

Spaaij, R., & Scholenkorf, N. (2014). Cultivating safe space: Lessons for sport-for-development projects and events. *Journal of Sport Management*, 28(6), 633-645.

What is it about? (Aim/objectives)

The paper aims to discuss those aspects that show how local sport events and sport for development (SFD) programmes can leverage positive social impacts by cultivating safe spaces – specifically free from conflict.

Where is it from? (Context/location)

Case studies are from Sri Lanka, Israel and Brazil.

Who are involved? (Research participants)

Local sports events and community SFD projects.

What are the readings and main concepts?

Safe space represents places where people are protected from physical, emotional and social harm where “safe” is not only about the absence of trauma, stress, violence or abuse, but also providing a safe space and opportunities for “risk-taking” in a controlled/safe environment.

Safe spaces have 4 dimensions:

- Physical – free from physical harm, accessible and accommodating.
- Psychological – established trust, sense of engagement and common or shared identity (e.g. participants)
- Socio-cultural – feel at home, a sense of belonging for different genders, age groups or people who have different religions, create meaningful interactions and accept people’s identities.
- Political – allow open dialogue without judgement, respect differences, share ideas and experiences freely and experience a sense of community in a programme or club setup.

What are the main findings? (Results)

The three countries have different realities and a specific NGO delivering programmes for social change:

- Sri Lanka – Asian-German Sport Exchange Programme/NGO - events, focus on collaboration and teamwork for youth integration and managing conflict.
- Israel – Football4Peace – University of Brighton and local volunteers, 13 cross community programmes in 33 communities from Jewish and Palestinian-Arab youth (10 to 13 years old), value-based education based on 5 principles (inclusiveness, equality, respect, trust and responsibility).
- Brazil – *Favelas* (shantytowns) local NGO with programmes, *Vencer* and *Vencedoras* (for females) – host events (after event musical celebrations) and employability for impoverished youth exposed to violence and abuse. Employability skills relate to discipline, teamwork, respect, communication and being results orientated.

What are the main lessons? (Discussion/Reflections/Learnings)

Physical safety – a special multi-sport facility (Peace Village in Sri Lanka) with high security and accommodation, as well as offering programmes on the outskirts of shantytowns (Brazil) and neutral spaces (Israel).

Psychological safety – use mixed teams in multiple sports to manage conflict and use teachable moments. Offer support from volunteers and provide emotional care.

Socio-cultural safety – celebrate diversity, mixed-gender education, share different identities and experiences. Cooperation and teamwork shape a family atmosphere, create a team identity through team names, songs, self-designed jerseys, and contribute to establish an imagined community.

Political safety – respect differences, claim neutrality (Israel) and have open (controlled) conversations.

Experiential dimension – allow risk-taking and creative tension for learning and reflection (e.g. bring upper-class people to *Favelas* and address their fears).

Is it useful? (Chat room, knowledge sharing)

Thinking of these different dimensions of safe spaces, how do you go about ensuring that you address all of them in your programmes? Please explain the physical, psychological, socio-cultural and political aspects.

How do you go about creating teachable moments where real-life situations happen in your programmes?