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## Sports events: Typologies, people and place

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## Sports events

### Typologies, people and place

*Sean Gammon*

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#### **Introduction**

Outside the high-profile mega types, the ubiquity and breadth of sports events can paradoxically make them less obvious choices for research. In addition, the overwhelming studies in sports events tend to involve economic impact analyses and consequently miss the many issues and additional impacts that such events engender. In reviewing the literature related to the study of sport events it became apparent that there has been a notable lack of critical commentary exploring the problems associated with applying traditional event categories to sport events. Moreover there is a deficiency of information concerning particular event types such as those associated with smaller events, along with those connected to parades and festivals. Therefore the aims of this chapter are twofold: first to introduce and evaluate current sport event typologies, and second to present an argument for sports events to be treated separately because of their complexity and nature.

It will be contended that there are two elements of distinction – a taxonomical distinction related to the specific criteria adopted for sport events, as well as an innate distinctiveness that aims to illustrate the special nature of sport events. For the sake of simplicity and clarity these two themes will be explored separately though it is acknowledged there will be some obvious overlaps.

#### **Exploring the sport event landscape**

Given sport's irrefutable importance and significance in the field of event studies it is perhaps surprising that there still remains no definitional conformity to the many different types of events that take place. In fact there appears no unified definition of what constitutes a sports event, probably because it is felt that there is no need as it is patently obvious what it is and consequently needs no further description. Nonetheless, the sport event landscape is a complex one, incorporating not only competitive events but also parades, celebrations and exhibitions, etc. To date sport event typologies have been situated within broader event types which in many cases overlap, primarily because they have been formatted using differing criteria such as form, size, function and experience (Getz 2007). The confusion is made worse through typologies having

varying definitions depending upon the author or the studies in which they are based. Consequently we are left with a situation in which an event such as the Olympic Games can be described as mega, hallmark, special, prestigious and festival all at the same time. This is not to suggest that such typologies are not useful or have little merit as they often help in distinguishing specific features of events, though clearly readers should be aware of their limitations and potential repetitiveness. The following sections aim to shed light on some of the problems with current event categorisations while at the same time introducing often neglected sports event types linked to celebration and commemoration.

### *Special sport events*

Unsurprisingly numerous sports events have been situated within the special event category (which is a term often used as an umbrella term for all planned events) as sport, for many, imbues loyalty, engagement, identity investment, belonging, and so will be perceived as – ‘special’. Of course, as Getz (2007) points out, such events may be special – but special to whom? For example according to Badmin *et al.* (1992: 109), ‘a special event can most simply be described as something that happens which is outside the normal routine of an organisation’. In this case the specialness is linked to the organisation rather than the perception of the participant or spectator, whereas other authors tend to concentrate on how positively the event is perceived by attendees and potential attendees. To what degree any sport event will be taken to be special is purely subjective and can incorporate a diverse and enormous range of events. Work undertaken by Jago and Shaw (1999) has helped to identify key characteristics of special events by first outlining the attributes highlighted in the literature of what constitutes this type of event, and comparing it with how such events are perceived by the public (Table 7.1).

The attributes listed in Table 7.1 certainly help in tying down some of the key ingredients which make up special events, though some attributes are more commonly linked to other event types such as mega-events (e.g. international attention and large economic impact, etc.) and hallmark events (e.g. raising awareness and tourism development). The significance of the problems and inconsistencies associated with event attributes are not lost on Jago and Shaw (1999: 22) who argue that current event definitional disparity sends out confusing messages:

Terms are used to simplify communication but if there is not a general consensus as to the meaning of terms, such communication can be greatly impeded. If a widely accepted definitional framework cannot be adopted voluntarily by the industry, there is then the possibility that government would impose one in order to overcome the frustrations caused by incorrect communication.

*Table 7.1* The attributes of events

<i>Event attributes from literature</i>	<i>Event attributes as perceived by the public</i>
Attracting tourists or tourism development	Number of attendees
Being of limited duration	International attention
Being a one-off or infrequent occurrence	Improvement to image and pride of the host region
Raising awareness, image or profile of a region	An exciting experience
Attracting media attention	
Having a large economic impact	
Being out of the ordinary or unique	

Source: Adapted from Jago and Shaw (1999).



The concerns outlined by Jago and Shaw (1999) are well made and encompass broader issues related to the general event landscape rather than just sport – though the current incongruity feeds down to all event forms.

### *Mega sport events*

Some of the more high-profile sports events are those associated with mega-events, obvious examples being the Olympic and Paralympic Games and the Football World Cup. But when does an event become 'mega' and what features should it display before being described as such? Similarly to special events, definitions range in the criteria adopted and in whether they focus upon general attributes and characteristics, or specific quantitative features. For example Rooney (1988) believes that mega-events display distinctive characteristics linked to tradition, international media coverage, myth-making, history, and the ability to trigger off additional events such as parades and festivals (particularly pertinent to this is the relatively new phenomenon of fan zones). Rooney (1988) also goes on to note that mega-sports events can occur irregularly or regularly in different places such as the Football World Cup and the Olympic Games; can occur in one of a limited choice of sites such as the British and American Open Golf Championships (Hall 1997); or can take place at one particular site which over time attains a hallmark status (see following section). Roche (2000), on the other hand, outlines the global appeal of mega-events, and notes that the organisation and management of such events would normally involve national and international bodies. Others such as Marris (1987) propose a more quantitative approach, suggesting that visitor numbers and event costs should be taken into consideration, though this would be largely dependent upon to what extent new stadia and venues would be needed and where the event took place, especially in terms of accessibility. However, the most widely used criteria adopted in the literature are related to the various impacts that such events engender. In very simple terms they revolve around the significance of the economic impacts coupled with irregularity and mass appeal (Gratton *et al.* 2001). Arguably the most succinct definition is offered by Getz (2007: 25):

Mega events, by way of their size of significance, are those that yield extraordinary high levels of tourism, prestige, or economic impact for the host community, venue or organisation.

It is worth pointing out here that, much like special events, the extent to which an event is defined as 'mega' is dependent upon to whom and to what it is directed. Getz (2007) points out that even a relatively modest event can still have a huge impact on a small community. Furthermore the perceived size and importance of any given event will vary between individuals and cultures depending upon their previous experiences and interests. Also an often neglected feature of mega-sports events is that they are often a collection of events rather than a single event, each of which is likely to generate varying degrees of interest and media coverage. This multi-event feature is common among all event types, including those that achieve 'hallmark' status.

### *Hallmark sport events*

The term 'hallmark event' is commonly used to describe an event that becomes synonymous with the location in which it takes place (Getz 1992; Hall 1997; McDonnell *et al.* 1999). Consequently, it is less about the operational features and more about the outcomes that the event generates over time, particularly with regard to tourism. Usually, hallmark events display a

distinctiveness that makes them stand out from the event landscape; they have been defined by Ritchie (1984: 2) as:

Major one-time or recurring events of limited duration, developed primarily to enhance the awareness, appeal and profitability of a tourism destination in the short and/or long term. Such events rely for their success on uniqueness, status, or timely significance to create interest and attract attention.

Because of the nature of many sports (i.e. being locationally fixed), it is unsurprising that many sports events have taken on the mantle of hallmark status. Examples of prominent sports hallmark events are the Wimbledon Tennis Championships; the Indianapolis 500; the Augusta Masters and the London Marathon. However, Ritchie (1984) maintains that hallmark events can be major one-off events, whose impacts are so significant and memorable that they build an association with a location that far outlives the duration of the event itself. These types of events such as the Olympic Games and various European championships differ from the events outlined above in that their 'hallmarkness' will often wane over time as new cities host future events. However, cities such as Barcelona have maintained and built upon their hosting of the Games, and continue to benefit from it in tourism receipts alone, primarily owing to re-imaging strategies and urban renewal (Gold and Gold 2006; Weed 2008).

An additional example of how sport helps in the promotion of places can be seen when sports teams assume a hallmark status with the town and cities in which they compete. Clubs such as Manchester United, Liverpool FC and the Baltimore Orioles regularly attract thousands of visitors, some of whom may stay for more than one night (Hinch and Higham 2001, 2004; Stevens 2001). Furthermore, the global media interest that such clubs generate firmly establishes recognition of where the matches take place and so fuels the synonymy between place and event. But to what extent a region, town or city is able to establish strong associations with the event is to some extent reliant on the knowledge and passion of the individual. For those who follow horseracing or snooker, the fact that the Grand National takes place at Aintree (Liverpool) or that the World Snooker Championship is held at the Crucible in Sheffield is well known. This is unlikely to be the case for those people who have little or no interest in these events.

### *Sports heritage, parades and festivals*

Although the above examples represent the more commonly adopted and adapted categories found in sport events, there are others that have largely been neglected in the literature. For example, there are those events which are linked to celebration, heritage and festivals. Indeed, the term 'festival' is often confusingly used in a number of different contexts and situations. First, it can be found when organisers or the media (for a variety of reasons) wish to underplay the competitive features of an event, ranging from mega-events such as the Olympic Games through to smaller youth-based events. Second, a sports event may be referred to as a festival when spectator and fan involvement is a clear signature of the event profile. An illustration of this is the Isle of Man TT motor cycle event, which promotes the recreational features of the event as well as the races themselves. In addition there are a number of peripheral events which take place during the two-week event, least of which is the opportunity for spectators to ride on the circuit themselves (worryingly known as 'Mad Sunday'). Third, and more obviously, when teams or individuals return after sporting success, many fans will line the streets in order to celebrate and pay respects to the victor or victors. The parade by the successful Spanish team through the streets of Madrid after their Football World Cup win illustrates this type of sports festival well. Also,



parades linked with the celebration of new inductees to sport halls of fame (primarily taking place in North America) can generate significant spectator interest and economic impact (see Pro-Football Enshrinement Festival 2010) and demonstrates well the heritage components of sports events (Gammon and Ramshaw 2007). Last, impromptu celebrations can occur after particularly important victories. Such celebrations often take place in and around the event itself or anywhere else where particular fans and/or nationalities may congregate or live.

### *Small-scale/community sports events*

Smaller-scale sports events have tended to take a less prevalent place in the literature and suffer similarly to the other categories with definitional inconsistency. Size as always is in the eye of the perceiver, whether it be from the perspective of the customer or the organiser. For example, Higham (1999: 87), when referring to sporting occasions of a more modest scale, describes them as:

regular season sporting competitions (ice hockey, basketball, soccer, rugby leagues), international sporting fixtures, domestic competitions, Masters or disabled sports and the like.

It may first appear that Higham's (1999) description hardly indicates small-scale events, though it must be taken on board that the examples given were framed around those events likely to generate tourism. Other contributors have focused upon the community element of smaller events, in that local community involvement at both organisational as well as participant levels can generate powerful social ties and various other positive externalities (Watt 1998; Shone and Parry 2004; Page and Connell 2010). Therefore these types of events are more local or at best regional, and do not require the same levels of cost, risk and expertise that other larger-scale events call for. Examples of smaller-scale, community-based events could range from local school sports days through to regional competitions. The impact of these events can contribute in social terms to the local community through identity building, civic pride and improvements to health, though – similar to its much larger counterparts – the advantages of these types of events are often exaggerated and/or ephemeral (Coalter 2007). This is not to suggest that smaller-scale sports events generate little impact locally, only that in some cases the broader values of sports participation are optimistically adopted and used by organisers in order to justify the event – a custom arguably practised by those responsible for larger events.

### **Sport event categorisations: the way ahead**

At present, sport event definitions and categorisations are influenced by an event's function, its form, the experiences it provokes or a combination of all three. Although it is important to consider the key features of all sports events, care must be taken to ensure that any criterion used neither conflicts nor overlaps with any other. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, current event types can generate confusion as many sports events will, to a greater or lesser extent, fit into more than one event type. The present situation is analogous to distinguishing foods using random criteria such as those that could be considered flavoursome, green in colour, fruit or apples. Such terms, while being superficially helpful, are in practice taxonomically pointless.

Getz (2007: 43), identifies sport events as an event form, and outlines that sport events represent an enormous category. He offers a broad classification which could be referred to as a starting point:

- Professional or amateur
- Indoor or outdoor (and other differences in their need for special venues)

- Regularly scheduled (league play, plus play-offs or championships or one-time exhibition or friendly matches)
- Local, regional, national or international in scope
- For participants, for spectators, or both
- Sport festivals (a celebration of sport, often youth, involving many sports) single or multi-sport events.

While the above classification outlines some of the many differing characteristics that sport events generate, it still separates features which overlap, such as for example a regional amateur indoor competition. Many may question the need for any detailed sport event classification, but if the study of sport events is to progress academically and operationally then a system which details clearly defined sport event types is urgently required.

The primary problem with any sport event classification is that each sport can produce very specific issues related to planning, impacts and complexity. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to map out a more detailed classification index, though future studies may wish to look first at sports-specific events (such as those associated with football, basketball, tennis) before establishing more general categorisations. Work undertaken by Gratton *et al.* (2000) that established a typology for major sports events, largely based upon economic impact, media interest and the extent the event is spectator-/competitor-driven, offers a possible solution. Although their typology is limited to major events and lists only four basic types, ranging from Type A (mega, international events, such as the Olympic Games) through to Type D (major competitor events such as national championships), its strength lies in that each event type is less likely to be open to interpretation. Of course, the typology would have to be extended to incorporate the full range of sport events (e.g. A1, A2, A3, B1, etc.) and perhaps incorporate some of the features outlined earlier (see Table 7.2).

It is worth noting that Table 7.2 acts only as an illustrative example of how future typologies may progress and hopefully will act as a starting point for future research.

Table 7.2 Event typology example

Event type	Economic activity	Local, regional, national, international	Single or multi event	Media interest	Regular, irregular	Spectator, competitive	Tourism potential	Sport development opportunity
A1 Olympics	High	International	Multi	High	Irregular	Both	High	High
B1 FA Cup Final	High/med	National	Single	High	Regular	Spectator	Med	Med
C1 National athletics champs	Med/low	National	Multi	Med	Regular	Both	Low	Med
D1 Regional swimming champs	Low	Regional	Multi	Low	Regular	Comp	Low	Med



These taxonomical distinctions illustrate the specific sport event features which collectively indicate the need for these event types to be treated separately in the event literature. This is not to suggest that the traditional categories outlined earlier should be totally discounted as they highlight some important event characteristics. The problem lies in the generality of these characteristics, in that they are ineffective in delineating clear specific sport event types. To add to the confusion it is common for certain sport events to be offered as 'typical' examples of one particular traditional category, ignoring the possibility of them fitting into others. The sports event landscape is a complex one, incorporating many event types that are not effectively addressed in the present categorisations. But it is not just the breadth and intricacy of sports events that distinguishes them from other events; it is also their unique innate qualities that make them worthy of special attention. Such qualities can be framed around how sport is followed and supported, the authenticity of the action and spectacle, and the singular virtues that the places and venues of where the events take place evoke. The following section will explore these qualities further.

### **Sport event specific attributes**

The manner in which sport events are delivered and consumed has changed considerably over the last thirty years. There has been a notable movement towards a more customer-orientated approach that no longer believes that the competition alone warrants the price of the ticket. Improvements in hospitality, along with technological advances, have meant that spectators can sit in relative comfort while reliving the key moments through large plasma screens which repeatedly replay the action in slow motion. Music will often be played to celebrate success during the game or will be played live during intervals along with other forms of entertainment. Owing to these changes, there have been suggestions that rather than being different or distinct from other events, sport events are beginning to resemble non-sporting events linked to entertainment and the arts. The introduction of more entertainment elements (beyond the sport itself) is to be expected, given the increased competition in leisure-related opportunities (Crawford 2004), as well as the desire to be entertained being one of the key motives for supporters to attend live sport events (Wann 1995; Wann *et al.* 2001). Nevertheless, sport events display and generate quite specific attributes that differ from other event types. Many of these attributes can be framed around how sport is consumed and experienced, and can be explained in terms of fan and spectator behaviour, authenticity and the power of place. Before exploring these elements further it is important to mention that it is dangerous to generalise sports and sports spectators, as each sport is not only delivered differently but is also followed and supported by individuals and groups as diverse as the many sports on offer. The behaviour of a highly identified football fan will differ greatly from that of a golf fan, as will the structure and delivery of the events. However, there will be some similarities which should be constant across all sport events.

#### *The sports fan*

Literature relating to studies of sports fandom are considerable and far beyond the scope of this chapter to cover in any detail (for further details see Wann *et al.* 2001; Crawford 2004; Brown 2007). However, it is important to state that large-scale sports events will often attract the full spectrum of spectator, from the highly identified fanatic through to the impartial spectator. Some may be followers of a team or individual, while others may simply have an interest in the sport. Precisely what criteria constitutes the many types of sports spectator has been debated often in the literature, with no one classification adhered to. Terms such as 'connoisseur', 'aficionado',



'die-hard', 'glory hunter' and 'casual observer' have all been used to describe the behaviour and motives of different types of supporter or fan. But the question to ask is: to what extent do sport fans differ from other fans found in other interest domains? To gain a better insight it is worth focusing upon that part of the fan spectrum which denotes some form of commitment.

Work undertaken by Hunt *et al.* (1999: 440) identifies five broad fan types, based upon basking in reflected glory, information processing, and attachment as it relates to the self. First they describe the 'temporary fan' as being one whose interest and enthusiasm is ephemeral. The temporary fan's support may occur over the period of high-profile and/or irregular events such as the Football World Cup, Olympic Games or Masters Golf, or may stem from an unexpected success by a team or individual which has gained significant media interest. Alternatively, an attraction to a team may be centred around a particular player; consequently, when the player leaves the interest in the team diminishes. According to Hunt *et al.* (1999) this type of fan behaviour and motive can be explained by referring to a study by Cialdini *et al.* (1976), which found that less committed fans tended to BIRG (bask in reflective glory) after their team won and CORF (cut off reflected failure) when they lost. This may manifest itself by wearing team colours, shirts and scarves after a win, or displaying dissociative behaviour and distance after a loss. Second, the 'local fan' is drawn in to support through identification with a geographic area. Any affiliations are solely based on them residing in and around where a team and/or player competes. According to Hunt *et al.* (1999), once an individual moves from a particular area it is likely that any identification with the 'local' team will decrease. Not so for the 'devoted fan', whose loyalty is unaffected by such moves, primarily through an emotional attachment with a team and/or player which in turn forms an important part of their self-concept. Their attachment is impervious to defeat, and so they are unlikely to BIRG or CORF as their allegiance supersedes any negative outcome and results. One step up from this is the 'fanatical fan', whose identification with a team and/or player is very close to the centre of the self, though not in preference to other significant life aspects such as family, work and religion. Hunt *et al.* (1999: 446) add further details which help distinguish the fanatical fan from the devoted fan:

The fanatical fan engages in behavior that is beyond the normal devoted fan, yet the behavior is accepted by significant others (family, friends, and other fans) because it is considered supportive of the target – sport, team, or player. The devoted fan may go to games. The fanatical fan will go to the game and paint their body the colors of the team, go in costume, or in some way exhibit behaviour different from the devoted fan.

In contrast, the 'dysfunctional fan', the last in the categories proposed by Hunt *et al.* (1999), describes fans whose fanaticism is of core importance to their self-identification. In other words, being a fan is the most important thing in their lives, as is winning. In some cases (though not always) dysfunctional fan conduct will manifest itself in anti-social behaviour such that exhibited in soccer hooliganism. Such is the total identity investment upon the team or player that it is common that other life facets (family, work, etc.) are neglected and consequently negatively affected.

It could be argued that the fan types listed above display characteristics that could be found in other event contexts such as those associated with music, entertainment and the arts. However, the passion, coupled with the persistent emotional and financial investment that is common among sports fans, irrespective of how disappointing the spectacle may be, is rare. Furthermore, that such passion could in some cases lead to maladaptive behaviour and violence is unusual in other non-sporting events. For the sports event organiser, the notion that customers are in some cases willing to pay for a season ticket for experiences that may be disappointing could indicate

that little should be invested in other features aimed at improving the overall event experience. But it must be taken on board that sport events attract the full spectrum of visitors, many of which would expect some level of comfort and additional entertainment. Furthermore, investment in a range of hospitality facilities, along with improved audio-visual facilities, goes some way to justify the ticket price. Indeed, some commentators suggest that sports event organisers should attempt to influence the event experience holistically (i.e. before, during and after the event) and in doing so improve sociability and crowd harmony (Chalip 2006).

### *Authenticity*

One of the salient features of sport competitions is that the outcome is unknown. No result is predetermined before the competition, irrespective of whether one player or team is perceived as far superior to another (Jennings 1996; Coakley 2009). Therefore the eternal attraction of attending a sport event can be found in the uncertainty of the result(s). What of course this means is that there is a good chance that a significant proportion of the spectators will leave the event dissatisfied. But unlike spectators and audiences of other event forms who go through negative experiences, the ardent sports fan will return time and again in the hope of rectifying any previous disappointments. The uncertainty of the result has meant that the draw of some sports is an economic one, fuelled by both legitimate and unlawful gambling industries. Recently, the influence that such darker sides of the industry may have on sports results (such as international cricket matches) has called into question the validity of both the result and the action that takes place during matches. Time will tell the extent to which such practices are widespread across all sports, and whether it will affect attendance figures and spectator enjoyment.

The wish to attend a live event is not solely driven by curiosity concerning the result, as fan and spectator motives are complex and can incorporate purposes linked to psychological, social and economic factors (Wann *et al.* 2001). Nevertheless, the prospect of experiencing the atmosphere of a sports event as well as being part of it is particularly important for all spectators (Gaffney and Bale 2004). Related to this is the opportunity to behave (especially for local fans) in ways that celebrate and sustain the many traditions and rituals of the past, and in doing so to channel authentic feelings of community and belonging (Zillman *et al.* 1989; Robson 2000). This interaction between spectacle and spectator can be summed up by Crawford (2004: 85), who notes that:

It is the delight of watching the crowd and experiencing the atmosphere which attracts many supporters to the 'live' venue. However, it is the supporters themselves, through their performance (for instance, as part of a 'Mexican wave', chanting or singing, displaying flags, banners or using musical instruments), who play a crucial role in generating the spectacle and atmosphere within the venue. Moreover, participation within the crowd can help cement their feelings of belonging and membership of this supporter 'community'.

Also, high-profile, irregular sports events such as world championships will draw a range of spectators whose desire is to be part of a global spectacle that 'may deliver defining moments in history' (Higham and Hinch 2009: 106). Furthermore, it has been argued that sports events represent opportunities for visitors to experience a nation or community at play, and in doing so gain a deeper insight into the cultural nuances and traditions that take place there (Nauright 1996; Jarvie 2006; Higham and Hinch 2009; Gammon 2010). As a result sport events are becoming significant features of many tourists' itineraries as they arguably quench the desire for authentic experiences of both a place and a people.



The phenomenon of fan zones, recently made popular through the last two Football World Cups in Germany and South Africa, should be mentioned here. Fan zones essentially are areas specifically designed for fans to assemble and watch a live match on huge video screens. They are often set up near to where the live event takes place and will thus cater for those who have been unable to obtain tickets but still wish to soak up the atmosphere of the event. Recently the term 'fan zone' has been adopted to describe areas for fans to congregate before a game in order to promote stronger ties with the fans and local community as well as encouraging the social features of the event experience discussed earlier. The City Square development outside the stadium at Manchester City FC is a good example of this, where large media screens stream edited and live video information while the club's community arm provides match-day activities for children (Place North West 2010). This initiative may be the first of many, and represents an example of how the event experience can be managed more holistically, as discussed earlier.

It is worth noting that peripheral events can take place anywhere and, in the case of European or international football competitions, are sometimes assembled in the 'home' stadia for fans who are unable to travel to the event. There has been scant research concerning the motives and experiences associated with fan zones but they pose, and will undoubtedly generate, some fascinating debates relating to atmosphere authenticity and place.

### *Sports events and place*

It is perhaps easy and understandable to sideline or ignore the places in which sports events take place, for the action in front of the spectator will often render the structure that houses events at best peripheral or at worst unimportant. But for highly identified fans as well as less passionate spectators, the places and structures in which sports events take place are important, a point raised by Gammon (2010: 124):

It must not be forgotten that stadia are the vessels that house these experiences and, therefore, have important social and cultural meanings in their own right. To ignore or dismiss them is equivalent to solely focussing on the wine whilst neglecting the significance of the container in which it is drunk.

Obviously, the relationships between person and place will vary depending upon geographical and community ties as well as fan motivation discussed earlier. For the less passionate spectator, sports stadia represent symbolic reminders of the event(s) that have taken and continue to take place there. These large and often imposing structures have, like many other traditional tourist attractions, become famous for being famous (MacCannell 1999). Recently, modern designs of major sports stadia have changed from the rather bland utilitarian structures of the past to stadia which have distinctive architectural signatures, and so clearly help in the marketing of place. The Bird's Nest stadium in Beijing is a case in point, with its distinctive iconic design and its ability to attract an astounding 30,000 visitors daily after the Olympic and Paralympic Games had ended (Reuters 2009). For the more devoted fan the sites in which regular or one-off events take place transcend their functional purpose and become powerful symbols of place and of home. Such deep connections are not just the preserve of the locals, but also of the travelling fans who develop strong associations with their 'home' ground (Higham and Hinch 2009).

It was John Bale (1982, 1993, 1994, 1996), who first explored the connections between sport, people and place by adopting and adapting work by Tuan (1974). Tuan uses the term 'topophilia' (possibly coined by the poet W.H. Auden) to describe in very simple terms a love

of place. According to Bale (1993) sports fans can often endow meaning to sport places through a quasi-religious allegiance that elevates these often modest structures into sites more akin to modern-day shrines. Moreover, where sports sites are bestowed positions of heritage, such as the spiritual home of a sport or team (e.g. Lord's Cricket Ground, St Andrew's golf course) it is not uncommon for visitors to take a form of secular pilgrimage in order to pay their respects (Gammon 2004; Gammon and Ramshaw 2007). In fact, most major sports stadia incorporate visitor tours which feed off the desires for individuals to gain a deeper connection with a famous site, as well as to the sport and/or the team that compete there.

Of course, it is not just sports events that generate such powerful ties with the places in which they take place. Many festivals, carnivals and music sites (such as the Bayreuth Festspielhaus for Wagner fans) generate strong ties with place. But the global appeal and interest that sport stadia generate often cross the boundaries of fandom to the less attached visitor, who acknowledges the cultural significance of the events that have taken place there. Undoubtedly, the massive media coverage of sports events helps fuel the interest in the sites where the action takes place, and may indicate why the Camp Nou (the home ground of FC Barcelona) is the number one visitor attraction in Barcelona.

### **Six Nations rugby tournament: Twickenham**

#### *Event outline*

The Rugby Union Six Nations tournament is an annual international sporting event that is contested by England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, France and Italy. In its present format the competition has been in existence for ten years, the first game taking place in 2000. Prior to this it was known as the Five Nations, but was changed when Italy joined the event in 2000.

The origins of the tournament go back to 1883 when the championship comprised of the four home nations, but it was later extended to include France in 1910 which led to the event being known as the Five Nations. The competition format is straightforward, with each team playing the other teams once, with home advantage alternating each year. A win is worth two points, a draw one point and there are no points for a loss. The team with the most points are declared the winners. Achieving victory in every game is the pinnacle of every team's ambition and is known as the 'Grand Slam'. England hold the record for the number of Grand Slams with twelve, followed by Wales with ten, France with eight, Scotland with three and Ireland with two. Within the competition there are a number of additional trophies associated with competitions between specific teams, such as the Calcutta Cup (England vs Scotland), the Millennium Trophy (England vs Ireland) and the Giuseppe Garibaldi Trophy (France vs Italy). In addition there is the Triple Crown, which is awarded to the home nation team which has successfully beaten the other three home nation teams.

The competition takes place usually over the months of January and March and is attended by over 980,000 spectators. The competition generates significant media coverage, with key matches boasting up to 10 million viewers. Each match could be considered a hallmark event, as the stadia are firmly linked to both location and tournament and include Twickenham (London, England), the Millennium Stadium (Cardiff, Wales), Murrayfield (Edinburgh, Scotland), Croke Park (Dublin, Ireland), Stade de France (Paris, France) and the Stadio Flaminio (Rome, Italy). However, the tournament as a whole could be considered as 'mega' owing to its international media coverage and collective attendance figures. Furthermore the championship has confusingly been described by the



media as a festival of rugby, which illustrates the limitations of current event typologies. The impacts generated by each contest will of course differ and be dependent upon where they take place, between whom, and at what stage of the competition. Consequently, it is possible that event types will vary with each match, though it is likely that most would reside within the B category outlined in Table 7.2.

### *Twickenham Stadium*

Positioned on the west of London, Twickenham Stadium is the home venue for all English games in the Six Nations. It is owned and operated by the Rugby Football Union, who are the governing body of rugby union in England, and is often affectionately referred to by the English fans as HQ. It has a long heritage; hosting its first rugby international in 1919. Since that time it has gone through many transformations and designs, culminating in the present state-of-the-art stadium that boasts seating for 82,000, making it the biggest designated stadium for rugby union in the world and the second largest stadium in the UK. However, the stadium hosts many other sporting and non-sporting events, such as domestic rugby events and rock concerts. Because of its historical significance and the many important events taking place there, the stadium not only markets itself as the home of English rugby but also as the spiritual home of rugby (Ramshaw and Gammon 2010). Consequently it runs a popular stadium tour and houses the World Rugby Museum, which contains a plethora of important rugby ephemera.

### *Fans*

Fan profiles for attending international rugby union events are internationally diverse, though studies have suggested that home fans tend to derive from higher socio-economic groups. With the exception of the dysfunctional fan (as violence and anti-social behaviour are rare at these events), spectators represent the full spectrum of fan types (Ritchie 2004) with many devoted fans willing to travel to all fixtures. The attached Marriott Hotel at Twickenham offers the opportunity for visitors to extend their stay and so caters for a growing sport tourist market. However, the majority of the fan base will mostly comprise a mixture of devoted and casual fans. The attendance of less identified fans will undoubtedly be drawn as much by the spectacle as by the match.

Because of the international nature of the event, the presence of local fans would not be as significant as it would be in local team fixtures, although it is worth noting that as part of the RFU community relations programme local residents living close to Twickenham Stadium are invited to enter a ballot for 400 free tickets.

### *Authenticity*

In recent years the championship has become more competitive, with no one team sustaining a winning streak year on year. This has undeniably added interest to the contests and has created increased attention from a wider scope of fans, as well as from the media. Organisations selling packages to watch the games are also keen to promote the special and unique qualities of the fixtures. They not only 'sell' the deep rivalries held between the teams but also promise spectators the opportunity to soak up the atmosphere of a special sporting occasion.

## Conclusion

Without doubt sport-related events represent a significant segment of the event industry, yet their inclusion in the literature, not including studies relating to mega-events, is relatively small. However, it is encouraging to see that sport-specific texts are emerging now, supported by research studies that go beyond the many economic impact analyses of the past. Given the growth in these recent publications it is surprising that a more detailed and agreed sports event typology has not been proposed, one that goes beyond the more general event types adopted in much of the event literature. Current typologies fail to both distinguish and convey the extent and complexity of a market that has great importance in cultural, social and personal terms. The economic contribution of sports events, when managed and forecast realistically, can act positively for communities, cities and regions in which they take place.

Sports events are like no other events in that they offer an authentic insight of a people at play, as well as generating levels of passion and emotional investment rarely seen in other event forms. They generate mass media interest and so are able to assist in place-marketing initiatives as well as a number of other positive outcomes related to health, regeneration and community cohesion. In some cases the stadia in which the events take place become attractions in their own right and can generate additional income for the organisations responsible for them. There are, of course, the darker and less positive sides to sports events associated with dysfunctional fan behaviour and the over-optimistic estimates that promote them as the panacea to failing local economies and social deprivation. Nevertheless it is all these features that distinguish the sports event as a significant event form that in turn warrants its status as a separate focus of study.

## Further reading

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