected due to the focus on elite performance and sport for good, which are seen as policy directives with little connection. Despite CSD's and SSD's stated commonality of purpose of facilitating long-term sustainable change to both participation levels and social exclusion, there have been numerous arguments over their compatibility in relation to aims versus rationales and outputs versus outcomes to the extent that they have frequently been viewed as separate professions. Whilst it may be the case that tackling social issues using sport as a tool is a different activity from developing talent pathways and elite performers, both approaches should utilise similar methods to address the needs of target communities.

To illustrate the benefits to be gained, England Hockey (n/d) in its document 'A single system for hockey' argues for a long term view of player development, and sets three main goals: bring more young people into hockey; develop a thriving club infrastructure; and achieve international success at the highest level. Good practice needs to be supported by "systems of competition, calendar planning, talent identification and coaching provision" (England Hockey n/d:2). The main structures used to support the plan are school-club links and club development. However, this does not recognise that many young people are not engaged by sport at school (particularly those from lower income backgrounds and BME groups (Smith et al 2007)) and therefore 'slip through the net'; they are however often engaged by CSD programmes that take place within their own communities. NGBs are missing out on potential talent by not engaging with community sport activity.

Bloyce et al (2008) remind us that there is competition amongst sport organisations for scarce resources, effectively turning sport development into a market place rather than an arena where cooperation between organisations thrives, and:

Even if the requisite resources have been secured and distributed appropriately, policy effectiveness is still dependent upon the understanding, skills and abilities of those who administer it as well as those charged with implementation (2008: p373).

The 'Big Society' agenda (Conservatives 2010), placed even more emphasis on the identification of local solutions to local issues. With reductions in funding to local authorities it behoves NGBs to 'step up to the plate' and support local groups and communities to realise their sporting needs (and consequently meet some of their social needs through sport). Despite the perpetual scramble for resources described by Bloyce et al (2008) and regardless of the prevailing funding conditions, collaboration is surely the way to maximise the impact of limited resources.

Just as it would be inappropriate to label all SSD work as excluding disadvantaged communities and individuals, we should not blithely assume that all participants in 'community sport' are realising the life-changing potential of sport. Professionals need to understand the communities they work in: this involves undertaking research and consultation. Crucially it also means acting upon the results, not simply ignoring them if they are not what were expected or if they offer an alternative view to that of policy makers. Ironically, intended beneficiaries of sport development schemes are often not involved in developing the strategic plans that will impact on their communities (be it geographical communities such as a deprived housing estate or an interest-based community such as tennis clubs in a town) (Partington & Totten 2012). Collaborative action is at the heart of CD, and thus should also be at the heart of sport development practice targeting communities. As Frisby and Millar (2002) argue, social action is more likely to occur when knowledge based on the lived experiences of community members is combined with the instrumental and technical knowledge of professional staff.

## **Summary and conclusions**

With apologies for stating the obvious, the only way to increase participation is to engage non-participants. To do this, politicians, policy makers and practitioners need to recognise that for many of these people, participating in sport is low on their agenda. For it to be placed higher, work needs to be undertaken to combat the social issues and barriers that impact on their lives. It is not enough to just provide *opportunities* for participation; these opportunities need to be appropriate and supportive for long term participation. This inevitably requires practitioners to tackle the causes of exclusion, not just the symptoms (Ledwith 2005; Long & Bramham 2006), and take a more integrated approach to the provision of sport. This is referred to by CSJ (2011, p.51) as developing a "united front."

Clearly this is easier said than done! However it has become increasingly common to see community development terminology bandied around within SD policy and practice to the extent that it has become the norm for SDPs to use buzzwords such as sustainability, empowerment and community engagement without it necessarily following that they understand the true meanings of those terms. In effect, these terms endorse change: changing the position, experience or influence of a community or social group in some way. There are

clear similarities and synergy with the aims of CSD, whether it be supporting a disempowered group to be able to exert influence over or within a sporting structure that previously marginalised it, or using sport as a mechanism to impact on the long term behaviour of an individual. Worryingly, the warnings of academics of the dangers of simply repackaging mainstream SD as CSD and hoping for a positive impact have been largely ignored and we still frequently see examples of poorly planned, confused initiatives (Butcher et al 2007, Coalter 2007, Hylton & Totten 2008). One of the aspirations of this book is to encourage practitioners in both community and sport-specific settings to embrace truly empowering, bottom-up approaches to their work. This would potentially extend the reach of SSD into larger and more diverse talent pools whilst enabling pressured resources such as Lottery funding for NGB 'Grow' and 'Sustain' targets to be distributed more fairly.

Despite Butcher (1994) arguing two decades ago that top-down, enforced schemes rarely result in any sustainable change, there has been little change in the way that sport development initiatives have been developed and delivered. His advocating of a **community-practice** approach (see also Banks et al 2003) where decision-making and planning is shared between statutory agencies and community groups has all but been ignored. Instead a plethora of schemes initiated by agencies such as Sport England, designed to increase participation in sport by under-represented groups, has been imposed on communities with little impact. The massive network of third sector sports clubs, many of which exist in the same deprived communities targeted for CSD interventions, provides a rich environment within which these possibilities can be explored. It is necessary to recognise that following a community development approach takes time, and as such will require a long-term commitment from partners and an acknowledgement of this approach from funding agencies. The provision of multiple, short-term funding streams from government agencies and others has not worked. The four-year cycle of Whole Sport Plan funding does not accommodate the reality that meaningful change can take a generation to accomplish (CSJ 2011), but even here a platform can be built and a tangible contribution demonstrated if CSD and SSD practitioners work together to stimulate interest and participation in specific sports in new constituencies. The practical implications of this call for enhanced collaboration will be considered in the next chapter.

## Exercises

1. Gather information on a community sport development project of your choosing. Critically evaluate its existing development strategy with reference to partnerships with sport-specific development. Make a list of at least five benefits to be gained from increasing its strategic partnership working with sport-specific development organisations.
2. Gather information on a sport-specific development organisation of your choosing (possibly, but not necessarily a national governing body). Critically evaluate its existing development strategy with reference to inclusive, grass roots work in communities. Make a list of at least five benefits to be gained from

increasing its strategic partnership working with community sport development organisations.

3. Create a set of shared aims for a strategic partnership between the two organisations you looked at in exercises 1 and 2.

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