

Toward a Sport Ecosystem Logic

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Network approaches in sport management are mainly guided by the logic of sport products, where firms produce value that is used-up by consumers. This logic neglects the collaborative nature of sport. On the contrary, the logic of value co-creation provides a perspective where actors collaborate to co-create value in sport networks. Thus, this purely conceptual research aims to examine approaches to value co-creation in sport ecosystems to offer a holistic perspective on the interconnectedness of actors and engagement platforms. Using the concepts of value co-creation, engagement platforms, and sport network approaches, this paper conceptualizes the Sport Ecosystem Logic as a general theory to promote innovative research. Comprising five fundamental premises, the Sport Ecosystem Logic explains how actors' shared interests in sporting activities evolve into an entire sport ecosystem. The Sport Ecosystem Logic advances our understanding of actors' resource integration on sport engagement platforms and how these platforms are interconnected in a sport ecosystem.

Keywords: sport ecosystems, sport institutions, resource integration, value co-creation, engagement platforms

The sport ecosystem is a complex network of relationships which is affected by a variety of economic, political, ecological, technological, and social dynamics. Existing work in sport management research utilizes various network approaches to provide aggregated perspectives on the sport system (e.g., Meiklejohn et al., 2016; Richelieu & Webb, 2019; Wolfe et al., 2002). Sport network approaches usually analyze interorganizational relationships (IORs; e.g., Werner et al., 2015) or the dyadic or triadic connections between sport actors such as sponsors and sponsee (e.g., Wagner et al., 2017). Thereby, they consider the value to be produced by organizations and used-up by consumers. This perspective is referred to as the logic of sport products (Woratschek & Griebel, 2020). These sport network approaches and their underlying theoretical foundation tend to neglect the fundamentally collaborative nature of sport.

In contrast to that, the logic of value co-creation provides an opportunity for an expanded understanding of collaboration in sport and, more specifically, to understand how actors integrate resources within a sport network.


Value co-creation states that many different actors contribute to the value of a sport network, and that no single actor produces value in isolation (Woratschek et al., 2014). While there is an emergent literature stream about value co-creation in sport, most of these studies focus on relationships between a limited set of actors (see [Supplementary Material](#) [available online]). The relationships between and among sport actors and the interconnectedness of the whole sport ecosystem are without a complete conceptualization in the sport management literature. Consequently, there is no systemic approach to understanding the number and variety of actors within sport ecosystems (i.e., leagues, teams, associations) and their stakeholders (i.e., suppliers, partners, sponsors, government).

Accordingly, and using value co-creation as a cornerstone, the purpose of this article is to conceptually advance our understanding of how actors and platforms are interconnected, and how multilateral resource integration impacts systemic governance within the

sport industry. We refer to this systemic approach as the Sport Ecosystem Logic (SEL). The SEL aims to provide sport management scholars with a general theory about the co-creation of value in sport ecosystems. Sport management through the lens of value co-creation will enable scholars to pursue novel research questions and subsequently advance theory by developing empirically supported models. Conceptual research enables scholars to answer unresolved questions, to stimulate additional research (Ladik & Stewart, 2008), and to produce systematic structure that can both explain and predict phenomena (Hunt, 1983).

Accordingly, we believe the SEL offers the following contributions to a holistic understanding of value co-creation in sport ecosystems. The SEL is the first systematic approach that integrates sport networks, value co-creation in sport, ecosystems, and service ecosystems to produce a general theory about the relationships between and among multiple actors interested in sport. Second, the ecosystem and service ecosystem literature does not refer to sporting activities, the fundamental "building block" of sport networks. Sport network approaches, on their part, are largely silent on the importance of value co-creation. This is despite the sport-related value co-creation literature, including the sport value framework, recognizing sporting activities as the core of sport management (Woratschek et al., 2014). The SEL therefore combines nonsport and sport management literature to enrich discussions on various levels regarding value co-creation in sport management. Third, service ecosystem and ecosystem literature captures holistic perspectives to elaborate actors' position, power, influence, behavior within constellations of networks, or systemic governance and relationships of those networks (Adner, 2017; Vargo & Lusch, 2016). With no equivalent models in sport management, the SEL bridges theories and links different literature streams. Consequently, the SEL provides the opportunity to broaden both researchers' mind-sets and their scope of thinking (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015).

The remainder of the article is organized as follows. We first review the literature related to network approaches within sport management, ecosystems, and service ecosystems. Reflecting a proposition-based style of theorizing (Cornelissen, 2017), we then

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develop five theoretically derived premises to explain how shared interest in sporting activities evolves into a sport ecosystem replete with institutions. For illustration purposes, we also apply each of the fundamental premises to the Olympic Games. The article concludes with a discussion and directions for future research.

Literature Review

Sport Network Approaches and Value Co-Creation in Sport Management

The sport industry is very often segmented according to product types (Eschenfelder & Li, 2007; Pitts & Miller, 1994). For example, organizations or firms produce a sport. In sport event production, organizations combine different types of resources. These can be financial, physical, legal, human, organizational, informational, or relational resources (Hunt & Derozier, 2004). In general, it is assumed that sport consumers pay for the output of combined resources because they want to consume the value which is embedded within sport products and services. This logic is deeply embedded in management research (Agha & Dixon, 2021; Li et al., 2001). Woratschek and Griebel (2020) refer to this as the “logic of sport products.” Figure 1 depicts the logic of sport products.

However, sport event offers need different organizations to collaborate. These would typically include sport leagues, sport teams, referees, manufacturers, venues/facilities, and the media. At its core, the sport event is built on two teams (or athletes) which cooperate and compete simultaneously, a concept widely known as cooptation (Robert et al., 2009). Another feature is that sport events can be sold at multisided markets (i.e., markets that link two or more distinct but interdependent groups of customers) (Budzinski & Satzer, 2011).

Despite the collaborative nature of sport, only a few sport management studies have applied a network perspective (see Wäsche et al., 2017, for a review of this literature). These studies also used different approaches to ground interactions and linkages

between actors. Nearly all of them incorporate the logic of sport products (Woratschek & Griebel, 2020). Chelladurai (2014) argued that sport organizations are part of open systems, defining an open system as a “set of interrelated parts making up an integrated whole” (p. 95). To investigate systems of organizations within sport, Chelladurai nominated stakeholder theory, institutional theory, and resource dependence theory. Those theoretical foundations have partly been addressed within network approaches in sport management.

Specifically, Wolfe et al. (2002) investigated the relationships of sport organizations, governing bodies, the media, and corporate sponsors using network theory. Their paper emphasized issues of power, dependency, and relationships in sport. With new emerging relationships and innovations within the industry, the authors argued that shifts in position, role, and distribution of power provide mutual benefit for network actors (Wolfe et al., 2002). In a similar direction, Thibault and Harvey (1997, p. 46) portrayed interorganizational linkages as “complex arrays of relationships between firms.” The authors based their research on resource dependency theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) and the premise that organizations collaborate to acquire resources and achieve objectives.

Richelieu and Webb (2019) used actor-network theory to conceptualize convergence, contrasts, and coherence of two sport-for-development-and-peace networks. Actor-network theory provides a general understanding of heterogeneous networks of aligned interests between human and nonhuman actors (Law, 1992; Richelieu & Webb, 2019). The authors provided literature-based answers about how and why sport-for-development-and-peace networks develop as well as to what extent collaboration maintains relationships within the networks (Richelieu & Webb, 2019).

Meiklejohn et al. (2016) applied the IOR perspective to sport leagues. The authors empirically analyzed networks within rugby unions in New Zealand conceptualizing collaborating affiliations as cliques, or rather a “group of mutually connected actors within a larger network” (Provan & Sebastian, 1998, p. 454). The determinants of IOR (Oliver, 1990)—stability, reciprocity, efficiency, and

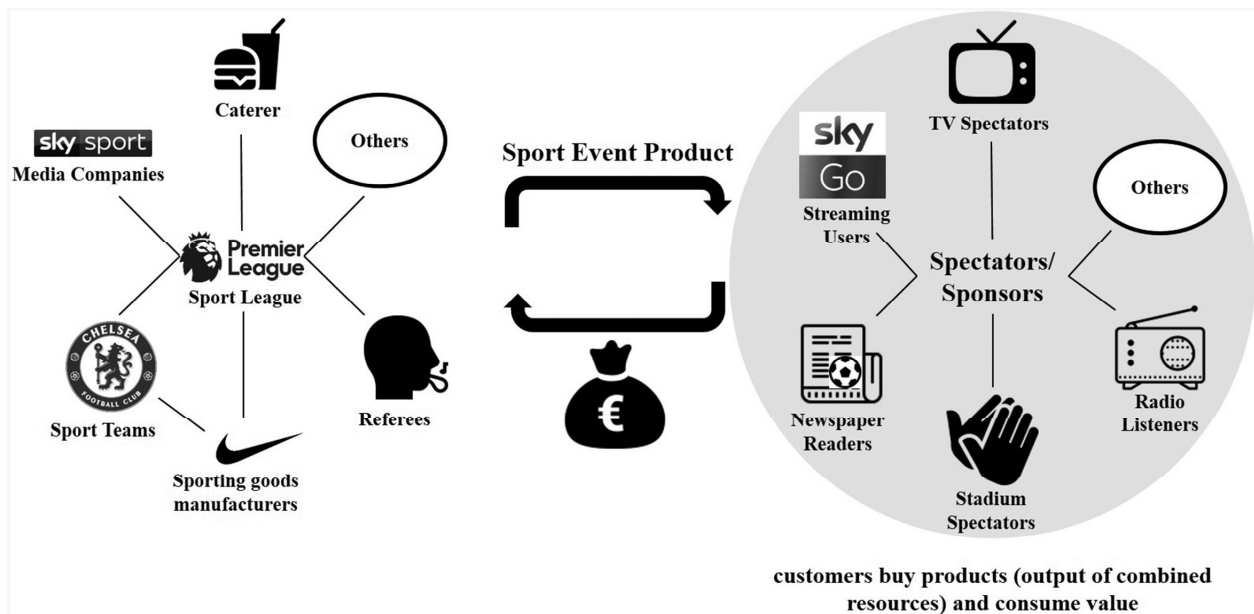


Figure 1 — Logic of sport products (Woratschek & Griebel, 2020).

knowledge sharing—are also the determinants of cliques (Meiklejohn et al., 2016). Interorganizational linkages not only occur in sport leagues but are also discussed and analyzed in the context of mega-events. Werner et al. (2015) empirically investigated the perceived impact of the 2011 Rugby World Cup on relationships and tie strength between regional tourism and its partner organizations. Sport (mega-) events influence both inter- and intraorganizational behavior within the respective destination marketing environment (Werner et al., 2015). Gerke (2016) provides evidence that IORs, more specifically clusters, facilitate innovation.

A different stream in sport management literature uses value co-creation as a theoretical explanation for collaboration (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). In contrast to the traditional logic of sport products (Woratschek & Griebel, 2020), value co-creation does not assume that value is embedded in sport products and services. Rather, value emerges through the collaboration of multiple actors sharing the same interests in sporting activities. Woratschek et al. (2014) were the first to introduce this logic to sport management. The sport value framework posits that “sporting activities are the core of sport management” (Woratschek et al., 2014, p. 14). Following this idea, a sport event platform is founded on actors’ sporting activities and competition. Consequently, the sport value framework views events as a platform where actors integrate resources and where value is co-created by a network of firms, athletes, fans, service providers, and other stakeholders (Woratschek et al., 2014). Gerke et al. (2020) used the sport value framework to develop a middle-range theory, namely the sport cluster concept.

Although there are studies about the context-dependency of value co-creation (i.e., public viewing, sport bars, and television) (Horbel et al., 2016), none have provided a detailed description of sport event platforms and nor have they examined how these platforms are embedded within a larger sport ecosystem. Existing work on value co-creation in sport management only considers dyads or triads of resource-integrating actors and are subsequently limited to microlevel or macrolevel aggregation (see [Supplementary Material](#) [available online]). In contrast, the SEL offers a more holistic perspective by including actors’ systemic contributions and the relationships between and among actors, as well as extending industry boundaries.

Ecosystems—A Multilateral Perspective

Adner (2017, p. 42) defined an ecosystem as “the multilateral set of partners that need to interact for a focal value proposition to materialise.” Jacobides et al. (2018, p. 2264) suggested that an ecosystem is a “set of actors with varying degrees of multilateral, non-generic complementarities that are not fully hierarchically controlled.” Both definitions put special emphasis on multilateralism. Although an ecosystem is multilateral by nature, Adner (2017) highlighted that an ecosystem consists of multiple partners that are characterized by a joint goal. The interactions and relationships between those partners cannot be broken down into a series of bilateral interactions. Partners are united by the common objective to act collaboratively to ensure that the focal value proposition for relevant stakeholders materializes. Members need to be aware of their alignment, role, and position within the ecosystem (Adner, 2017; Adner & Kapoor, 2010).

Within a business environment, an ecosystem is a “community of organisations, institutions, and individuals that impact the enterprise and the enterprise’s customers and supplies” (Teece, 2007, p. 1325). Companies within a business ecosystem may

transcend industry boundaries. By doing so, they cooperate and compete to support innovations within the community to better serve customers’ needs (Moore, 1993). Those communities refer to intentional gatherings of economic actors whose business activities serve the community as a whole (Iansiti & Levien, 2004; Moore, 2006). Business ecosystems, however, are only one stream within what Adner (2017, p. 39) characterized as a “cornucopia of constructs” where ideas and different streams are interrelated in terms of overlaps, boundaries, redundancy as well as applicability in academic and practical analysis.

Jacobides et al. (2018) differentiated between business ecosystems, innovation ecosystems, and platform ecosystems. Business ecosystems focus on actors, such as organizations, institutions, and individuals within an economic community as well as on their activities beyond industry boundaries (Jacobides et al., 2018; Teece, 2007). Innovation ecosystems are built on a focal innovation and the constellation of interdependent players that interact to develop (research economy) and commercialize (commercial economy) the product or service innovation (Adner, 2006; Oh et al., 2016). Platform ecosystems are created by the interactions between the platform operators and their complementors, such as platform users, advertisers, and content providers (Eloranta & Turunen, 2016; Jacobides et al., 2018).

In contrast to business nets or networks, ecosystems are more than the direct and indirect linkages of actors (Aarikka-Stenroos & Ritala, 2017; Möller, 2013). By including outside actors, organizations, and technologies, ecosystems are characterized by a much looser and less formal affiliation of actors (Aarikka-Stenroos & Ritala, 2017). Membership of the ecosystem is determined by interdependencies based on relational concepts, such as shared fate (Iansiti & Levien, 2004), shared purpose (Moore, 2013), institutional arrangements (Vargo & Lusch, 2016), or affiliation (Adner, 2017).

A key characteristic of ecosystems is cooptation (Brandenburger & Nalebuff, 2011; Hannah & Eisenhardt, 2018). Cooptation “describes how businesses simultaneously compete and cooperate with competitors, suppliers, customers, and other ‘players’ in their environments” (Dobbs, 2010, p. 35). The balance between cooperation and competition is evident throughout multiple ecosystem levels, including product- or service-level interactions within the ecosystem and even between ecosystems (Hannah & Eisenhardt, 2018). In the field of sport marketing and management, studies on cooptation are widely spread over different fields, such as sport tourism (Lorgnier & Su, 2014), nonprofit (Wemmer et al., 2016) and for-profit (Robert et al., 2009) sport clubs, or sport brands (Rodrigues et al., 2009).

Service Ecosystems—A Value Co-Creation Perspective

Value co-creation is useful for understanding how actors collaborate for mutual benefit. The co-creation of value “involves the joint creation of value by the firm and its network of various entities” (Perks et al., 2012, p. 935). These social or economic actors benefit from integrating others’ resources.

Resource integration is most often perceived positively, given its link to value co-creation. Here, we acknowledge that the outcome of the collaborative value-creating process can be positive or negative for an individual actor. Negative outcomes reflect what some authors call value co-destruction (Echeverri & Skålén, 2011; Plé & Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010). In our opinion, value is never totally destroyed but can be disrupted or diminished to a certain

degree. This is possible given that value co-creation is dynamic and multidimensional. For example, fans chanting songs of abuse may be positive for them, but likely negative for others. At the same time, all spectators may still enjoy the game and the thrill of their favorite team winning. Furthermore, value does not vanish because it is always determined by the beneficiary (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Even corruption, doping, or cheating creates some benefits for other actors. Although we prefer the term value disruption, we acknowledge the relevance of value co-destruction to understanding value.

Value co-creation requires interaction between two or more resource-integrating actors (Breidbach & Maglio, 2016). For value co-creation to emerge, one actor needs to initiate the process with a value proposition. Chandler and Vargo (2011, p. 8) defined value propositions as “invitations from actors to one another to engage in service.” Here, service is defined as “the application of specialized competences (knowledge and skills) through deeds, processes, and performances for the benefit of another entity or the entity itself” (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, p. 3).

In its early years, academic discussions on value co-creation were concerned with interactions between only two actors, in most cases, a firm and a customer. Over the last 15 years, however, researchers have pursued multiactor settings, or ecosystems of actors (Akaka & Vargo, 2015). Scholars argue that dyadic interaction represents the starting point for the emergence of broader systems of actors and a holistic picture of the co-creation of value (Chandler & Vargo, 2011). A service ecosystem is defined as “relatively self-contained, self-adjusting system of resource-integrating actors that are connected by shared institutional logics and mutual value creation through service exchange” (Vargo & Lusch, 2016, p. 10). Institutions and the above-mentioned institutional logics are important in service-dominant logic because they coordinate value co-creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Institutions are defined as all types of “rules, norms, meanings, symbols, practices, and similar aides to collaboration” (Vargo & Lusch, 2016, p. 6). Scott (2013) described institutions as multifaceted social structures that consist of symbolic and material elements, as well as social activities. Institutions can be formal (laws by legal authorities) or informal, and reflect the culture, beliefs, norms, values, and morals within a society (Brodie et al., 2019; North, 1990). Scott (2013) differentiated between three categories of institutions, so-called institutional pillars. There is the regulative pillar (i.e., rules and laws by governing bodies); the normative pillar (i.e., social values, norms, and obligations); and the cultural-cognitive pillar (i.e., common societal beliefs and shared understanding).

Institutions are dynamic, meaning that they are subject to constant revision, change, and adaption by the actors (Lusch & Nambisan, 2015). Vargo and Akaka (2012) consider institutions as necessary operant resources for value co-creation, as they influence and guide actors’ behavior and by that enable social interaction. Complex problems and interrelationships within a service ecosystem can be observed throughout different levels of aggregation (Woratschek et al., 2020a). The three aggregation levels are micro (i.e., actors), meso (i.e., sets of actors on platforms), and macro (i.e., ecosystems and institutions) (Storbacka et al., 2016).

Engagement platforms support continuous interaction and value co-creation between actors (Breidbach & Brodie, 2017; Ramaswamy, 2009). Chakrabarti and Ramaswamy (2014, p. 1286) conceptualized engagement platforms as “assemblage(s) of artefacts, persons, interfaces, and processes” that support value co-creation. In addition to that, Breidbach et al. (2014, p. 594)

defined engagement platforms as “physical or virtual touch points designed to provide structural support for the exchange and integration of resources, and thereby co-creation of value between actors in a service system.” In other words, engagement platforms facilitate continuous interaction (Ramaswamy, 2009), orchestrate resource exchange between actors within a service ecosystem (Breidbach & Brodie, 2017), and are therefore an enabling resource for value co-creation (Frow et al., 2015).

Conceptual Development

Sport network approaches have embraced the logic of sport products and widely neglected the collaborative resource integration of sport actors. An exception is the connection between the cluster concept as a sport network approach with the idea of value co-creation (Gerke et al., 2020). Studies on value co-creation in sport management typically consider only a limited set of actors or the specific contexts. The context refers to a “unique set of actors and the unique reciprocal links among them” (Chandler & Vargo, 2011, p. 41). Most of these articles only take a micro- or meso-perspective. However, there is a lack of conceptual research that extends this perspective beyond an event platform and answers the question of how platforms are embedded in a larger sport ecosystem. Theoretical advances regarding management and service ecosystems can explain the contributions of actors and the interconnectedness of platforms in the sport ecosystem. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the uniqueness (or at least the defining characteristics) of sport management and the wider sport ecosystem. The unique/defining characteristics of sport management are discussed by various researchers (Andrew et al., 2019; Chalip, 2006; Hoye et al., 2008). Sport is based on emotionally loaded and cooperative sporting activities (Woratschek et al., 2014). This is not reflected in the service-dominant logic.

Sport management scholars identify overlapping interests with other fields, and the competitive and cooperative nuances of sport (Agha & Dixon, 2021; Andrew et al., 2019; Chalip, 2006; Hoye et al., 2008). Common themes are the creation of value, branding, business development, product, and service innovations as well as market expansion. Organizations in sport place particular emphasis on defeating on-field opponents, winning trophies, sharing revenue with others, and handling unique relationships to athletes as employees and fans as customers (Foster et al., 2006; Smith & Stewart, 2010). Woratschek et al. (2014, p. 13) also discussed the defining characteristics of sport management, “for instance, the mix of volunteers and professionals, cooptation, events sold directly and via different media and emotional customers.” In addition to the defining characteristics of the sport ecosystem, there is a need to also consider the wide variety of sport. Richelieu and Webb (2019, p. 3) described this variety of sport as a continuum “from kids playing hockey in the street, to jogging with a dog, to highly coded, structured, politicized, and disciplined events, sport is a term that academic literature applies to a bewildering spectrum of human activities.” The sport ecosystem covers a tremendous spectrum of actors, from for-profit to nonprofit, from governmental to nongovernmental, and from professional to amateur. These actors and their relationships create the sport ecosystem. Theoretical approaches covering the networks and interconnections of actors are not able to provide a holistic picture. This might be because underlying theories, for example stakeholder theory, institutional theory, and resource dependence theory (Chelladurai, 2014), focus too much on actors’ roles and special characteristics (i.e., power, convergence, or motives) without considering a macrolevel

perspective. We argue that the SEL offers a foundation for an aggregated, macrolevel perspective of sport ecosystems.

With theoretical foundations in place, we can now articulate the five fundamental premises that constitute the SEL. This ensures that the SEL is “based on a novel and distinct set of theoretical grounds” (Cornelissen, 2017, p. 4). We build the SEL from the micro- to the macrolevel (i.e., bottom-up approach) and use examples to contextualize our argument.

FP1: Actors Have Joint Interests in Specific Sporting Activities

Fundamental Premise 1 (FP1) is derived from the sport value framework (Woratschek et al., 2014). To develop a systemic approach, it is necessary to place sporting activities at the center of the discussion. Actors on an individual level (athlete, teams, and physically active) agree to compete or do sport as a leisure activity. Therefore, the process needs to be initialized with a value proposition (Chandler & Vargo, 2011). One actor (individual sport) or a set of actors (team sport) invite another actor or other actors to engage in sport. The value proposition equals another actor’s interest in sporting activities and desire to compete against others on an elite, nonelite but also on an informal physical activity level. Actors consequently have joint goals and specific complementarities (Jacobides et al., 2018) to engage in sporting activities that are core to sport management (Woratschek et al., 2014).

Actors are inclined to act collaboratively when pursuing a common objective (Adner, 2017). This shared objective is based on each actor’s interest in sport. However, even with a shared interest in sporting activities, actors also have additional interests. Subsequently, the management of stakeholders’ diverse additional interests is a major governance task (Amis et al., 2020). Individual actors, or groups of actors, interact in three ways. First, their additional interests, besides the shared interest in sporting activities, can be complementary. For example, fans’ interests in posting positive stories about a sport team on social media leads to better image of the team. This is also in the interest of the sponsor, as the sponsor benefits from image-transfer. Second, actors’ additional interests can stay in conflict to each other. Amis et al. (2020) call for a theory of stakeholder governance where conflicts between multiple stakeholders can be resolved. Such a multilateral conflict might occur when the league suspends a player for an off-field miscreant behavior. The player’s team protests the decision, as does the player’s association. Fans speculate on the nature of the miscreant behavior on social media, as do pundits on late night sport television shows. The betting market may also become uncertain because the player is unavailable for the championship game. Third, interests among actors can be neither complementary nor conflicting but neutral to each other. At live events, fans enjoy having drinks and cheering with their peers, whereas sponsors in the hospitality area focus on creating business contacts.

Sporting activities and the corresponding actors, who initiate value co-creation with their shared interest, have network-wide power, meaning that they cannot be excluded from the network (Markovsky et al., 1988). In other words, if a sport game is scheduled and one actor does not attend, the competition and all associated sporting activities will not occur. With FP1, we propose that the fundamental basis of the sport ecosystem is each actors’ interest in being involved in sporting activities and competition.

To illustrate, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the Tokyo Olympics from occurring in 2020. With like-minded actors not allowed to compete against each other, the International Olympic

Committee (IOC) postponed the event. Consequently, the Olympic Games ecosystem was not able to be established in 2020.

FP2: Actors Integrate Resources to Co-Create Value Based on Sporting Activities

FP2 is that actors integrate resources to co-create value based on sporting activities. In doing so, actors provide resources and simultaneously use other’s resources in a microlevel value co-creation process (Storbacka et al., 2016). The interactions and relationships between those partnering actors are characterized by a common objective (Adner, 2017). The objective is to create (elite, nonelite, or informal) sporting activities. Collaboration occurs because actors on an individual level (i.e., athletes, teams) agree to compete or be physically active (FP1). The joint creation and acceptance of a value proposition thereby sets the stage for resource integration. Hence, firms, customers, and other actors provide and use resources and integrate them in a collaborative value co-creation process (Woratschek et al., 2020a).

Resource integration can be imbalanced or balanced. Imbalanced resource integration is a predominant topic in sport management. It implies that actors voluntarily provide their own resources without expecting to benefit in the short term. This is often the case in sport event management, where event organizers, but also various other actors, benefit from the resource integration of volunteer workers. Those volunteers provide their time and expertise to support the co-creation of sport events. At the same time, other actors, such as sponsors and sponsees voluntarily engage beyond the sponsorship contract and integrate resources for the use of other actors (i.e., sponsors, media, league officials, politicians) (Buser et al., 2020). In a balanced exchange of resources, actors provide resources and at the same time, benefit from using the other actor’s resources. This is the case when a sponsor provides payment in cash or in kind to a sport organization and receives in exchange sponsorship rights incorporating access to hospitality at the game, athletes for commercial purposes, and the placement of corporate logos. Consequently, the sponsor also accesses the media, politicians, or sport fans, which moves beyond a bilateral relationship to multilateral resource integration.

Consider the example of the 100-m sprint final at the Olympic Games. Here, the eight finalists integrate their talent, passion, and hard work to create the race within the wider athletics program. However, the eight finalists have already integrated their resources with the resources of nonfinalists during the heats, quarter, and semi-finals. Among others, the eight finalists also benefit from the contributions of World Athletics, the IOC, their national Olympic committees and national athletics federations, event volunteers, sponsors, and broadcasters as part of the value co-creation process.

FP3: Actors Co-Create Value on Sport Engagement Platforms

A sport event provides a platform where actors co-create value within a network (Woratschek et al., 2014). The event attracts other actors to provide resources while at the same time using other’s resources to co-create value. Those actors might be spectators, media, sponsors, volunteers, service providers, and others. On this basis, we propose FP3, which is that actors co-create value on sport engagement platforms.

Business ecosystems focus on actors within an economic community as well as on their activities beyond industry boundaries (Jacobides et al., 2018; Teece, 2007). Sport events have

economic links and activities beyond sport industry boundaries, such as tax consultancy, politics, and construction industry, and serve as intermediaries between actors, for example, between the different sponsors and different spectator groups. In the management literature, platforms are defined as intermediaries of connections between market participants (Thomas et al., 2014). Businesses based on platforms can shape markets and blur lines between Business-2-Business (B2B) and Business-2-Customer (B2C) (Ehret et al., 2013). This is why sport platform providers such as the IOC or Local Organizing Committees cannot be precisely categorized as B2B or B2C as the service ecosystem literature shifts the focus to actor to actor (A2A). Platform providers facilitate networks of partnerships (i.e., sponsorship networks, athlete networks, and political networks). The networks of partnerships surrounding platform providers are called platform ecosystems (Fehrer et al., 2018).

Sport event organizers provide different types of platforms (e.g., sport events, sponsors meetings, press conferences). These refer to multisided markets and link different actors to co-create value via resource integration. Following Breidbach and Brodie (2017) and Storbacka et al. (2016), individuals' microlevel engagement (i.e., dyads and triads) facilitate different actors to integrate resources on engagement platforms at the mesolevel. A focal actor is responsible for the platform's virtual and physical infrastructure. The engagement platform represents a resource integrated by the platform operator. The sport engagement platform supports value co-creation in multilateral relations and interaction between resource-integrating actors based on sporting activities. Besides the provision of the engagement platform itself, the platform hosting focal actor at the same time also integrates other resources. The engagement platform perspective allows us to apply theoretical ideas to various contexts and settings. The resource-integrating actors and the type of resources, however, change depending on the context. That is to say, the situational factors impacting the resource-integrating process (Löbler & Hahn, 2013) and the characteristics of reciprocal links among the actors (Chandler & Vargo, 2011) depend on the engagement platform. Consistent with FP1 however, sporting activities are always considered as the fundamental basis and actors' shared interest on engagement platforms.

The IOC contracts a Local Organizing Committees to provide engagement platforms for the IOC to host the competitions of the different disciplines. Within these venues, all actors provide their own and use other's resources to co-create value (FP1 and FP2). Using the event platform, they facilitate other actors to join the platform (i.e., fans, sponsors, media) and integrate their resources. In addition to physical event platforms, the Local Organizing Committees may also provide virtual platforms, such as fan apps, to connect the various actors.

FP4: Mutually Dependent Networks of Sport Engagement Platforms Comprise the Sport Ecosystem

In this section, we propose FP4, which is that mutually dependent networks of sport engagement platforms comprise the sport ecosystem. The sport value framework recognizes that sporting activities provide many types of platforms, not just an event platform. Consequently, various different engagement platforms emerge. One might be the esports platform, which replicates real-world sporting competitions. For example, there is Fédération Internationale de Football Association Online, a series of online sport games developed by Electronic Arts. The sport betting platform

integrates actors such as betting agencies, government, and consumers with resource-integrating actors such as sport organizations, sponsors, facilities, broadcasters, and so on. Sporting activities are the fundamental basis for all of these engagement platforms. On these engagement platforms, actors integrate resources for value co-creation. This constitutes the mesolevel of the SEL. Thus, the mutually dependent engagement platforms comprise an ecosystem on the macrolevel (Breidbach et al., 2014; Storbacka et al., 2016). Transferring this argument to the SEL, mesolevel platforms (FP3) based on microlevel sporting activities (FP1 and FP2), create macrolevel sport ecosystems.

The next step of the SEL is to describe how engagement platforms are interconnected. Sport actors' resource integration is not limited to one particular engagement platform. The integration can occur across multiple platforms. A sponsor can be associated with multiple sport event platforms. A sport club can participate in a national championship (i.e., English Premier League) as well as in international competitions (i.e., Union of European Football Associations champions league). An athlete's image can appear on a breakfast cereal box and as an avatar in an esports game. An organization can make available sport statistics to sport teams as well as fantasy sport businesses. These platform-spanning connections create a myriad of direct and indirect linkages (Aarikka-Stenroos & Ritala, 2017). Clearly, actors can integrate resources on different platforms. Actors that belong to more than one platform link platforms, which creates mutual dependency between networks of platforms.

We want to emphasize that a sport ecosystem is different to the sport industry. While it is well accepted that sport organizations comprise the sport industry, actors from outside the sport industry are members of the sport ecosystem. Some actors, organizations, and technologies have a looser and less formal affiliation to the platform (Aarikka-Stenroos & Ritala, 2017). However, they still belong to the sport ecosystem because they share interests in respective sporting activities. This is contrary to the sport industry approach, which is based on outputs as resource combinations (products and services), and therefore following the logic of sport products. Following a sport industry approach, contributions from actors outside the industry are excluded. From the SEL perspective, all actors, even those outside of sport can contribute through resource integration in the sport ecosystem. Consequently, the sport ecosystem is built through mutually dependent networks of sport engagement platforms by extending the industry boundaries to all actors contributing in resource integration.

To contextualize this premise, we note that during the Olympic Games various sporting activities and disciplines are staged in the same community over a short period of time. At the event, there is the resource integration of dyads and triads of actors (microlevel: e.g., fans-sponsors-sport organization); sport engagement platforms (mesolevel: e.g., sport event, hospitality area, fan app); and mutually dependent networks of platforms (macrolevel: e.g., Olympic Games ecosystem, League of Legends ecosystem) arise. Actors are integrating resources on more than one platform. It is possible for a volunteer to drive corporate sponsors to the Olympic sponsorship engagement platform and to drive drug testers to the sport event engagement platform. Olympic partners might also integrate resources on other sport engagement platforms. Coca-Cola, an Olympic partner, for example, may also partner with the National Basketball Association or National Collegiate Athletic Association or even advertise during the TV show American Idol (Coca-Cola, 2020). While Coca-Cola is not a sport actor, it is undeniable that the soft-drink manufacturer integrates resources within various sport ecosystems. Within the

sport ecosystem, there are many actors without a direct connection to sport. Their interest in sporting activities (i.e., sponsorship, broadcasting) embeds them within the sport ecosystem.

FP5: There Is a Cycle of Institutions Forming Actors' Behaviors and Actors' Behaviors Shaping Institutions

With FP5, we propose that the ecosystem is characterized by shared institutions (Vargo & Lusch, 2016) and that formal and informal rules (Brodie et al., 2019) form actors' behaviors. At the same time, actors' behaviors shape institutions in a virtuous or vicious cycle. The valence of this cycle individually depends as value is always determined by the beneficiary (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). The circular process of institutions forming actors' behaviors and actors' behaviors shaping institutions is continuously reinforcing itself. This is also reflected in sociological theories where humans' actions create society and at the same time are shaped by the society around them (Giddens, 1982).

The cycle of institutions consists of both formal and informal institutions. Formal institutions include rules and laws that can result in sanctions if violated. Such institutions are summarized under the regulative pillar (Scott, 2013). In sport, governing bodies monitor actor behavior, or rather the compliance with the formal institutions (i.e., leagues, federations, anti-doping agencies). Governing bodies sanction actors that violate formal institutions. Rules and regulations in sport are followed not only by the sport competitors but also applied by other actors. For example, the rules of golf define equipment characteristics, which constrain the design and manufacture of golf clubs and golf balls. Informal institutions in sport are much more complex. Such institutions are summarized under the normative and cultural-cognitive pillar (Scott, 2013). Informal institutions include values, norms, and social obligations (i.e., normative) as well as common beliefs within a shared understanding (i.e., cultural-cognitive) (Scott, 2013). In sport, informal institutions include sportspersonship and the underpinning values of fairness, inclusiveness, excellence, friendship, and respect. Koenigstorfer and Preuss (2018) label these values as appreciation of diversity, friendly relations with others, and achievement in competition. Informal institutions also include cultural beliefs such as fan identification (Gwinner & Swanson, 2003) or fan engagement (Yoshida et al., 2014). Institutions are enduring elements in social life that affect actors' dispositions and behaviors (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Sport actors are guided by institutions. Institutions form actors' behaviors. These institutions are necessary for the integration of resources because they influence actors' behaviors and therefore the interactions that underpin value co-creation.

Actors within the sport ecosystem utilize and adapt both formal and informal institutions to integrate resources within the ecosystem. Institutions form actors' behaviors. For example, behaviors are guided because violations are sanctioned by governing bodies. On the contrary, social belongingness requires the adaption of normative and cultural-cognitive institutions. Sport actors, both athletes and spectators, need to adapt values and a shared contextual understanding to be part of the platform.

In addition, actors' behaviors shape and refine institutions by creating knowledge and practices that serve other actors to govern aspects of social life (Scott, 2013), and thus co-create benefits for other actors (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Institutions are not permanent; they are always subject to change and further development (Lusch & Nambisan, 2015). The development and adjustment to actors'

behaviors is part of a recurring process. Therefore, FP5 is that institutions forming actors' behaviors and actors' behaviors shaping institutions are reinforcing themselves in a cycle.

Many institutions form the Olympic Games. Each participating international sport federation has its own rules and regulations. This is underpinned by the IOC's commitment to safeguard the integrity of sport. In addition to that, the IOC has its own set of rules and regulations. For instance, the ability of athletes to use social media is constrained. The ability of athletes to promote their personal sponsors is limited. The behavior of partners is regulated via detailed contracts. Athletes follow stringent and intricate anti-doping policies. These formal institutions are part of the regulative pillar by Scott (2013). Besides formal institutions, the Olympic Games also contain a set of informal intuitions. Actors are encouraged to follow the Olympic values of excellence, friendship, and respect. These normative and cultural-cognitive institutions are promulgated by the IOC and wider Olympic Movement. Actors are also able to shape institutions. The global interest in esport, specifically on the Asian continent, paired with growing economic power and professionalism of esport caused the IOC to partner with Intel, one of the world's leading multinational technology corporations, and stage an esport tournament for the first time in Tokyo 2021 and Beijing 2022. The Intel World Open led-up to Tokyo 2021. Shaping the institution to allow digital sport stakeholders to integrate their resources at the Olympics is certainly innovative.

The Sport Ecosystem Logic

Put simply, the SEL states that sport actors have joint interest in sporting activities on an elite, nonelite, or informal level (FP1) and integrate their resources to co-create value (FP2). Based on these sporting activities, actors' collaborative resource integration occurs on sport engagement platforms (FP3). Because actors integrate resources on more than one interconnected engagement platform, the sport ecosystem is composed of mutually dependent networks of sport engagement platforms. The sport ecosystem, in contrast to the sport industry perspective, includes all relevant resource integrators that share an interest in sporting activities (FP4). Ultimately, institutions within the sport ecosystem form actors' behaviors and actors' behaviors shape institutions in a cycle (FP5). Those fundamental premises contribute to the bottom-up approach of the SEL. Table 1 provides an overview over the fundamental premises, their theoretical origins, and explanations.

Figure 2 illustrates the bottom-up approach within the Olympic Games ecosystem. On a microlevel of aggregation, at least two actors collaborate with a joint interest in sporting activities (i.e., the Olympic 100-m sprint). Microlevel analyses mostly are based on dyads or triads. As more and more actors with shared interest in sporting activities collaborate, engagement platforms emerge, and actors integrate resources on those engagement platforms at the mesolevel of aggregation. Those actors (A) might be athletes (A1 and A2), volunteers (A3), sponsors (A4), fans (A5), media (A6), coaches (A7), officials, event staff, politicians, and other actors. Based on this specific sporting activity (Olympic 100-m sprint), various other engagement platforms, such as the Olympic village, Olympic public viewing, Olympic sponsorship, and others emerge. Those engagement platforms are connected because actors participate in more than one platform, provide resources, and benefit from using the resources provided by other actors in the network of engagement platforms. This network of mutually dependent sport engagement platforms comprises the Olympic Games ecosystem on the macrolevel of aggregation.

Table 1 FPs of the SEL

FPs	Theoretical origin	Explanation
FP1 Actors have joint interests in specific sporting activities.	<i>Ecosystem and service ecosystem literatures both emphasize collaborative joint goals and specific complementarities. The SVF by Woratschek et al. (2014) states that sporting activities are in the core of sport management.</i>	Athletes compete or sportsmen and—women leisurely participate in sports. These sporting activities are fundamental for other actors to join.
FP2 Actors integrate resources to co-create value based on sporting activities.	<i>Ecosystem literature highlights the need to interact. Service ecosystem literature introduces resource integration as basis for value co-creation. SVF describes considers all stakeholders in specific sporting activities to be resource integrators in their specific networks.</i>	Resource integration is both resource provision and resource usage. Actors provide resources for the benefit of others and they use resources from others for their own benefit. Resource integration leads to value co-creation.
FP3 Actors co-create value on sport engagement platforms.	<i>Ecosystem literature refers to business platforms where focal actors create multisided markets. Service ecosystem literature introduces engagement platforms as offline and online touchpoints to support value co-creation. SVF refers platforms to sport events where actors spend their business and leisure activities.</i>	Focal actors provide sport engagement platforms to enable and facilitate all actors' value co-creation. Furthermore, they grant access to other actors and also use the platform for their individual benefit. In the SEL, sport engagement platforms are defined as online and offline touchpoints to support value co-creation in multilateral relations based on sporting activities.
FP4 Mutually dependent networks of sport engagement platforms comprise the sport ecosystem.	<i>Ecosystem literature emphasizes multilateral sets of actors in networks. Service ecosystems are “dynamic constellations of mutually dependent engagement platforms” (Breidbach et al., 2014, p. 600). In sport management, authors use network theory to describe the context-dependent relations of actors and their power.</i>	Actors are not solely integrating resources on one platform. Those platforms are interconnected and build networks. Sport industries are based on outputs as resource combinations (products and services). Sport ecosystems are based on sporting activities and include platforms from other industries as long as they have interests in sporting activities. A sport ecosystem includes all relevant actors contributing to value co-creation in sport management.
FP5 There is a cycle of institutions forming actors' behaviors and actors' behaviors shaping institutions.	<i>Ecosystems are not fully hierarchically controlled, but based on relational concepts, like shared fate or shared purpose. In service ecosystems institutions form actors and are shaped by actors. In sport management literature institutions influence (inter- and intra-) organizational behavior.</i>	Institutions form actors' behaviors in a sport ecosystem but can also be shaped by actors in a cycle. Those institutions are very prominent and powerful in the sport context. Sport institutions are formal (i.e., rules, regulations) as well as informal (i.e., values, beliefs). Institutions are always subject to change and further development (i.e., adaption or rules, fan movements or behaviors) and can therefore lead to innovation.

Note. FP = Fundamental Premise; SVF = Sport Value Framework; SEL = Sport Ecosystem Logic.

Contributions

With the conceptualization of the SEL, we aimed to contribute to a holistic understanding of the interconnectedness of actors and engagement platforms and the co-creation of value within sport ecosystems. The SEL supports sport management and marketing academics in explaining phenomena of relationships and connections as part of value co-creation. The SEL is a general theory about value co-creation in sport ecosystems that provides a broader understanding compared to existing network approaches in sport management, which are mostly based on the logic of sport products. The value co-creation perspective represents the collaborative nature of sport and how actors integrate resources multilaterally.

The key contribution of the SEL is an explanation of the IORs among micro-, meso-, or macrolevel actors and the connections through multilateral resource integration to actors from outside the industry. The SEL is premised upon theory synthesis (i.e., conceptual

integration across multiple theories or literature streams) and theory adaption (i.e., amend an existing theory by using other theories) (Jaakkola, 2020). The integration of management and service-related ecosystem literature (i.e., synthesis) serves as a theoretical underpinning of actors' contributions and the interconnectedness of engagement platforms in the sport ecosystem (i.e., adaption). To advance our understanding of the relationships within and beyond the sport industry, the SEL conceptualizes value co-creation (originating from service-dominant logic) based on shared interest in sporting activities (originating from the sport value framework) on multiple levels of the sport ecosystem (see Figure 2).

The SEL is a general theory about value co-creation in sport ecosystems. As such, it provides some distinct contributions to the sport management literature. First, the SEL takes the perspectives on theory building of Gioia and Pitre (1990) and Peters et al. (2014) and describes and explains observable processes and phenomena through a set of premises. These premises situate

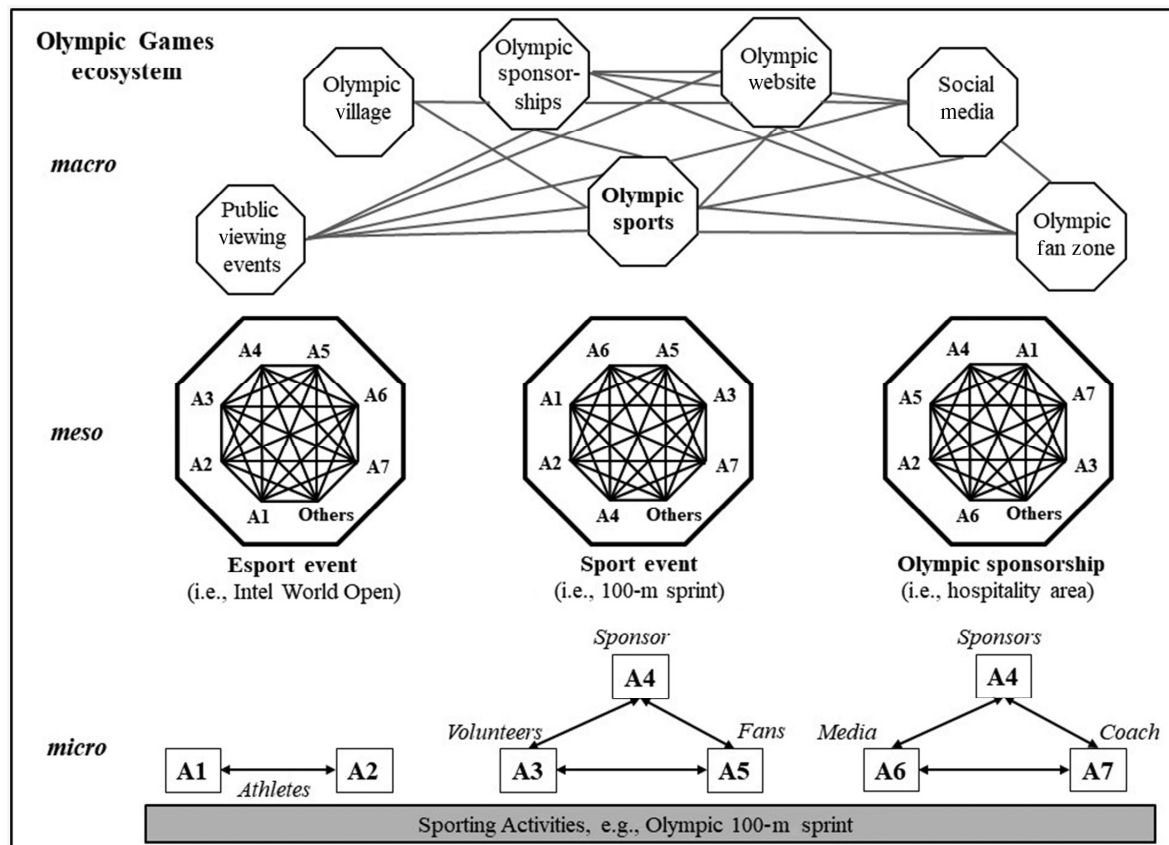


Figure 2 — Olympic Games ecosystem: microlevel, mesolevel, and macrolevel of aggregation.

sporting activities at the center of value-creating relationships in the sport ecosystem. Sporting activities offer the opportunity to co-create value through resource integration on sport engagement platforms. In contrast to sport network approaches where value is produced by sport firms and destroyed by consumers, the SEL proposes that value emerges through the engagement and joint collaboration of many actors in the same sporting activity. Within the SEL, actors integrate resources on different mutually dependent platforms, which build networks in a sport ecosystem. Institutions form how actors integrate resources, but actors can also shape those institutions.

Second, by combining different literature streams, the SEL conceptually advances our understanding of sport ecosystems and how multiple actors co-create value through resource integration. The ecosystem literature states that a multilateral set of actors with specific complementarities need to interact. Service ecosystem literature indicates how value emerges through resource integration formed by actor-shaped institutions. Sport network approaches in sport management emphasize the value of coordination and collaboration among competitors. Value co-creation literature in sport management emphasizes that sporting activities are the foundation of sport networks.

Third, the SEL explains why and how sporting activities are the basis for value-creating relationships. Actors provide and use resources in multilateral relationships on a sport engagement platform with both physical and virtual touchpoints. Given that actors can integrate resources on different engagement platforms, sport engagement platforms are linked to each other. This is why

explanations of how value emerges in the sport ecosystem should oscillate between dyads and triads (microlevel), sport engagement platforms (mesolevel), and networks (macrolevel). In contrast to the service-dominant logic, the SEL includes sport engagement platforms with all the defining characteristics of sporting activities. For instance, sporting activities lead to voluntary engagement of sport fans (i.e., rituals, word-of-mouth communication) (Woratschek et al., 2020b). Moreover, sponsors can engage in interorganizational citizenships behaviors (Gerke et al., 2017) by voluntarily integrating resources (i.e., management competencies, technical competencies, and innovative ideas) above and beyond the terms of the contract (Buser et al., 2020). Other actors also engage in voluntary activities and contribute to value co-creation on sport engagement platforms. For example, politicians can provide patronage of a sporting event. The SEL explains how connections between these platforms create a sport ecosystem with all its defining characteristics.

In contrast to a sport industry perspective based on the logic of sport products, the SEL clearly states that value emerges because many actors integrate resources in multilateral relationships in a complex system. Value is not solely created by sport organizations. Hence, unlike other approaches, all value-contributing actors are incorporated within the SEL.

Overall, the SEL enhances the capacity of sport management researchers to understand the perspective and position of an actor within a sport ecosystem. The different levels of aggregation provide useful guidelines for classifying both actors and engagement platforms. Moreover, the SEL conceptualizes the

interconnectedness of actors with shared interests in sporting activities, their multilateral resource integration on engagement platforms, and ultimately the interaction of cooperative and competitive behaviors within the sport ecosystem. This systemic perspective enhances traditional sport network approaches by amplifying the importance of value co-creation in sport management.

Future researchers can utilize the SEL to pursue a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between and among sport actors, sport engagement platforms, and sport ecosystems. Reflecting on the five fundamental premises of the SEL, we propose five themes to guide future research, each with several exemplary research questions. These ideas are summarized in Table 2.

Sporting activities are the fundamental “building blocks” for the emergence of sport ecosystems (FP1). The shared interest in those specific sporting activities, which initially are necessary for the emergence of value-creating relationships, are highly relevant when discussing value co-creation in sport management. In addition, actors’ or group of actors’ interests beyond the sporting activities can be complementary or conflicting—or somewhere in between; or perhaps even both simultaneously. Conflict is especially relevant when considering the economic and noneconomic interests of stakeholders in multilateral relationships (Amis

et al., 2020). As a result, the motives and additional interests need to be further researched to understand multilateral relationships in sport management. First and foremost, conflicting interests represent a topic that is as interesting as it is complex.

With a sporting activity, actors participate in multilateral resource exchange with other actors. From professional sport and mega-events through to informal sport gatherings, actors provide their own resources and use others’ resources. The multilateral integration of resources can be balanced or imbalanced. Imbalanced resource integration is mainly caused by voluntary behavior (i.e., interorganizational citizenship behavior) (Gerke et al., 2017) or engagement behavior (van Doorn et al., 2010). Moving beyond the traditional realm of people volunteering (i.e., Bang & Chelladurai, 2009; Hallmann & Harms, 2012), we should also seek a better understanding of the voluntary behaviors and voluntary resource integration enacted by sponsors, sponsees, government, and media.

The FP3 considers engagement platforms as touchpoints for multilateral relationships and thus value co-creation. Engagement platforms, therefore, need to ensure their relationship facilitating effect. Focal actors in sport engagement platforms need to change their self-conception from the seller of products and services (logic of sport products) to an enabler of social interaction. Therefore, focal actors need to understand platform participants’ interests and

Table 2 Future Research Themes

FPs	Future research theme	Exemplary research questions
FP1 Actors have joint interests in specific sporting activities.	Complementary and/or conflicting interests of actors beyond sporting activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are actors’ interests beyond sporting activities? • How can actors manage conflicting interests and leverage complementary interests? • How can platform providers effectively resolve multilateral conflicts?
FP2 Actors integrate resources to co-create value based on sporting activities.	Balanced and imbalanced resource integration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What motivates actors to integrate resources (voluntarily)? • How does context impact the voluntary integration of resources? • What types of resources are integrated voluntarily?
FP3 Actors co-create value on sport engagement platforms.	Role of sport engagement platforms to facilitate relationships and value co-creation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What platform infrastructure characteristics encourage resource integration among multiple actors? • How to manage the optimal combination of virtual and physical sport engagement platforms? • What are complementary and conflicting interests on sport engagement platforms?
FP4 Mutually dependent networks of sport engagement platforms comprise the sport ecosystem.	Systemic governance of mutually dependent sport engagement platforms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What characterizes powerful focal actors sport engagement platforms within the ecosystem? • How to design a system of engagement platforms for the benefit of all resource-integrating actors? • What kind of engagement platforms have to be offered for actors with complementary or conflicting interests?
FP5 There is a cycle of institutions forming actors’ behaviors and actors’ behaviors shaping institutions.	Institutions influencing the economic, environmental, and social value within the sport ecosystem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can actors collaboratively define and subsequently shape institutions within the ecosystem? • Under what circumstances do actors initiate collaborative shaping of institutions and how do they convince other actors to contribute and innovate? • How can actors leverage institutions to promote business innovation and shape markets?

Note. FP = Fundamental Premise.

motivations outside of sport to unite them on their engagement platform and provide a valuable infrastructure for resource integration. A promising practice in this regard is FC St. Pauli, a German professional football club. The club, arguably uniquely, unites stakeholders around political, social, and environmental issues. The club's initiatives include access to education and clean drinking water, political campaigns against the right-wing, and a music school (in cooperation with a sponsor) for people experiencing social deprivation. Questions about focal actors' facilitating activities, the optimal infrastructure, and combination of physical or virtual sport engagement platforms, as well as the identification of interests should also be considered.

In FP4, actors integrate resources on different sport engagement platforms that create a mutually dependent network centered on sporting activities. Given the need for actors to integrate resources from other platforms/ecosystems (and potentially also from outside the sport industry), it is clear that no organization is in complete control of its destiny. From a systemic governance perspective, future research could analyze how to create an integrated system of virtual and physical engagement platforms. This helps to answer questions about the management of the structure and position of engagement platforms within a sport ecosystem, as well as how to design the infrastructure of engagement platforms to support actors' multilateral resource integration. Moreover, the SEL approach helps to investigate dependencies on specific focal actors and their position on engagement platforms and subsequent impacts on network vulnerability and power (i.e., Cook & Yamagishi, 1992) or the change and adaption process of the system (i.e., complex adaptive systems) (i.e., Carmichael et al., 2019).

Sport ecosystems are influenced by sport- and non-sport-related institutions. Institutions and actors' behaviors influence each other iteratively. Whereas the mutual relationship between institutions and actors' behavior is well researched (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006), this is not the case when it comes to understanding the collaborative co-shaping of institutions in sport. In addition, sport actors' institution shaping behavior, in the light of the SEL, has the potential to drive change, business innovation, and shape markets in sport. Consequently, actors' institution-shaping practices and their effect on the sport ecosystem represents a highly relevant and undeveloped research topic for future research. Within these topics, researchers are encouraged to explore the emergence of institutions that influence the economic, environmental, and social value of the sport ecosystem, the design and conditions of institutions, as well as the role and power of actors with the ability to shape institutions.

Ultimately, the SEL needs to be justified and strengthened with both conceptual refinement as well as empirical insights. Therefore, multiple methodological approaches should be deployed to gather empirical data using case studies, ethnographic, semantic, linguistic designs, or experiments (Brodie et al., 2019).

Managerial Implications

The SEL may also change managers' mind-sets from a logic of sport products toward a systemic logic of value co-creation. In the paragraphs that follow, we use the Olympic Games to examine the implications of this new mind-set. With a sport product logic, the IOC would consider itself the owner of the Olympics. As such, the IOC would perceive that it has sole responsibility for the quality of the Olympic Games. Hence, the IOC alone determines the institutions and values of the Olympic Games, and regulate stakeholder behavior.

With a value co-creation logic, the IOC would see itself as operating engagement platforms to underpin the Olympic Games ecosystem. Consequently, Olympic values would be co-created by multiple actors sharing an interest in Olympic sporting activities. A value co-creation logic would enable the IOC to recognize that while it may legally own the Olympic Games, the IOC actually provides an engagement platform and that the values of the Olympic Games ought to be determined cooperatively. Consequently, relevant stakeholders (i.e., international social and environmental organizations as well as business representatives) can co-determine which potential host-city best integrates the ecosystem's ecological, economic, and social values. So, even though the IOC cannot fully control the quality of the Olympic Games, the IOC should still encourage other actors to participate given their ability to co-create additional value.

With a sport product mind-set, the IOC offers different products, and each product is controlled by a responsible manager. This leads to the danger of departmental egoism, thus legacy is not a strategic focus. Opening the mind-set to value co-creation, every responsible IOC manager would comprehend the systematic relationships and the overarching value system. As a result, a manager not only maximizes the success of his/her own engagement platform but also pursues higher level priorities.

Furthermore, the value-creation mind-set can be transferred to other relevant stakeholders (i.e., host-city governments). Following a sport product logic, democratically elected governments typically have to convince their constituents that hosting the Olympic Games is beneficial. Governments must provide ideas to overcome the opposition. In authoritarian states, the government decides, but often to the detriment of the well-being of broad sections of the community. However, by embracing the logic of value co-creation, governments can engage with their citizens by asking them to contribute ideas, as well as share concerns (i.e., environmental degradation, financial burden) and solutions.

With a SEL-driven mind-set based on the logic of value co-creation, sport management practitioners may improve decision making because of an enhanced holistic understanding of other actors' contributions to value creation. They can subsequently refine their own role by acknowledging that sport organizations provide an engagement platform instead of producing valuable outputs. Following the SEL, those engagement platforms are embedded in a bigger sport ecosystem, where actors from inside and outside the sport industry collaborate to co-create value in sport.

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