

Working Research Paper

A Study of the Tokyo 2020 ‘Game Changer Project’ between the Netherlands and Japan:

Leveraging Disability Sports in Local Communities in Japan

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This publication is a preliminary version of the final report. The complete research findings will be published following the Paralympic Games in 2021 and the conclusion of the Game Changer Project organized by the NOC*NSF and Japan Sport Council in conjunction with Edogawa Ward, Adachi Ward, and Nishitokyo City.

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Executive Summary

The *Game Changer Project* is an on-going effort to spread disability sports in Japan using the Tokyo 2020 Games as a catalyst for change. The project offers valuable insights into how positive outcomes for sports mega-events can be realized through strategic leveraging, rather than relying on ambiguous conceptualizations such as “legacy”. This study contextualizes the *Game Changer Project*’s contents and approaches by exploring how disability is viewed in Japan and the importance of education and community in creating an inclusive environment. It details the different interests and factors that have influenced the project’s attempts to provide disability sports in three participating municipalities: Adachi Ward, Edogawa Ward, and Nishitokyo City.

In creating practical strategies for the promotion of disability sports, policymakers have taken into account local contexts and adopted different approaches that range from more top-down to more bottom-up in nature. However, there are also similarities between the steps that have been taken by different policymakers. All municipalities have focused on (local) stakeholder integration. Rather than building completely new infrastructure for disability sports, they have focused their efforts on connecting local organizations with existing sports facilities. This report offers insights into how, in practice, a sports mega-event is leveraged to produce positive outcomes. It also examines how this leveraging of large-scale sports events is carried out through a combination of international cooperation and the placing of responsibility with local stakeholders by using a (municipal) community-based approach. In short, the study shows that the strategic leveraging of sports mega-events in the host community is more effective than relying on the promise of a general legacy.

Introduction

The *Game Changer Project* is an on-going effort to promote disability sports in Tokyo during the run-up to the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The project was started by the Dutch Olympic Committee and Dutch Sports Federation (NOC*NSF), and the Japan Sport Council (JSC). Concisely, the *Game Changer Project's* aim is to spread disability sports in Japan using the Tokyo 2020 Games as a catalyst for change. Although the project remains unfinished (due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the postponement of the 2020 Games), there have already been significant developments. Examination of these developments can offer valuable insights into how positive outcomes of sports mega-events can be realized through strategic leveraging.

This preliminary report starts with an overview of the Paralympic Games and the concept of "inclusion" in sports. It then goes on to detail how this concept is detailed in Tokyo's bid for the 2020 Games and describes how the Olympic and Paralympic organizing committees have formulated the concept of "legacy". Legacy is an ambiguous term that has spawned a range of studies but still remains vague. Rather than rely on legacy, therefore, this study opts to use the term "leveraging". It suggests that such 'leveraging' of sports mega-events offers a more concrete concept that is applicable to the particularities of the *Game Changer Project*.

After discussing ideas about Olympic 'legacy' and 'leveraging', the report will then move on to explore how disability is viewed in Japan. Here it will emphasize the important role that is played in Japan by both education and the community in creating an inclusive environment. The report will then go on to detail the contents of the *Game Changer Project* and to describe the different approaches that have been taken by the various parties involved in the project. This analysis details the different interests and factors that have influenced the programming of the *Game Changer Project* by focusing on the contributions and efforts made by the three municipalities involved in the project: Adachi Ward, Edogawa Ward, and Nishitokyo City.

The three municipalities have taken different approaches in their attempts to leverage the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games to promote disability sports in their communities. These approaches range from being more top-down to more bottom-up. It is also clear that policymakers have had to consider their local contexts in creating practical strategies for leveraging the events in the promotion of disability sports. There are, however, similarities among the steps taken. For instance, all municipalities have focused on (local) stakeholder integration. Rather than building entirely new infrastructure for disability sports, they have instead focused their efforts on connecting local organizations with existing sports facilities.

In short, this report offers a preliminary overview of the way in which leveraging strategies have been formulated in practice, what kind of effects they have had, and how this leveraging has been carried out both through international cooperation and also at a community-level.

A Note on Methodology

The researcher responsible for producing this report was granted access to the *Game Changer Project's* activities by the Dutch Olympic Committee and Dutch Sports Federation (NOC*NSF), with the agreement of the and the Japan Sport Council (JSC) and the participating municipalities. The researcher joined in the project's exchanges, programmes, and meetings as a participant-observer. These observations have been supplemented by semi-structured interviews with the project organizers and key stakeholders, as well as with participating athletes, coaches, and consultants. In addition, the JSC and the three municipalities have provided survey data, presentations, and internal project documents for analysis. This information has further been supplemented by a broader view on national and local policies related to disability and disability sports (in Japan), the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and legacy building.

The Paralympic Games

The Paralympic Games is a sports mega-event for athletes with a disability. It is the largest sports event for people with disabilities and the second largest sports mega-event in the world, second only to the Olympic Games.¹ There are summer and winter games held once every four years.² These are overseen by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and organized by the Organizing Committee(s) of the host nation.³ Since the 1988 Games in Seoul, the Paralympics has been held in the same location as the Olympics.⁴ Although a sports event, the organizers of the Paralympics emphatically focus on “diversity and inclusion” as a key part of their mission.⁵

The IPC places a lot of weight on the role of inclusion in the Paralympic Movement, stating that “Diversity is a reality. Inclusion is a choice.”⁶ Organizing disability sports is thus connected to promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities. The Paralympic Movement’s most fundamental mission is the “empowerment” of people with disabilities, with sport as the main vehicle driving this change forward.⁷

These ideas, and in particular the idea of “inclusion”, gained significant traction during the run-up to the London 2012 Games. The Lon-

1) “History of the Paralympic Movement,” IPC, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://www.paralympic.org/ipc/history>; Ian Brittain, *The Paralympic Games Explained* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 9.

2) This study focuses on the summer editions.

3) “Paralympic Games | All Editions,” IPC, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://www.paralympic.org/paralympic-games>.

4) “Seoul 1988 Paralympic Games,” IPC, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://www.paralympic.org/seoul-1988>.

5) “IPC Diversity and Inclusion Policy,” IPC, January 2017, accessed June 6, 2020, https://www.paralympic.org/sites/default/files/document/170313091602678_2017_January_IPC+Diversity+and+Inclusion+Policy_FINAL.pdf.

6) Ibid.

7) There are several relevant critiques of the Paralympic Movement’s ability to actually “empower”. See for example: Danielle Peers, “(Dis)empowering Paralympic Histories: Absent Athletes and Disabling Discourses,” *Disability & Society* 24, no. 5 (2009): 653, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590903011113>.

don Games were the largest Paralympics to date. Daily media coverage improved visibility of the Games and several events sold out completely.⁸ Following the closing ceremony, this media success led to claims that the Games had created a positive legacy for people with disabilities in the United Kingdom.⁹ However, research has been critical of these claims. The measurable positive effects of the Games on people with disabilities have remained scarce. There is also a substantial disconnect between the media portrayals of Paralympians and the lived realities of people with disabilities.¹⁰ London 2012 therefore serves as an example of how the idea of legacy can be rhetorically salient while the actual positive impact of the event does not live up to the words. Regardless of these results, the theme of inclusion found its way into the Rio de Janeiro 2016 Summer Paralympic Games.¹¹ It has now become prominently associated with discussion of the legacy to be left by the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics.

8) Ian Burrell, "Paralympic Coverage beyond 'Wildest Dreams' says Governing Body as they appeal for continued Coverage of Sports," *Independent*, September 10, 2012, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/olympics/paralympics/paralympic-coverage-beyond-wildest-dreams-says-governing-body-as-they-appeal-for-continued-coverage-8120602.html>.

9) Cabinet Office UK, "Inspired by 2012: The Legacy from the Olympic and Paralympic Games," A Joint UK Government and Mayor of London Report, Second Annual Report – Summer 2014, July, 2014, accessed June 6, 2020, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/335774/140723_Inspired_by_2012_-_2nd_annual_legacy_report_-_accessible.pdf; "London 2012 Legacy Continues to be felt across the UK," *Olympic*, July 25, 2014, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://www.olympic.org/news/london-2012-legacy-continues-to-be-felt-across-the-uk>.

10) For a careful examination of the London 2012 legacy for people with disabilities, see: Ian Brittain and Aaron Beacom, "Leveraging the London 2012 Paralympic Games: What Legacy for Disabled People?" *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 40, no. 6 (2016): 499-500, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0193723516655580>.

11) Athanasios (Sakis) Pappous and Christopher Brown, "Paralympic Legacies: A Critical Perspective" in *The Palgrave Handbook of Paralympic Studies*, ed. Ian Brittain and Aaron Beacom (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018): 658, <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-47901-3>.

The Promise of Inclusion: “Legacy” and the Tokyo 2020 Games

Countries compete in a bidding process to receive the right to host the Olympic and Paralympic Games. One city per country is allowed to place a bid for each event held every four years. Following an agreement between the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) on 19 June 2001, this “one bid, one city” policy now extends to hosting the Paralympic Games. In short, the right to host the Olympics includes the Paralympics.¹² In September 2013, Tokyo was granted this right for the 2020 Summer Games.¹³

The bid from Japan was partially built on the idea of creating a Paralympic legacy. As is stated in the original candidature file which forms the blueprint for Olympic and Paralympic projects:

The overall philosophy of the Tokyo 2020 proposal is to deliver a Paralympic Games which will show how social inclusion and non-discrimination, and full consideration of the needs and interests of people with disabilities, can create a better world and provide a brighter future for the entire community.¹⁴

Focusing on improving barrier-free environments and accessibility, the bid banked on the assumption that changing Tokyo’s urban landscape would automatically lead to higher levels of social inclusiveness and more autonomy for disabled people.¹⁵ In the evaluation of Tokyo’s

12) “Paralympic Games,” *Olympic*, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://www.olympic.org/paralympic-games>.

13) “IOC Selects Tokyo as Host of 2020 Summer Olympic Games,” *Olympic*, September 7, 2013, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://www.olympic.org/news/ioc-selects-tokyo-as-host-of-2020-summer-olympic-games>.

14) “09 – Paralympic Games,” Tokyo 2020, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://gtimg.tokyo2020.org/image/upload/production/bdjhcdfbzbzfiwfv2pii.pdf>.

15) Kazuo Ogura, “Visions on the Legacy of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Paralympic Studies*, ed. Ian Brittain and Aaron Bea-com (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018): 583, <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-47901-3>.

bid, the Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games pledged to create more initiatives in disability sports to further promote inclusion.¹⁶ The idea of “inclusion” is clearly visible in both the bid and the current promotion campaigns for the Olympics. It is framed as an important part of Tokyo 2020’s eventual “legacy”.¹⁷ The Games’ slogan: “Unity in Diversity”, is a clear example of this.¹⁸

It is evident that the organizing committee has embraced the IPC’s mission, and emulated its promotional strategies.¹⁹ However, neither the bid, the candidature file, nor the evaluation, attempt to operationalize the term “legacy”. This is a common trend in the treatment of legacy that is not unique to the Tokyo Games. Legacy is frequently seen as something self-explanatory, making a definition unnecessary.²⁰ This semantic ambiguity impedes practical research and makes it challenging to pinpoint what a sports mega-event’s intended effects are and how they will be realized concretely.

This vagueness has been a chronic issue for decades. It has led to an increasing amount of research exploring the possible legacy (or legacies) of sports mega-events. Several theoretical frameworks for understanding and generating a legacy have been produced by these inquiries.²¹ In spite of all these intricate theories, however, “few [of these

16) “Report of the 2020 Evaluation Commission, Games of the XXXII Olympiad,” IOC, April 19, 2013, accessed June 6, 2020, https://stillmed.olympic.org/Documents/Host_city_elections/2020_Evaluation_Commission_report.pdf.

17) Susan S. Lee, “Promises of Accessibility for the Tokyo 2020 Games,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 18:5, no. 9 (2020), <https://apjpf.org/2020/5/Lee.html>.

18) “New Tokyo 2020 Emblem Symbolises Unity in Diversity,” *Olympic*, April 25, 2016, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://www.olympic.org/news/new-tokyo-2020-emblem-symbolises-unity-in-diversity>.

19) See for example: “Diversity & Inclusion (D&I),” Tokyo 2020, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://tokyo2020.org/en/games/diversity-inclusion/>.

20) Richard I. Cashman, *The Bitter-sweet Awakening: The Legacy of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games* (Sydney: Walla Walla Press, 2006): 15.

21) See for example: Eva Kassens-Noor et al., “Towards a Mega-event Legacy Framework,” *Leisure Studies* 34, no. 6 (2015): 665-671, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2015.1035316>; Holger Preuss, “A Framework for Identifying the Legacies of a Mega Sport Event,” *Leisure Studies* 34, no. 6 (2015): 643-664, <https://doi.org/10>

theoretical frameworks] have been empirically tested, resulting in a lack of theory underpinning the majority of legacy research”.²²

A growing number of new studies have therefore shifted away from legacy as an operational concept, and have started examining the ability to “leverage” sports mega-events. The difference between legacy (and its generic cousin “impact”) and leverage is that leverage has a “strategic and tactical focus.” With the concept of leverage, the “objective [is] to identify the strategies and tactics that can be implemented prior to and during an event in order to generate particular outcomes.”²³ Leveraging emphasizes practical strategies and how concrete targets have, or have not, been achieved. It also considers the possibilities offered by multiple sports mega-events (or mega-events in general) in a host region. For example, it examines what more can be achieved by holding both the Olympic *and* Paralympic Games. This allows a more thorough analysis of which strategies are effective, and which are not.²⁴

Importantly, leverage “treats events as potentially useful additions to the host community’s product and service mix, rather than as isolated opportunities”.²⁵ Through the leveraging of events, a certain legacy

.1080/02614367.2014.994552; Jean-Loup Chappelet, “Mega Sporting Event Legacies: A Multifaceted Concept,” *Papeles de Europa* 25 (2012): 76-86, http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/rev_PADE.2012.n25.41096; Laura Misener et al., “Beyond Olympic Legacy: Understanding Paralympic Legacy through a Thematic Analysis,” *Journal of Sport Management* 27 (2013): 329-341, <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.27.4.329>; Tracey J. Dickson, Angela M. Benson, and Deborah A. Blackman, “Developing a Framework for Evaluating Olympic and Paralympic Legacies,” *Journal of Sport & Tourism* 16, no. 4 (2011): 285-302, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14775085.2011.635014>.
22) Ian Brittain, Jason Bocarro, and Terri Byers, “Conclusion,” in *Legacies and Mega Events: Fact or Fairy Tales?* Ed. by Ian Brittain, Jason Bocarro, Terri Byers, and Kamilla Swart (London: Routledge, 2018): 261.

23) Laurence Chalip, “Towards Social Leverage of Sports Events,” *Journal of Sport & Tourism* 11, no. 2 (2006): 112, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14775080601155126>.

24) Leo Jago et al., “Building Events into Destination Branding: Insights from Experts,” *Event Management* 8, no. 1 (2003): 3-14, <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599503108751658>.

25) Laurence Chalip, “Trading Legacy for Leverage,” in *Legacies and Mega Events: Fact or Fairy Tales?* Ed. by Ian Brittain, Jason Bocarro, Terri Byers, and Kamilla Swart (London: Routledge, 2018): 29.

can be planned which fits with the host regions' particular context. This allows "those who otherwise manage development in the host community" but who are not directly involved in the sports event to take the lead in creating and strategizing for a positive legacy.²⁶ This is important because these actors can often better understand the development needs of the local community. Creating positive outcomes in the context of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, for example, requires an understanding of disability, disability sports, and local communities in Japan (specifically, in Tokyo). The following section of this report shall discuss this.

Disability, Sports, and Community in Japan

The potential success or failure of the Paralympic Games relates to how well it achieves the International Paralympic Committee (IPC)'s ideals of social inclusion and the empowerment of people with disabilities. Winning the bid for the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games has therefore forced Japanese stakeholders to assess their disability services, especially disability sports. At a glance there is a large gap between how disability is perceived in Japan and the IPC's Paralympic values. This is a structural problem that needs to be addressed on multiple levels.

Historically, strong expectations of productivity and reproduction in Japanese society have led to a systemic exclusion of people with disabilities. Social participation is conflated with the idea that a productive member of society needs to contribute economically.²⁷ As a result, for decades, in both society and the media, disabled people were rendered "invisible".²⁸ Along with these expectations and the invisibility they produce, disabled persons are also infantilized, never considered fully-fledged adults (*ichininmae*).²⁹

In Japan, disability is often seen as a medical condition that cre-

26) Ibid.

27) Carolyn S. Stevens, *Disability in Japan* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013): 28.

28) Arran Stibbe, "Disability, Gender and Power in Japanese Television Drama," *Japan Forum* 16, no. 1 (2004): 23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0955580032000189311>.

29) Stevens, *Disability in Japan*, 161.

ates a deficit. Disabled people are considered vulnerable and the tragic victim of some sort of loss. Disability is individualized and seen through a paternalistic lens. This forces individuals and their immediate family to take on the bulk of the burden for anything related to living with a disability. The role of society is played down, and impairment is framed as a consequence of living with one's personal, individualized, tragedy.³⁰ This marginal position is compounded by a dominant 'medicalized' view of disability: any access to disability services is linked to medical assessments.³¹

This marginality, or "invisibility", is reflected in the state of disability sports. These have remained relatively unknown in Japan. Around the time of the Rio 2016 Games, a study conducted among Japanese respondents showed that few people were familiar with disability sports. However, three factors have had a positive effect on Japanese people's familiarity with disability sports in recent years: viewing disability sports; media exposure; and knowing someone with a disability.³²

The Tokyo 2020 Paralympic provided an excellent opportunity for the Japanese public to view disability sports at the highest level. Before the event was postponed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, around 2.8 million tickets had already been sold.³³ Media exposure has also grown exponentially. In recent years, television broadcasts have increasingly contained segments about Paralympic sports. Disabili-

30) James Valentine, "Disabled Discourse: Hearing Accounts of Deafness Constructed through Japanese Television and Film," *Disability & Society* 16, no. 5 (2001): 711, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590120070088>.

31) Rafael Lindqvist and Kamal Lamichhane, "Disability Policies in Japan and Sweden: A Comparative Perspective," *ALTER, European Journal of Disability Research* 13 (2019): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.alter.2018.08.001>.

32) Motoaki Fujita, "障害者スポーツ，パラリンピックおよび障害者に対する意識に関する研究 (A Study on Attitudes toward Sports for People with Disabilities, Paralympics, and People with Disabilities)," *Doshisha Journal of Health & Sport Science* 8 (2016): 12, <http://doi.org/10.14988/pa.2017.0000014681>.

33) "早わかRio! Infographics! (Easy to Understand Rio! Infographics!)" *The Nippon Foundation Paralympic Support Center*, accessed June 6, 2020, <http://games.parasapo.tokyo/rioparalympic/infographics/>.

ty sports have also found their way into popular culture.³⁴ Generally, the quantity of public exposure to disability sports has increased. This has led to a broad awareness of disability sports and the Paralympics amongst the Japanese populace.³⁵

However, the way disabled athletes are represented in the media remains problematic.³⁶ Athletes are framed as overcoming their impairments through superhuman hard work. Such narratives obviate the realities of living with a disability in Japan.³⁷ Furthermore, receiving the right to host has had no measurable effect on knowledge concerning disability. Neither has it improved interaction between disabled and non-disabled people in Japan.³⁸

The short timeframe in which disability sports have been being covered by the Japanese media in the run up to the event has also served as a limiting factor. There are clearly many faults with assuming that increased media exposure will lead to long-term benefits. Strategic leveraging of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics to produce a positive legacy for disabled people in Japan should therefore focus on areas other than increased media exposure for disability sports.

Education is a key factor. As described below, schools play a fundamental role in sports participation in Japan. For example, students

34) Anoma P. van der Veere, “The Tokyo Paralympic Superhero: Manga and Narratives of Disability in Japan,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 18:5, no. 8 (2020), <https://apjpf.org/-Anoma-van-der-Veere/5373/article.pdf>.

35) Hiromi Sato, “国内外一般社会でのパラリンピックに関する認知と関心 (The General Public’s Awareness and Interest in the Paralympics in Japan and in Some Selected Countries),” *Journal of the Nippon Foundation Paralympic Research Group* 1 (January 2015): 45, <http://para.tokyo/日本財団パラリンピック研究会紀要Vol.1.pdf>.

36) Jan Grue, “The Problem with Inspiration Porn: A Tentative Definition and a Provisional Critique,” *Disability & Society* 31, no. 6 (2016): 843, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2016.1205473>.

37) Van der Veere, “The Tokyo Paralympic Superhero.”

38) Kotomi Shiota, “Survey Report on Awareness and Participation Behavior in Disabled Sports and Disability Understanding after Tokyo’s Bid for the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics,” *The Journal of Physical Therapy Science* 30, no. 1 (2018): 5-10, https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/jpts/30/1/30_jpts-2017-373/_pdf.

who are trained to become physical educators and who receive training in providing disability sports are more likely to use sports for maintaining health among disabled people. It is important that schools create an environment in which training in the provision of disability sports is facilitated.³⁹ Japanese educational institutes have suffered from a chronic lack of the specialized knowledge and experience that is necessary to properly implement disability sports.⁴⁰ This is problematic. Teaching staff's attitudes towards inclusive education are related to their self-efficacy. Many members of staff feel that they do not have sufficient capacity to instruct students in the provision of disability sports. Raising the level of self-efficacy is in turn related to knowledge and experience.⁴¹ Experience in teaching children with a disability has a significant positive impact on teaching staff.⁴² This means that the lack of experience currently possessed by teaching staff is detrimental to the advancement of inclusivity in education, and by extension, in sports.

"Encounters" between people with disabilities and non-disabled people can also be used as a social tool for higher levels of social inclusion.⁴³ A socially supportive environment greatly influences the individual attitudes of people with disabilities. It can lead to an improved understanding of a person's "meaning of life" and can positively affect

39) Toshihiro Miura and Yoshinobu Oda, "健康を支援するスポーツ文化研究—アダプテッドスポーツ理解への授業研究— (Sports Culture Research for Health Support: Research into Lessons for Understanding Adapted Sports)," *Kansai Daigaku Ningen Kenkō Gakubu Kiyō Ronbun* 3 (2011): 28-29, <http://hdl.handle.net/10112/7776>.

40) Kyōnosuke Yabe, "アダプテッド・スポーツとパラリンピック (Adapted Sports and the Paralympics)," *Gakujutsu no Dōkō* 11, no. 10 (2006): 57, https://doi.org/10.5363/tits.11.10_54.

41) Akie Yada and Hannu Savolainen, "Japanese In-service Teachers' Attitudes toward Inclusive Education and Self-efficacy for Inclusive Practices," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 64 (2017): 227, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.02.005>.

42) Ibid., 223.

43) See for example: Christine Bigby and Ilan Wiesel, "Encounter as a Dimension of Social Inclusion for People with Intellectual Disability: Beyond and between Community Presence and Participation," *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability* 36, no. 4 (2011): 266, <https://doi.org/10.3109/13668250.2011.619166>.

how one views their own disabilities.⁴⁴ However, the range of different kinds of disabilities has made a generalized approach difficult.

Current policies have achieved varying results in schools because different disabilities require different solutions.⁴⁵ There is a workable level of flexibility in disability-related policies but classroom practices remain rigid.⁴⁶ The importance of experience and knowledge among teaching staff cannot be overemphasized.

Japanese parents of disabled children frequently rely on professional consultations and special education services. Improving ties between teachers and parents is essential for facilitating the support of parents bringing up disabled children.⁴⁷ Parents can be sensitive to negative reactions from inside their communities. This sensitivity can then have the detrimental effect of worsening social isolation for disabled children.⁴⁸ Regional support is therefore crucial for empowering families.⁴⁹ Higher levels of community interaction have the added benefit

44) Masakuni Tagaki, "Long-Term Experiences of Men with Spinal Cord Injuries in Japan: A Qualitative Study," *Forum Qualitative Social Research Sozialforschung* 16, no. 2 (2015), <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/2148/3770>; "Research Development from Acceptance to the Meaning of Acquired Disability in People with Impaired Mobility in Japan," *Japanese Psychological Research* 58, no. 1 (2016): 96-98, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpr.12123>.

45) Anne-Lise Mithout, "Children with Disabilities in the Japanese School System: A Path toward Social Integration?" *Contemporary Japan* 28, no. 2 (2016): 181, <https://doi.org/10.1515/cj-2016-0009>.

46) Misa Kayama et al., "Local Implementation of Disability Policies for "High Incidence" Disabilities at Public Schools in Japan and the U.S.," *Children and Youth Services Review* 52 (2015): 38-40, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2015.02.009>.

47) Misa Kayama et al., "East Asian and US Educators' Reflections on how Stigmatization affects their Relationships with Parents whose Children have Disabilities: Challenges and Solutions," *Children and Youth Services Review* 73 (2017): 139-140, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.12.010>.

48) Misa Kayama and Wendy Haight, "Balancing the Stigmatization Risks of Disability Labels against the Benefits of Special Education: Japanese Parents' Perceptions," *Children and Youth Services Review* 89 (2018): 43, 45, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.04.008>.

49) Rie Wakimizu et al., "Family Empowerment and Associated Factors in Japanese Families Raising a Child with Severe Motor and Intellectual Disabilities," *In-*

of increasing the quality of life of disabled persons. They can also be an effective way of improving the mental health of the parents of disabled children and young people.⁵⁰ To summarize, good connections between people with disabilities, families, educational staff and professionals, and regional support are vital for creating a socially inclusive environment.

The “Game Changer Project”

The *Game Changer Project* is a joint initiative started by the Dutch Olympic Committee and Dutch Sports Federation (NOC*NSF), and the Japan Sports Council (JSC). It aims to advance disability sports in Japan during the run-up to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. On 10 October 2017, the NOC*NSF, JSC, Adachi Ward, Edogawa Ward, and Nishitokyo City signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) at the Embassy of the Netherlands in Tokyo that constituted the start of this joint project.⁵¹

The NOC*NSF is a semi-governmental organization that is responsible for sports in the Netherlands, including the Olympic and Paralympic committees and teams, and is the umbrella organization of the national sports federations. The NOC*NSF is integrated, meaning that policies and facilities cover both elite sports and grassroots sports,

ternational Journal of Nursing Sciences 5 (2018): 374-375, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnss.2018.09.006>.

50) Miyako Kimura and Yoshihiko Yamazaki, “Mental Health and Positive Change among Japanese Mothers of Children with Intellectual Disabilities: Roles of Sense of Coherence and Social Capital,” *Research in Developmental Disabilities* 59 (2016): 52, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2016.07.009>.

51) “Game Changer Tokyo 2020 Project,” NOC*NSF, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://nocnsf.nl/tokyo-2020/gamechanger>; Japan Sport Network “オランダオリンピック委員会・スポーツ連合、足立区、江戸川区、西東京市との連携事業「Game Changer プロジェクト- パラスポーツで社会を変える」調印式の開催について (About the Signing Ceremony for NOC*NSF, Adachi Ward, Edogawa Ward, and Nishitokyo City’s Joint Project “Game Changer Project: Changing Society through Para-sports”),” *Japan Sport Council News Release*, October 2, 2017, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://www.jpnsport.go.jp/corp/Portals/0/News-Release/H29/171002.pdf>.

including disability sports that fall under either category.⁵²

The Japan Sports Council (JSC) is also a semi-governmental organization, and is the executive body for sports policy in Japan. It is responsible for promotion, research, and management of sports and sports facilities (including the New National Olympic Stadium) nationwide. However, the organization is not integrated, and is separated from the Japan Sport Association (JSPO),⁵³ the Japan Olympic Committee (JOC), and the Japan Paralympic Committee (JPC).

Although the NOC*NSF and JSC are organized differently, they are both responsible for the implementation of national policies related to sports, under the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports (VWS) and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), respectively. The *Game Changer Project* was intended to be carried out in Japan, so the JSC took responsibility for its logistical aspects, including which Japanese organizations would participate.

Before they signed the Memorandum, NOC*NSF and the JSC started a process to select participating wards and cities within the Tokyo metropolitan area to focus on in the project.⁵⁴ Out of the five applications, three were selected: Edogawa Ward, Adachi Ward, and Nishitokyo City. Together with the NOC*NSF and JSC, these three municipalities formed the active members of the *Game Changer Project*. They became the geographic range within which the project has been implemented.

The *Game Changer Project's* initial goal is expressed in its catchphrase: “Changing Society through Para-sports”. This is a broad statement with the same operational vagueness as the term “legacy”. For ex-

52) “De overtuiging en missie van NOC*NSF,” NOC*NSF, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://nocnsf.nl/missie-visie-doelstelling-nocnsf>.

53) The umbrella organization of Japanese sports associations: “JSPO（日本スポーツ協会）とは（What is the JSPO）,” Japan Sport Association, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://www.japan-sports.or.jp/about/tabid57.html>.

54) Tokyo Metropolis consists of 23 wards, 26 cities, 5 towns, and 8 villages, see: “都内区市町村マップ（Map of the Wards, Cities, Towns, and Villages in the Metropolitan Area）,” Tokyo Metropolitan Government, March 3, 2018, accessed August 14, 2020, <https://www.metro.tokyo.lg.jp/tosei/tokyoto/profile/gaiyo/kushichoson.html>.

ample, the idea of “changing society” can be interpreted in an infinite number of ways. More clarification is given in the project’s main objectives: “inspiration”, “knowledge transfer”, and “legacy”.⁵⁵ The connection between the project’s goals and the Paralympic mission is clear. However, while the concepts expressed in these objectives do offer a little more to go on, they are still very much open to interpretation. A more concrete strategy is provided in the project’s programme set-up. This consists of three elements:

1. Common program: joint workshops for sports leaders and other related personnel in all three municipalities, in which Dutch athletes, coaches, and other related personnel participate.
2. Individual program: experience and exchange activities in schools and sports facilities in which Dutch athletes participate.
3. Visiting program: visits to the Netherlands by sports policymakers and related personnel to learn about the Dutch way of creating an inclusive society (social inclusion).⁵⁶

The project suffers from a high level of operational vagueness. However, this was a conscious choice made in the nascent stages of the project’s development.⁵⁷ This choice was made because such vagueness has provided one major advantage. The flexibility of the project’s goals, programmes, and content has allowed the participating parties to adapt to local contexts and recent developments, as described below in more detail.

55) See for example: “Game Changer プロジェクト～パラスポーツで社会を変える (Game Changer Project: Changing Society through Para-sports,” Edogawa Ward, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://www.city.edogawa.tokyo.jp/documents/1528/gamechanger.pdf>.

56) Japan Sport Network, “オランダオリンピック委員会・スポーツ連合、足立区、江戸川区、西東京市との連携事業がスタートします (NOC*NSF, Adachi Ward, Edogawa Ward, and Nishitokyo City’s Joint Project Starts),” *Japan Sport Council News Release*, November 1, 2017, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://www.jpnsport.go.jp/corp/Portals/0/News-Release/H29/171101.pdf>.

57) Personal Communication Herbert Wolff, NOC*NSF, July 14, 2020.

An Overview of the Project

The bid from Japan for the Tokyo 2020 Games included a promise for “social inclusion and non-discrimination, and full consideration of the need and interests of people with disabilities”.⁵⁸ The *Game Changer Project* is a direct consequence of the 2020 Games, but it is separated organizationally from the organizing committees. It is therefore not part of the general “legacy” that was promised in the Tokyo 2020 bid. Instead, it is an independent, community-based attempt at leveraging the Tokyo 2020 Games to spread disability sports in Japan.

As part of the project, delegates from the Netherlands made visits to Tokyo. During the first visit, activities consisted of displays and presentation by two main delegates representing Dutch para-sports. The first of these was Rita van Driel, the principal *Game Changer Project* project manager, former national program manager for disability sports of the Netherlands, and incumbent board member of the IPC.⁵⁹ The second delegate was Kelly van Zon, a two-time Paralympic table tennis gold medallist.⁶⁰ The initial stages of the project were about creating “awareness” of disability sports among citizens in the participating municipalities.⁶¹ This involved primarily inspiration-based activities such as school visits and participation in sports festivals (see images 1 and 2, and appendix I).

It is difficult to measure the concrete effects of such inspiration-based approaches. The idea that elite sport “inspires” people to take up sport remains difficult to prove.⁶² These displays by elite athletes also

58) “09 – Paralympic Games,” Tokyo 2020.

59) Rita van Driel currently also serves as the chairperson of the Dutch National Alliance of Sports and Movement “Sportakkoord”.

60) See: “Kelly van Zon,” TeamNL, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://teamnl.org/sporters/5744-kelly-van-zon>.

61) Adachi Ward has created a series of videos for each visit, see: cityadachi, “GAME CHANGER～パラスポーツで社会を変える～ 2017年度 (GAME CHANGER: Changing Society through Para-sports, 2017),” YouTube, April 17, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtP1h4HcY_0.

62) Jonathan Grix et al., “State Strategies for Leveraging Sports Mega-Events: Unpacking the Concept of ‘Legacy,’” *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* 9



Image 1: Presentation at an elementary school led by Rita van Driel (project manager) with Kelly van Zon, November 2017 (photo by author).



Image 2: Demonstration by Kelly van Zon (Paralympic gold medallist) at an elementary school, November 2017 (photo by author).

(2017), <https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2017.1316761>.

may not help increase understanding among Japanese policymakers of how Dutch Paralympic athletes have been able to reach top levels in the Netherlands. These questions about the benefits of displays of elite sports were apparent in the narrative that ran throughout the activities of the first visit to Tokyo in early November 2017. This narrative was essentially that these figures had been “successful despite having a disability.”⁶³ Such an issue was noticed early on by the participating Dutch delegates.⁶⁴

Early discussions with senior policymakers involved in the project made it clear that they possessed little to no knowledge concerning the methods and organizational (or, institutional) frameworks used in the Netherlands for facilitating disability sports.⁶⁵ The JSC’s decision to launch the project, and its goal of creating a “best practice model” for national implementation, highlights how the organization of disability sports has been insufficient nationwide, not just among the participating municipalities.⁶⁶

For this reason, the visit by Japanese policymakers to the Netherlands in late November 2017 was specifically programmed to show how disability sports are facilitated in the Netherlands (see appendix II).⁶⁷ The Japanese delegation consisted of both JSC policymakers in charge of the project as well as municipal policymakers responsible for the project follow-up.

The programme started off with an introduction to the glob-

63) For a more detailed exploration on this topic, see: Ronald J. Berger, “Pushing Forward: Disability, Basketball, and Me,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 10, no. 5 (2004): 798, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800403261857>.

64) See appendix I for the schedule; interview with Rita van Driel, Project Manager NOC*NSF, Rotterdam, November 2017.

65) オランダ往訪プログラム／レビューミーティング (Visit to the Netherlands Program/Review Meeting minutes), Rotterdam, 23 November 2017.

66) “NOC*NSF, Adachi Ward, Edogawa Ward, and Nishitokyo City’s Joint Project Starts”; “Game Changer パラスポーツで社会を変える～JSN オランダ連携プロジェクト (Game Changer Changing Society through Para-sports: JSN-Netherlands Joint Project),” Japan Sport Council, October 11, 2017.

67) See appendix II.

al framework of disability sports in the Netherlands, given by Herbert Wolff, the Director of International Relations at NOC*NSF. Then there were presentations from several Dutch experts (see image 3). This was followed by a tour of the national training facilities. These facilities are integrated and can be accessed by both Olympic and Paralympic athletes. The same theme continued in the rest of the programme (see image 4). The delegation was brought to visit several integrated sports clubs that offer both sports and disability sports (athletics, korfbal).



*Image 3: Presentations at NOC*NSF detailing the Dutch sports system led by Herbert Wolff, November 2017 (photo: Rita van Driel, NOC*NSF).*

The visit primarily focused on Rotterdam, the second largest city in the Netherlands.⁶⁸ During the visit to the Netherlands it became clear to the Japanese delegates that in the Netherlands the separate administrative departments that deal with sports, welfare, and other essential activities related to disability or sports, are formally connected through

68) Rotterdam is located in the western part of the Netherlands and has 644.618 residents (2019): “Kerncijfers Wijken en Buurten 2019,” CBS, July 30, 2019, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/maatwerk/2019/31/kerncijfers-wijken-en-buurten-2019>.

intermediate organizations.⁶⁹ The importance of the integration of these stakeholders was purposefully a prominent theme in the activities organized for the delegation.⁷⁰



Image 4: The Japanese delegation participates in an adapted sports programme (G-korfball) at korfbal club RKC Wion, November 2017, (photo: RKC Wion).

The visit to the Netherlands resulted in a drastic shift in the project's main activities. The concluding evaluation among the delegates led to a revision of the project's *raison d'être*, with this moving from an inspiration-based to a reflective approach. The project's policymakers started connecting the *Game Changer Project* to the institutionalizing of disability sports within the administrative frameworks of their respective local governments. The project format changed considerably. Policymakers in each municipality started including lecture-based workshops and sports clinics for local sports leaders, students, government

69) See for example: "SportMEE, expertise in aangepast sporten en bewegen," MEE Rotterdam Rijnmond, accessed June 6, 2020, <http://www.sportmee.nl/>.

70) Visit to the Netherlands Program/Review Meeting minutes; interview with Rita van Driel, November 2017.

officers, and citizens in the programmes (see appendices III and IV).⁷¹ This shift was strongly encouraged and supported by senior NOC*NSF officials.⁷²

Despite the lessons taken away from the Netherlands, there was a clear understanding among all the participants that there are irreconcilable differences between the Dutch and the Japanese systems. The organizational framework in the Netherlands is decentralized and region-based. There is a large number of independent sports clubs.⁷³ These clubs make use of small or mid-sized sports facilities that are privately owned or rented, and they attract their own members.

The decentralized nature of the Dutch system also means that sports clubs have to voluntarily implement disability sports and special programmes. The government has made public subsidies available to stimulate clubs to do so.⁷⁴ Municipalities rely on intermediate organizations and individual regional sport coaches (*buurtsportcoaches*) to negotiate the implementation of disability sports. This makes interdepartmental and inter-organizational communication essential.⁷⁵

In the *Game Changer Project* these intermediaries have been described as “Sports Service Points” (SSPs, see figure 1).⁷⁶ These SSPs

71) オランダ連携プロジェクト合同会議 議事メモ (The Netherlands Cooperative Project Joint Meeting Proceedings Memo), Tokyo, August 7, 2018.

72) Interview with Rita van Driel, Project Manager NOC*NSF, Rotterdam, July 26, 2018.

73) Harold van der Werff, Remco Hoekman, and Janine van Kalmthout, “Sport Clubs in The Netherlands,” in *Sport Clubs in Europe: A Cross-National Comparative Perspective*, ed. Christoph Breuer et al. (Heidelberg: Springer, 2015): 280-281, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-17635-2>.

74) “Nationaal Sportakkoord (publieksversie),” Rijksoverheid, June 29, 2018, accessed June 6, 2020, 12, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/sport-en-bewegen/documenten/rapporten/2018/06/29/sportakkoord>.

75) “Wat is een buurtsportcoach?” BuurtSportCoach, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://sportindebuurt.nl/buurtsportcoach/wat-is-een-buurtsportcoach/>.

76) Rita van Driel, “Sport Service Point: Create structure to cooperate,” “スポーツ・サービス・ポイント Sport Service Point: 協力体制を構築する (Supōtsu sābisu pointo “Sport Service Point”: Create structure to cooperate),” “Roadmap Sport Service Point Tokyo,” and “スポーツ・サービス・ポイントのロードマップ (Roadmap Sport Service Point),” Presentations, February, 2020.

are adjusted according to the region in which they are embedded, with varying names, organizational structures, and budgets.⁷⁷ Although the Netherlands has a scattered and decentralized landscape of organizations that deal with different aspects of disability sports, the functionality of these intermediate organizations (SSPs) does not vary a great deal. Their relatively autonomous position also allows for contextual flexibility. The Dutch contribution to the *Game Changer Project* has therefore also had the consequence of directing substantial attention to exploring how these SSPs function within the institutional infrastructure in the Netherlands.⁷⁸

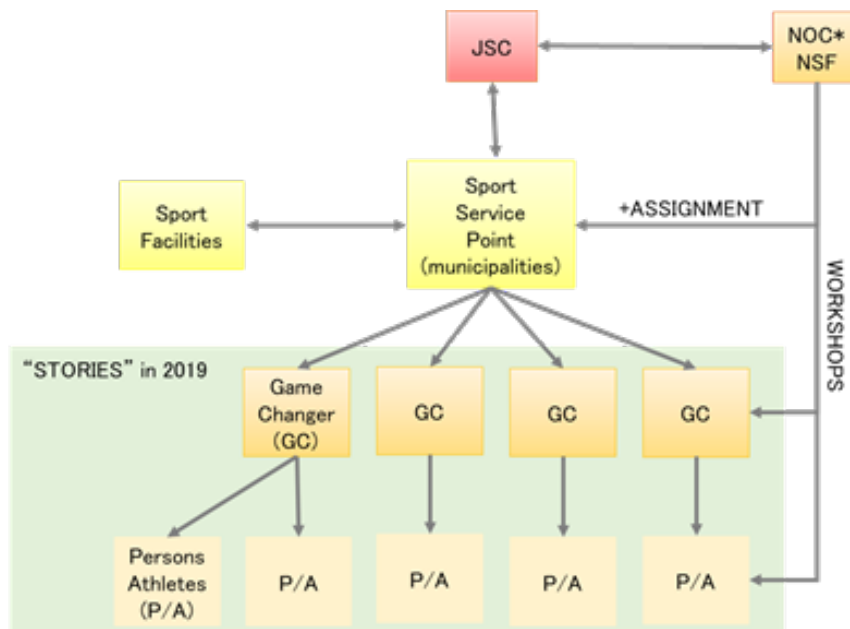


Figure 1: Overview of the structure of a Sports Service Point as introduced in the *Game Changer Project*, February 2019 (original: October 2018) (NOC*NSF).⁷⁹

77) See for example: "SportMEE, Expertise in Aangepast Sporten en Bewegen," and "Beweegloket Den Haag," Den Haag, July 25, 2019, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://www.denhaag.nl/nl/in-de-stad/sport/beweegloket-den-haag.htm>.

78) Rita van Driel, "Create structure – Sport Service Point – Tokyo," Presentations, February 2020.

79) Van Driel, "Roadmap Sport Service Point Tokyo": a "Game Changer" stands for a person or organization connected to the SSP. These Game Changers are in turn connected to persons and athletes who want to participate in disability sports.

The institutional infrastructure in the three municipalities is centralized, contrasting with the Dutch situation. Local municipalities in Japan are tasked with the promotion and implementation of sports. The management of regional sports facilities and schools (including their sports facilities) falls under their jurisdiction.⁸⁰

In Japan, sports participation for younger generations is primarily facilitated through the educational system. Extracurricular sports clubs that use school facilities form the main locus for younger generations to be socialized into sports.⁸¹ Other sports facilities owned by municipalities are used for public events, such as inter-school competitions, and other publically accessible programmes that are often managed in cooperation with commercial partners.⁸² These sports venues are also widely used by private companies that have their own (amateur) sports clubs, a common practice in Japan.⁸³

After the first delegation from Japan visited the Netherlands, the Japanese policymakers from the three municipalities described their own sports infrastructure as centralized and vertically structured (top-down). They suggested this contrasted with what they saw during their programme in the Netherlands.⁸⁴ From early on in the project, the policymakers therefore showed a clear awareness of the differences between the Japanese and Dutch systems.⁸⁵

In order to help the Japanese policymakers explore how to improve the local organization of disability sports, the second delegation

80) スポーツ基本法 平成二十三年法律第七十八号 (Sports Promotion Act: 2011 Law, Article 78), MEXT, 2011, https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/sports/kihonhou/attach/1307836.htm.

81) Peter Cave, ““Bukatsudō”: The Educational Role of Japanese School Clubs,” *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 30, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 383, 413, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jjs.2004.0041>.

82) “足立区総合スポーツセンター (Adachi Ward General Sports Center),” Mizuno Supōtsu Sābisu, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://shisetsu.mizuno.jp/m-7503>.

83) Masahiko Sawano, 企業スポーツの栄光と挫折 (The Glories and Setbacks of Corporate Sports) (Seikyūsha: Tōkyō, 2005): 157.

84) Visit to the Netherlands Program/Review Meeting minutes.

85) Ibid.

from the Netherlands to Tokyo consisted only of disability sports experts. The first of these was Rita van Driel. Second was Dolf Nijbroek, a professional korfbal coach specialized in disability sports. Third was Marjolijn de Boer, an adaptive sports consultant. Active clinics were organized to give sports leaders, teaching staff, and related personnel an opportunity to experience a disability sport first hand.⁸⁶ The presentations and lectures given during the programme centred on how to build a basic institutional infrastructure through which local participation in disability sports is improved.⁸⁷ In every lecture, presentation, and workshop, the repeated focus was on gaining experience, flexibility of thinking rather than rigid programming (in classroom practices, especially in sports),⁸⁸ and importantly, connecting community stakeholders.⁸⁹

One senior policymaker indicated that the exclusion of people with disabilities from public facilities was not a conscious choice. There were no active policies to deter anyone from doing sports before the start of the *Game Changer Project*.⁹⁰ However, in all three municipalities disability sports were rarely part of the regular programming.⁹¹ In practice, therefore, people with disabilities were structurally excluded. As a result, most programmes that could be used in the *Game Changer Project* to promote disability sports had to be started from scratch with limited knowledge and in a brief timeframe.

It is to the credit of the Japanese policymakers involved that they all recognized the need for stakeholder integration early on in the project. They also adjusted the programme's activities to make them fit with

86) Interview with Dolf Nijbroek, Zeist, August 21, 2019; see also appendix III for the program overview.

87) Rita van Driel en Marjolijn de Boer, "Individual counseling/SSP," Presentations during the GCP, November 2018.

88) As De Boer comments on the facilitation of sports in general, it needs to be "regular where possible, adapted when necessary. Individual counseling makes this possible." Personal communication, July 6, 2020.

89) Van Driel and de Boer, "Individual counseling/SSP"; Van Driel, "Roadmap Sport Service Point Tokyo."

90) Visit to the Netherlands Program/Review Meeting minutes.

91) Meeting at the Japan Sport Council minutes, October 11, 2018, Tokyo.

their local contexts, available facilities, and services. One factor that contributed considerably to the rapid development of the *Game Changer Project* has been the way that previously isolated stakeholders have been connected through the project's workshops. For many of those working in (municipal) departments, as well as for those working in public and private organizations dealing with different segments of either disability or sports, the *Game Changer Project* has been the first opportunity they have had to be in the same room, working on the same issue.⁹² In the initial phases of the *Game Changer Project*, however, the responses from local stakeholders in each region varied.

Adachi Ward

In Adachi Ward,⁹³ for example, public schools were highly receptive to participating in the exchange part of the *Game Changer Project*. Sports facilities were more reluctant, having no programs or designated personnel for facilitating anything related to disability sports.⁹⁴ This changed following a lecture and workshop at Adachi's main sports facility where personnel and volunteers from different departments were asked to participate (see image 6).⁹⁵ The participation of local athletes with a disability in later workshops helped to diminish resistance even further. It gave more depth to the discussions among stakeholders about how to improve opportunities for disability sports within the ward. One senior policymaker described how, after participating in the *Game Changer*

92) Workshop for Para-sport Coaches Meeting notes, June 27, 2018, Tokyo.

93) Adachi Ward lies in the central-northern part of the Tokyo Metropolitan area, and has 693,411 residents: “足立区の年齢別人口最新版 (Latest Report on Adachi Ward's Population by Age),” Adachi Ward, last updated May 15, 2020, accessed June 6, 2020, https://www.city.adachi.tokyo.jp/koseki/ku/aramashi/toke-nenre_r0205.html.

94) Atsushi Abe et al., スポーツ担当になったら読む本: 地方行政におけるエビデンスベースの政策立案に取り組むために (Guide Book for Sports Leaders: An Evidence-based Approach on Drafting Policies for Regional Administrations), Japan Sport Council (Dokuritsu Gyōsei Hōjin Nihon Supōtsu Shinkō Sentā: Tōkyō, March 2020): 125.

95) See appendix III.

Project, “those who initially expressed opposition, fell silent”.⁹⁶

The second Dutch delegations’ visit to Tokyo in June 2018 helped Adachi Ward to start holding workshops that focused on knowledge exchange. For instance, Nijbroek led substitute PE classes for non-disabled and “mildly” disabled (*keishō*) children at public elementary, middle, and special-needs schools in Adachi Ward. In these classes, Nijbroek purposefully avoided explaining the rules of korfbal at the start, only gradually introducing them one by one over the course of each class while building up to a mock competition. He focused on keeping the children constantly active through simple exercises. In doing so, Nijbroek was able to pinpoint which children were having difficulty keeping up and individually support them, while leaving more autonomous children to continue playing the game themselves.

The workshop aimed to introduce flexibility in classroom practices. It also sought to introduce a method of teaching that can work in larger groups of children with different levels of motor skills and disabilities.⁹⁷ These classes were immediately followed by a similar workshop for teaching staff and a short knowledge exchange (see image 5). Several dozen teaching staff attended this part of the programme. However, the feedback from the participants pointed out that the post-workshop discussion section was too short, leaving little time to discuss teaching methods. In addition, not all teachers were given the opportunity to gain experience in teaching children with disabilities. Nevertheless, the teaching staff that participated gave a generally positive evaluation of the workshop. The main message of the class also appears to have been effectively conveyed to these participants. One participant, for example, commented: “There were approaches that I can use in my daily practice, such as changing the rules every time to correspond [with the students’

96) Abe et al., *Guide Book for Sports Leaders*, 126.

97) Interview with Dolf Nijbroek, Zeist, August 21, 2019. Nijbroek and Van Driel both explained that korfbal was introduced into the Game Changer Project because it is a low threshold sport for people with disabilities that can be easily adjusted to personal skill levels due its simple rules, no dribbling, or touching. As the sport originates from the Netherlands, it is likely that organizational interests also played a role in the choice for korfbal.

needs]’.”⁹⁸

Similar experience-based workshops were held for local sports leaders, teaching staff from other facilities, staff from special needs facilities, and staff from local sports facilities (see image 6). These workshops were divided into two sections. In the first section, participants were given lectures about Dutch disability sports infrastructure and practical teaching methods given by Van Driel and De Boer. Then in the second section, the participants took part in a korfbal workshop that closely resembled that described above. After the first workshop was held in Adachi Ward in June 2018, this led to the purchase of (disability) sports equipment. It formed a catalyst for implementation of disability sports in Adachi Ward.⁹⁹

Fearing that a set-up based on the Dutch SSP system would not attract people, Adachi Ward chose to pursue a (semi-)bottom-up strategy. The Sports Promotion Section of the municipal ward (which is also responsible for the implementation of the *Game Changer Project*) has organized “regional sports meetings” as part of the *Game Changer Project*. The ward was divided into 6 regions, and stakeholders from every region were invited, including locals with a disability engaged in sports, sports facility managers and personnel, sports leaders, welfare department and facility officials, the Japan Amateur Sports Association, and medical workers.¹⁰⁰ Using the allure of the *Game Changer Project*’s Paralympians and experts, these meetings have gradually attracted more attention. As a result, they have enabled municipal policymakers to create an increasingly broad network of stakeholders.¹⁰¹

These meetings existed before the project, albeit on a smaller scale. However, their introduction into the *Game Changer Project* opened up

98) “足立区 第2弾 事業報告 (Adachi Ward Second Visit Activity Report),” Adachi Ward, August 7, 2018, 4.

99) Ibid., 3.

100) Abe et al., *Guide Book for Sports Leaders*, 127.

101) cityadachi, “GAME CHANGER～パラスポーツで社会を変える～第2弾 (GAME CHANGER: Changing Society through Para-sports, 2nd Part),” YouTube, April 17, 2018, 12:25 minutes, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9a6cix6lvo&t>.



Image 5: Dolf Nijbroek leads a korfbal workshop with teaching staff at a middle school in Adachi Ward, June 2018 (photo by author).



Image 6: Participants at the lecture and workshop at the Adachi Ward General Sports Center, June 2018 (photo by author).

opportunities for expansion into experience-based workshops, and eventually into the broader facilitation of disability sports.¹⁰² As more stakeholders gradually joined, community events and independent activities were increasingly organized outside of the core activities of the project as well. Importantly, these meetings have markedly improved horizontal integration within the municipal office and have led to better connections among local stakeholders.¹⁰³

Edogawa Ward

In Edogawa Ward there were similarly restrained responses to the initial stages of the project. In the same way, this resistance largely dissipated in later stages.¹⁰⁴ In contrast to Adachi Ward, however, Edogawa has chosen a top-down approach. The Ward has steadily advanced its integration of stakeholders by implementing their own version of the Dutch SSP system (see image 7).¹⁰⁵ Although based on the Dutch system and its creation of intermediate organizations, Edogawa has opted to collect information through a centralized information and communication technology (ICT) system that connects consultation points located in every municipal sports facility. This ICT system is called the “Edogawa Sports Concierge.”¹⁰⁶ Information concerning disability sports programmes

102) cityadachi, “【ホストタウン オランダとの連携事業 第5弾】 Game Changerプロジェクト～パラスポーツで社会を変える～ (“Host Town the Netherlands Joint Project 5th Part” Game Changer Project: Changing Society through Para-sports, 5th Part),” YouTube, March 2, 2020, 10:59 minutes, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yeb4MbdNVdM>.

103) Abe et al., *Guide Book for Sports Leaders*, 126.

104) Edogawa Ward lies next to Adachi ward in the central-northern part of the Tokyo Metropolitan area, and has 699,661 residents: “町丁目別世帯と人口・年齢別人口報告〈2020年度〉 (Population Report by Block, District, Household, and Age [2020]),” Edogawa Ward, June 3, 2020, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://www.city.edogawa.tokyo.jp/e004/kuseijoho/gaiyo/tokei/jinko/jinko2020.html>.

105) 江戸川区方式SSPを補完する新規・拡充事業2019 (New and Expanded Operations towards Edogawa’s SSP’s 2019),” Edogawa Ward Sports Promotion Section, Presentation, February 8, 2019, Tokyo.

106) “「スポーツコンシェルジュ」宣言に基づき区内スポーツ施設に相談窓口を設置 (“Sports Concierge”: The Establishment of Consulting Services in

and facilities is shared with each consultation point. However, one issue with the system has been the fact that the consultation sessions with potential participants were initially only available once a week. In addition, the required paperwork included long take-in sheets that might deter people from participating.

The Edogawa Sports Concierge established in Edogawa Ward experienced a slow start, making responsible policymakers unsure about the effectiveness of the system.¹⁰⁷ In order to further gain experience for improving it, mock interviews between Dutch experts and trainee sports consultants were organized. The Dutch experts provided feedback based on their experiences in the Netherlands. They also engaged in discussion of how to improve access to sports for people with disabilities.¹⁰⁸ The long-term efficacy of the system is still unclear. However, by October 2019, 87 people had made use of the available services. This suggests that the system is achieving slow, but steady, penetration.¹⁰⁹ Importantly, this system and the implementation of disability sports have become part of long-term public policy, ensuring a steady budget for the coming years.¹¹⁰

Edogawa Ward has chosen to prioritize the inclusion of students into the programme over the inclusion of local teaching staff. During the Dutch delegation's June 2018 visit to Japan, for example, 44 students studying physical therapy (PT) at the Tokyo Medical Sports Vocational School located in Edogawa Ward participated in two lectures and a workshop led by Van Driel and De Boer. The lectures were similar to those given elsewhere, explaining how disability sports are facilitated in

the Ward's Sports Facilities based on the Public Declaration)," Edogawa Ward, July 17, 2019, accessed June 6, 2020, https://www.city.edogawa.tokyo.jp/e028/sports/sports/syougaisya_suports/concierge.html; Abe et al., *Guide Book for Sports Leaders*, 128.

107) Game Changer Project Joint Workshop minutes, February 4, 2019, Tokyo.

108) Abe et al., *Guide Book for Sports Leaders*, 128.

109) Ibid., 126.

110) “江戸川区スポーツコンシェルジュ宣言 (Declaration of the Edogawa Ward Sports Concierge)," Edogawa Ward Sports Promotion Section, Presentation, February 4, 2019, Tokyo.

the Netherlands. However, here the lectures and workshop were both adapted to include experience-based exercises. In one exercise, for example, students were given low or no vision simulator goggles and were tasked with guiding a fellow students through the building. In another exercise, students were divided into groups, given a card that described a specific disability, and asked to create a suitable sport or activity for a person with that particular disability (see image 8).

During these two exercises it became clear that disability sports were not part of the regular curriculum. This was confirmed by several of the participants. The school was asked to prepare certain equipment in advance as well. Some of this equipment, most notably the wheel-chairs, were inadequate and could not be used for the exercises. This, again, highlights the initial lack of knowledge among both teaching staff and students. For most participants, the *Game Changer Project's* activities were their first introduction to disability sports.¹¹¹

A post-activity survey among the participants gave back positive feedback overall. The ‘medicalized’ view remained an important lens through which disability was viewed by these participants. They saw disability largely as a physical deficit that could be improved through medical intervention.¹¹² The students all recognized the connection between disability and their own field of study, despite their initial lack of knowledge. Notably, none of the students saw any problems with introducing sports into physical therapy or rehabilitation programmes, with one student commenting: “As a Physical Therapist I need to be able to consult about disability sports, and pro-actively recommend it”.¹¹³

To combat a chronic lack of volunteers, Edogawa Ward has also initiated the “Edogawa Para-sports Ambassador” programme. Potential volunteers are attracted to help organize events in disability sports, such as the annual “Edogawa Para-sport Festival” which was launched in 2016.¹¹⁴ This is a public event where visitors can experience a broad

111) “Edogawa Ward Report on the Proceeding of Activities,” 1, 6-7.

112) Ibid., 3.

113) Ibid., 2.

114) “第1回パラスポーツフェスタエドガワ (1st Para-sports Festival Edoga-

range of sports together with Japanese Paralympians. The festival has consistently attracted hundreds of disabled and non-disabled residents.¹¹⁵ Students from the Tokyo Medical Sports Vocational School, mentioned above, also participate as (in-training) therapists and volunteers.¹¹⁶

To ensure Para-sport Ambassadors have sufficient knowledge to volunteer in such events, they are required to take the beginner's level of the Disability Sports Leader certification course.¹¹⁷ This is necessary to qualify for the programme. By April 2019, there were 112 Para-sport Ambassadors.¹¹⁸ This programme is connected with the *Game Changer Project*. During the June 2018 visit, 39 qualified disability sports leaders and volunteers participated in lectures and workshops similar in format to those held at the vocational school. Afterward they also joined a korfbal workshop, focused on experience-building and knowledge exchange, similar to that given to the teaching staff in Adachi Ward.¹¹⁹

wa)”, Edogawa Ward, October 27, 2010, last updated January 31, 2019, <https://www.city.edogawa.tokyo.jp/e004/kuseijoho/kohokocho/press/h28/10/h281027.html>.

115) “第4回パラスポーツフェスタえどがわ (4th Para-sports Festival Edogawa)”, Edogawa Ward, December 16, 2019, accessed June 6, 2020, https://www.city.edogawa.tokyo.jp/e028/sports/sports/syougaisya_suports/jigyo/r0111162.html.

116) Mitsutaka Katō, “「パラスポーツフェスタえどがわ」に、東京メディカル・スポーツ専門学校の学生が参加しました！ (Tokyo Medical Sports Vocational School students participated in the “Para-sports Festival Edogawa”!)”, *Jikei Gakuen Nyūsu*, December 6, 2018, accessed June 6, 2020, http://www.jikeigroup.net/news/20181206_23648.html.

117) “公認障がい者スポーツ指導者 (Official Disability Sports Leader)”, Japan Para-sports Association, accessed June 6, 2020, https://www.jsad.or.jp/leader/leader_qualified_update.html.

118) “えどがわパラスポアンバサダー (Edogawa Para-sports Ambassador)”, Edogawa Ward, May 23, 2019, accessed June 6, 2020, https://www.city.edogawa.tokyo.jp/e028/sports/sports/syougaisya_suports/ambassador.html.

119) “江戸川区事業実施報告 (Edogawa Ward Report on the Proceeding of Activities)”, Edogawa Ward, July 2, 2018, 8-9; Coach Development Workshop notes, Tokyo, June 29, 2018.



Image 7: Senior policymakers from Edogawa Ward present their version of the SSP at the JSC headquarters in Tokyo, February 2019 (photo by author).



Image 8: Students from the Tokyo Medical Sports Vocational School were given a card with a specific disability, and were tasked with creating a suitable sport or activity, June 2018 (photo by author)

Nishitokyo City

As with Edogawa Ward and Adachi Ward, Nishitokyo City has also faced a fundamental lack of stakeholder integration.¹²⁰ However, Nishitokyo City is much smaller than Edogawa and Adachi Wards.¹²¹ This means it has had to make more budget-conscious choices in terms of *Game Changer Project* programming.¹²² It has made the creation of an SSP difficult. Instead, efforts towards implementing disability sports in the city have centred on connecting existing organizations, using the *Game Changer Project* as a catalyst.

Although schools were receptive to cooperation, the response to the project from sports facilities and organizations in Nishitokyo City has been restrained. The municipal office nevertheless has managed to organize several events in cooperation with Tokyo Dome.¹²³ It has also been able to gather sports leaders, local citizens with a disability, and officials in related departments (i.e. child welfare), to participate in a string of workshops. Reminiscent of earlier workshops, these opportunities were often the first time that local stakeholders in Nishitokyo City had worked together on the same issue, in the same room.

These workshops have followed a similar format throughout the project. Participants are invited to participate in a (disability) sports clinic or experience (i.e. using low or no vision simulator goggles to practice guiding others, or playing korfbal/wheelchair basketball).¹²⁴ This is followed by discussions among participants divided into teams about how

120) Abe et al., *Guide Book for Sports Leaders*, 126.

121) Nishitokyo City is in the western part of the Tokyo Metropolitan area, and with 205,926 residents it is considerably smaller than Adachi Ward and Edogawa Ward: “人口・世帯数 (Population and Number of Households),” Nishitokyo City, June 5, 2020, accessed June 6, 2020, <http://www.city.nishitokyo.lg.jp/siseizyoho/tokei/zinko/r2/713169.html>.

122) Game Changer Project Joint Workshop minutes, February 8, 2019, Tokyo.

123) Tokyo Dome runs several public facilities in Nishitokyo. See: “西東京市スポーツ施設 (Nishitokyo City Sports Facilities),” Nishitokyo City, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://www.shisetsu-nishitokyo.jp/>.

124) “西東京市 事業報告 (Nishitokyo City Activities Report),” Nishitokyo City, June 28, 2020, 1-4; Appendices III and IV.

to improve disability sports in their own communities (see image 9).¹²⁵

Interestingly, the team presentations given during these sessions have consistently included stakeholder integration and improved communication as key points.¹²⁶ This is notable, as it shows that these issues play a conspicuous role within local communities and among those who have a vested interest in promoting disability sports in Nishitokyo City.

Nishitokyo also organized workshop sessions with “encounter” as the main theme. During one workshop in June 2018, around 50 children with and without disabilities were invited to a local children’s welfare centre. They were separated into three groups that switched between three different games, swapping places after each time interval (see image 10).¹²⁷ Although the event attempted to bolster interaction between disabled and non-disabled children, participants acknowledged that the number of able-bodied children far outweighed that of disabled children, impeding interaction.¹²⁸ One child’s guardian referred to this issue: “The number of able-bodied children was too high resulting in groups of children who already knew each other well. How about evening out the number of abled and disabled children?”

Encounter can be a valuable tool in creating a supportive environment when properly managed. A valuable lesson that can be taken from this workshop is that a group of children needs to be properly balanced and guided in order to facilitate interaction. It is also important to note that there were discernible differences in perspectives on disability between the Dutch delegates and Japanese participants. Each child with a disability was accompanied by a personal guardian who often played the sports instead of the child. The child thus became the observer, rather than the participant. Actively discouraging this, De Boer, Nijbroek, and Van Driel attempted on several occasions to separate the children from their guardians and to involve them in games by directly passing

125) See appendices III and IV.

126) Workshop at Nishihara General Education Facilities notes, February 5, 2019, Tokyo.

127) Nishitokyo City Activities Report, 1.

128) Ibid., 2.

them a ball or individually guiding them to a play station.

However, several comments from participants given after the workshop made it clear that the protective, more paternalistic, perspective remained dominant. One person commented, for example, that “it is not making [the disabled children] play with [non-disabled children], but being in the same place that is important.” The children with disabilities are ascribed little to no agency. This is a position reflected in the practices shown during the workshop (image 10).

Nishitokyo has also created a monthly clinic titled “Enjoy New Sports”. This two-hour clinic is for people who have a disability or do not regularly do exercise. The clinic makes a range of sports available to these people including boccia, universal curling, and ring tossing.¹²⁹ In November 2019 the participation rate stood at 8-10 persons per session.¹³⁰ Since 2019, the Physical Education Association of Nishitokyo has also taken up disability sports as part of their official activities. In line with this step, the association has connected with the *Game Changer Project*, with the Sports Promotion Section of Nishitokyo City, and with the mayoral office, substantially improving regional stakeholder integration.¹³¹

Coordinating the Game Changer Project

Coordination between the municipalities and the NOC*NSF has been carried out by the Japan Sports Council (JSC). The JSC has set up the Japan Sport Network (JSN) to function as a platform for knowledge exchange. The *Game Changer Project* is one of the projects that falls under this network’s main activities.¹³² The three municipalities report their

129) “春のENJOYニューススポーツ交流会 (Spring Session of the ENJOY New Sports Exchange Meeting),” Nishitokyo City, Sports Promotion Section, March 13, 2020, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://www.city.nishitokyo.lg.jp/enjoy/sports/enjoy-spring.html>. This session has been cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

130) Coach Development Workshop notes, February 5, 2019, Tokyo.

131) Abe et al., *Guide Book for Sports Leaders*, 126.

132) “Japan Sport Network,” Japan Sport Council, last updated April 1, 2020, accessed June 6, 2020, <https://www.jpnsport.go.jp/corp/saiyou/tabid/514/Default>.



Image 9: Local stakeholders (sport leaders, staff from Tokyo Dome, citizens with and without disabilities) are split into groups to discuss the implementation of disability sports in the region, February 2019 (photo by author)



Image 10: Exchange workshop in Nishitokyo: Marjolijn de Boer leads one of the activities for both disabled and non-disabled children in a children's welfare center, June 2018 (photo by author)

progress through this network and share information with other organizations in Japan.¹³³ The role of the JSC is primarily logistical. The organization provides a space and platform for knowledge dissemination, coordinates the project programmes for each visit, provides translations for essential documents and communication, and summarizes and reports on the projects' results among national stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).¹³⁴ This is an essential role, as it has allowed the three municipalities to deepen their inter-organizational ties and nationally disseminate their results.

Importantly, joint workshops in the *Game Changer Project* programme have provided a place where different stakeholders can discuss each municipality's activities (see appendix IV; images 11 and 12). Policymakers from each municipality have also visited the *Game Changer Project* programmes in the other municipalities. In doing so, they take note of possible pitfalls and opportunities while also improving inter-municipal relations. An example of these relations is the way the three municipalities have frequently provided each other with necessary sports equipment to facilitate different segments of the *Game Changer Project* programme (i.e. korfball equipment and wheelchairs). Several policymakers have commented that there had been no such cooperation among the municipalities (or with the JSC) prior to the *Game Changer Project*.¹³⁵ This improvement in relations between municipalities can therefore already be identified as an effective means of leveraging the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympics Games.

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133) Abe et al., *Guide Book for Sports Leaders*, 120.

134) A noteworthy example is the *Guide Book for Sports Leaders*.

135) Communication with JSC P.I., February 4, 2019.



Image 11: Adachi Ward policymakers discuss their current sports infrastructure and the progress of the GCP during a joint workshop at the JSC headquarters, February 2019 (photo by author)



Image 12: Rita van Driel, the principal project manager, provides the three municipalities with feedback on the programme during a joint workshop at the JSC headquarters, February 2019 (photo by JSC)

Limitations

This study has several limitations. The most glaring is that, as a result of the recent COVID-19 pandemic, the study remains unfinished. The pandemic has put a sudden brake on all activities and has made travel between the Netherlands and Japan next to impossible. This led to the decision to produce a preliminary report about the *Game Changer Project*, based on research carried out so far. I want to emphasize that the findings presented here are based on the data collected up until now. They are therefore not reliable for predicting long-term developments. They offer only preliminary conclusions and are therefore tentative in nature. These findings need to be considered within the broader discourse studying sports mega-events.

The project has advanced considerably beyond what is described in this preliminary report. This report only covers one of the two visits made by Japanese policymakers to the Netherlands and two of the five visits made by a Dutch delegation to Tokyo.¹³⁶ This preliminary report offers an overview of the general activities within the *Game Changer Project*. However, it lacks in-depth analysis of individual activities and a broader comparison between Dutch and Japanese stakeholders, including a comprehensive national policy analysis. Issues with translation, activity coordination, organizational budgets, and specific roles within the project have also been largely left out. These will be included in the final report.

Discussion

Two issues have not yet been addressed in the overview above. The first concerns how disability has been perceived during the *Game Changer Project* and how it is perceived now. The second is how people with disability have been included in the project.

How disability is viewed by the policymakers in the *Game Chang-*

136) The third visit has only been partially covered. At the time of writing, there have been five official delegations to Tokyo: “Game Changer Tokyo 2020 Project.”

er Project stems from wider perceptions of disability in Japanese society: disability is viewed as a personal tragedy, and the role of society is frequently played down.¹³⁷ Being valued as a member of society is inherently linked to economic productivity.¹³⁸ This results in people with disabilities being infantilized in broader discourses.¹³⁹ This perspective is prominent in the activities that have been carried out as part of the *Game Changer Project* (see for example, image 10). In Japan, access to disability services also remains dependent on medical assessments.¹⁴⁰ This is another structural issue that has been found in the *Game Changer Project*. In fact, policymakers involved in the project have expressed similar attitudes towards disability throughout the project. As one senior policymaker's comment exemplifies:

Until the Game Changer Project started, I also had the image of someone severely disabled when speaking of people with disabilities. Someone physically disabled who cannot move their body. If you are like that it is dangerous, if they do not have a caregiver with them they cannot go anywhere. But there is a broad range of disabilities, it is not only people like that, and there are actually people who autonomously look for opportunities to do sports, and then do them.¹⁴¹

The change in attitude expressed in the latter half of the above statement is largely a consequence of the way in which Van Driel has repeatedly urged Japanese counterparts to include people with disabilities in the programme. She has encouraged their inclusion not only as participants in the sports clinics, but also as active members of the lecture-based workshops and discussions.¹⁴² The policymakers responsible for facilitating this regularly articulated their concerns over finding people

137) Valentine, "Disabled Discourse," 711.

138) Stevens, *Disability in Japan*, 28.

139) *Ibid.*, 161

140) Lindqvist and Lamichhane, "Disability Policies in Japan and Sweden," 1.

141) Abe et al., *Guide Book for Sports Leaders*, 128.

142) Game Changer Project Joint Workshop minutes, February 8, 2019, Tokyo.

with disabilities, let alone finding people willing to participate in the *Game Changer Project* programme.¹⁴³ This perspective explains the programme's initial focus on displaying disability instead of engaging with disability.

Despite the challenges, however, all three municipalities have eventually managed to involve citizens with disabilities or (local) Paralympic athletes. In fact, in Adachi Ward, one of the senior policy-makers in the *Game Changer Project*, who joined the project at a later stage, is himself an avid tennis player and a wheelchair user. This shows that people with disabilities are indeed present and willing to engage with their communities. As mentioned earlier, resistance to the *Game Changer Project* and to the idea of organizing disability sports seemed to diminish among local stakeholders as their involvement continued. This shows how people with disabilities have contributed to the progress of the *Game Changer Project* and have played a vital role in the development of disability sports in their own communities.

It is also important to note how the *Game Changer Project* has responded to the idea of inclusion that forms part of the International Paralympic Committee's mission. In the Tokyo 2020 bid, this was expressed in the promise of improved accessibility. However, just creating accessible buildings and infrastructure does not automatically lead to higher levels of inclusion.¹⁴⁴ Physical accessibility is only a prerequisite. Inclusion is about talking with people with disabilities, not about them. People with disabilities need to be involved in the process. As Van de Ven et al. argue, "It takes two to tango".¹⁴⁵ The switch to more content-based programming in the *Game Changer Project* is therefore a welcome innovation. This addresses structural problems rather than relying solely on "inspiration" to exact change.

143) Ibid.

144) See for example in the case of the Netherlands: Overmars-Marx et al., "Advancing Social Inclusion in the Neighbourhood for People with an Intellectual Disability: An Exploration of the Literature," *Disability & Society* 29, no. 2 (2014): 255-274, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2013.800469>.

145)

Although this all seems promising, it is important to keep in mind the *Game Changer Project* is still bound by institutional limitations. For example, later visits carried out as part of the *Game Changer Project* programme, which have not been considered in this preliminary report, have made clear that the importance placed on displaying elite athleticism has not waned. This idea is likely to continue to be a determining factor in the project. The idea of using elite athletes as role models keeps being employed for school visits, large visual displays, and meetings with high-ranking officers. This affects the decision-making process justifying a continued budget for the project.¹⁴⁶ The *Game Changer Project* therefore walks on a precarious line between glorifying disability as tragedy, and leveraging basic disability sports infrastructure that will have a long-term impact on local communities.

Nevertheless, the direction of the *Game Changer Project* programming represents an important shift. It shows a recognition that society has to take on a part of the responsibility for including people with disabilities in sports. Specifically, in the *Game Changer Project*, a part of the burden of inclusion is taken by the municipality, sports leaders, teaching staff, and coaches. It should be pointed out here that this idea that society should share some of the burden for sports promotion is not exceptional to sports for people with disabilities. This applies to non-disability sports as well. However it has been an idea from which disability sports in Japan have long been excluded.

Preliminary Conclusions

Despite the aforementioned limitations, this study of the *Game Changer Project's* progress, developments, and difficulties presents a rich source of information. This information may be significant for informing possible future cooperative frameworks between international organizations in sports, particularly in the fields of disability sports and legacy. This report offers insights into how the leveraging of a sports mega-event to achieve positive outcomes works in practice. It shows how such lever-

146) Game Changer Project Joint Workshop minutes, February 8, 2019, Tokyo.

aging is achieved through a combination of international cooperation and placing responsibility on local stakeholders by using a (municipal) community-based approach. In short, the study shows that strategic leveraging in the host community is more effective than planning for a general legacy.

The three municipalities have all chosen different strategies that connect with their local contexts. Lessons from the Netherlands were not transplanted *in toto* to Japanese contexts. Instead, the senior policy-makers in each municipality were highly aware of the incompatibilities between this system and their own institutional infrastructures. There are also substantial differences in the pace of progress and the implemented strategies.

Adachi Ward has chosen a bottom-up strategy, starting with using the *Game Changer Project* as an incentive to attract and connect local stakeholders. It has also focused on amassing experience with disability sports among local teaching staff through workshops. Edogawa Ward has taken a top-down approach, implementing the “Edogawa Sports Concierge”: connecting facilities through a shared information communication technology network and creating a contact point in each sports facility for consultation. Edogawa has also recognized the importance of volunteers, establishing the Para-sport Ambassador programme to both attract people and educate them about disability sports. Facing several restraints as a result of its size and budget, Nishitokyo City has chosen to focus on connecting existing regional stakeholders on top of experience-based workshops (similar to Adachi Ward) and “encounter” workshops. This approach had limited success in the early phases of the *Game Changer Project*. However, stakeholder integration has significantly improved since 2019.

Despite the different approaches, there are important commonalities that deserve highlighting. The *Game Changer Project* initially started with an event-based programme in all three municipalities that focused on “presenting” disability and sports to a non-disabled audience. Following the visit to the Netherlands and discussions in joint work-

shops facilitated by the JSC, policymakers in each municipality started pro-actively leveraging the *Game Changer Project* in order to improve the situation in local disability sports. It is through this change in perspective that the project has evolved away from an event-based display structure focusing on elite athleticism, towards building local disability sports infrastructure and experience-based content.

This is a point of interest, as existing research has already shown that willingness to facilitate disability sports in Japanese schools relies heavily on teaching experience.¹⁴⁷ Classroom practices concerning inclusive education are rigid, even if disability-related policies offer workable levels of flexibility.¹⁴⁸ Professional support, education services,¹⁴⁹ and proper regional support are crucial for empowering families and building inclusive communities.¹⁵⁰

The *Game Changer Project's* activities have taken place on a municipal level and have focused on providing support and experience for educational staff and professionals. This makes it easier to build towards regional support that is essential for creating a socially inclusive environment. Rather than sticking to “inspiration” as the sole basis for creating a legacy, the *Game Changer Project's* focus on experience among teaching staff and local stakeholders involved in disability and/or sports addresses a real issue that is plaguing the spread of disability sports in Japan. It is therefore a good example of strategic leveraging targeting a specific, identifiable, problem.

Moreover, all three municipalities focused on local stakeholder integration. Rather than seeing the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics (and Olympics) as an isolated event that can stir up a potential legacy, policymakers who “otherwise manage development in the host community” have made an effort to use the Game Changer Project as a catalyst to improve

147) Yada and Savolainen, “Japanese In-service Teachers’ Attitudes,” 223.

148) Kayama et al., “Local Implementation of Disability Policies,” 38-40.

149) Kayama et al., “East Asian and US Educators’ Reflections,” 139-140.

150) Rie Wakimizu et al., “Family Empowerment and Associated Factors,” 374-375.

upon already existing infrastructure.¹⁵¹

Adjusting the project and activities in accordance with available resources, policymakers have been able to utilize the Games as a “potentially useful [addition]” to their own “product and service” mix.¹⁵² Specifically, they have made use of existing disability and sports related services (and official departments), combining these with the use of existing public facilities. In this manner, they have strategically taken the lead in leveraging a positive legacy for their own communities.

Afterword: COVID-19 and its Repercussions

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic can be felt in every corner of the world. As the world globalizes, opportunities open up for cooperation between organizations, institutes, countries, and peoples, just like the *Game Changer Project*. Opportunities, however, come with risks. The same mobility that allowed experts and policymakers from two countries on opposite sides of the planet to share their experience and knowledge, has also allowed COVID-19 to take on its current destructive nature.

Among the hundreds of thousands of – often needless – casualties, we have found that the most vulnerable minorities are often the heaviest hit. This includes people with disabilities. Not only are care facilities restricting their activities, every non-essential form of contact is now to be avoided, furthering the chasm between those who get support and those who do not. For the *Game Changer Project* this means that sports facilities have been closed, or access has been restricted. Travel has made delegations impossible. And alas, not all sports can be practiced over Zoom or Teams or Skype.

National and local economies have taken a hit that will take years to recover from. Decreased spending will have a heavy toll on local tax revenue, which will put even more pressure on policies deemed non-essential. This will likely include widely accessible disability sports, a field

151) Chalip, “Trading Legacy for Leverage,” 29.

152) Ibid.

of interest still in a nascent state of development. New policies are more likely to face the chopping block than long-established ones.

The future of the *Game Changer Project*, and of plans to create a Paralympic legacy for Tokyo 2020 in general, are now ambiguous at best. It is hoped, however, that the progress described in this report will not be forced to stop because of a change of will among the policymakers who have been deeply involved in this project from the start. On the contrary, the likelihood of survival rests in part on the willingness of these policymakers to keep on their current pursuits in spite of the challenges that lie ahead.

Also necessary is the willingness of officials in high places to allocate funds and prioritize these new policies in an environment that will restrict their decision-making power. The most important part, however, will be to see if the activities up until now have been effective in connecting local stakeholders to the extent that, even without municipal support, they can restart and refocus their efforts together once the fog of pandemic has lifted.

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Appendix I

Game Changer Project, Tokyo Visit, November 2017									
	FRI	SAT	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
08:00									
09:00									
10:00			Primary School	Primary School		Secondary School		Special Needs School	
11:00			Secondary School	Primary School	Special Needs School	Primary School			City Sports Festival
12:00						Student lunch			
13:00		Para-sports Festival	Student lunch	Student lunch					
14:00	Visit to The Dutch Embassy						Off		
15:00									
16:00			Special Needs School						
17:00									
18:00			Reception			Municipal Sports Club			
19:00				Dinner with staff					
20:00									

School visits primarily consisted of a lecture-based presentation of the two main delegates, and display of the sport in the school's gymnasium.

Appendix II

Game Changer Project, Netherlands Visit, November 2017					
	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
08:00					
09:00	Welcome and Introduction	Special Needs School			
10:00			Municipal Office Rotterdam		
11:00	Tour Papendal Facilities				
12:00	Lunch	Rehabilitation Center	Lunch		
13:00	Workshop 'Educating Volunteers'		Special Needs School		
14:00	Visit training				
15:00					
16:00					
17:00	Dinner with staff	Athletics Club	Dinner		
18:00					
19:00				G-Korfball Training	
20:00		Dinner			
21:00					

Appendix III

Game Changer Project, Tokyo Vslit, June 2018				
	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
09:00				
10:00		Special Needs School	Coach development workshop	Vocational School Lecture & Workshop
11:00				
12:00				
13:00	Workshop			
14:00		Korfball Workshop		Lecture Special Needs
15:00			Coach development	Japanese culture
16:00				
17:00				
18:00				
19:00	Reception Dinner	Korfball Workshop Para-coaches		Coach development workshop
20:00				
21:00				

Appendix IV

Game Changer Project, Tokyo Visit, February 2019							
	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	Wed	THU	FRI
08:00							
09:00		Para-sports City Festival		Primary School	Paralympian demonstration	Primary School	
10:00			Joint Workshop		Special Needs School	Special Needs School	
11:00				Student Lunch		Lunch	
12:00					Student lunch		
13:00							
14:00				Lecture Para-sport			
15:00	Sports Volunteer Development Seminar					Roundtable Staff	Joint Workshop
16:00				Workshop Para-sport	Lunch with staff		
17:00							
18:00							
19:00					Workshop para-sport	Network Event	
20:00							
21:00							