# Introduction

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In the year of the World Cup in Brazil 2014, the sheer mass of content across multiple sources in both the media and research outputs suggests that football is a World game. Estimates of viewing figures for the most recent Football World Cup Finals range from 250 million actual viewers (i.e., those that watched the final game) to 700 million viewers who consumed 'some part' of the game (i.e., the reach) (see FIFA, No 1 Sports Event). FIFA also reported that the cumulative television viewing figures for each of the 2006 and 2010 World Cups in Germany and South Africa was an incredible 26.29 billion[1]. Significantly, it is the ability of football to 'reach' so many people that makes it a true game for all; irrespective of gender, age, ethnicity, religious belief, disability, socio-economic or health-status. Brazil is the heart of creative and attractive football and the home of carnivals and sunshine. The business world readied itself to capitalize on the exposure that any alignment or presence at the World Cup could bring to the global awareness of their brand. However, it would seem that those who seek to encourage and foster social good through football have been slow to capitalise on such intrigue and interest in order to capture and connect with all who have some propensity to consume football or to be reached by and through football. Most notably, the limited attention to social good or social welfare campaigns aligned to the World Cup was arguably the biggest miss of the whole tournament? This volume explores the power of football and its role in engaging and including its 'populous' in positive social and behavioural activity. Specifically, this volume highlights a range of approaches that have

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been adopted and actioned by researchers, practitioners and organisations in order to stimulate, create and influence social good through football.

The notions of inclusion and inclusivity require a coherent alignment to high accessibility, low costs and involvement of all. The social roots of football have long been established. Across the globe, football's culture, heritage, and identity are entrenched within its respective local communities. As such the relationship between the football club and the community has been inextricably linked. It is this relationship that ensures that, in order for football to continue to flourish, or even exist, it will forever be indebted to its communities. It is the synergy between football's local and global appeal, its reach and subsequent responsibility and indebtedness to its communities that we must capitalise on, in order to ensure that football can act as a vehicle for the promotion of social good for all. Given England's global football brand and its long established football based community outreach programmes, viewed by many as models of 'best practice', this volume (mainly) focuses on activity occurring in football clubs in England. Within the England the link between football clubs and the community has been actively nourished through the development of the national Football in the Community (FitC) programme.

Football clubs in England have a relatively long history of engaging in community-based work. The late 70s saw the first moves to formalise a 'Football and the Community' programme. These early schemes were backed by the then Labour Government and the Sports Council[2]. The mid-80s saw the Sports Council pass governance of the programmes to other agencies which included the Football League and the Professional Footballers' Association through the Footballers' Further Education and Vocational Training Scheme[3]. During this time, the reputation of football was in steep decline as a consequence of emerging

social issues (i.e., hooliganism, gangs and firms). Concerns over the increasingly fractured relationship between football and its communities demanded government intervention in order to re-establish the inter-connected and mutually beneficial relationship. For many years FitC schemes across the country were positioned as deliverers of community engagement[4]. This delivery, typically involved encouraging more children to play, watch and support their respective football teams. Whilst the presence of the football club in its communities was more visible, questions remained as to the exact purpose of the football club's community programme. Whilst football in England began to experience increasing commercialisation the relationship between football clubs and its communities remained strained and distant. In essence, people began to ask whether, given the apparent commercial growth of the football club, that they (the clubs) could do more for their communities[5]. In essence, the continuing commercialisation and 'Sky-ification' of football further contributed to this divide and the subsequent questioning of the moral obligation of football to its communities[6]. As such, stakeholders within and external to the 'game' called for football clubs to display a greater level of corporate social responsibility (CSR), with a view to re-considering and re-establishing their relationships with their communities[7].

The continuing appeal of football, the subsequent television deals and the apparently unabated rewards for clubs has intensified the pressure on football to 'genuinely' consider their social role. Indeed, the presence, and examination, of CSR practices within football is becoming increasingly scrutinised[8]. Such scrutiny has been reported to be affiliated to New Labours' election win in 1997 and the evolving welfare reform, as part of their 'Third Way' ideology, which in essence asserted that business was required to consider a more socially responsible approach to their operations. Football was not, and is not, immune from such scrutiny. The Football Task Force (FTF) emerged with a remit to monitor the social

responsibility of the football sector[9]. Football stadia were identified as key arenas for encouraging and engaging fans in the development of positive health messages[10], covering all aspects of stadia functions, and the football clubs were positioned as vehicles to deliver on a range of key policy objectives including health, education, community cohesion, employment, regeneration and crime reduction[11]. Despite this, very little is known of the day-to-day existence and impact of such work. Some success has been reported through the engagement of men in health related behaviours with 'raised health awareness' being reported as a consequence delivering health messages at football clubs; a place where men feel comfortable[12]. Further findings included positive health changes, increases in physical activity levels, improved weight status and a reduction in alcohol consumption. This research coupled with a recent study in the Lancet, which evidences successful weight loss in men via the Fit Fans in Training programme delivered across Scottish Premier League Clubs suggests that mixing football and health promotion can work. Whilst the latter of these studies was costly to deliver, the positive impact of this work suggests that football can play a key role as part of the wider Public Health Service delivery[13].

With football clubs being asked to deliver so much (i.e., monitored and evaluated health related programmes), we are left with a skills shortage within and across practitioners working in football and the community programmes[14]. Despite the apparent success of such on-going and developing cases, we are in an age of public spending austerity and as such the existing practitioners are being asked to deliver on ever increasing and expanding agendas that (technically) require an accumulation of many more skills than just coaching. Such skills including, physical and physiological awareness, dietary and health advice, counselling, welfare and well-being alongside research, evaluation and monitoring techniques, require training and investment. Moreover, such practitioners require elevation to, alignment with,

and/or consideration of inclusion in, the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) which includes areas such as social workers, psychologists and dieticians. Such a shift in the professional status and recognition of the FitC coach will better enable the coach and football industry to deliver to these expanding health and care agendas[15].

Never has it been more important to adopt a genuine and inclusive approach to engaging with our local and global communities. As we reflect on the overwhelming media hype of the World Cup, and admire the way in which the business and commercial world has capitalised on such an iconic platform to accrue further global recognition, we must ask whether football and its populous have genuinely benefitted from and/or capitalised on this phenomenon. The excellent examples of social good and positive individual and organisational behaviour change highlighted in this volume only scratches the surface of potential. We and football has the power to change lives. We can all do more...

It is beyond the scope of this introductory pre-amble to provide a summary of discussion of the articles; the abstracts offer ample insight in to the excellent work that has been undertaken and collated here. Suffice to say that the ambition of the volume, when the original call for contributions was made was to locate like-minded researchers who have a shared interest in football and inclusivity. The papers draw on sociological, political and economic perspectives from a breadth of contexts concerning the inclusivity, societal good, positive behaviour change, governance and practice of football clubs. The special edition also lends from an array of methodological lens that allows you, the reader, to see what is possible to achieve when working, and collaborating, with and alongside industry partners. To this end, we are satisfied that the journal offers a truly holistic, contextual and real understanding

of  the joys and complexities associated with working within football in the community programmes whilst trying to make a difference to peoples' lives through football.

We hope that the collective nature of the papers offered in this journal will encourage football governing bodies and football CEOs to recognise that inclusion, inclusivity and social welfare make sound moral and business sense. This special issue champions the business case for inclusivity through the integration and mutual alignment of economic, social and health factors. We believe that it is time to stop asking football to cure, solve and eradicate societal ills through ad hoc, short term and short sighted investments and begin to gather real critical mass behind a long term strategic plan to engage, include, utilise and measure football's power in engaging the masses in positive social good and social welfare practices. Football can change lives but it needs to better understand its reach, its fan base, and their subsequent indebtedness to positively impact their local and global communities. In the spirit of inclusivity, we believe that it is the responsibility of all levels of the football industry including football governing bodies, football CEOs, practitioners and the perspectives of the participants or people genuinely affected by and or reached by football, to make this happen.

Collaboratively, the authors offer both research and applied insight and perspectives with a genuine desire to capitalise and optimise the social role of football. As such, the authors represent a growing interest including Manchester Metropolitan's Football and its Communities research group and the critical mass of researchers representing the Leeds Metropolitan University Carnegie Faculty of Sport and their collaboration with the Football Exchange at Liverpool John Moores University. The Editors would like to formally thank and compliment all of the contributors for their novel research, time and effort in making a

genuine contribution to the literature and applied working practice. This work represents the work undertaken by those with applied experience and insight, alongside their academic duties. As such those working in football and aligned stakeholders including policy makers, commissioners, project managers, health professional, community practitioners and coaches should find this special issue a pertinent, informative, timely and moreover a rally call to embrace a more holistic approach to tackling issues of inclusivity through football with a long term strategic investment in making change and improving lives.

## Acknowledgements

## Notes

[1] Viewing figures for World Cups 2006 and 2010.

[2] Mellor, 'The 'Janus-faced sport''

[3] Walters and Chadwick, 'Corporate citizenship in football', 60

[4] Parnell, et al., 'Football in the Community schemes: exploring the effectiveness of an intervention in promoting positive healthful behaviour change'.

[5] Brown et al., *Football and its communities*

[6] Taylor, 'Multi-paradigmatic research design spaces for cultural studies researchers embodying postcolonial theorising' and Anagnostopoulos and Shilbury,'Implementing corporate social responsibility in English football'.

[7] Taylor, 'Multi-paradigmatic research design spaces for cultural studies researchers embodying postcolonial theorising'.

[8] Walters and Chadwick, 'Corporate citizenship in football', 60; Anagnostopoulos and Shilbury,'Implementing corporate social responsibility in English football' and Breitbarth, and Harris. 'The Role of Corporate Social Responsibility in the Football Business. Towards the Development of a Conceptual Model'.

[9] Mellor, 'The 'Janus-faced sport''.

[10] See latest EU Healthy Stadia report.

[11] Mellor, 'The 'Janus-faced sport''; Parnell, et al., 'Football in the Community schemes: exploring the effectiveness of an intervention in promoting positive healthful behaviour change'.

[12] Pringle, A., et al., 'Effect of a national programme of men's health delivered in English premier league football clubs'.

[13] Hunt et al., A gender-sensitised weight loss and healthy living programme for overweight and obese men delivered by Scottish Premier League football clubs (FFIT): a pragmatic randomised controlled trial.

[14] Mellor, 'The 'Janus-faced sport''; Parnell, et al., 'Football in the Community schemes: exploring the effectiveness of an intervention in promoting positive healthful behaviour change' and Parnell, et al. ''Implementing Monitoring and Evaluation Techniques within a Premier League Football in the Community

Programme: A Case Study Involving Everton in the Community', in *The Routledge handbook of sport and corporate social responsibility,* ed. Salcines, Babiak, and Walters.

[15] Parnell, et al., 'Football in the Community schemes: exploring the effectiveness of an intervention in promoting positive healthful behaviour change' and Parnell, et al. ''Implementing Monitoring and Evaluation Techniques within a Premier League Football in the Community Programme: A Case Study Involving Everton in the Community', in *The Routledge handbook of sport and corporate social responsibility,* ed. Salcines, Babiak, and Walters.

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