



EXAMINING URBAN AUTHORITIES' SPORT DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES. A CASE STUDY OF MARONDERA TOWN IN ZIMBABWE

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Abstract:

The Marondera town obtained its town status in 1974, and since then it constructed and authorized some sports and recreation centers for its urban communities. Unfortunately, only two sports and recreation centers are in operation to date. The dilapidation of these facilities has left the urban communities of Marondera with no option but to turn those sports centers and active open spaces into garbage dumping sites that have increased land and air pollutions in the town and residential suburbs. Environment Management Authorities have often been dragging the municipality of Marondera to court for failing to combat environmental pollution in the town of Marondera and this has motivated this study to find cheaper ways to control environmental pollution and one of these ways being of harnessing the power of sport and recreation. The study objectives were to examine the existing sport development initiatives by Marondera town council and come up with sport-environmental strategies that could strengthen and sustain urban environments through the power of sport and recreational activities. The study adopted a qualitative paradigm and the data were analyzed using transcription and thematic analysis processes to solicit data from town councilors, town planners, environmentalist officials, and residents who were stratified into business community, sport participants and ordinary residents. The design deemed appropriate was the case study. Data revealed that the philosophy 'going green' is not popularized among the urban people, that is, why environmental pollution is rampant and difficult to control. Therefore, the study concludes that it is

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possible for municipalities to harness the power of sport and recreation to enhance protection of urban environments. It is further recommended that urban authorities should partner with national sports associations and the local communities of diverse background to spearhead sport-environment-friendly initiatives.

Keywords: sports, green space, environment

Background for the Study

Environmental health care should be every one's business whether in towns or in rural arrears, but the prevailing situation is that municipalities are left alone to maintain and enforce environmental cleanliness. The culture of social responsibility, according to Robins and Coutler, (1996) is at stake in most countries and it is witnessed in the case of public utilities like municipal sport centers, and active open spaces, people do not place any respect to them in keeping them clean as they regard them as belonging to everybody.

On the other hand, there are several militating constraints that make these councils fail to keep their towns clean, especially budgetary constraints. Such constraints are not an excuse in harnessing other strategies that will assist councils to maintain and promote healthy town environments. It was noted in the United Nations General Assembly (2009) resolutions 60/1 that sports promote education, health and development and peace in communities. The issue of healthy environments is pertinent as most towns are haunted by problems of garbage collection. Furthermore, municipalities as development organs of the government are expected to uphold tenets of the Sustainable Development Goals to which Zimbabwe and other states are signatories, especially Goal number 11.6 which propounds the reduction of the adverse per capita environment impact of cities, including paying special attention to air quality, municipal and other waste management.

The construction and establishment of stadia, open play centers, gymnasia and other fields of recreation by town councils was an effort to keep residents healthy and fit. Unfortunately, such efforts have been wetted down as new councils with different priorities are continuously elected into power and some have shown no interest to keep sports and recreational centers cleaned and maintained under their budgets. For instance, Marondera town council had a sport budget for some years before with sports qualified personnel employed to manage sports and recreational facilities, but later on until to date that post is vacant. The contention under this study is that, while residents are made to pay rates as development levy by council, still the council is not

rehabilitating the play centers and those active open spaces which used to accommodate community sport and recreational activities leaving these places open to public menace and a source of land and air pollution. Given this background, the study sought to come up with strategies that could be adopted by the Marondera town council in a bid to keep urban environments clean and healthy through harnessing the power of sport and recreation. The present state of environmental uncleanliness has affected residents' health and the Marondera town council as it is continuously fined by EMA. Therefore, the study's recommendations if adhered to by the council would assist it to reduce budgetary constraints in a cheaper way and sport being one of the ways.

2. Statement of the Problem

Marondera town council once had a remarkable number of sport and recreation facilities, only two are in smart operation and the rest are neglected and have been turned into garbage dumping sites by residents causing both land and air pollution. There are several open spaces that are turned into dumping sites by residents in and around the town of Marondera. Among other methods which might be cheaper to keep Marondera town environments clean and healthy, this study aims to come up with affordable strategies embedded in sport and recreational power.

3. Research Questions

1. Which sport development initiatives necessary in urban councils in line with environmental health upkeep?
2. What are the social and economic importance of sport and recreational life style in urban towns?
3. Which strategies are feasible to keep towns clean through the power of sport and recreation?

4. Objectives

1. To evaluate old and existing sport and recreation plans for Marondera town Council.
2. To explain the environmental benefits experienced by town communities from sport and recreation life style.

3. To draw up strategies to be adopted by Marondera town council in the bid to keep the town clean and healthy for its communities through harnessing the power of sport and recreation.

5. Review of Related Literature

5.1 Sport and Environmental Initiatives in towns

There should be a plethora of environmental health initiatives that every town should adopt in order to keep towns clean and safe for their people. Most towns in Zimbabwe are in constant trouble with vendors who are causing every part of cities filthy by selling and dumping refuse everywhere, (Minister of local Government Public works and National Housing (2015, Herald p 1). Those vendors are residents of those towns, which on other hand mean people need some economic initiatives that would occupy them other than street vending. As has been noted and appreciated by researchers that sport can open avenues to economic well-being of a community, the Local governments should think along those lines to build sport fields and rent such pitches to sport clubs and associations who could stage various competitions every time. Hoye et al (2009) assert that once there are plenty of sports fields in an area, common people are found selling their products in those fields because that is where crowds are found. It is easier for the councils to enforce their by-laws inside those play fields pertaining litter dumping. For instance, each vendor carrying a litter bag into which empty packets must be thrown by their clients. For instance, the United Nation Environmental Program (UNEP) is as a result working with various sports organizations to ensure that sports goods and sports events are green. This inherent link between sports and the environment is a powerful tool that can be used to communicate environmental messages and encouraging environmentally responsible behavior.

Crespin, (2010) posits that lack of social responsibility has impacted much against urban environmental health. An observer in Sunday Times (2014,May 23 p5) has pointed out that urban authorities have ignored putting public incinerators in urban residential areas in which disposal diapers and sanitary pads could be burnt, instead of them being thrown in homestead rubbish bins and unattended tall grass in open spaces. Those open spaces according to EMA's Mashonaland East provincial report of 2014 could be turned into recreational centers for the communities, such as resting centers, fenced and with concrete benches and beautified with ornamental shrubs. Tennis courts require small areas (Wise 1985), such as those open spaces which attract residents to dump their garbage; therefore, those could be developed and become income generating sites for the council. Sport infrastructure and other kinds of municipal

leisure infrastructure represent one of the basic conditions to be met in order to let the local residents satisfy their collective and individual needs related to sport and exercises.

5.2 Importance of Sport and recreation to the Urban Environment

Sports activities impact on the environment and the environment does have an impact on sport. According to UNEP (1994), and Chernushenko (2001), participation in sport requires a clean and safe environment. Sports activities on the other hand may also impact on the natural environment though the scale and gravity of the impact depends mainly on the kind of sport and the size of the event. Sport and recreation have a unique power to bring development in the urban environments. Barghchi, Omar and Aman (2010), observe that in Australia over the past 20 years, investment in the sporting infrastructure at national level in cities was not primarily aimed at getting the local community involved in sports, but instead aimed at attracting tourists, encouraging inward investment, and changing the image of the city.

Another example where town environments benefit from staging sports mega events is that of South Africa Soccer World Cup of 2010 where hosting cities' roads, streets, parking areas, sewage drains and water services received a face lift to accommodate visitors. This was an epitome of the importance of sport and recreation to town environment improvement.

Sport participation reduces crime rate in communities, (Andrews and Andrews 2003). People who participate in sport are always exposed to rules during games, for instance, and researches argue that they even translate that culture of being law abiding people to their daily lives in communities so as to maintain self-respect and remain good models. That translates to mean such people could not dump litter everywhere or steal water taps that irrigate open spaces in towns.

Sport is a human right as is explicitly embodied in Article 1 of the Charter of the Physical Education and Sport adopted by the UNESCO in 1978 which states that "The practice of Physical Education and Sport is a fundamental human right for all. It stresses that everyone is entitled to participate in sport including, especially women, young people the elderly and the disabled.

Sport infrastructure and other kinds of municipal leisure infrastructure represent one of the basic conditions to be met in order to let the local residents satisfy their collective and individual needs related to sport and exercising.

5.3 Strategies to keep towns clean through sport and recreation

5.3.1 Green spaces

Roxbury, (2006) defines green spaces as land that is partly or completely covered with grass, trees, shrubs or other green vegetation. Green spaces include parks, community gardens, cemeteries, school yards, playgrounds, public seating areas, public plazas and vacant lots. Once these are well managed in towns, they are a great benefit to the environment as they filter pollutants and dust from the air; they provide shade and lower temperatures.

5.3.2 Recycling Programs

Papers of all types and metal containers have been a common type of litter found in residential and open spaces in towns. Crespin (2012) advocates recycling of such used empty containers such that residents are motivated to pick and collect these containers and sell them to local packaging companies. On the same vein, Crespin (2012) urges the use of biofuels which are a low carbon renewable gasoline, especially E10 and E15 blends for generators which have been the most common substitute to electricity in Zimbabwe suburbs and companies.

5.4 Corporate Social Responsibility and Sport

Sports teams, like any business, should engage in ethical behavior as it serves to build an image in the minds of fans (FIFA.com.2013c). For instance, financing environment cleanliness campaigns like sponsoring paper picking whilst displaying company logo, putting up bins at all strategic and active places and at the end of that exercise they stage a sport competition gala for the communities under a given theme like "Sports For All". This social responsibility gesture might serve as a vice to environmental sustenance through community involvement, (FIFA.com.2013c)

5.5 Volunteerism in environmental management through sport

Sport activities, programs and events usually make use of volunteers. The 2000 Sydney Olympics, for example, deployed 47000 volunteers who participated in picking up cigarette butts. Sport is a key way of encouraging volunteerism and achieving the resultant social benefits UNV, (2001). Once mobilized, volunteers can also be encouraged to participate in other activities for example clean-up campaigns or other environmental management programs. According to UNV (2001) a football club in Kenya (MYSA) located the slum of Mathare in Nairobi, allocates points to its teams on the basis of wins, losses, draws and garbage collection, coupling the health benefits from a clean environment with those from participation in sport.

6. Research Methodology

The study employed a qualitative approach to solicit data from participants. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003), Kelle and Erzberger (2004), Uwe (2007), Creswell (2009), qualitative expects the researcher to study the participants in their natural setting, the researcher being key instrument, uses multiple sources of data and participants' meanings of the issue under study. These characteristics were enjoyed by the researchers in this study.

7. Research Design

The research design deemed appropriate was the case study as it gave researchers an in-depth study of a particular organization and its sports governance, in this case was Marondera town council.

8. Population

To carry out this study, town planning officials, councilors, ordinary residents, Environmental Management Authority officials, business community, sports administrators and the general residents who work and reside in Marondera urban made up the relevant population for this study.

9. Sample and Sampling Techniques

From the population noted above, a sample size of fifty (50) participants was deemed appropriate for this study. Town planning officials involved were 5, councilors 5, officials from EMA were 5, business community persons were 5, sports administrators 5 and ordinary residents in Marondera urban selected were 25. The sample was selected using simple random sampling, and purposive sampling which ever was necessary. An important group of participants from the residents was a group of street vendors who happened to provide peculiar information as a radical group to municipal by-laws.

10. Data Analysis

Responses from interviews and observations were coded according to themes from transcribed data. Data were analyzed according to these themes and findings and conclusions were arrived at.

11. Results and Discussion

11.1 Sport-environmental initiatives

It emerged that since the Marondera town got its town status in 1974 it had a sport and recreation policy which saw the establishment of sports fields and some green parks. From the interviews it was found out that some sports fields were no-go areas for blacks, but since then, they were a preserve for white minority groups e.g. in cricket, tennis, golf and rugby pitches and were attractive open spaces with care-takers on payroll, unlike playgrounds for blacks.

11.2 When did the green sports fields stop being maintained?

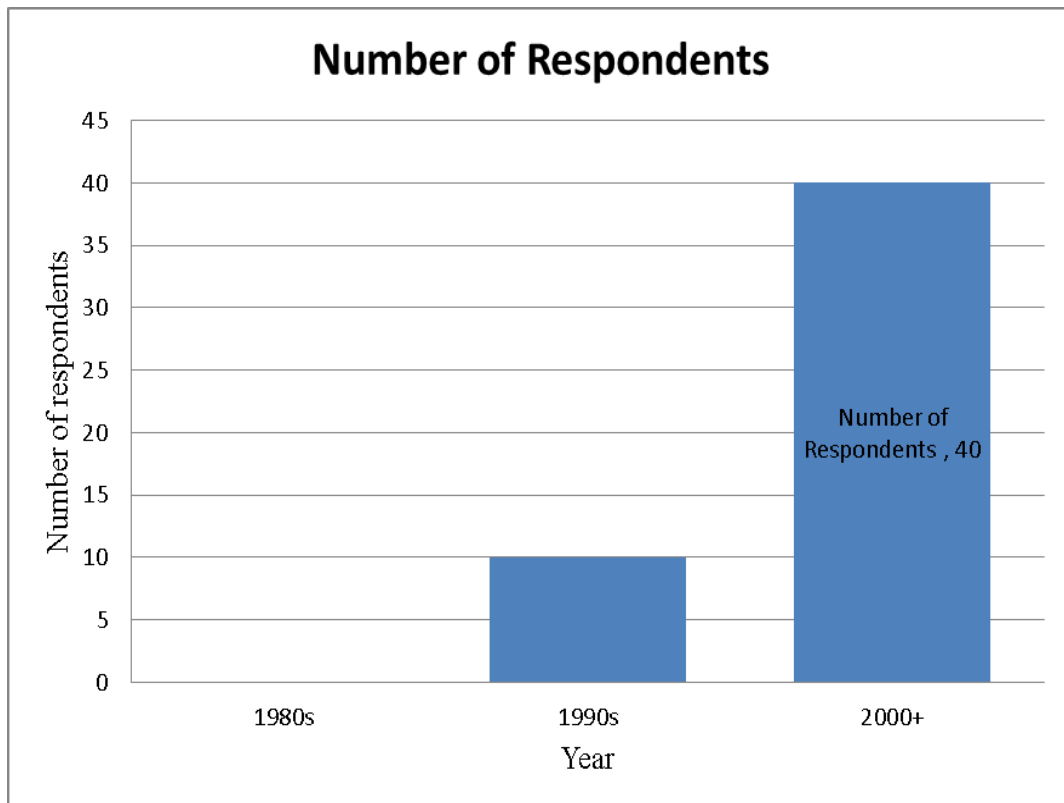


Figure 1

Post-independence saw black majority taking over those white dominated sports fields and that was when the state of some fields suffered the brunt of uncaring culture. It is convincing that by leaving those fields of sport unguarded could be a precipitating condition to let residents turn them into garbage dumping sites.

11.3 Availability of sports facilities

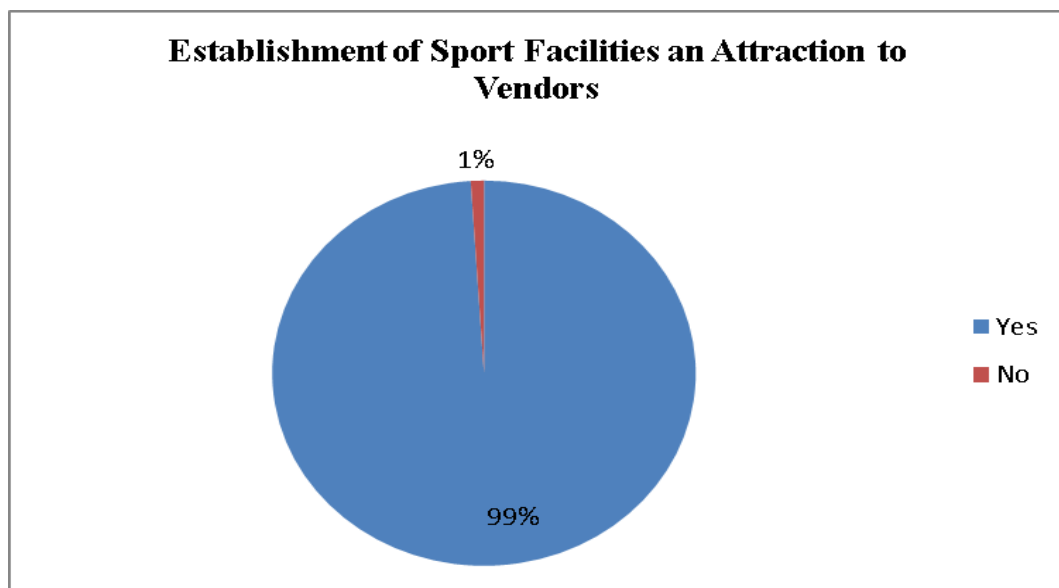


Figure 2

The gathered data advocated for the establishment of numerous sport arenas in residential areas so that vendors could be attracted to sport crowds who might be spectators or sport participants to sell their products to, than in streets always. 99% of the participants suggested this strategy as a panacea to street vending which has contributed immensely to urban environmental pollution. This initiative might contribute to decongesting the CBDs; this suggestion was also echoed by (Hoye et al 2009).

11.4 Participants' verbal responses to their understanding of the concept 'going green'

Residents: generally said "*hatizive, zvii izvozvo?*" (we don't know, what is that?)

Town engineers: "living a life that promotes clean environment free from life-threatening pollutants, planting and maintaining flora".

Sports Administrators: "sustainable, clean and habitable environment"

Business community: "not clear to us, we often read on the products we order"

EMA officials: were assumed to know this.

Councilors: were evasive, had no knowledge.

It appeared that there is knowledge deficit among 80% of urban dwellers except that of town engineers and those from EMA, concerning the 'green ideology'. This might signify weak advocacy by EMA and municipality authorities. That might be a reason people are not participating in promoting 'green life-style' in towns.

Observations concurred with the literature that disposal diapers and sanitary pads are dumped in open spaces with unattended tall grass and bushes in town. Participants suggested turning those open spaces into active small courts for tennis, volleyball and resting areas so that people could pay a little fee to enjoy the leisure and comfort of these active spaces to the benefit of the town council.

Table 2: Describe working relations with the municipality towards promoting environment cleanliness

Participant group	Weak	Excellent
Business community	✓	
Sports Associations	✓	

Working in partnership with the corporate world and local National Sports Associations is weak, the municipality could exploit the expertise and stage some fund raising games and make environmental awareness campaigns and channel the proceeds towards the purchasing of public bins, collection of garbage, unlocking drainages and purifying water.

Data indicated that town authorities and residents are eager to have their town host mega sport events for the development of roads, water services and other accommodation facilities, but lack of adequate existing stadia has rendered their desire null and void.

Table 3: On strategies to keep town clean, the participants had this to say

Theme	No.	%
Stepping up cleanup campaigns through sport	50	100
Relocating vending sites	25	50
Establishing green spaces	50	100
Employing watchdogs and guards	50	100
Council buying more refuse collection vehicles	50	100
Building public incinerators	40	80

From the responses above, it is clear that even the ordinary stakeholders are concerned with urban environment pollution. The data above indicate an agreement by most strata of participants to strategies that would see the urban environment safe from pollution through human positive efforts. Unfortunately, 50% of the participants were vendors who radically opposed their eviction from street sites, possibly because they regarded streets as viable places for quick sales since that is where crowds are found as

potential buyers. On installation of public incinerators, the drop by 20% was due to fear of further air pollution by residents not to say they want the garbage to stay.

Generally, it shows it is easier for the city authorities to harness this community concern and turn it to their advantage in the campaign for urban environmental cleanliness.

12. Conclusions

Given the findings above, this study concluded that:

- Sport and recreation have a bearing to environmental sustainability and
- Town municipalities can take advantage to advance health levels of their towns through the power of sport and recreation.
- The concept of 'going green' is not popular among town residents; therefore, it is difficult for the municipalities to control town populace from polluting the urban environments.
- Despite residents and town authorities' knowledge of sport as a tool to facilitate environmental cleanliness, they cannot stage mega sport events because of fewer stadia and other sport facilities.
- Municipalities have numerous open spaces that they are not attending to and those have been a menace as garbage dumping sites.
- The state of the economic has exacerbated the capacity to maintain and develop town environments through sport initiatives.
- There is a weaker partnership between the municipalities and National Sports Association in crafting sport initiatives to combat environmental pollution by residents.

13. Recommendations

1. Urban authorities should take advantage of the power of sport and recreation to develop and maintain town environments through upgrading open spaces into income generating sport and recreational centers.
2. Town councilors should spearhead environmental-sport related activities in their political wards.
3. Establishment of partnerships between municipalities and the sport associations should be a prerequisite to environmental cleanliness.
4. Town councils must employ sports officers and environmental security guards to man the active open spaces.

5. Over-night car parks in residential areas should be maintained and owned by the town councils so that car owners pay direct to the council than to land barons.
6. Street vendors should be given their bays at properly designated sites with necessary sanitary facilities.

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