

Recreation, Sport and Civil Society – Some Observations and Opportunities

By Gareth Moore-Jones *

As we move 'into the future', whatever that may mean to you, it is worth considering some of the social dynamics and activity that play a role in maintaining a quality of life that we, in the main, have come to expect. I have undertaken a significant body of research into aspects of societal change such as peak oil, global terrorism and both virtual and alternative reality portals, and my colleagues at Futures New Zealand have undertaken significant work in the areas of energy and agricultural futures.

This study has led me to the conclusion that all 'extraneous' drivers lead to one common outcome: that is, that there will be a change in the way that individuals and groups within communities will need to interact with other. If we are to return to a village-based community, with less travel, more reliance on our neighbours and 're-discovering' our sense of community then recreation and sport will play a crucial cohesive role. Or, put another way, "the more things change the more they....."

In this regard, I was recently asked to present at the National Funders Forum at Te Papa for Philanthropy New Zealand. This talk was based upon research undertaken looking at the relationship between Philanthropic funding in New Zealand, the enhancement of Civil Society and the role that recreation and sport play in that relationship.

What follows is an overview of that presentation, which outlines some of the trends and future actions within the recreation and sport sector that philanthropists, local councils and sports organisations should consider.

Recreation & Sport – observations:

You will notice that I use the term *recreation and sport* rather than the usual *sport and recreation*. Sport is merely a sub-set of recreation – I think we should start a campaign to get SPARC renamed RASNZ (maybe a cruisy TV ad with dried grapes exercising to the tune of ‘I heard it through the grapevine’)!

Recreation, sport and ‘*Civil Society*’.

Recreation and sport play a crucial role in any community. Recreation and sport not only provide a *social cohesion* function but also play a role in *health and wellness, economic development* and *cultural identity*.

Social cohesion is a core component of a ‘civil society’ and that outcome of a civil society would appear to be a primary goal of Philanthropy. In ‘Giving New Zealand’ Philanthropy NZ’s 2006 report prepared by Berl¹, the definition of philanthropy is:

‘Philanthropy is the act of giving financial resources to a cause that is intended to improve general human well-being, and where the giver expects no direct reciprocation or financial gain in return’

We’ll come back to that term ‘well-being’ in a moment but I suggest here that civil society and community well-being are almost interchangeable.

If civil society can be termed an ‘associational’ society (where the goals of communities are achieved through associational effort and voluntary groups such as recreation and sporting groups), or ‘civil society as the good society’² recognising and sustaining civility through tolerance, non-discrimination, non-

¹ Giving New Zealand, Philanthropic funding 2006. BERL, March 2007 pg 6

² Edwards, Michael (2004) ‘*Civil Society*’ Polity Press.

violence, trust and co-operation, then recreation and sport can be shown to develop and enhance 'civil society' through their very nature.

Recreation and sport (and increasingly the science of physical education in our children's formative years) is being recognised by communities as essential tools to foster development and peace. Even the United Nations³ is increasingly drawing on this medium through which entire societies can be mobilised, to raise awareness about issues and as a tool to achieve their objectives in a variety of fields, from improving health and education, to creating employment and promoting tolerance and respect for human rights.

Acknowledging the growing potential of partnerships between a range of stakeholders, the UN Secretary-General appointed a Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace in 2001 to identify tasks and programmes that could benefit from the use of sport. In recognition of the important role that sport and physical education can play at the individual, community, national and global levels as mechanisms, in combination with existing efforts, to achieve specific targets such as those concerning poverty reduction, universal education, gender equality and environmental sustainability, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2005 as the International Year of Sport and Physical Education.

Take a look at any recreation and sporting club in your region and you will observe both the 'associational society' and the 'good society' in action – wander to the sports fields on a Saturday morning and you will see the outcomes of those associations displayed.

³ "The practice of sports is essential for the development of every boy and girl. It increases the learning capacity, teaches important lessons about respecting others, leadership, team work and offers the opportunity for a healthier life to children and adolescents," said UNICEF's Manuel Buvinch.

Importance of Recreation and Sport

Why is continuing investment in recreation and sport important for our community now and into the future?

The outcomes that are almost self-evident 'givens' are fun, social interaction, health and identity. At a more nuts and bolts level, recreation and sport is a public good that provides other considerable benefits, not only to the individual participants, but to society in general. Central and local government realise the benefits, and the economic and social value created by recreation and sport - \$300M per annum in sport-generated tax payments – the gross output from the sector was \$1.9B. 94 percent of New Zealanders are interested or involved in recreation and sport and one third of all New Zealanders participate in organised sport activities⁴.

In the health sector, physical inactivity is one of the biggest contributors to the burden of disease in New Zealand. Physical inactivity alone is estimated to result in 2,500 deaths per annum. (The direct costs of inactivity are estimated to be in the order of \$180M per annum and are likely to be much larger when indirect costs are included.)

It can be seen that recreation and sport-induced activity and the settings at which and within which they occur, are a crucial component of our society on a number of levels, and are worthy of investment.

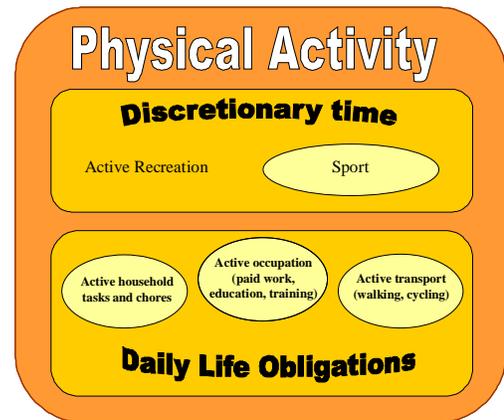
Philanthropic Trusts and other funders are already becoming aware of the 'broader scope' of recreation and sport. They may like to consider daily-life movement and active transport as worthy targets for future investment for youth and older adults who most need alternative access and inclusion of activity outside of the traditional recreation and sport models particularly in the face of future trends and impacts of peak oil.

⁴ Why Invest in Sport and Recreation – SPARC 2004.

The expanded 'recreation' sector can be explained by the following:

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This diagram illustrates how the scope of 'activity' is now extending beyond the traditional sport and active recreation undertaken during discretionary time. It now includes incidental physical activity that occurs while undertaking obligatory activities in our daily lives (a core tenant of Sparc's 'Push Play' campaign).



However, it remains true that the fundamental characteristics for the individual of RECREATION are that it is usually *fun and satisfying*, often a *playful and refreshing contrast* to other parts of their life, and provides *opportunities for social connection*. At a macro-level recreation and physical activity contributes many benefits including *greater connectedness, non-polluting alternative transport and more vibrant communities*.

In the area of achieving the aims and goals of philanthropy, namely community well-being and a civil society, I would argue that recreation and sport are extremely highly connected. They form a strong link network, and because of their sheer volume, both in number of clubs and participants, have a good chance of enhancing civil society.

The Local Government Act 2002:

Local and regional recreation provision is a key to community development and is implicit within each of the four core outcome areas of local government as

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identified by the Local Government Act 2002: economic, social, cultural and environmental *well-being*. The Act encourages territorial authorities to take a comprehensive approach to assisting their communities identify their desired outcomes in terms of well-being, and to encourage a co-ordinated approach to the achievement of the agreed outcomes.

For recreation and sport, the Act has generally been regarded as a positive opportunity to be promoted on an equal footing with other traditional council services in meeting these outcomes. If we were to consider the contribution of recreation and sport as a three-tier concept then it's contribution to civil society would be the first tier, the Act's emphasis on Social, Environmental, Economic and Cultural impacts would be the second tier and the contribution of recreation and sport as a popular and accessible 'tool' by which territorial authorities can achieve desired community outcomes would constitute the third tier.

Local councils are currently (or will need in the near future to start) considering the relationship between their 'outputs' and movement of the community towards desired future community outcomes i.e. how do the provision of sports fields, playgrounds, swimming pools and stadia contribute to a healthy and vibrant community? Some councils are addressing this through an investigation into facility leasing e.g. how does leasing a facility to a specific recreation or sport group at \$1 p.a. contribute towards community outcomes? (or for that matter civil society). And, whose responsibility is it to show that causal relationship? (We like the term BoP – 'burden of proof').

The additional requirement for councils to identify other agencies who can deliver community outcomes has meant greater focus upon partnerships. Historically (for a number of very fine, not so fine and some downright ridiculous reasons) councils have not considered cross-boundary initiatives in the recreation and sport area. The ability under the LGA 2002 for councils to use Development Contributions to fund recreation facility development 'outside of

their own boundaries', provides substantial opportunities for true regional provision of recreation and sport. Unfortunately, to date very few councils have researched the reality and mechanisms for such developments although the appearance of the Auckland Regional Physical Activity and Sports Strategy (ARPASS) has certainly shown on one level, how cross-boundary planning can and does occur).

Facility partnerships – community and schools⁶:

The concept of school and community partnerships is not new – indeed Auckland City Council probably lead the country in their approach to such partnerships and their Partnerships Policy is regarded as a leading example in the area. The Ministry of Education have become more open (or at least less intractable) in the process, and the Auckland Regional Physical Activity and Sport Strategy's (ARPASS) initiative to investigate community and school partnerships is a timely process.

The issue for the community has often been 'a facility on school grounds is simply a school facility', and what exactly represents 'community access'.

As we approach a time of rising fuel prices, traffic congestion, high density housing developments and a more mature, pragmatic view of communities toward 'local access and participation levels of service instead of national or international standard facilities'⁷, the centrality of the school to a community becomes more important for community recreation and sport. It is the author's view that school and community partnerships will become the norm for facility development with regard to recreation, sport and the performing arts.

⁶ Compiled in association with David Allan, Director Strategic Leisure (NZ) Ltd

⁷ Research and recent projects undertaken by the author with Global Leisure Group Ltd shows clearly that many communities wish to first ensure a minimum level of service for local access (we call it Maximum Levels of Opportunity) before they consider the added resource necessary for development of national or international standard event facilities.

As my colleague David Allan notes, the significant advantage of most school sites is their central location within communities because historically land has been set aside for schools at the earliest stages of developing a new community. This means they are also likely to be well located for most types of community recreation and sport facilities.

A well-founded community-school partnership is a win-win solution for most facility developments. Locating a facility on a school site through a community-school partnership can provide superior enduring benefits for the community, the school, the recreation and sport(s) involved and councils compared to a stand-alone facility on a public reserve because of⁸:

- Higher use of the facility during school days (traditionally a low use time for community sport facilities) resulting in greater efficiency of capital investment in facility.
- Support for improved educational outcomes because the facilities are available on-site for curriculum delivery.
- Shared burden between local community and school (mostly funded by Government through Ministry of Education) of capital and renewal costs.
- Shared maintenance and operating costs between local community and the school (mostly funded by Government through Ministry of Education).
- Better promotion of the sport(s) to the student population because the school and club sport activity occurs in their environment.
- Potential for sport academy or similar activities as part of curriculum offered by the school.

⁸ David Allan, Director of Strategic Leisure (NZ) Ltd 2007

- Reduction in after school journeys to and from the facility because many of school age users are already on site
- School is seen as an important contributor to wider community life rather than purely as an educational institution for young people.
- Deterrent for vandals due to increased passive supervision of community users on site outside of school operating hours.

Health and wellness:

‘Health and wellness’ are terms being used by central government to achieve ‘buy-in’ for the policies on countering obesity in the next 10-20 years (OK, maybe this is a simplistic definition but ultimately realistic – see the HEHA Strategy⁹). That being physically active can have a wide range of positive health and wellness outcomes (when combined with healthy nutrition practices) is well documented and supported.

It is also true however, that the terms are becoming increasingly recognised within the recreation and sport sector as counter-productive to an uptake of activities, as the community is being given, at best, mixed messages about the fundamental role of recreation and sport. The catch-all phrase of ‘physical activity’ is quickly becoming the common mantra and the mantra suggests that we need ‘to do’ physical activity or we’ll become sick, die and become a burden on the rest of society (joggers make better citizens?) Being active through recreation and sport has, as *one* outcome, improved health and wellness, but it is first and foremost *fun, intergenerational, character building, educational and social (those well-beings and civil society again!)*. Is community recreation and sport in danger of being hijacked by the health imperative?

⁹ Healthy Eating - Healthy Action. Oranga Kai – Oranga Pūmāu. 2003

Costs of participation are still considered a barrier:

Consultation for a recent study for the ASB Trusts¹⁰ still clearly demonstrates that 'cost' is a barrier to participation in recreation and sport for many people. This cost can be travel to and from activities, costs of entry (facilities, game fees and/or affiliation fees to RSOs), or the costs associated with 'getting involved' through purchase of equipment. SPARC's 'Obstacles to Action; study¹¹ also identified cost as a barrier.

However, some international research suggests that cost is only '*an absolute barrier*' to small number of people and appropriate targeting initiatives may achieve considerable increases in participation levels. Fred Coalter at the Centre for Leisure Research at Herriot-Watt University Edinburgh reported the findings of a Scottish study into the impacts of price upon leisure facility users

'Heavily subsidised entrance charges for public recreation facilities are a central component of public leisure policy. This policy is based on the assumption that the cost of entrance represents a major obstacle to participation for a range of social groups. Drawing on user and household surveys it suggests that the cost of entrance is an absolute barrier for a small number of people. However, among committed participants it may act as a relative barrier by reducing the frequency of their participation. The data suggests that constraints on participation are more likely to be related to cultural attitudes underlying a lack of interest or other lifestyle factors which limit free time available for physical recreation'

¹⁰ A number of interviews were conducted with organisations across the sector and the regions

¹¹ Obstacles to Action: A study of New Zealanders' Activity and Nutrition: SPARC and Cancer Society 2003. Viewed at www.sparc.org.nz

Sustainable recreation and sports organisations¹²:

If cost is an ongoing factor, along with a variety of other societal impacts, what are the actions to be undertaken by the relevant groups, and funding agencies, to address the issue into the future?

In recent decades, the trend has been towards the centralisation of recreation and sport activity on major facilities requiring the participants to travel further. Some of this has been driven by the need for increased quality of facility provision to meet international standards such as artificial all-weather surfaces for hockey. Some has been driven by the decrease in the availability of volunteer administrators and the need to reduce the number of administrators required in relation to the number of participants. Some has been driven by the benefits of the above as well as generating a strong sense of belonging and energy of being at the "happening place" such as with large netball complexes.

Another driver causing increased travel distances has been the desire to play against opposition of similar quality. This has led to the emergence of "super leagues" with larger geographic catchments. When this has been coupled with a decline in participation numbers and rural depopulation, the catchment areas of some competition leagues have increased markedly. This can be seen in a number of recreation and sport domains in the Auckland/Northland region with some participants living in Kaitaia travelling to Whangarei or from Avondale to Mount Wellington or Pakuranga.

These increases in travel time and cost present strong disincentives when contemporary factors of increasing fuel costs and/or congestion are weighed up during the decision-making process of the potential participants or their parents on whether to commit to a regular and patterned activity such as organised sport. It is likely that, increasingly, selection of an activity will be based on

¹² Developed in conjunction with David Allan, SLNZ LTD

convenience (total time commitment including travel) and cost (all costs not just the registration fee). Therefore an activity that can for the most part be available locally will become more attractive, particularly for families with several members participating in different competitions or teams requiring multiple journeys each week.

Centralisation will still have its place for high cost specialised facilities with a relatively low number of users such as a dive pool with a 10m. tower or an indoor velodrome. Centralisation may still have merit if the facility is well located in relation to the transport network such as adjacent to a major public transport hub, junction or node. However, centralisation as an over-riding concept, without reference to other societal impacts such as peak oil as an example, can in fact be a detrimental process (a basic flaw in Sportsville).

Recreation and sport organisations will need to adjust their thinking regarding how they organise their activity in terms of the convenience and costs of their offering to potential participants both in relation to other activities/sports and other informal active recreation pursuits. Some activities may not be viable except in localised nodes, particularly "minor" sports requiring specialised facilities and a critical mass of users to operate a viable facility. These sports may become restricted to major metropolitan centres.

Traditionally, recreation facilities and sports fields have been located on public reserves because the land has been provided by local government at little or no cost. However, the majority of these reserves are poorly located in relation to transportation networks and other major destinations such areas retail centres or major education institutions. The true cost of developing major centralised facilities on cheap or free land at these remote locations is starting to impact on sport participation and on council and community expenditure (did we say rates?)

As an example, the Auckland Hockey Association has started this process through its Facilities Strategy to make hockey more attractive. It is looking to provide more local practice/training facilities and improved geographic distribution of competition all-weather turfs within its territory.

Looking to the future, we need to realign the public transportation networks to better service these centralised facilities and we look to develop new facilities adjacent to a major public transport hub, junction or node. This will require a major attitudinal change by decision-makers on two fronts: firstly regarding the relevant status or merit of sports venues in relation to other land uses of these high value areas; and secondly, shifting the paradigm regarding capital investment in a sports facility to recognise that we are not talking simply about the facility but the total package of facility and its location. This approach will mean that sometimes, additional investment will be required to secure a well located site as part of the cost of creating an effective sustainable facility.

At the individual level, we will be forced to reconsider our commitment to a particular recreation or sport activity as the cost of transport fuels increase. We are thinking here of the example of a farming family living outside Lawrence in South Otago, who, over a four-week period in the winter, travel on average 645 km per week solely for their children to attend practices and competition games in their chosen sports of rugby and netball. This travel excluded journeys where other agendas were met such as journeys to school or the supermarket.

It could be argued that the decade-long shift towards 'recreation and sport precincts or hubs' as a way of achieving greater efficiencies, economies of scale and reducing volunteer burn-out, has been overtaken by the need to consider dispersed, small-scale and local facilities and programmes for those most severely impacted by the societal changes noted above. Councils and communities will need to be able to assess this trend before investing in facilities that may not be accessible in 10+ years.

Recreation, sport, spontaneity and settings:

In addition to the issues noted, there is an increasing understanding of the 'individual' nature of many emerging recreation and sport activities combined with a move toward more 'spontaneous' activity. Is there a need for communities to provide the contemporary version of the cul-de-sac for spontaneous recreation (especially for youth)?

Research in 2002 clearly identified the need for areas for spontaneous recreation for urban youth¹³. A number of factors contribute to the need and desire to have informal youth destinations developed that provide recreation opportunities across the community. The concept is regarded as providing cost effective answers to youth recreation needs and the opportunity to avoid investment in 'long-term' built infrastructure.

Aligned to these many elements is the basic question about the philanthropic investment and the wider community fundraising component, in recreation and sport. In general, and in the longer term, which provides greater spontaneous recreation opportunities, in a manner which people can afford, in locations that don't require extensive travel and that contribute to community outcomes and ultimately 'well-being and civil society' – \$30M in a sports stadium (used by 30 players and watched by 15000 who have to drive there) or \$1M in 30 different locations for a variety of participatory pursuits. There are of course opportunities and requirements for both approaches – however, it is sometime harder to demonstrate the advantages of dispersed smaller scale initiatives than a large 'sexy' stadium (and certainly it is easier to get volunteers behind a major facility project).

What the community and funders need to consider is the relationship between the respective approaches (centralised or dispersed) and determine 'in the main'

¹³ Civic Solutions Ltd for North Shore City – 'Youth Destinations Plan' 2002

which contributes for that specific community to more active participatory pursuits, which contribute to the four well-beings and which respond best to the community outcomes in each community (and therefore contribute to the target groups advocated by the council or funder.)

A lack of leisure preference demographic research for new populations hinders good decision making:

Many agencies have a unique and mostly comprehensive understanding of the local demographics and environments in which recreation and sport is delivered. This is particularly true for territorial authorities. However, this knowledge is limited to the individual recreation or community development officer and struggles to be disseminated. Similarly it is doubtful that recreation and sport provision has kept pace with the recent demographic changes in some high growth areas such as the North Shore and Auckland boundaries¹⁴ and there is a perception that investment continues to be in facilities and sports relevant to 'traditional' populations. Although there has been recent research undertaken, the transition from *'it's good to know this stuff'* through to physically changing the face of community facilities appears to be taking some time.

Ongoing and quality research into the recreation and sport preferences of new migrants is required for future decision-making by all funders and for the community to have confidence that resources (read rates again) are being invested in a way that meets the needs of projected populations, thereby reducing the risk of expensive retrofitting and scrapping of relatively new facilities..

¹⁴ Two thirds of people in New Zealand of Asian descent live in Auckland – www.stats.govt.nz/regional-statistics/ethnicity

The Future: 'Peak oil' and 'Alternative realities'

Research has not kept pace with the rapid upward movement in oil prices and the impacts that may have upon leisure-time decision-making and recreation-specific urban design. Of relevance to future funding of recreation and sport are the choices that residents make if they can only afford either 'the travel' or 'the swim'; whether they choose to drive to 'free' activities such as the beach or even choose to drive to an aquatic centre that is free of charge such as in Manukau City.

There is clear and compelling evidence to suggest that traditional fossil-based fuel derivatives will soon simply become unaffordable for many. However, and understandably, no council or Regional Sports Organisation wishes to be the first to recognise this in their strategic planning and facility planning as the evidence to date is 'general' rather than recreation and sport specific. I would argue that any facility plan undertaken from 2008 onwards that does not include a research section into this topic is negligent in its responsibilities.

Community funders and councils will continue to be approached for facility funding, yet will be making multi-million dollar decisions without a true understanding of the longevity of the facilities usefulness and access. (What also needs to be considered is the debate around inter-generational equity and fairness, where the ongoing cost burden of a facility will be borne by residents of the future, based on decisions made today). It appears crucial for funders to fund research into this area, specifically how 'peak oil' will impact on society, its movements, habits, recreation and sport activity, urban planning, active transport and facility planning over 10-20 and 50 years.

Similarly the impacts of 'Alternative Realities', such as Second Life and 'virtual realities' such as cyber-tourism should not be left for yet another decade before discovering the impact they may have on society and the way people live their lives.

In Second Life¹⁵ one can begin to live a completely different and unique 'alternative reality' to that lived everyday – home, business, life and loves *and recreation and sport* are all possible (and current)¹⁶.

In April 2007 international market-research firm Gartner predicted that by 2011, 80% of all active internet users worldwide will have some sort of presence in a virtual world. That potentially is a large number of people spending less time in active recreation and sport and more time actively engaging with an avatar in alternative spaces!

With ever increasing access to Virtual Reality, tourism may no longer be needed (and that is without impacts of peak oil or global terrorism), where you can already visit the Rockies in VR, and you can walk in Delhi without getting the belly. What are the implications of this on smaller tourist destinations planning their 50-year futures?

Similarly it is predicted that Virtual Reality will become so sophisticated that it will reproduce the cardio-vascular responses in the same way as swimming a length in a pool would – so why go to the pool (oh that cryptosporidium!)? At the University of Michigan they are already using CAVE¹⁷ to train gridiron players as the virtual world they put them through is just as realistic as real training, with the advantages that it can be multi-dynamic and only uses a room 5x5.

And one of my favourites is the self-correcting golf ball which prevents slicing and leads to an entire golf tournament being achieved in 8 hours.

Remember, it is not necessarily 'us, here and now' that councils and Trusts are investing in but youth today and tomorrow and we need to understand what

¹⁵ www.secondlife.com

¹⁶ Last week you could watch the Australian Tennis Open on Second Life and interact in a variety of ways

¹⁷ Cave Automatic Virtual Environment – University of Michigan 2007

drives them.

Trends

Being asked for an overview of trends evident in recreation and sport facility development and programmes and services is, I'm afraid, a little like being asked "how long is a piece of string"? Trends are a commentary on what is already observable whilst predictions take trends, use some foresight techniques and make commentary on what 'might', 'may', 'could', happen in the short or medium-term future. My ideal role would be to merge my 18 year interest in recreation and community development with my interest (well, OK, as my wife calls it, my obsession) with looking at possible futures and to undertake extensive research into the future of recreation and sport and how that will impact upon communities, individuals, urban design, travel and how we will live our lives – certainly it would address some big questions for major funders! In the meantime though, the brief look at trends below is a distillation of the work of Global Leisure Group over the past few years¹⁸.

Trends in recreation and sport

The trends impacting on sport in New Zealand and changes in the sporting community include:

- The increasing proportion of two income families and single parent families.
- Reducing availability of parents to participate in voluntary roles in sport.

¹⁸

David Allan, Rob Greenaway, Garry Henshall, Gareth Moore-Jones. Global Leisure Group 2004-6

- The decrease in the volunteer base. Clubs reviewed in recent research¹⁹ frequently cited lack of administrators and volunteers as a major hurdle to the development of their sport.
- Volunteer administrators and officials becoming burnt out with insufficient replacements and the average age of volunteers increasing.
- Increasing resistance from participants and volunteers (such as coaches) to long-term on-going commitments involved in seasonal leagues.
- Increasing options in scheduling of sport opportunities to suit consumer demand resulting in a decline in Saturday afternoon adult participation, with an increase in weekday evening activity. However Saturday remains the peak participation day for junior players, particularly in the traditional outdoor sports.
- An increase in participation in pay-to-play (pay not to volunteer) sporting options for both adults and children. It is likely that the demand for these options will continue to grow and require appropriate scale and quality of facilities to maintain financial viability.
- The erosion of club structures through declining senior club memberships and volunteers, poses a threat to the provision of these activities, particularly sport for children.
- Sport events becoming even more important in the future as an option for promoting the region and capitalise on the positive economic impacts derived from such events.

¹⁹ Waikato Regional Physical Activity Strategy: Canterbury West Coast Regional Physical Activity Strategy: Hauraki/Thames-Coromandel Recreation Facility Strategy. Eastern Bay of Plenty Physical Activity Strategy. Rangitikei Activity and facilities Strategy. Matamata-Piako Active Recreation and Facility Strategy. Global Leisure Group Ltd 2003-2007

- Consumer demand for enhanced leisure facilities that offer a range of opportunities concurrently. This has seen increasing development of leisure pools, theme playgrounds and multi-use recreation centres. People are also showing a willingness to travel to these facilities, particularly for a family outing, rather than use more limited local facilities.
- A shift in traditional seasons such as summer soccer and the possibility of more summer netball and hockey and the merging of seasons, for example earlier start to winter season with expanded Rugby Super 14 to extend professional rugby season and club rugby pre-season training in January and games in February and March.
- The increasing trend to year-round participation, often for fitness reasons.
- Increasing cooperation and alliances across codes to ensure survival through sharing facilities and resources to minimise costs. The multi-code sports club is an outcome of such alliances such as promoted in the “Sportsville” concept²⁰.
- The increasing gap between professional (entertainment and commercially focused) and amateur sport (participation and volunteer focused).
- The growth of global communications creating Global Hero’s who are household names in New Zealand, America and the UK, such as Tiger Woods, David Beckham and Michael Jordan.
- Increasing use of new technology and new materials in facility design and sport surfaces improving the playing conditions for players and the quality of experience for spectators. This has increased expectations of

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Sportsville – a way forward. Hillary Commission, Wellington 2000

users and is reflected in development of new indoor and outdoor facilities (and the demand for the upgrading of existing facilities) in New Zealand.

Future Predictions

The development of new activities is hard to predict as recreation and sport either reshape existing formats and/or develop new formats to meet perceived demand. Who could have predicted the rise of mountain-biking, touch, in-line skating, snow boarding or triathlon, let alone the revival of skate-boarding. Who can predict which sports will emerge over the horizon in the next decade with the move toward individualistic consumption and the convergence of activity with technology (techtivity) such as geo-caching, as a growing phenomenon.

Success of our national teams has influence on demand for facilities required for the sport. The focus on success is significant in shaping demand for particular sports as illustrated by the boom in junior cricket during the Hadlee and Crowe era of the 1980's and latterly the high profile of netball as (ex) World Champions and the 'vanquisher of the arch enemy'²¹. The influence of global media is considerable and can be linked to the rise of sports such as soccer and basketball in New Zealand as the best of the world is beamed via satellite into homes. The supply of sports fields and courts is not keeping pace with demand.

Predicting what success in which sports will occur in the next ten years is not feasible. However, the generally fast flowing large ball sports, such as netball, basketball, volleyball, soccer, rugby, and rugby league, lend themselves to use by television as preferred options for sport entertainment of the general sport audience. This is likely to reinforce demand for involvement in these sports from young people in particular. It is not a coincidence that these sports can be played

²¹ Witness the Waitakere Centre, The Auckland Netball Centre and the proposed Netball North Harbour Indoor Facility to cater for participation increases in the region.

spontaneously in any environment – just give a kid a strange shaped ball!. The recent explosion of alternative reality portals such as Second Life’ will inevitable lead to new ‘real-life’ recreation and sport activities and we already have Sky TV showing the World Gaming Championships where you can watch your TV watching players watching a TV screen in computer enhanced gaming scenarios. Of certainty is that there will not be any ‘extra land grown’ to meet expected population increases²² and recreation and sport will need to consider innovative ways of providing facilities, including the adaptation of sports to have larger numbers playing for shorter periods i.e. Womens Golf NZ introduced 9-hole golf.

General Trends in Facility Provision

The sport, leisure and entertainment industry environment has continued to change rapidly (especially in the Auckland region) with a critical mass driving innovation and investment forward, threatening the traditional roles and patterns of participation and provision. The implications for major facility development include:

- An emphasis on entertainment sport changing to suit the needs of the media and spectators (at the expense of the players?)
- A demand for major venues which provide comfort, sophistication and ease of access for participants and spectators
- An emphasis on larger facilities with sports sharing resources
- Centralising a base venue and the development of satellite venues to ease traffic congestions in high-density urban environments (and to future-proof against an inevitable oil crisis)

²² The region is growing faster than any other in NZ at a rate of approximately 750-800 people each week

- A growing emphasis on facility provision across sector needs i.e. joint funding of co-use community facilities that provide physical activity opportunities (funded by TAs and Trusts) and health/therapeutic benefits (funded by Health agencies) by location of warm water for an increasing percentage of older residents
- Consolidation on centralised facilities to reduce the personnel required to conduct the activity
- A continuing role for territorial authorities to be the prime providers of facilities and resources justified by economic and social benefit arguments and therefore a requirement for territorial authorities to investigate cross-boundary development
- A need to seek joint ventures and partnerships between sport, local authorities, and the corporate community if major facility provision is to continue
- Gaming Machine Societies providing greater funding support to sport than the other granting bodies combined. Several sports organisations have become operators and formed trusts to fund their activity. A house built of cards?

The only national source of public funds for sport facilities supplied via the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board was withdrawn several years ago and to date a replacement has not been signalled by central government.

A large supply of capital grant finance is available from the Philanthropic Trusts but is under heavy pressure from competing interests.

Licensing Trusts are also significant sources of grants where they operate.

- Trends in Indoor Sport and Event Centre Provision

In recent years a new wave of multi-purpose indoor centres have been built to meet the contemporary needs of their communities, such as in Southland, Taupo and Marlborough. Trends indicate:

- Demand from territorial authorities for multi-purpose event centres to provide opportunities for social and cultural activities, concerts, exhibitions, trade fairs and other community activities as well as indoor sport will increase.
- Larger scale development in response to demand for either larger spectator capacity centres in excess of 5,000 seats from event promoters and sports, or large indoor floor area facilities for mass participation.
- A general lowering in the flexibility of use where a higher standard of facility is needed for a specific activity.
- An increasing drive for efficiency and effectiveness in provision of all services and facilities in local communities. This has increased emphasis on accurately assessing the value of benefits in providing a particular standard of facility and in balancing against other options.
- Designs dominated by the popularity of ball sports (basketball, netball and volleyball) requiring compromise in standards for other users of multi-use facilities.
- Adoption of new technologies to improve facility performance and/or flexibility such as sports floors, retractable seating and mobile stages (all of varying quality, durability and mobility).
- Preference to provide large flat floor exhibition and or banquet facilities when sites allow them to co-locate indoor facilities with conference facilities.

Dual Provision With Education

Community investment in education facilities is not being maximised. These facilities, including primary and secondary schools and tertiary institutions, are often closed during evenings, weekends and long holiday periods and often fail to fully contribute to the demands of the community for leisure and recreation space and time. Models where maximisation has occurred are the ASB Stadium in St. Heliers and Avondale College in Avondale.

The concept of dual provision promotes joint planning, funding and on-going management. Unlike dual use where one party allows another party to use it's facility. A dual or joint form of provision suggests a process of mutual responsibility and benefit. There is clear evidence of the benefits of a dual/joint provision approach to facility development throughout New Zealand and especially in Auckland City.

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