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# The (un) level playing field: sport, inequality and the myth of inclusivity.

Professor Louise Mansfield



# Sport for All? Global, National Local Policies



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## Sport policy in Finland

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to provide a description and create an understanding of public sport policy, the key actors within the sports system, and the political sphere in Finnish sport. The development of sport policy in Finland has been characterised by a relatively long-lasting, polarised, and highly politicised sports sector and a series of structural reforms. The contemporary sports system in Finland represents a mixed model, in which the state has a strong role in directing sport policy (especially through resource steering), while the role of sports organisations is implementation. Further, municipalities play a central role in creating conditions for sport and physical activity, and all sport policy actors have high autonomy in their operations. In particular, the population's increasing physical inactivity and lack of elite sport success in Finland have driven the central government to seek new solutions, such as centralisation, a cross-administrative approach, and evidence-informed policy-making practices. Sport policy is also impacted by international trends and agreements, such as sustainable development, in which Finland's ambitious goals affect the sports sector. In the future, the unclear roles of different actors and a lack of leadership could cause further challenges to the adoption of effective sport policies.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

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### KEYWORDS

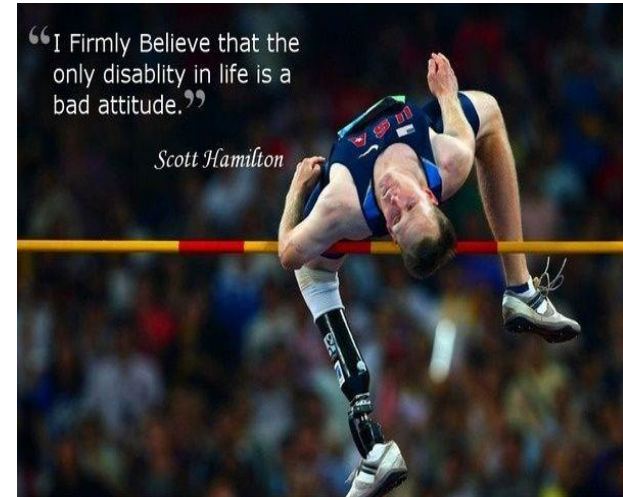
Finland; sport policy; sports governance; country profile; sports organisation

# Exclusionary Practices and Attitudes in Sport



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# Exploring the Unlevel Playing Field in (Community) Sport

- Tokenism and the myth of inclusivity
- Complex systemic exclusionary issues
- Oversimplistic intersectionality
- Towards inclusivity in community sport?

# **The Myth of Inclusivity and Tokenistic Tactics**



# Historical Advances in Inclusivity through Sport?



**Sarah Al Shaeri Makes History:  
First Muslim Hijabi to Win Bronze in  
Taekwondo for Belgium at Paris  
2024 Olympics.**

# **Systemic Exclusionary Processes**

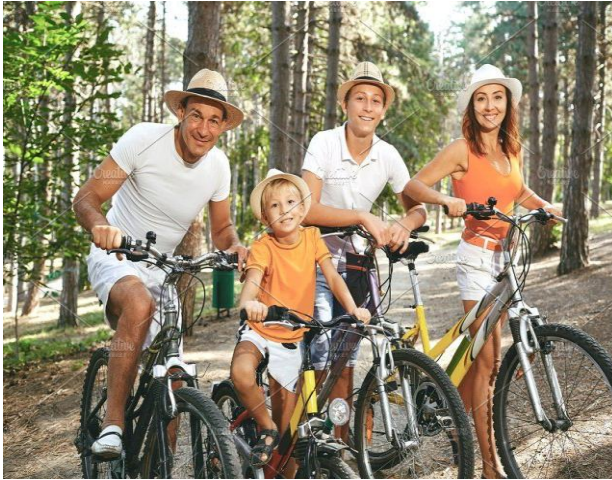




"The problem was just the fact that I was female, and I had the nerve to be in that space."



# “Imaginary of Inclusivity” in Sport Participation



# **Intersectionality: Oversimplified and Politicised?**

“

**IF YOU SEE INEQUALITY AS  
A “THEM” PROBLEM OR  
“UNFORTUNATE OTHER”  
PROBLEM, THAT IS A PROBLEM.**

Kimberlé Crenshaw,

Lawyer, civil rights advocate and intersectional feminist



# **Towards Inclusivity in Contested Community Sport; Celebrating Different and Diversity**





# Understanding Southall, London UK.



# History and the present: difference, diversity, (racialised) inequalities/ tension

## • Southall

- a major town in the (West) London Borough of Ealing
- since 1950s proximity to Heathrow and wider global (forced) migration e.g 1972 expulsion of Indian population from Uganda has made it home to large Punjabi/Sikh community
- major South Asian culture (385, 000 residents; 40.4% Asian; 70% Punjabi)
- perjorative descriptions 'Little India'; 'Little Punjab'
- racialised tensions, racism and violence – culture of distrust in 'outsiders' and authorities



# Participatory and community principles and practices of coproduction

- The ***limits of a one-way consultation*** (Beresford, 2002)
- The ***development of intricate diverse relationships and expertise*** (Mansfield, 2016)
- ***More creative, participatory practices*** (Donetto et al., 2015)
- ***Sector (border) crossings*** (Mansfield, 2018)
- ***Public pedagogy*** - learning spaces enabling ethical and respectful social change; a language of critique and possibility (Giroux 2004)



# Social Movement

for Physical Activity  
in Southall



## Health Systems Innovation

A shared vision, passion and commitment to transforming community health systems through physical activity

*"We need change for health...physical activity was not a key part of our community lives (Super Organiser, M)*



## Place | Space Locality | Culture

Understanding the ways that a sense of place can influence local action for physical activity for mental and physical health

*"Promoting Southall is really key to the Movement... I can see people saying it's my community... my place... my activity" (Super Organiser, F)*



## Collaboration | Partnership

Co-creating and sustaining an open, transparent culture of shared learning and development with partners

*"There is more shared discussion...through the Social Movement... and there is potential to link up more all the time" (Strategic Decision Maker, F)*



## Leadership | Self-Organisation

Challenging systems of central control to co-create new systems of leadership and self-organisation for community physical activity.

*"This Movement... is holistic... it's not from the top down... it's important for the people to lead change... make a difference... change a perspective..." (Super Organiser, F)*

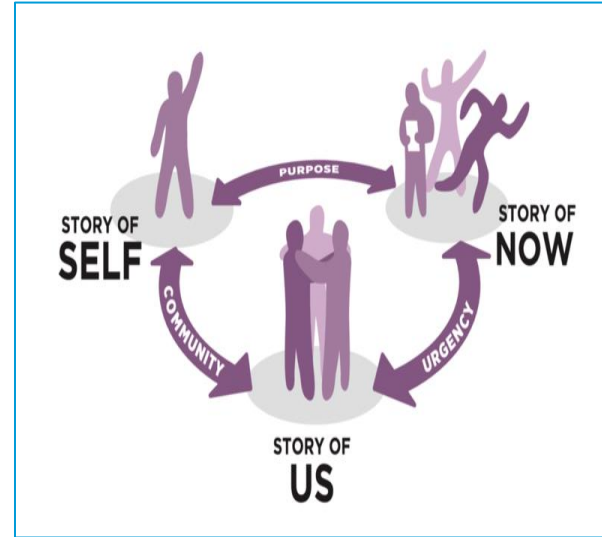


## Sustainable Transformation

New ways of working and learning optimise community capabilities, collaborative opportunities, and shared learning for process adaptation and system change.

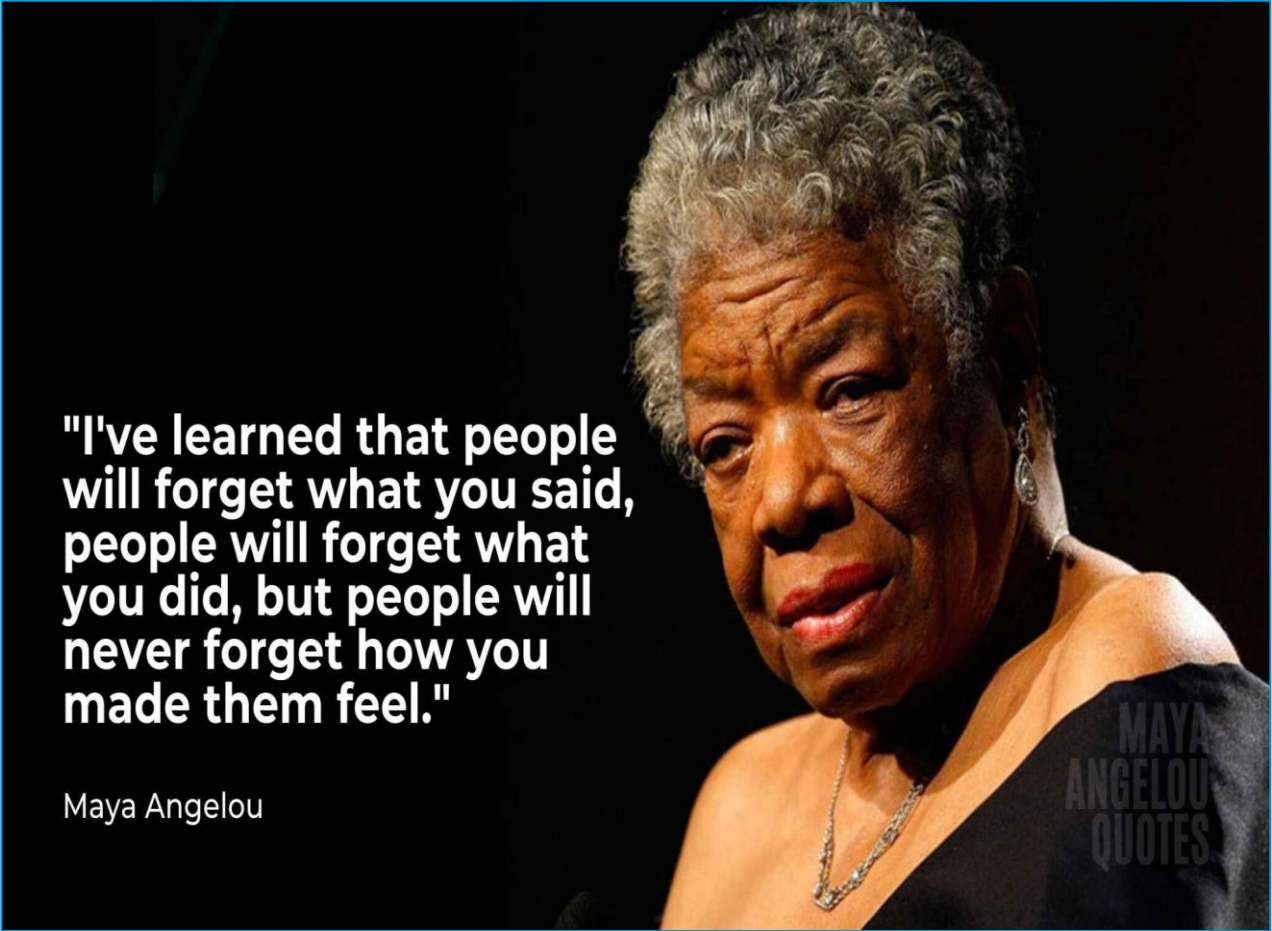
*The key focus is radical change... to adapt... and change... people know they can get involved... and influence strategic decisions" (Strategic Decision Maker, M)*

# Public Narrative: Leadership through Storytelling



# Impact of Research on Users? (Beresford, 2002)





**"I've learned that people  
will forget what you said,  
people will forget what  
you did, but people will  
never forget how you  
made them feel."**

Maya Angelou

MAYA  
ANGELOU  
QUOTES

## Inclusivity in Community Sport Practice

*Southall is different...we embrace that...we have to recognise diversity of potential leaders...embrace all cultures...our people (leaders)...have values of inclusivity (and) owning personal resources...(we ask) what will (you) bring to the table...people worry about leading...I change it to enjoyment, love and being motivated. Yes...(put yourself at)...the forefront. (Southall, UK; Community Sport Strategic Decision Maker, F)*



