In a wide range of countries, governments have developed policies and implemented programmes that seek to leverage the role of sport and leisure to deliver a range of benefits to communities (Cofield, 2007). While there is a common understanding that sport and leisure can contribute to a number of social and health benefits, a key justification is the perception that communities are facing increasing pressures from global economic, social and environmental changes. If communities are unable to adapt to and cope with such pressures, it has been suggested that some may suffer severe economic, social or environmental impacts (McInnes, 2000). McInnes further argued that stakeholders, including the public, need to be involved in decisions that affect their environment, and that by being involved, they can be more likely to be satisfied with the outcomes. Therefore, it is important to develop strategies to ensure that communities can adapt to the changing environment and are able to live more sustainable lifestyles.

**Sustainability and Events**

It is generally accepted that governments, communities and communities worldwide are facing a range of economic, social and environmental risks and that to adequately deal with such risks means that “business as usual” is not an option (McInnes, 2009). McInnes further argued that stakeholders, including the public, need to be involved in decisions that affect their environment, and that by being involved, they can be more likely to be satisfied with the outcomes. Therefore, it is important to develop strategies to ensure that communities can adapt to the changing environment and are able to live more sustainable lifestyles.

**Profit**

This area has received the most attention in the event impact/legacy literature, which generally identifies that significant economic local and regional economic outcomes are frequently not realised or are well below expectations (Australian Government, 2003). However, other researchers such as Granneman, Shidell & Colman (2003) argue that the majority of funds raised in public sector investment in sport events uncertainty is not clear evidence that the use of public funds results in significant benefits. Moreover, Downward et al. (2009) characterised the data on local economic impacts of events as “ggg”. Downward et al. (2009) summarised the main studies that have examined economic impacts into two main types:

**Event Based**

- Events are those ceremonies that are associated with the nature and quality of the place and are associated with strong interests in event development and positive economic outcomes.

**Supply Chain**

- Supply chains are those events that are associated with the nature and quality of the place and are associated with strong interests in event development and positive economic outcomes.

**Event Operations**

- Event operations are those events that are associated with the nature and quality of the place and are associated with strong interests in event development and positive economic outcomes.

**Summary**

Overall, it can be concluded that the claims made about the economic benefits of sport events from being often discounted, the evidence about non-economic benefits is often anecdotal and, in the case of environmental legacies, our knowledge remains at an early stage of development. In particular, the literature suggests that:

- Benefits such as increased community exposure, enhanced community image and urban rejuvenation have been questioned;
- The potential event site potential models to inspire community health benefits through increased sport participation are uncertain;
- Social and psychological impacts can exceed economic impacts and may also be more valued by the community, and;
- There is little knowledge and emphasis on environmental issues related to event management.

**Policy and Management Issues**

It appears that there is a lack of understanding that for major events are essentially political and are often not part of a rational planning process (Fott, 2005). Moreover, such decisions frequently have little or no community input and are based on unadorned assumptions. However, events (and sport events in particular) due to their symbolic and/or ritualistic role to communities are typically very difficult for policy makers to argue against. Events often create an emotional hold on the public with concomitant high expectations about potential psychic income benefits. It is also the case that many events have been perceived as highly significant and as unifying events, being seen as positive even by those who do not attend or have little interest in the event. Therefore, it is necessary to examine these events as often maligned as being anti-city or anti-racial and against progress and development.

Moreover, event benefits where realised, tend to be concentrated amongst those key groups with political influence/power whereas the costs or negative externalities are dispersed across the majority of local inhabitants (Fot, 2005). In terms of sustainability this is an especially problematic issue in the case of developing countries bidding for events and Games (Golding et al., 2009) for example, if the expenditure on a wealthy city is leading to the stagnation of the poor?

To oppose events it is to challenge the normative growth paradigm but how do communities, even in the light of minimal evidence that can be used to challenge the long lasting economic legacies do? Constraints on change may result from both local (regulatory, costs and soft factors) and external (climate change, risk perception) (Dodd & Buller, 2009). Unfortunately, the data available to facilitate informed policy making about events tends to be inadequate and the situation is further complicated by the political cycle which results in a short term focus.

A further policy-management issue is the "foreign" nature of much sport/event/tourism related investment with resultant high levels of leakage. This means that the economic benefits are less likely to be realised and that the local community is less likely to benefit. Furthermore, if delivery systems are also tied to unsustainable external supply chains then the long term sustainability of the project is at risk of running into difficulties even if local supply structures adopt more appropriate practices (Golding et al., 2009) and the tasks are not an uncommon issue as different economic sectors and disciplines in a supply chain may progress at different speeds along the sustainability continuum.

"At best, hosting events adds nothing statistically to employment on of the economy."

A further policy consideration is the negative impacts of the new paradigm in event impact/legacy planning and management that reflects a more aggressive approach to reconciling the leveraging of economic benefits rather than focusing on short term outcomes (Chaplin, 2006). This event planners should move beyond the "build it and they will come" approach that has largely characterised public policy to date. To further facilitate a more strategic approach, event planning and delivery should be integrated across a broader range of industry sectors and also incorporate a regional event "portfolio" approach to events (O'Brien, 2007).

At the operational level, event managers should concentrate more on community engagement and the importance of the sense of celebration and fun that should be an inherent element of events. This can also be facilitated through partnerships that revolve around opportunities for visitors to engage in learning and social activities associated with the event and the personal interests of O’Brien (Chaplin) and Downward et al. (2009) for example.

**Conclusion**

As highlighted by McInnes (2009), the development of sustainable practices means that incremental change will not be enough. Deep change is needed in terms of the goals and practice of business enterprise; ways we relate to natural systems; and, ways we relate to each other, our time and built communities. The event industry should not be immune to such challenges and indeed, should embrace the opportunity to better reflect emerging community attitudes and values.