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## **Chapter 11** (times new roman 18, bold. Page left side)

Italian sport policies  
for the sustainable development

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## **Abstract**

The aim of the chapter is analysing the role of sporting organization for planning and promote active policies and sustainable strategies related to 2030 Agenda goals (6, 8, 11). Through a holistic approach, the essay explains how preserving the environment means determining the conditions for improving the quality of human life starting from the commitment of all. In this framework several theoretical perspectives are examined in order to indicate the way for the development of sustainable sport. Following the review of the literature concerning policies and management models of sustainable development, the authors describe the setting of an analysis model useful for testing the sports organizations' sustainability. The construction and use of some indicators related to international guidelines relating to sustainability are examined. In specific, the scheme is based on three pillars (Synergy, Culture and Practice) and five dimensions (economic-financial; managerial; environmental, social, cultural). Monitoring the actions related to the main Italian sporting events is therefore, useful to provide information to all minor events in order to spread a culture of sustainability and bring out virtuous examples of healthy lifestyles throughout the country.

**Keywords:** Sport Event, Sustainable Development, Synergy, Culture, Practice, Communication.

## **1. Introduction**

In Italy, sports organizations at various levels (starting from Coni, Sport e salute Spa up to lesser associations operating in the territories) are currently engaged in the implementation of sustainable strategies in order to achieve the various goals of the 2030 Agenda, although with different degrees of intensity of commitment.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide some basic information on the following 3 dimensions:

- 1) the national adoption of sustainable development policies starting from the global provisions of the IOC and of Europe;
- 2) the adoption of governance and management models based on the principles of sustainability in its various forms (economic-financial, management, environmental and social);
- 3) the centrality of sporting events as a driving force for experimentation, application and dissemination of sustainable practices.

The latter aspect is central, especially considering the recent events related to the worldwide spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As Parnell et al. (2020) have verified, it has profoundly changed sports habits, cancelled events (from the Olympics to leagues and tournaments of all grades, both professional and amateur), causing enormous damage to the economy and in the sports industry. Consequently, as Evans et al. (2020), alongside the suspension of physical activities during the lockdown phases, some trends are expected in the medium to long term, including: loss of income, interruptions (in some cases even definitive) of the activities and careers of athletes, unemployment of many operators, loss of support from

sponsors and volunteers, difficulty and reduction of remuneration, risk of a reduction in membership and membership fees.

However, this situation has highlighted the importance of sport as a social institution for the well-being of the community and has led some national governments to provide support measures for the sports sector. Similarly, while the world is under attack from a virus, awareness of humanity's weaknesses grows: from the management of health systems to poverty, from social inequalities to the planet's vulnerability. This is why the design of processes and strategies at accelerating sustainable actions also in the sports world are made necessary.

In this regard, Evans et al. (2020) raise some questions about how to set up the sport of the future, for example:

- Will it be necessary to introduce new limits based on health parameters and physical distance for athletes and sporting events?
- Will it be necessary to review business models to ensure greater sustainability, or the ability to deal with unforeseen large-scale situations?
- Will it be necessary to review the organization of sports activities in order to conceive the spaces differently, reduce travel, also in order to reduce the pollution of the cities?
- How to ensure sport for all, based on inclusiveness and mutual support, while inequalities are growing in society (especially in times of health threats)?
- How to reduce overall spending in a sector that is not very dynamic in relation to changes?

Some authors (Amekran and El Hangouche 2020; Begović 2020; Dalton et al. 2020) highlight the strategic role of sport in response to the pandemic, for example, to help people who have had psychological implications (depression, anxiety states, sense of isolation, etc.) and suggest sport as a

solution for the community. For example, they consider the need for national governments to provide subsidies (or their integration) to allow children up to 14 years of age and people with problems to play sports of health for at least two years in support of families, using the revenues from the State monopoly games.

We are certainly only at the beginning of the ongoing debate, but it is too early to outline the possibilities for development. However, it is important to take advantage of this moment of “re-organization” of activities to encourage sustainability methods, strategies and procedures.

The examination of the literature that follows intends to reflect on international models and advanced processes, developed at both a scientific and regulatory level.

This systematization is the starting point for building a tool for surveying and analysing sustainable actions carried out by sports organizations. The adoption of this tool has a dual purpose: on the one hand, to allow scholars to initiate diachronic monitoring aimed at verifying the state of diffusion of sustainable practices in the medium to long term; on the other hand, allowing sports organizations to use a tool to verify the effectiveness of the actions carried out. Indeed, some studies confirm that such tools are not widely used in the sports sector, while it would be necessary to implement monitoring processes (González-Serrano et al., 2020).

Considering the review of the literature concerning policies and management models of sustainable development, our aim is to describe the setting of an analysis model useful for testing the sustainability of sports organizations. The specific objective is to demonstrate the construction and use of some indicators related to international guidelines relating to sustainability in its various forms.

Monitoring the actions related to the main Italian sporting events is important to provide information to all minor events in order to spread a culture of sustainability and bring out virtuous examples of healthy lifestyles throughout the country<sup>1</sup>.

## **2. Literature Review**

This study considers the concept of sustainability in a holistic perspective in which preserving the environment means determining the conditions for improving the quality of human life starting from the commitment of all (Mallen and Dingle 2017; McCullough and Kellison 2016). Several definitions converge on this approach. For example, Dresner (2008: 30) defines sustainable development as the integration of conservation and development to ensure that changes to the planet effectively ensure the survival and well-being of all people. But how is this process possible and what policies can be adopted to do so? To answer this question, regulatory provisions and theoretical approaches are examined that indicate the way for the development of sustainable sport.

### ***2.1 Sustainable sport: policies and theories***

The sustainable management models that can be adopted by sports organizations are based on the IOC and the European Commission provisions. They provide for adopting convergent policies in an integrated

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<sup>1</sup> In this perspective, the authors are carrying out both quantitative and qualitative research field at national level, through questionnaires to sports organizations and interviews with qualified witnesses and stakeholders. The research tools are based on the construction of the model described in the following par. 3 (see Figure 1).

perspective. Therefore, the 2030 Agenda provides a specific point dedicated to "partnership for the goal" (at the local, national and international level) because these policies must be coherent, integrated and shareable in all place. This means that the following concepts - education, health and well-being, protection of the environment, peace and human and social rights, etc. - must belong to the same paradigm. This is way it is useful to understand how the EU has conceived the creation of complementary synergies between its member state.

International organizations recognize that sport plays an important role in pursuing the 17 points set out in the Agenda. the sports system is aimed at increasing citizens' participation in sport, knowing that regular physical activity reduces the risks of a variety of non-communicable diseases and spreads healthy and healthy lifestyles (Reis and DaCosta 2012; Hoye et al. 2015). In addition, it is aimed at promoting universal access to safe solutions and accessible green public spaces to do physical activity, contributing to the planning of participatory human settlements, and to manage the school sports literacy and physical development of young people during their growth in school age (Tak et al. 2014; Lindsey and Darby 2019).

Regarding environmental issues, sport is important for the following functions:

- production and disposal of sports equipment that have a significant negative impact on the environment;
- contain and reduce the environmental damage caused by the exercise of outdoor sports activities;
- build sustainable sports facilities and organize sustainable events. For example, careful management of green procurement, domestic gas emissions, energy efficiency, waste disposal and proper soil and water



treatment is important (Collins et al. 2012; Subic et al. 2013; Laeremans et al. 2018; Trendafilova and McCullough 2018).

In the White Paper on Sport (2007), the European Commission stated that

*both sports practice and sporting facilities and events have a significant impact on the environment ... and therefore, it is important to promote ecologically correct management ... Sports organizations and organizers of sporting events should adopt environmental goals to make their activities eco-sustainable* (European Commission 2007a, 10).

From an economic-financial point of view, sport must ensure sustainability in the following way: reduction of costs and guarantee of balanced budgets; reduction of waste and degradation situations, in line with the specificities of the various levels and types of organization involved (public or private, central or peripheral). For example, the EU hopes that national and supranational organizations can have the role of guidance and coordination in the implementation process.

Some authors (Skinner et al. 2008; Mazza 2020) describe the various policies for sustainable development of sport in the various countries, highlighting the lack of coherence and convergence in the adoption of univocal provisions. For example, among the most advanced countries in sports sustainability policies, they consider only a few countries including: United States, Australia and Europe, Germany, Finland and the United Kingdom. From this point of view, the elements that the scholars examined concern: sustainability applied to plant engineering, the management of sponsorships, human resources and events supported by a good government policy in the promotion of projects and initiatives. Some scholars have also

demonstrated the positive effects of these sport interventions on the growth of local economies (Inoue et al. 2013; Hu et al. 2016; Kurscheidt et al. 2017; Wicker et al. 2017).

McCullough et al. (2016) have developed a very suggestive theory - called waves of change - according to which sports organizations, by adopting sustainable policies, change their processes and generate benefits for themselves and for society. The waves represent the phases of change: they do not have a linear trend, because they are influenced by different endogenous and exogenous variables. It is therefore possible that sustainable progress may be accelerated or stopped: what is important is that the planned measures are implemented in the long term. Furthermore, changes in sport are not equally distributed, nor implemented internationally and nationally. The authors hope that the model will be adopted for the dissemination of a shared collective awareness and for the increasingly widespread development of sustainability.

The authors illustrate three macro-phases but emphasize that the third can be replicated indefinitely in conjunction with the need for process innovation in pursuit of sustainability. The first wave coincides with the activation of the process of change, the second with its consolidation and the third with revisionism, that is, the improvement of the procedures adopted and the introduction of new ones (or the replacement of previous ones when they do not are more suitable). In this approach, sustainability is conceived in a holistic way and declined in its aspects, even if environmental efforts better illustrate the evolution at a sporting level more.

Regarding the progression of the waves, the authors report that some sports organizations have already introduced several environmental sustainability initiatives, such as recycling to more advanced programs to offset carbon emissions. Mallen (2017) observed that, as the waves progress,

they improve the initiatives implemented and involve partners and participants more effectively to further reduce the environmental impact by promoting, for example, sustainable behaviour at events and communications on how to dispose of waste properly during the event.

The theory of waves of change is based on the following theories:

- institutional theory and organizational learning theory.

The first one (Tolbert and Zucker 1999) identifies the similarities between organizations in a diversified organizational environment and argues that the more certain processes are spread in an institutionalized way, the more they try to conform to the others in a logic of isomorphism. This happens for normative dispositions (normative level), for pressures that come from social expectations (coercive level) or for a sort of Darwinian competition for the survival of those that are better according to certain standards (mimetic level).

The second theory notes that the diffusion of innovations occurs by organizational learning (Svensson 2017; Zeimers et al. 2019). It affects the organization's staff and stakeholders; while the decision to adopt an innovation depends on the following reasons: compatibility with previous processes; utility and observability of the actions by users and stakeholders.

Another theoretical approach useful to explain the adoption of sustainable policies is the *Corporate Social Responsibility* (CSR) because social responsibility encourages the activation of sustainable actions to improve one's reputation (Levermore 2010; Babiak et al. 2018; François et al. 2019). Therefore, CSR becomes a dominant management approach that provides sports organizations with practical guidelines for planning and developing innovative solutions suited to the needs of society. In sports field, social responsibility is useful for improving different issues: economic, political, environmental, use of technologies and social policies.

Furthermore, the authors who study CSR in sports organizations suggest that it must not only be connected to marketing objectives and strategies of economic returns and stakeholder management (Trendafiova et al. 2017), but must be considered a proactive approach.

This approach enables social legitimacy to be achieved when a coherent policy is implemented, based on a common vision and which includes discussion with stakeholders, necessary to ensure legitimacy (Schein 2010; Costas and Kärreman 2013; Koschmann and Wanberg 2016; Schoeneborn et al. 2020).

Through Habermas's (1984) concept of communicative rationality, the authors argue that legitimacy is built on consent through the construction of a shared sense. Suchman (1995) distinguishes four types of legitimacy in order to produce approval: pragmatic, moral, cognitive and communicative. From this point of view, "legitimate" sustainability offers numerous advantages in the sports sector: for example, the appreciation and identification of fans and stakeholders; or the competitive advantage over other organizations of the same sport, or of other sports (McCullough and Kellison 2016).

## ***2.2. Sporting events and Sustainability***

Sustainability for the organization of events is central, as emerges from the CSR approaches just discussed. In this sense, Wickham et al. (2020) confirm that the reputational capital plays a key role in the management of sustainable events with an inclusive function of visitors and host communities, promoting their awareness of responsible behaviours.

According to the studies that develop the concept of community it is possible to explain this process, starting from the theorization of Tönnies

(2005), taken up by various sports scholars (Perić et al. 2016; Pereira et al. 2019). They argue that the community develops based on the following elements: belonging, influence, integration or satisfaction of needs; sharing collective emotional connections.

In support of their thesis, these authors discuss different theories (identity theory, planned behavior theory) and different study models ("attitude-behavior-context"; "motivation-opportunity-ability"; "value-faith-norm "; "sustainable behavior "; "sports consumer behavior ").

The main theoretical reference connected to the social sustainability approaches of sports organizations is the theory of social exchange. It explains the motivations of locals to support sporting events and how they perceive their impact (Albert and Baron 2016; Shepherd and Patzelt 2018).

This theory states that the perceived benefits must outweigh the costs; the exchange is based on the relationship between social and / or environmental benefits and costs. For example, the value of the tourist impact of an event is recognized when the benefits for the local economy are greater than the organizational costs and do not generate permanent environmental damage. Thomson et al. (2019) underline the importance of the relationship between generated impacts and the perception of social justice with respect to the distribution of these impacts. This implies the commitment of sports organizations to ensure a balanced distribution between costs and benefits. Furthermore, Chien and al. (2018) and Parra-Camacho et al. (2020) found that if residents perceive the event as partial or unfair, negative reactions and consequent behaviours of residents can occur.

Currently, the most suitable study approach to interpret the phenomenon is the Leveraging Social Model which considers the value of the involvement of stakeholders, in order to maximize the advantages that the territory obtains when hosting an event.

This model covers all efforts aimed at exploiting the development potential that a sporting event can bring to sectors such as economy, tourism, social, culture, environment, and health (Pereira et al. 2019; Wise et al. 2019).

The analysis of the advantages is based on the ability to include all the actors involved in the event, thus generating a sense of belonging. According to Sobral et al. (2019) and Wise et al. (2019) in order to reach this goal, it is necessary that the central themes of the event coincide with the most important issues of the community and, obviously, also make stakeholders and media converge on them.

Consequently, one of the problems that the authors highlight in applying the model is the lack (in many cases) of cooperation between the subjects involved. Other causes may be the following:

- lack of convergence on social issues within communities, due to differences of interests;
- lack of trust, or perception of scarce coincidence of interests between the stakeholders of the event. In this case, the choices of the organizers, transparency and orientation are crucial for the purpose of a shared responsibility to ensure adequate conditions for the creation of trust and the dissemination of sustainable practices.

Finally, it must be considered that, in some cases, there is a lack of coordination on the part of public administrations: this does not facilitate the unitary perception of the event in the territory.

Following the classic definition of Roche (2000), in the analysis of sustainable events, it is also useful to indicate some aspects that distinguish mega and special events from hallmark and community events. According to some authors (Spilling 1996; Al-Emadi et al. 2017), mega events can incentivize adaptive changes in favour of sustainability in the host territory,

when the planning of the event is set following this perspective. During the eight years of preparation, it is possible to create partnerships and specific intervention projects and thus develop a plan in the long term. This can happen at various levels: social (for example, increase in human resources and in the widespread awareness of an extended audience of spectators), economic (definition of the type of investments); environmental (design of structures and infrastructures).

Conversely, the normative and socio-cultural factors can limit the effectiveness of the implementation of the proposed projects, as well explained by the *Culture Dimensions model* of Hofstede, G. (2011) which orientates the dimensions of culture to explain their impact in a social environment.

Al-Emadi et al. (2017) cite the case of the European soccer Cup in Qatar 2026, as an example of the limitation of women's participation in the workforce, which cannot be overcome for cultural reasons. González-Serrano et al. (2020) show that, in many cases, the projects of the past Olympic editions (for example London 2012), have not been able to activate redistributive and participatory logics of the development programs, not allowing sustainability aims. Instead, the model proposed by FIFA for the 2016 World Cup, with the participation of different host cities in a distribution logic, can be considered a good incubator of economic sustainability. Similarly, Karadakis et al. (2016) show that the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games were effective because they built a good network supporting the implementation of a "sustainable" project. The author states that usually a good project leaves a legacy, in terms of: clear policies for the protection and conservation of the environment; infrastructure regeneration; telecommunications improvements; adaptation

and beautification of parts of the city; improvement of roads and re-urbanization of parks and public spaces.

On the other hand, in hallmark and community events, the dissemination of sustainable behavior is connected to the ability to pursue the community goals. In addition to the social implications, sustainability must be correlated to specific economic needs, such as: seasonal adjustment to increase job opportunities; the ability to generate a continuous economy in the main economic sectors of the territory and increase exports for local industries. In short: events must support production and employment (Könecke et al., 2017; Amador et al. 2017). According to Yang et al. (2020) accelerating the development of the sports sector can be a national and effective strategy if it supports individual local economies also by using contracts, commissions and joint ventures to facilitate the integration of sport and related industries promoting balanced development.

### ***2.3 The management of sustainable sport and its environmental and socio-economic implications***

The most recent literature has examined and elaborated new models aimed at enhancing the social and economic implications by developing a sustainable sport management approach. This perspective has been deepened on an interdisciplinary level especially in the fields of economics and business administration, sports and political sciences. Ratten (2017) defines entrepreneurship in sport as the use of social issues to create change in sports organizations and uses sport to encourage solutions to social problems.

On the one hand, some studies (Bacq and Janssen 2011; Defourny and Nyssens 2017) show that organizations within all social sectors (particularly



in the non-profit sector) have been encouraged to compete with less public funding. On the other hand, the continuous expansion of the sports sector has highlighted the need for greater attention to its economic development through a systematic and managerial approach. Other research (Miragaia et al. 2017; Trendafiova et al. 2017; McSweeney 2020) argues that the sports organization, to be an agent of positive social change, must be characterized by an environment with positive norms based on social values, while sporting achievements must be considered secondary. The goal is not to maximize profit, but to promote social development. The authors also argue that the creation of economic value is the consequence of a combination of different values and the advantage is connected to the creation of social and ecological value. This procedure involves the adoption of policies to improve working conditions, respect for human rights and the development of recovery of natural environments.

The Walters and Panton (2014) study describes, for example, how some football club benefit from changes in their governance model introducing subsidiaries with diversified objectives but reducing costs with the support of partners. Branch offices can focus on social inclusion, education or health goals. In this way, clubs obtain significant strategic advantages associated with the creation of a community: increase in reputation; growth of better results from talent scouting.

Bjärsholm (2017) discusses several examples of branches of organizations dealing with issues such as equal opportunities, inclusion of the marginalized people, fight against women's violence. The various studies analyzed by the author from a CSR perspective show that the advantage for sports clubs is not only an improvement in reputation and credibility, but also an increase in employee motivation. This model, according to the author, implies the ability of an organization to adapt to the fluctuations in

the needs of institutions, territories and financiers. As González-Serrano et al. (2020) highlight, the success of sports organizations depends on their ability to quickly adapt to the environment and exploit the opportunities offered by innovation. This way also finds positive feedback among increasingly pro-environmental users who recognize the commitment of sports organizations in social terms. In this regard, Lettice et al. (2017) state that, when organizations find innovative social and environmental solutions, they are highly appreciated by users because they generate clear feedback. Among the most effective cases analyzed, the authors cite the design of electric sports cars and the creation of jobs for the homeless. Furthermore, Yang et al. (2020) underline, as another solution, the value of interregional cooperation which becomes strategic if it provides for an adequate strategy to enhance the events according to the socio-economic objectives of the area. This means that, if the events at the local level do not have an adequate propulsive capacity for the host territory, it is necessary to activate interregional development projects in order to involve more sporting and cultural events supported by a wider coordination, capable of activating the cooperation of the industrial and administrative level.

### **3. Towards the definition of an analysis model**

The examination of the literature has highlighted the fundamental aspects on which the sustainable development of sport rests and the distinctive features that must characterize the management of sports organizations at different levels. On this basis, the chapter presents our attempt to systematize operational concepts aimed at building an analysis model to be used to examine, and monitor over time, the progression of

changes in favour of the adoption of sustainable actions in sport. The model must lead to an organic and comprehensive vision of sustainable sports management. Obviously, the Italian situation, which is the main subject of this study, does not start from a zero point, but within it there are very different situations, as emerged from the literature, especially if we consider federations or small sports clubs, large international events or small events.

The replicability of the analysis model must allow application for all different types of sports organizations and, for this reason, must be based on general requirements based on the study of literature and legislation, but also on development and national guidelines.

Furthermore, the analysis model must be able to measure the parameters that estimate sustainability in its various dimensions (economic, social and environmental) in order to be able to verify, in a holistic-diachronic perspective, its evolution over time. For this reason, the objectives of the model and the parameters that characterize it are discussed here. Regarding the objectives, the model wants to estimate the adoption rates of sustainable initiatives and the levels of effectiveness, taking into consideration the national project scenario.

In Italy, Coni, Sport e Salute Spa, and sports federations are currently committed to implementing CIO and UE indications to develop a sustainability strategy based on infrastructures and natural sites, procurement and sustainable management of resources, mobility, workforce and climate. The Italian sports world<sup>2</sup> has decided to invest over € 1.5 million in five years to implement an environmental protection system aimed at the following actions:

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<sup>2</sup> (together with the Minister for the Environment and Land and Sea Protection, [https://www.minambiente.it/sites/default/files/archivio/allegati/trasparenza\\_valutazione\\_merito/protocollo\\_intesa\\_mattm\\_-\\_coni\\_-\\_sport\\_e\\_salute.pdf](https://www.minambiente.it/sites/default/files/archivio/allegati/trasparenza_valutazione_merito/protocollo_intesa_mattm_-_coni_-_sport_e_salute.pdf))

✓ promoting development projects sustainable, fair and sustainable well-being;

✓ evaluate the progress of the sports world from an economic, social and environmental point of view consistent with the objectives of the "2030 Agenda" on Sustainable Development, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

✓ educate on sustainable lifestyles;

✓ training managers and all professionals working in the sports sector.

The project focuses on the following three pillars: synergy, culture and practice.

1) *Synergy*: means fostering partnerships between sports federations, associated sports disciplines, sports promotion associations, administrations, research institutes and universities for the dissemination of a culture of safeguarding biodiversity, knowledge of the ecosystem, reduction of impact environmental in sporting events. The aim is to enhance the role of non-profit sports institutions and active volunteers, by rewarding best practices for integrating environmental objectives into sport, with attention to sports initiatives involving the weakest and most marginal groups of young people.

2) *Culture*: the goal is to spread the value of the environment among young people, also through the most important events.

3) *Practices*: the first step is to make all sporting events plastic-free. This involves other practices: adopting effective collection systems; reduce climate-changing emissions, strengthen sustainable mobility, green procurement, the promotion of "Minimum Environmental Criteria", the efficient use of natural resources, the lower production of waste, the conscious use of water, recycling and reuse compatible with the environment. Particular attention is paid to the design, upgrading and energy efficiency of sports facilities, those located in the suburbs. This aspect has

been highly appreciated by the IOC, in the context of the Italian candidacy for the 2026 Olympic Games, which will upgrade over 80% of the existing facilities.

Synergy is the basis of the national project and indicates the will to pursue an integrated, shared, coherent and respectful approach to the requirements dictated at the supranational level. Culture aims to raise awareness among sports fans and citizens in general, involving them and guiding them to assume responsible behaviour. For this reason, the model requires a specific dedicated section. Finally, practices are the central aspects on which the model is built in relation to the dimensions of sustainability.

The construction of the model is therefore conceived around 5 dimensions: economic-financial, managerial, environmental, social, cultural (instead of the three macro-areas of sustainability). In particular, following the studies on CSR and sustainable sports management, a specific dimension has been inserted (management): it is now evident that, without good management, it is not possible to carry out sustainable projects in a systematic way in the long term.

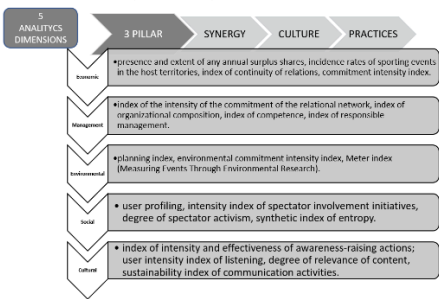
In addition, the cultural dimension has been added<sup>3</sup>, useful for raising awareness among citizens towards the adoption of listening measures; promotion of values and behaviours; and involvement, so much so that careful planning is required. It is therefore important to investigate communication actions and verify the use of sustainable tools and

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<sup>3</sup> As emerged from the literature regarding the management of relations with interested parties and citizens and as expressly disclosed by the Italian governing institutions of sport in the "culture" section.

technologies to manage the relationship with users, in compliance with the communication objectives.

FIG.1 - Sustainable Sport Development Model



About the economic-financial dimension, the model intends to estimate both the sustainability of the financial statements by verifying whether it is in surplus (in order to respond to financial sustainability); and care in the diversification of income, by calculating the intensity of commitment to diversification. This index is important because it allows to estimate the management of financial relationships; as well as the participation of sponsors, calculating the intensity of the commitment to measure the gradient of synergy developed; the continuity index of the relationship with the sponsors to estimate the strength of the relationships; finally, the type of product sector to verify the connections that a sports organization develops with the production area.

As has emerged from the literature, the success of sports organizations depends on the following reasons:

- ability to manage relations with the territory in a systematic way and promote economic growth in a win-win logic;

- presence of any annual surplus shares, since, although the goal is not to maximize profits, it could generate investment potential to be allocated to sustainable development;

- incidence rates of sporting events in the host territories. This aspect is important because the model, to be effective, cannot consider only endogenous factors, but must also measure exogenous ones.

In this context, the method of analysis used by Hu et al. is interesting. (2016): it is based on the entropy weighting to calculate the global level index of the sports sector and regional sustainable development and is not affected by the linearity of the evaluation data. The weight of the indicators is calculated based on the variability of the index and the meaning of the index value (avoiding the interference of human factors). The assignment process is transparent and reproducible, so the weights have high credibility. This scheme envisages the use of synthetic indexes transversal to the five dimensions to estimate the overall entropy rates.

About the management dimension, the model intends to estimate the intensity of the commitment of the relational network (partners and institutions) that contributes to the realization of the event and support events. Also, in this case the actions are weighted in relation to the type of involvement of the partners.

This index is related to what emerged in the literature with respect to the following elements: ability to generate a network around common interests, making people perceive consistency and sustainable commitment; organizational composition (number of employees and volunteers involved); competence index, or training initiatives that involve staff for the acquisition of targeted knowledge.

From a sustainable sports management perspective, competence is an essential prerequisite to guarantee the ability to carry out projects. Indeed,

the responsible management index considers, among the indicators, the initiatives implemented for workers in terms of pay equity, equal opportunities, inclusion of minorities, enhancement of talents, job placement, work-life balance, quality of the climate and work environment.

With regard to the environmental dimension, the model intends to estimate: the planning index, by measuring the number and type of projects carried out, to be carried out and that would be realized in the future; the intensity of environmental commitment, summarizing the indicators relating to the actions carried out in the field of sustainable mobility, energy and hydro-geological saving, anti-pollution measures, waste storage and treatment and recycling of materials, use of eco-sustainable materials starting from the condition of plastic-free and respectful of health needs, the management of the plant.

About the identification of indicators, those already tested in various researches were considered in setting up the model. Among these, in particular, the Meter index (Measuring Events Through Environmental Research) was considered, which uses nine main operational categories, divided into sub-categories and detailed items, which cover all the main aspects concerning the environmental sustainability of an event and are evaluated for all its phases, i.e., planning, organization, implementation, post-event. Boggia et al. (2018) consider the index to be quite analytical and therefore capable of representing the numerous aspects for the environmental assessment of a sporting event.

For the social dimension, the model focuses on the organization of events as tools capable of raising awareness on social issues. The model is in fact aimed at estimating the intensity of the initiatives that involve spectators, weighted according to their degree of activism and effectiveness in terms of visibility and image return. Parra-Camacho et al. (2020) highlight



the importance of the intangible impacts that have been incorporated in this model, through the following indicators: increased interest and local participation in activities related to the event; promotion of local culture and the values of sport; estimation of the psychological impacts related to the improvement of pride of the residents, the feeling of belonging and identification with the community, the estimation of the economic impacts of tourism and the ability to attract sponsors. Some of these indicators fall within the synthetic entropy index described above.

With regard to the cultural dimension, the model intends to estimate, coherently as indicated in the literature (Cobourn and Frawley 2017; Kim et al. 2018): intensity of awareness-raising activities based on the frequency of the initiatives carried out; user listening intensity based on offline and online opinion surveys and customer satisfaction; degree of relevance of the contents with respect to what is indicated in the sustainability report of the sports organization; sustainability index of communication activities, starting with indicators relating to eco-sustainability such as the dematerialisation of communications.

Finally, to set up the model, other studies were examined that experimented with parameters and indicators at an empirical level and carried out efficacy tests useful for evaluating their validity. The latter, however, proved less convincing with respect to the objectives of this analysis model. For example, Yang et al. (2020) reports the results of research conducted by Zhao et al. (2017) and Shi et al (2018), to examine the implications of sport in sustainable regional development. These scholars examined six dimensions and built 23 indicators on them: economic benefits, effects on employment, conditions of industrial support, economic development, social security. However, some limitations emerge. For example: the average annual growth rate of sports employees is significantly

lower than the growth rate of the sports industry's added value; the growth rate of sports facilities is much lower than the development rate of the sports sector; the sports consumption levels of the residents are not very high. With respect to the model, it is believed that this question should not be included in the model because it concerns aspects that are contingent on objectives and which can undergo rapid changes. The number of employees or the investment in plants, for example, may be part of specific projects, but not a constant. This model, on the other hand, must be able to estimate replicable aspects.

Finally, the adoption of the model at a diachronic level allows, taking up the theory of the waves of change, to verify the phases in which sports organizations are currently engaged (in which wave they are and under what conditions: evolving, stagnant or regression) and identify growth factors or difficulties, in order to outline intervention measures to promote growth and counteract situations of stagnation or slowdown.

## **Conclusion**

The first important result that we want to highlight is the confirmation that Italian sports policies appear consistent with the holistic approach that provides for the adoption of integrated and shared measures. In Italy, government sports institutions have expressed their desire to create synergies to pursue the goals of sports sustainability.

This is confirmed by the analysis of European literature and policies, within which, for Italian sport, shared sustainability actions are outlined at national level. This entails the possibility of benefiting from European funding. In this regard, it is useful to consider that, to facilitate the

application of the provisions of the White Paper in EU countries, some devices have been envisaged such as (European Commission 2017b): green budget, eco-management system and EU audit (EMAS), Green Public Procurement (GPP) and EU Eco-Label Award Scheme. The green balance is used to report on activities of a sustainable nature; EMAS is a voluntary management tool for public bodies and private companies aimed at recognizing organizations to improve their environmental performance and reduce their environmental impact on an ongoing basis, through the optimization of production, the effective use of resources, especially when organizing mega sporting events<sup>4</sup>.

The GPP is another voluntary tool for the control of public contracts made for the purchase of goods/services by public administrations in compliance with environmental criteria; while the Eco-Label is a system for awarding the ecological quality label, for the recognition of environmentally friendly processes, recently also extended to sports equipment and accommodation facilities.

Unfortunately, some studies (Geeraert 2016; Weatherill et al. 2016) report that most of these tools are not applied in European sports policy. This reduces the opportunities both regarding the pursuit of shared objectives and with respect to the possibility of accessing European funds. Some authors point out that this is due to the lack of coordination and agreements between national and international sports institutions. On the other hand, Italian sport

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<sup>4</sup> For example, the 2006 Turin Winter Olympics have obtained this recognition (Testa et al. 2012).

has already shown on previous occasions the awareness and willingness to pursue this path and the policy setting is proceeding in this direction.

This first result reinforces the value of using the model developed here, to develop a diachronic analysis on the spread of sustainable sport in Italy. The studies that will be conducted using this analysis model can have significant value for the scientific world and for the management of sports organizations and sporting events.

They will make it possible to have a replicable tool for monitoring sustainable progress and provide precise indications on the strategies that the sports world can implement for its goals based on the most advanced theories.

For sports management it means having a tool to measure the effectiveness of the projects and actions carried out, even in comparison with similar organizations.

This makes it possible to better identify the sports and production players to build synergies and implement projects, but also to have useful ideas to improve their initiatives. In this perspective, the university must be alongside sports organizations to support their efforts and provide scientific input to achieve higher standards of effectiveness and efficiency in sustainable development.

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