



THINKING GLOBALLY AND ACTING LOCALLY: THE POWER OF PLAY AND GAMES

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The European Commission has long acknowledged the important role of sport and physical education in promoting public health, a healthy lifestyle and social well-being, together with socio-cultural integration, namely social inclusion in and through sport, as we had all pointed out in the project description. One need also reiterate here—in order to contribute to the brainstorming of our upcoming meeting in Zaragoza—that a great number of studies have shown, not only the health benefits, but the social importance of physical activity and sport, specifically the social capital of sport: sport agency and volunteerism, i.e. the sport potential in promoting social inclusion and reducing or eliminating social, ethnic and gender prejudices (Kamberidou 2012, 2011; Hall 2012; Hardin & Greer 2009).

Gender equality, essential from a human rights perspective and an economic viewpoint, is a fundamental right recognized by the *EU Charter of Fundamental Rights*. It means visibility of both women and men in all spheres of public life as well as empowerment and equal access to resources. According to our project proposal, our objective here is to address how cultural, social and political obstacles can be overcome through **volunteerism, sport agency and the power of play**, using technology to identify and promote *European Traditional Sports and Games from an intergenerational and inclusive perspective*, accordingly building upon the principles of the “European Sport for All Charter”, adopted in 1992 and revised in 2001, as well as the “EU Physical Activity Guidelines. Recommended policy actions in support of health-enhancing physical activity” (UE, 2009) and the “EU Communication on Sport: Developing the European Dimension in Sport” (UE, 2011).

Developments in new technologies of mass communication have created *new realms of agency* (Kamberidou 2012), unprecedented global audiences, especially during mega sports events. Accordingly, the European Commission has been promoting pioneering work that



advocates social empowerment and active participation, *thinking globally and acting locally*, while inspiring women into technology— through multi-dimensional and proactive strategies and collaborations—together with interdisciplinary international research addressing critical issues such as the under-representation of women and non-mainstream groups in sport governing bodies (Kamberidou & Chroni 2016).¹ Moreover, a wide variety of organizations have been using sport and especially *the power of play and games* to nurture peacemaking across divided communities, to promote gender equity and eliminate racism and violence (bullying) in schools and communities, along with campaigns to rid sport of anti-Semitism and islamophobia, eg. *Football 4 Peace (F4P)*, *Sport in Society*, *PeaceFirst*, *Ultimate Peace* and many more. The social space of Sport has been building up knowledge and experience in the promotion of peace and development and deploying this expertise in areas such as peace education. Indeed sport serves as a platform for bridging socio-cultural and political gaps, namely as an effective agent of social change, a means for building sustainable peaceful relations (Kamberidou 2012).

Sport agency refers to the power of sport as a resource of hope. It refers to the intentional use of sport, physical activity and play to attain specific results. Sport has been increasingly seen as having a role to play in peacemaking processes and as a means and tool that contributes to the resolution of enduring societal problems, most notably the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In other words, there are many points of engagement through sport such as *the Annual Match Against Poverty*, *the Peace and Sport Forum* in the Middle East, *F4P*, etc. Certainly, sport alone cannot solve complex social problems and ensure peace, but it could be positioned in a broader toolkit to achieve optimal results, specifically with other holistic interventions, programs, initiatives and best or good practices (eg. peace education). Specifically, sport agency refers to athlete activism: dynamic participation, active engagement and volunteerism, the impact of sport interventions and that of individual athletes in the promotion of social inclusion. It refers to the social space of sport as an effective tool in the following areas: social mobilization; bridging social inequality gaps; encouraging gender equity; cultivating peace education; nurturing peacemaking across divided communities; and eliminating racism, xenophobia and violence (Kamberidou 2012).

Since the aim of the project is to contribute to an innovative dissemination and promotion of European traditional Sport and Games (TSGs) as an inclusive and intergenerational cultural and social asset, along with identifying and sharing good TSG practices, the Greek team would like

¹Full pdf in: http://scholar.uoa.gr/sites/default/files/ikamper/files/inspirational_women_in_europe_0330_continentes_europa.pdf



to begin with a few proposals (listed below). Additionally, we recommend you take a look at Venetsanou's contributions (https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Fotini_Venetsanou), such as *Developmentally appropriate movement programmes in young children*; the incorporation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in education, *Learning and Digital Environment of Dance – The Case of Greek Traditional Dance in YouTube*²

➤ **Social inclusion in and through sport: Recommendations for identifying and sharing good TSG practices; creating technological, innovative tools for the promotion and dissemination of TSGs**

1. **Promote volunteerism-respect for cultural diversity** in Attica region/Athens (i.e. games and sport activities at refugee facilities, focusing on women and children); in the frame of intergenerational sharing and interacting, intercultural dialogue; sport activities or games can emphasise a feeling of belonging, strengthening social ties, social cohesion (social capital), among other things.

- 1.1. Providing physical education students (and not only) with course credits for their specific contributions/volunteer work
- 1.2. An awareness campaign to involve physical education teachers, sport scientists, and other disciplines
- 1.3. Raise awareness concerning health benefits
- 1.4. The impact and value of culture-based sports/games and collective aspirations or social innovations

2. Memory – Cultural Heritage – culture based creativity- sustainable development

- 2.1. Teaching material (digital; avatars in sport; e-books; wikipedia; e-dictionary of traditional games)
- 2.2. Teacher-training workshops on instructional tools and/or methods for bringing together culture and sport curriculum learning outcomes (i.e. using traditional stories/fairytales as means for developing psychomotor outcomes)
- 2.3. Student-training workshops on digital tools for creating audiovisual material (i.e. short movies) on sport-specific themes (i.e. ancient Olympic Games)

² https://www.researchgate.net/publication/310951474_Learning_and_Digital_Environment_of_Dance_-_The_Case_of_Greek_Traditional_Dance_in_YouTube



3. Inclusion – Equal opportunities for all

- 3.1. Research on the potential links between traditional games and modern games and/or sport
- 3.2. Sport related activities for people of all ages: communities of practice within which local elders are invited to teach games that they played in their childhood. Creation of an online platform with relevant videos
- 3.3. Dissemination of game-based teaching methods (i.e. via web-conferencing) for the adjustment of game-activities according to students' individual needs and learning preferences

4. Connections with daily life

- 4.1. Creation of a mobile application featuring a child character playing traditional games (users must pass levels)
- 4.2. Non-profit school bazaars with traditional toys or equipment for TSG made by students. Web channel to advertise such initiatives

5. **Beware of Exclusion in Traditional Games:** A main feature of many traditional games is the exclusion of the child who loses. This is a negative side of traditional games if we think that games are (a) an important means for the development of children's motor skills and abilities and (b) an ideal context for children's socialization and self-perception development. A child that loses most likely does not have the abilities needed for winning that game (e.g. reaction time, speed, orientation in space). Following the rules of the game to get out when he/she loses, he/she misses the opportunity to enhance his/her abilities and skills. Moreover, he/she creates a loser profile, impeding in that way the development of positive self-perceptions and self-esteem

- 5.1. Adapting or modifying the rules of traditional games so as to ensure that no child is excluded !

6. **Traditional games for the entire family:** Research has revealed that parents' physical activity is associated with that of their children, especially with their daughters. In a recent Greek study (Voukia et al., under review), parents were found to negatively influence the physical activity of their daughters but not that of their sons. Accordingly, taking into account that girls' physical activity levels are usually lower than those of boys', it becomes obvious that girls' physical activity could be enhanced through the family context. Traditional games are an ideal means to achieve this; both parents and grandparents feel "safe and secure" in this structure, since they used to play traditional games when they were children



7. **Traditional games as a means of physical activity:** Taking into account the need for ways in which both parents and children will enhance their physical activity levels, traditional games can be used as “physical activity providers”:
 - 7.1. Creation of a web platform that will include information about the benefits of each physical activity, each game, etc. (e.g. steps/hour, aerobic steps/hour, calories, distance)
 - 7.2. Ideas for re-forming each game in order to achieve higher intensity physical activity
 - 7.3. Information about “how much/long you need to play this or that game” in order to achieve the daily physical activity levels recommended by World Health Organization (WHO).

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