Reimagining Community Youth Sport Events: Relational Lessons from the Arctic Winter Games

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Abstract

This thesis examines the Arctic Winter Games (AWG) as a community youth sport event that offers important lessons for reimagining such events around relationality. While sport events are often evaluated through economic, competitive, or performance-oriented outcomes, this thesis shifts attention to their relational significance. It asks how the AWG creates conditions for meaningful relational experiences, what kinds of relational encounters participants describe during and after the event, and what this case can teach us about the social possibilities of community youth sport events.

Drawing on qualitative secondary data analysis, this thesis analyzes materials from two broader research projects on the AWG, including interviews, open-ended survey responses, organizational documents, and observation notes. The analysis is primarily informed by Hartmut Rosa's theory of resonance and Victor Turner's concepts of liminoid and communitas, along with related concepts of relationality. Together, these theoretical perspectives allow the thesis to examine not only how significant relationships emerge during the AWG, but also how particular event conditions may increase the possibility of meaningful relational encounters.

Across three article-based analysis, this thesis develops a layered understanding of relationality in the AWG. The first article examines the AWG as a potential space of social resonance, showing how organizational, spatial, temporal, and psychological conditions can support meaningful connection while also illustrating key elements of resonance, such as affection and response, and its preconditions, such as openness and curiosity. The second article considers the pressures that may inhibit resonance in youth sport events, including hyper-competition, sportification, and instrumental rationality, while showing how the AWG may soften these pressures. The third article explores the AWG as a liminoid configuration in which participants

experience various forms of relationality, including friendship, networking, belonging, emotional and cultural resonance, enchantment, communitas, and continued involvement after the Games.

Taken together, this thesis argues that the AWG can be understood not simply as a youth sport competition, but as an illustrative case for reimagining community youth sport events around relationality. Its significance lies less in producing relationships automatically than in showing how a community-oriented philosophy, sociocultural programming, festive atmosphere, emphasis on northern and Indigenous values, and broader developmental values can create conditions in which relational encounters become more likely.

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Chapter 1: Case study, aims, and importance

Introduction

Sport events are more than moments of competition; they are dynamic social arenas where relationships are initiated and developed. Scholars have increasingly recognized sport gatherings as sites of relational encounters—places where participants, audiences, communities, and others forge new connections, share experiences, and negotiate cultural values (e.g., Chalip, 2006; Fuchs, 2025; Inoue & Havard, 2014; Roche, 2000; Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018). In particular, community sport events that foreground educational, social, and cultural initiatives—rather than elite performance alone—offer rich terrain for exploring how relational encounters are cultivated through shared activity and celebration (Bertet et al., 2024; Fuchs, 2023). Building on this, the current thesis is concerned with precisely the relational dimension of community youth sport events. In this thesis, relationality is used as a broad umbrella concept referring to the various ways individuals and collectives relate to themselves and their bodies, other people and social groups, cultures and communities, material objects and places, the event itself, and broader existential worlds such as nature and history. These relations can vary in form, intensity, duration, and quality: they may be fleeting or enduring, primarily functional or deeply affective and transformative. Relationality is therefore not treated as synonymous with positive connection; a relational analysis also attends to disrupted or adverse relations, including disconnection, exclusion, and alienation. Although this thesis recognizes this breadth, its empirical emphasis is primarily on social and cultural relationships, with particular attention to deeper forms of positive relational experience while also acknowledging more ordinary or instrumental forms of interaction. Using the Arctic Winter Games (AWG) as a case study, I examine how, and under what conditions, this community youth sport event enables diverse forms of favorable relationality among individuals. This chapter begins by detailing the history, structure, and purpose of the AWG, followed by a review of

existing research on the Games. The chapter concludes by summarizing key insights from the AWG literature and presenting the thesis's specific aims and significance.

Case study: The Arctic Winter Games

The Arctic Winter Games are a biennial international sporting event that brings together young athletes (aged 14 to 20) from communities across the circumpolar North. Founded in 1970, the AWG has grown into the world's largest northern multi-sport and cultural gathering, designed to promote cross-cultural exchange, community pride, and friendly athletic competition among Arctic and sub-Arctic peoples (Fuchs, 2023). The idea for the Games emerged in 1967 after Canadian northern athletes were outmatched at national competitions; officials from Yukon, the Northwest Territories (NWT), and Alaska proposed a dedicated event where northern athletes could compete on an equal footing in their own environment (AWGIC, n.d.-a). With support from political leaders (including Yukon Commissioner James Smith, NWT Commissioner Stuart Hodgson, and Alaska Governor Walter Hickel), the first AWG were held in Yellowknife in March 1970, featuring teams from Yukon, NWT, and Alaska (AWGIC, n.d.-a). Since then, the Games have typically been held every two years and usually last about one week. Participation has steadily expanded to include northern regions of multiple countries including, Alberta, Northwest Territories, Nunavik, Nunavut, and Yukon for Canada; Greenland; Alaska for the United States; Sápmi for Norway, Sweden, and Finland; and Magadan Oblast and Yamal Peninsula for Russia. Representing northern jurisdictions and regions rather than entire nation-states, these contingents convene under the AWG's three-part mission of athletic competition, cultural exhibition, and social interchange. These elements are symbolized by the three interlocking rings in the AWG logo (AWGIC, n.d.-b). In essence, the Arctic Winter Games are as much a celebration of northern

culture and friendship as they are an athletic event, reflecting a unique ethos of meeting to create unity in diversity across the circumpolar world (Bertet et al., 2024; Fuchs, 2023).

Figure 1

Arctic Winter Games Official Logo



Note. From *Brand and logos*, by Arctic Winter Games International Committee, n.d.-b. (https://arcticwintergames.net/About-AWG/AWG-Graphics-Standards-Manual). Copyright by Arctic Winter Games International Committee.

The Arctic Winter Games International Committee (AWGIC) provides the overall governance of the event. Institutionally, the AWG is situated at the intersection of multiple sport systems rather than within a single national sport structure. Athletes and coaches reach the Games through jurisdiction- and sport-specific development and selection arrangements, which vary among contingents. At the event level, the AWGIC safeguards the Games' philosophy and

policies, selects the sport program, and develops technical packages specifying applicable rules, age categories, events, team composition, and competition formats. Host societies stage each edition, while participant preparation and selection occur through the relevant contingent and sport structures. The AWG therefore draws on existing provincial, territorial, state, national, and sport-governance arrangements while retaining some capacity to adapt its event-specific organization to its northern, cultural, developmental, and community-oriented purposes. This institutional position is considered further in the practical contributions presented in Chapter 7.

Historically, the AWG was conceived to address the lack of opportunities for northern and Indigenous athletes in mainstream sport forums. The focus from the outset was on broad participation and development—involving as many youths as possible—rather than on elite performance. Indeed, the AWG charter emphasizes providing a forum for athletes "other than elite athletes with competitive opportunities in the south" (AWGIC, n.d.-a). This inclusive, developmental focus remains central today. Each Games is hosted by a different northern community in a rotating schedule, creating a legacy of local pride and experience. Over five decades and more than 25 editions, the AWG has fostered a circumpolar family of communities. In the sections that follow, I examine in detail the athletic, cultural, and social dimensions of the Arctic Winter Games and then discuss key academic studies that have investigated the Games' impacts and significance.

1. Athletic aspects of the Arctic Winter Games

a) Contemporary sports: At its core, the AWG is an athletic competition featuring a wide range of sports, from popular modern events to Indigenous games. In terms of modern sports, the Games include many standard outdoor and indoor events. Participants compete in sports such as ice

hockey, cross-country skiing, biathlon, speed skating, figure skating, curling, volleyball, basketball, table tennis, badminton, and futsal, among others. The mix of sports is intentionally broad to maximize athlete inclusion; team sports and individual sports for both boys and girls are represented. A typical edition of the AWG has around 15–20 sports on the program. Unlike elite world championships, the competition level at AWG is tailored to developing athletes. This allows youths from small northern communities to experience high-level competition against peers of similar ability and training. Athletes who might not make national teams or major international events can nonetheless strive for personal bests and podium finishes at the AWG, which can be a springboard for their athletic growth. Indeed, one of the AWG's stated goals is to "involve as many athletes as possible either in the Games or in the team selection trials," thereby broadening participation in sport in the North (AWGIC, n.d.-a).

Competition winners at the Arctic Winter Games are awarded medals that reflect the region's heritage. Rather than standard medallions, the AWG awards are in the form of the "Ulu," a traditional Inuit knife with a distinctive half-moon shape. Gold, silver, and bronze Ulus are bestowed for first, second, and third place in each event (Bertet et al., 2024). The Ulu medals have become a beloved symbol of the Games. They not only reward athletic achievement but also serve as a cultural emblem—a daily reminder that these Games are rooted in the Arctic land and its people's traditions. Many athletes treasure the Ulu as a trophy that is uniquely northern. The use of the Ulu further distinguishes the AWG from other multi-sport events and underscores the integration of cultural identity into the athletic fabric of the Games (Thomsen et al., 2018).

Figure 2

Ulu-Shaped Medals from the 2018 Arctic Winter Games



Note. The medals are shaped like an ulu, a traditional Inuit knife. From *Arctic Winter Games 2024 in Alaska*, by H. Kubny, 2021, *Polar Journal* (https://polarjournal.net/arctic-winter-games-2024-in-alaska/). Photograph credited to AWG.

B) Indigenous Games: A defining feature of the AWG's athletic program is the inclusion of Indigenous traditional games alongside contemporary sports. From the 1970 inaugural Games up through the early 1980s, the sports contested were mostly Euro-Canadian in origin (e.g., skiing, skating, hockey, etc.), and Indigenous games were initially relegated to demonstrations rather than official medal events (see also, Bertet et al., 2024; Paraschak, 1997). This began to change as organizers and communities pushed to recognize the value of Northern Indigenous sports. In an effort to revitalize the Games and highlight northern heritage, the AWG added two new sport categories—Arctic Sports (sometimes called Inuit Games) and Dene Games—to the regular competition program (AWGIC, n.d.-a). Since their incorporations, these indigenous events have been a staple of the AWG, making it one of the large multi-sport events in the world where athletes compete for medals in Indigenous heritage sports. Embracing these indigenous games helped

enhance the unique northern character of the AWG and even attracted greater media interest by showcasing events that spectators would not see at the Olympics or Canada Games. Therefore, the AWG creates a rare intersection where tradition and modernity meet in sport, uniting athletes in both contemporary competitions and ancestral games within one event—in effect, blending two sporting paradigms to create unity in diversity among participants (Bertet et al., 2024; Fuchs, 2023; Thomsen et al., 2018).

Arctic Sports and Dene Games are usually understood less as "sports" in the narrow, modern sense and more as embodied forms of Indigenous knowledge—practices through which history, values, and everyday land-based skills are kept alive (Frazer & Giles, 2023; Giles, 2004, 2005; Heine, 1999). There are two main categories of events, each consisting of multiple disciplines: 1) Arctic Sports (Inuit Games): One-Foot-High Kick; Two-Foot-High Kick; Alaskan High Kick; Kneel Jump; Sledge Jump; Triple Jump; Arm Pull; Airplane; One-Hand Reach; Head Pull; and Knuckle Hop. These events are drawn largely from Inuit traditions across Alaska, Canada, and Greenland. Many test agility, jumping ability, and pain endurance.

Figure 3

Sledge Jump at the 2023 Arctic Winter Games



Note. Sledge Jump competition during the 2023 Arctic Winter Games in Wood Buffalo, Alberta. Photograph by the author, 2023.

2) Dene Games: Finger Pull; Snow snake; Stick Pull; Hand Games; and Pole Push. Dene games typically measure strength, teamwork, and dexterity (AWGIC, n.d.-c).

Figure 4

Dene Hand Games at the 2023 Arctic Winter Games



Note. Dene Hand Games during the 2023 Arctic Winter Games in Wood Buffalo, Alberta. Photograph by the author, 2023.

In research on Inuit traditional games, these activities are closely connected to survival on the land and the cultivation of functional capacities such as strength, endurance, agility, and coordination (Frazer & Giles, 2023; Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, n.d.). What is emphasized is not only performance or winning but also the ways the games foster community bonds and support cultural pride and continuity—linking physical exertion to identity,

intergenerational transmission, and collective well-being (Frazer & Giles, 2023; Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, n.d.). A similar logic appears in scholarship on Dene Games. Rather than being treated primarily as specialized performance domains, Dene Games are frequently described as grounded in hunting, travel, and other practical skills associated with life on the land (Fabian & Giles, 2023; Giles, 2004; Heine, 1999). In this framing, the games are meaningful because they cultivate abilities that mattered—and continue to matter—within community life: speed, endurance, accuracy, and mental discipline, alongside broader cultural teachings about land, relationships, and responsibility (Fabian & Giles, 2023; Giles, 2004; Heine, 1999). Importantly, accounts of Dene Games also highlight their social and celebratory character. They are often portrayed as events where physical and mental testing co-exists with festivity—marked by drumming, humor, and a shared atmosphere of excitement (Giles, 2005; Heine, 1999, 2005). In this sense, competition is present, but it is nested within a wider cultural experience in which enjoyment, pride, and community connection are central outcomes, not side effects (Giles, 2005; Heine, 1999, 2005).

2. Cultural aspects of the Arctic Winter Games

Culture is another pillar of the Arctic Winter Games, equally as important as the others. From the beginning, the AWG founders envisioned the event as a vehicle to showcase and preserve the unique heritages of northern peoples. The cultural dimension is manifested in multiple ways during the Games: through opening and closing ceremonies, formal cultural exhibitions, and performances, through the incorporation of Indigenous games (discussed in the athletic section), and through the informal sharing of traditions among participants. According to the AWG International Committee, the Games are explicitly designed to be a forum for sharing cultural

values from northern regions around the world (AWGIC, n.d.-a). This commitment is visible in every AWG program. Each host society organizes some cultural program activities that run parallel to the athletic and social aspects of the events. The programs typically feature cultural galas or showcases, where singers, dancers, musicians, and storytellers from the various contingents perform for audiences. The cultural delegation from each contingent is given almost as much prominence as the athletic delegation, underscoring that the AWG is not only a sport competition but also a cultural festival (Bertet et al., 2024; Bullard, 2025).

Figure 5

Cultural Gala Performance at the 2023 Arctic Winter Games



Note. Dance performance during the Cultural Gala at the 2023 Arctic Winter Games in Wood Buffalo, Alberta. Photograph by the author, 2023.

Over time, the cultural component of the AWG has expanded beyond stage performances. Recent games have incorporated elements like art exhibitions, craft workshops, and Indigenous shows as part of the official program. For instance, the 2023 Wood Buffalo AWG included daily cultural pop-up events inside and outside the village. These activities allowed visiting delegates to present their heritage to others and also to local residents (see also, Dallaire et al., 2024; Mackay & Dallaire, 2024).

Figure 6

Cultural Pop-Up Event at the 2023 Arctic Winter Games



Note. Culture of the Day (Peru) cultural display during the 2023 Arctic Winter Games in Wood Buffalo, Alberta. Photograph by the author, 2023.

The opening and closing ceremonies are among the most visible expressions of culture at the AWG. Rather than serving only as formal rituals, these ceremonies bring together Olympic-style traditions with Indigenous cultural expression. For example, the lighting of the ceremonial flame often draws on northern heritage, giving the event a sense of place and cultural meaning. Unlike most other modern events, the AWG opening ceremony often includes prayers or blessings by Indigenous elders, drum songs, and communal dances that invite all participants to join. The AWG incorporates native dancing and cultural presentations into their ceremonies in a way that distinguishes them from the Olympics (see also, Fuchs, 2023, 2025; Thomsen et al., 2018). Throughout the week, the presence of the Indigenous games within the sports competition also reinforces cultural visibility. These events often draw large crowds and media interest, becoming a point of pride. Athletes in these sports often feel they are carrying their culture into the arena.

3. Social aspects of the Arctic Winter Games

Beyond the sports and cultural dimensions, the Arctic Winter Games are fundamentally a social experience for all attendees and host communities. The AWG's official mandate includes fostering social interchange among peoples of the North (AWGIC, n.d.-d). In practice, this means the Games function as a giant gathering, building friendships, and understanding across geographic and cultural boundaries. Athletes, coaches, cultural delegates, and others from different regions are typically housed together in a village setting, eating meals side by side and attending events together. Travel to the AWG is often the first time many youths leave their remote hometowns, and they get to meet peers from other parts of the north—finding both differences and common

ground in their lifestyles. The result is a vibrant social milieu that can be known as the true heart of the AWG. A recent analysis found that participants experienced this event as festival, with the Games placing festivity and socialization at the heart of the event (Bertet et al., 2024). During the week of the Games, a multitude of informal social interactions occur—from pin trading to team sports, mass dances to simply hanging out at the athletes' village. These interactions break down barriers between regions and cultures. A Nunavut athlete might befriend someone from Greenland; Dene teenagers from the Northwest Territories might teach their games to Alaskan peers, and vice versa. In this way, the AWG creates a pan-Arctic social network of youths. On the one hand, the event's organizers deliberately schedule many group activities, such as opening/closing ceremonies, cultural performances, and social nights, to encourage mingling and friendship formation. On the other hand, "making new friends" ranks among the top outcomes of the Games conveyed by participants (see, e.g., Dallaire et al., 2024; Walter, 2011). The social impact of the AWG is not limited to the athletes, coaches, cultural participants, and mission team members. Host communities undergo a profound social experience as well. Staging the Games requires mobilizing hundreds or even thousands of local volunteers, and the process often galvanizes the whole town or region. Parents, elders, and youth volunteers work side by side to welcome the circumpolar visitors.

Literature on the AWG: What Is Known and What This Thesis Explores

Across existing scholarship, the Arctic Winter Games have consistently been framed as a hybrid northern sports festival whose significance exceeds athletic competition, even as this hybridity generates enduring tensions (Hinch & de la Barre, 2007). The AWG's distinctiveness has been linked both to festive and informal participant practices (e.g., exchange, play, sociability)

and to formal cultural programming (Bertet et al., 2024). The AWG's distinctive strength is in its sport-culture configuration: the formal combination of athletic competition, cultural exhibition, and social interchange among Northerners, including a sport program that brings together contemporary disciplines and Indigenous Games, thereby helping preserve the event's "uniqueness of the North" (Hinch & de la Barre, 2007). The event has also been positioned as a human-scale alternative where the AWG has not only been contrasted with dominant event models but also presented as a "small, spirited" reference point for thinking about socially legitimate events with meaningful public value, civic engagement, and territorial significance (Fuchs, 2023, 2025).

At the same time, scholars have cautioned that northern and Indigenous cultures remain contested terrain, where cultural agency coexists with risks of museumification, commodification, and globalization (e.g., Fabian, 2022; Hinch & de la Barre, 2007; Hinch & Ramshaw, 2014). Research has also noted that integrating Indigenous games into formal sport structures can generate sportification through standardization and record-based logics (e.g., Hinch & de la Barre, 2007; Hinch & Ramshaw, 2014; Jones, 1989). However, it has been suggested that participants actively resist and rework these pressures through practices such as flexible timetables, informal participation norms, and forms of recognition that privilege cultural contribution and community meaning over athletic excellence (Heine & Young, 1997). In this sense, AWG scholarship has indicated that "tradition" is not simply preserved within the Games but continually reconstructed through negotiation, compromise, and resistance as Indigenous practices are incorporated into modern event structures (Heine & Young, 1997). Finally, evidence has reinforced the view that the AWG is "more than a sports event," showing that its perceived value is widely understood in social and cultural terms—especially Arctic cultural exchange, youth-sport celebration,

pride/iconicity, hospitality, community bonding, and societal collaboration—rather than primarily economic ones (Ren et al., 2016). Taken together, studies have positioned the AWG as a normatively distinctive event whose significance lies not only in competition but also in its social, cultural, and territorial value. Precisely because the AWG both borrows from and deviates from dominant sport-event norms, Fuchs (2025) argued that it offered a valuable lens to question the contemporary sport paradigm values and explicitly called for social science research to evaluate the social, educational, cultural, and legacy traces such events leave in territories and communities.

Although the AWG has been described as an alternative sport event model (e.g., Bertet et al., 2024; Fuchs, 2023; Thomsen et al., 2018), there remains limited empirical detail about what the event offers in terms of relational encounters, and therefore about what makes it "alternative" on relational grounds. Existing literature has pointed to the AWG's relational potential, but it has tended to emphasize more visible social dimensions, such as interaction and networking among northern populations, community ties, and friendship-building (e.g., Bertet et al., 2024; Fuchs, 2023; Mahadevan & Ren, 2019; Szabo, 2003; Walter, 2011). Less attention has been paid to other forms of relational experience, including cultural encounters, emotional connection, collective togetherness, and enduring attachments beyond the event itself. Therefore, this thesis builds on the existing literature by widening the lens of relationality and examining what may make the AWG distinctive as a community youth sport event. It explores not only commonly documented forms of connection, such as friendships and networks, but also deeper social, cultural, emotional, and communal forms of relational experience. In addition, while existing research has often focused on relationships during the event, less is known about which ties and relational encounters endure after the Games. Accordingly, this thesis examines both participants' immediate relational experiences at the AWG and the longer-term relational traces that may persist years later, including

the experiences of former athletes who return in other roles, such as coaches, mission team members, and officials. Finally, although scholars have repeatedly argued that the AWG is "more than competition" and may provide a promising space for relational encounters (e.g., Fuchs, 2023; Thomsen et al., 2018), we still lack a clear account of the conditions that enable these encounters and the ways in which the AWG may resist pressures in contemporary sport that can constrain relationship-building. Therefore, this thesis aims to:

***Research Aim 1*:** Examine how the Arctic Winter Games, as a community youth sport event, create conditions that support meaningful relational experiences among individuals.

***Research Aim 2*:** Explore how the Arctic Winter Games mitigate dynamics within contemporary sport that may constrain relational experiences.

***Research Aim 3*:** Examine the diverse forms of relationality experienced by participants during and after the Arctic Winter Games.

Why These Research Aims Matter

Sport events have increasingly been recognized not only for their economic or competitive significance, but also for their potential social values. While sport event policy has often emphasized economic impact, scholars have argued that greater attention should be paid to the social benefits that events can generate for participants and host communities (Chalip, 2006). This is especially relevant as sport events have increasingly been organized around social purposes, rather than competition alone (Sherry et al., 2011). Within this broader concern with social impact, relationality is particularly important. Sport event scholars have shown that events can foster social value through sociability, communitas, social camaraderie, social capital, and community development, especially when opportunities for meaningful interaction are created (e.g., Chalip,

2006; Inoue & Havard, 2014; Misener & Mason, 2006; Sherry et al., 2011; Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018). Therefore, relationships should be treated as central to understanding the significance of sport event participation.

Recognizing relationality as a key dimension of sport event participation also raises an important question: under what conditions do sport events actually enable meaningful relational experiences, and what pressures may limit them? This question is especially important because sport events are shaped by the broader logics of modern sport. Modern sport has been associated with dynamics such as competition, specialization, bureaucratization, quantification, the pursuit of records, and rationalized forms of organization (Guttmann, 1978/2004). These dynamics can also shape youth sport contexts, where participation may become increasingly organized around achievement, ranking, specialization, and future success (e.g., Bjørndal & Espedalen, 2026; Gennings et al., 2025; Lim, 2025; Vella et al., 2025). In response, scholars have called for youth sport to be reimagined around alternative values and models that better support young people's social, developmental, and relational experiences (e.g., Lim, 2025; Matthews et al., 2026; Vella et al., 2025). Community-oriented sport events are especially relevant to this discussion because they can extend beyond athletic competition to support social interaction, cultural expression, community development, and broader educational or developmental purposes (e.g., Ruhanen & Whitford, 2011; Schulenkorf, 2013). The AWG offers a valuable case for examining these issues because existing literature has framed it as an alternative or distinctive youth sport event: one that challenges a strict separation between sport and sociocultural values and gives prominence to festive, social, relational, and cultural dimensions alongside athletic competition (e.g., Bertet et al., 2024; Fuchs, 2023; Thomsen et al., 2018). By presenting itself as "more than competition," the AWG provides an important context for examining how a community youth sport event may create

conditions for meaningful relational experiences, respond to pressures that can constrain such experiences, and enable diverse forms of relationality during and after the Games.

Structure of the Thesis

In the chapters that follow, Chapter 2 reviews the key bodies of literature that ground this thesis, including defining different types of sports events with a particular focus on community-based sport events, research on sport events and their social impacts, relational experiences in sport event settings, and Hartmut Rosa's (2016/2019) theory of resonance, alongside related concepts such as liminoid and communitas (Turner, 1969, 1982). The chapter concludes by presenting the study's conceptually guided research questions. Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach, primary datasets, and analytic procedures used across the thesis. The empirical core of the thesis is then presented in three article-based chapters. Chapter 4, which corresponds to Paper 1, examines the AWG as a potential space of resonance by exploring both participants' social resonance experiences and the organizational, spatial, temporal, and psychological conditions that may facilitate them. Chapter 5, which corresponds to Paper 2, analyzes how the AWG responds to conditions that can constrain or undermine resonance experiences, including dynamics associated with hyper-competition, sportification, and instrumental rationality. Chapter 6, which corresponds to Paper 3, examines the AWG as a liminoid time-space in which diverse individual and collective relational experiences may emerge, including friendship, networking, cultural encounters, enchantment, communitas, and relational traces that endure beyond the Games. Finally, Chapter 7 develops the thesis's broader argument for reimagining community youth sport events as relationally conducive spaces, discusses scholarly, theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions, identifies future research directions, and offers the final conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review, Theoretical Framework, and Guiding Research Questions

Introduction

This chapter presents the conceptual and empirical foundations that guide the thesis. It begins by reviewing the literature on sporting events, first outlining different event types and then paying particular attention to community sporting events, given their relevance to understanding the features of the Arctic Winter Games. It then examines the social impacts of sporting events, with a focus on individual and collective forms of social relationships, as well as cultural relationships. The chapter also introduces the main theoretical concepts informing the study, including resonance, liminality/liminoid, and communitas. It concludes by presenting the three main conceptual research questions that emerge from this review and guide the analysis of the thesis.

Sports events

Sports events are structured athletic occasions that combine competition, entertainment, and intentionally designed programming. They can be understood as events planned around a set schedule, often producing notable social and economic effects on the host city or region, while featuring diverse and complex sport-related and recreational activities (Bode & Negruşa, 2025). In other words, sports events span a vast range of activities—professional or amateur, indoor or outdoor, single competitions or multi-sport festivals—at scales ranging from local community to global levels (Gammon, 2020). Because of this diversity, scholars classify sports events by features such as scale, frequency, purpose, etc. Below are some commonly cited categories:

Mega and non-mega sport events

Mega and non-mega sport events can be distinguished primarily by their scale, reach, and impacts. Mega-sport events are large-scale, internationally significant, and heavily mediated sporting spectacles that attract intense global media attention and often generate major tourism flows, prestige, and economic effects for host communities, such as the Olympic Games (Gammon, 2020; Getz & Page, 2007; Horne, 2015). Instead of defining mega-events according to a single size-based threshold, Müller's (2018) framework evaluates them through several dimensions, including their capacity to draw visitors, achieve mediated visibility, involve significant costs, and produce transformative effects for host cities or regions. Non-mega sport events, by contrast, have generally been understood as sporting events that are smaller than mega-events in size, scale, scope, and reach and have often been treated in the literature as small- or medium-scale events or major-but-not-mega competitions (Ramchandani et al., 2015; Taks, 2013).

National championship events

These are recurring high-level competitions staged within national or regional sporting systems, including examples such as national title championships, professional league finals, and major continental competitions. They are often governed by national federations or professional leagues and typically involve top-level athletes or teams. While these events can attract strong local or regional crowds and media coverage, their overall scale and reach are generally more limited than those of global mega-events (Gratton et al., 2000).

Hallmark sport events

The concept of a hallmark event has changed over time. Ritchie (1984) applied the term broadly to major events of limited duration, whether held once or repeatedly, that were intended to raise a destination's profile, enhance its appeal, and generate tourism benefits. In this early definition, what made an event distinctive was its uniqueness, prestige, or significance at a particular moment, rather than its recurrence or lasting connection to one location. Later sport event typologies adopted a narrower understanding. Parent and Smith-Swan (2013), for example, describe hallmark sport events as recurring events closely tied to a particular place. This distinguishes them from large-scale sport events, which may be one-off or recurring, and mega-events, which are typically staged once in a host destination before moving elsewhere. Through repeated staging in the same location, a hallmark sport event can become part of the identity and traditions of its host city or region while also strengthening the destination's image and appeal (Gammon, 2020). Wimbledon and the London Marathon illustrate this understanding because each has become strongly associated with the place in which it is held.

Sport heritage and heritage sporting events

Sport heritage is not limited to material forms such as stadiums, museums, halls of fame, and memorabilia. It also lives through events, traditions, rituals, memories, and sporting practices that connect the past with the present (Ramshaw, 2020). Events express this heritage in different ways. Some are organized mainly to commemorate or recreate the past, such as anniversary celebrations, civic commemorations, and festivals centered on traditional sporting practices. In these cases, competition may be less important than celebrating history, expressing cultural identity, or keeping a tradition alive. Other events begin primarily as competitions but gradually develop heritage value through repeated staging, established rituals, and enduring connections with

particular communities or places (Ramshaw, 2020). These meanings are neither fixed nor necessarily shared by everyone. Decisions about which people, achievements, and traditions are remembered or overlooked reflect relations of power and can produce contested understandings of the sporting past (Ramshaw & Gammon, 2017).

Within this broader discussion, a "heritage sporting event" is a competition that has come to be regarded as heritage over time. Chappelet (2015) identifies four closely connected features that support this development: recurrence, attachment to a particular location, local ownership or governance, and longevity. Together, these features can root an event in its host territory and strengthen its relationship with local people. Pinson (2017), however, emphasizes that possessing these characteristics does not automatically make an event heritage. The event must also distinguish itself through particular forms of organizational knowledge, symbols, and narratives and be recognized by a relevant population as an authentic part of its territory. Heritage sporting events therefore overlap with hallmark events, but the distinction used in this thesis is mainly one of emphasis. Hallmark-event literature foregrounds the enduring association between an event and its host place, whereas heritage sporting event research focuses more directly on how historical continuity, local stewardship, distinctive symbols and narratives, and community recognition allow an event to acquire heritage value.

Drawing on Ramshaw and Gammon (2015), Pinson (2017) cites the AWG as an example of an event in which heritage is a core feature and the celebration of sporting or local heritage is central. Elsewhere, Pinson raises the broader possibility that some mobile events may develop and carry their own heritage from one host location to another, although he illustrates this point using the Olympic Games rather than the AWG. This possibility provides a useful lens for interpreting the AWG because the Games also rotate among host communities. Nevertheless, Hinch and

Ramshaw (2014) situate the AWG within heritage sport tourism and emphasize their connections with northern culture, collective identity, and place. The Indigenous sporting practices included in the Games, recurring ceremonies, symbols, traditions, and narratives of northern identity can therefore be understood as forms of sporting and cultural heritage that are expressed, renewed, and renegotiated across successive editions.

Professionalized sport events

In this thesis, a distinction is made between professional and professionalized sport events. Professional sport events refer narrowly to competitions involving paid athletes, professional teams, or professional leagues. Professionalized sport events refer more broadly to events whose organization and delivery have become shaped by processes such as formalized governance, specialized roles, managerial rationalization, standardized practices, performance measurement, commercialization, and media visibility (Dowling et al., 2014; Melnick et al., 2025; Ruoranen et al., 2016). Professionalization is therefore understood as a matter of degree rather than a fixed event category: youth, amateur, and community sport events may adopt professionalized structures and logics without becoming professional sport events in the occupational sense.

As professionalization becomes more pronounced, commercialization and result-oriented institutional logics may overshadow community "sport-for-all" aims (Stenling & Fahlén, 2009). At the organizational level, professionalization often involves the rationalization of management practices and the adoption of specialized tools designed to enhance efficiency and output, with success increasingly assessed through quantifiable indicators (Melnick et al., 2025; Ruoranen et al., 2016). At the athlete level, results- and business-driven environments can foster "robotisation" and commodification, positioning athletes as assets within asymmetrical power relations and a

performance culture dominated by results-oriented logic (Schubring et al., 2024, p. 1972). Professionalized events are marked by formal coaching structures and structured training regimens, the prioritization of performance and marketability, and an intensified reliance on performance metrics (Choi & Byun, 2024). They are also embedded in extensive media coverage and treated as premium entertainment products, with their management oriented toward maximizing commercial value across multi-sided markets, further reinforcing commercialization and commodification (Lim, 2025).

Community sporting events

Community sport events such as local fun runs, school sports days, charity tournaments, or amateur leagues are typically organized first and foremost as enjoyable, socially oriented occasions, where the primary audience and beneficiaries are local residents rather than distant spectators or commercial markets (Batty, 2016). In this sense, their purpose extends beyond staging competition: they have often been framed as community happenings that create space for social interaction, entertainment, and shared experiences among people who live in (or closely identify with) the host setting (Batty, 2016). Because they are embedded in place, these events have also been linked to place-based benefits, including strengthening people's connection to where they live, encouraging greater sport participation, and cultivating community pride (Edwards, 2015).

A key theme in the literature is that community sport events can be understood as socially responsible initiatives at the community level, with value generated through their contributions to relationships and collective life (see, e.g., Misener & Mason, 2009). For example, they have been discussed as contexts that can help communities cultivate belonging and trust in social

relationships, partly because participation creates repeated opportunities for people to come together, socialize, form friendships, and develop intergroup networks in an enjoyable setting (Bertet et al., 2024; Schulenkorf & Edwards, 2012). In this way, community sport events can function not only as leisure experiences but also as social spaces that support connection across groups, including dynamics of reconciliation and unity when events are intentionally organized toward those ends (Fuchs, 2023, 2025; Schulenkorf & Edwards, 2012).

Beyond immediate relational outcomes, there is growing evidence that community sport event projects can contribute to broader processes of community empowerment and capacity building. Scholars have argued that these events can help build networks, enhance cultural traditions, support the acquisition of skills, and strengthen communities' sense of agency (e.g., Gasser & Levinsen, 2004; Kellett et al., 2008; Sugden, 2006). Related work has pointed to further impacts, including strengthened community spirit and pride, the reinforcement or revitalization of cultural traditions, values, and beliefs, opportunities for intercultural learning, and enhanced capacity for communities to shape or steer their own development trajectories (e.g., Green & Chalip, 1998; Misener & Mason, 2006; O'Brien, 2007; Schulenkorf, 2010).

Importantly, the literature has also emphasized that such benefits are not purely accidental: they can be strategically leveraged through deliberate event design and integration with broader community programming. Schulenkorf and Edwards (2012), for instance, suggested that community sport events can generate greater benefits when organizers and host communities engage children as agents of change, encourage ethnically mixed team-sport participation, integrate sociocultural activities into the event setting, connect events to ongoing sport-for-development programs, and leverage them across social, cultural, political, educational, and related areas. In a complementary way, Bean and Forneris (2014) demonstrated how participants

in a community-based program (Boys and Girls Club in a Canadian city) experienced it as a fun, safe, and accessible environment where friendships could form, life skills could develop, and those skills could transfer beyond the program context. In a similar way, Spaaij and Schaillée's (2020) analysis of the Amsterdam Futsal Tournament demonstrated how community events may contribute to cultural sustainability. They showed that preserving heritage and strengthening ties with community members shaped organizer practices and participant experiences, particularly by fostering narratives of cultural continuity, expressions of identity, and an intensified sense of belonging within the wider diaspora, even when this belonging was temporary.

Community-based sport events have also commonly been distinguished from more professionalized sport events through the types of aims and social dynamics they foreground. Rather than primarily emphasizing elite performance outcomes, they tend to prioritize broad participation, health promotion, and developmental or educational objectives, alongside community bonding (Lim, 2025; Setiawan et al., 2025). They have also frequently been described as spaces for collective action and relationship-building—strengthening social networks, reinforcing identity and pride, and enabling cultural exhibition and exchange—especially when they are designed to support interaction across diverse groups (e.g., Ruhanen & Whitford, 2011; Schulenkorf, 2013).

Positioning the Arctic Winter Games as a Community Youth Sport Event

This thesis positions the Arctic Winter Games as a community youth sport event. Because this designation is analytical rather than an official classification used by the AWGIC, it is necessary both to explain why the Games can be situated within this event category and to clarify what "community" means in the context of an event connecting geographically dispersed and

culturally diverse northern populations. The Games do not fit neatly within a single established event category because different classifications foreground different aspects of the event. In terms of scale, they can be located within the broad category of non-mega sport events (see, e.g., Müller, 2015; Taks, 2013). In terms of their program and purposes, Canadian Heritage (2026) describes the AWG as one of the largest multisport cultural events in the circumpolar North, bringing Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth together through sport, culture, community spirit, and connection. The AWG also highlight heritage, ceremonial, and festive features that can be examined through broader perspectives on sport heritage, parades, and festivals (see, e.g., Gammon, 2020). These categories help identify the scale, structure, or content of the Games, but they do not fully capture their community orientation or the relationships among the northern populations involved.

Research specifically addressing the AWG has similarly situated the event in several overlapping, though not entirely uncritical, ways. Early work presented the Games as a formalized and structured gathering intended to provide common ground for cultural and social interchange, education, understanding, and friendship among northern peoples (Jones, 1989). Hinch and de la Barre (2007) subsequently described the AWG as a community celebration of sport that connects athletic competition with cultural exhibition, social interchange, and community development. More recent research identifies the AWG as a pan-Arctic sporting and cultural gathering whose youth-centred emphasis on sharing, education, exchange, and Indigenous sporting practices contributes to the construction of an Arctic community (Fuchs, 2023). The Games have also been examined as a culture- and value-sustaining site for the construction and negotiation of pan-Arctic, Indigenous, regional, and national identities (Thomsen et al., 2018); as a festive event that fosters socialization, symbolic unity, and belonging among northern youth (Bertet et al., 2024); and as a

vehicle for host-community capacity building, collaboration, volunteering, and broader societal innovation (Ren & Rasmussen, 2017). At the same time, Fabian (2022) cautions that the AWG remain influenced by standardized Western sport structures, producing tensions among Indigenous cultural expression, resistance, sportification, and colonial sporting logics. The AWG should therefore not be presented as an uncomplicated or inherently inclusive expression of a unified northern community.

The Arctic Winter Games International Committee (AWGIC) does not itself use the term "community youth sport event." Instead, it officially presents the AWG as a circumpolar sport and cultural event for northern youth. Its website defines the AWG as "a high profile circumpolar sport competition for northern and arctic athletes, and a multi-cultural exposition for the circumpolar world" (AWGIC, n.d.-e), while its formal vision is "to be the premier circumpolar sport and cultural event for northern youth" (AWGIC, n.d.-f). Its Staging Manual further explains that the Games promote sport development, fair play, healthy lifestyles, partnerships, cultural diversity, social exchange, and understanding. It identifies maximum participation across cultures, rather than increasing athletic skill itself, as the fundamental purpose of participation and presents the AWG as "common ground" for cultural and social interchange, education, understanding, and friendship among circumpolar peoples (AWGIC, 2021, p. 8). Thus, although the AWGIC does not formally classify the AWG as a community sport event, its descriptions position athletic competition alongside youth development and explicitly cultural, social, and relational purposes.

More specifically, this designation brings together three central features of the AWG. The term sport event recognizes its organized and competitive multisport structure; youth identifies its principal participants and developmental orientation; and community emphasizes how the Games are locally grounded, collectively supported, and directed toward relationships among northern

populations. This classification does not deny that the AWG are international, competitive, selective, or larger than many local community sport events. Rather, it draws attention to dimensions that classifications based exclusively on size or event structure do not adequately explain: the involvement of host communities and volunteers, the cultural and social purposes of the Games, their focus on developing northern youth, and their role in connecting communities across the circumpolar North.

This use of community requires further clarification because community should not be equated exclusively with a small, geographically bounded locality. In developing their theory of sense of community, McMillan and Chavis (1986) distinguish territorial understandings of community, such as neighbourhoods and towns, from relational communities formed through the character and quality of human relationships. Bradshaw (2008) develops this argument through the concept of the "post-place community," defining community in terms of networks held together by solidarity, shared identities, and norms that need not be confined to a single residential location. This does not mean that any geographically dispersed population automatically constitutes a community. Bradshaw (2008) specifically cautions that bringing a large group of people together at an event does not, by itself, create community; community also requires relational bonds and some meaningful common enterprise, identity, or normative orientation. Accordingly, the temporary presence of athletes and other participants at the AWG is not sufficient evidence that a circumpolar community exists. MacQueen et al.'s (2001) evidence-based definition provides a useful framework for explaining the more substantive basis of the AWG's community dimension. They identify five interconnected elements of community: a locus or setting, shared perspectives, social ties, diversity, and joint action. These elements allow community to be understood as both situated and relational: it occurs within geographical or social settings, but it is

constituted through relationships and collective practices among people who can remain diverse. In this thesis, community is therefore understood as a relational and collective formation in which diverse people or groups are connected through social ties, shared frames of reference, and forms of joint action. A community may be rooted in a particular place, but its relationships and boundaries can also extend across localities.

These dimensions are visible in the organization and purposes of the AWG at several interconnected scales. First, each edition is grounded in a host community and delivered through a non-profit Host Society, local organizations, public institutions, and extensive volunteer participation. The host community is not simply the physical location of the competition; its residents, organizations, facilities, cultures, and volunteer capacities become part of producing the event. Second, each delegation brings together young people and other participants from multiple local communities within its jurisdiction. Third, the recurring event connects these delegations within a wider network of northern and circumpolar communities. The circumpolar North supplies a shared regional frame, but geography alone does not make its diverse Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations one homogeneous community. Rather, the AWG provides a recurring institutional and social setting in which these populations can encounter one another and establish, express, negotiate, and renew relationships.

MacQueen et al.'s (2001) five elements help make these connections more explicit. The host community, the participating northern jurisdictions, and the recurring event setting provide the AWG's locus. Diversity is present in the different Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, languages, cultures, places, and sporting traditions represented. Shared perspectives are not assumed to be uniform across these groups, but are institutionally encouraged through the Games' emphasis on northern youth development, fair play, cultural exchange, mutual understanding, and

the celebration of northern sport and culture. Social ties may be developed and renewed through competition, social programs, cultural activities, ceremonies, volunteerism, partnerships, and repeated participation. Joint action occurs when host organizations, volunteers, delegations, cultural participants, athletes, coaches, officials, and community partners work together to stage and participate in the Games. Understood in this way, the AWG functions as a recurring node through which geographically dispersed communities are connected, rather than as a one-time gathering that automatically transforms everyone present into members of a single community.

This interpretation also corresponds with the characteristics of community sport events reviewed in the preceding section. Although such events are often locally bounded, their community orientation is not determined by size alone. It is also reflected in whom they are intended to benefit, how they are organized, and which purposes they prioritize. Community sport events commonly foreground participant and community experiences, social interaction, education, cultural expression, belonging, and collective development rather than treating elite performance, commercial spectatorship, or economic impact as their exclusive objectives (e.g., Batty, 2016; Misener & Mason, 2009; Schulenkorf & Edwards, 2012). They can also support community networks, volunteer development, cultural continuity, intercultural learning, collective pride, and local capacities when these outcomes are deliberately incorporated into event planning (e.g., Kellett et al., 2008; Misener & Mason, 2006; Schulenkorf, 2010; Schulenkorf & Edwards, 2012). The AWG reflects these characteristics through its reliance on Host Societies and volunteers, its integration of sporting, cultural, ceremonial, and social programs, and its official commitment to developing northern youth and fostering relationships among northern communities. Research on the AWG also demonstrates that these community-oriented purposes can extend beyond the event week by contributing to volunteer capacity, skills, collaboration,

social cohesion, cultural expression, and host-community development (Ren & Rasmussen, 2017; Ren et al., 2016).

Taken together, these characteristics position the AWG as a community youth sport event that is locally grounded but translocal in reach. The relevant community is not a culturally unified circumpolar population, but a diverse and evolving network of host, territorial, regional, Indigenous, and other northern communities connected through the recurring organization and experience of the Games.

Finally, classifying the AWG as a community youth sport event should not be confused with assuming that every participant experiences a sense of community. McMillan and Chavis's (1986) four dimensions of membership, influence, fulfilment of needs, and shared emotional connection help explain how recurring participation, common symbols, shared time and space, positive interaction, and meaningful collective experiences might generate such a sense. However, the institutional intention to promote community and the structural presence of community-oriented features do not demonstrate that belonging, mutual influence, or emotional connection necessarily occurs for everyone. Whether participants experience these dimensions, how such experiences develop, and where community may be limited or contested remain empirical questions addressed through the findings of this thesis.

Sports events as a liminoid phenomenon

Sporting events can be understood as moments that interrupt the time pressure typical of accelerated modern life. In Hartmut Rosa's (2005/2013) account of social acceleration, everyday rhythms intensify and change speeds up, producing a chronic sense of having to keep pace. Against this backdrop, sports events often function as a temporary reordering of time: participants travel

away from ordinary routines and enter a concentrated social and cultural setting in which attention, interaction, and embodied presence are organized differently than in everyday life. This concentrated event time-space can therefore be theorized as a threshold-like interval, where relations to places, objects, and people become unusually salient.

The language of thresholds is captured in rite-of-passage scholarship. Van Gennep (1909/1960) proposed that passages commonly unfold through three linked moments—separation, transition, and incorporation—in which people are first detached from ordinary statuses and routines, pass through a middle phase of change, and then return to social life in a (re)stabilized position. Turner (1967, 1969, 1979) reformulated this sequence as separation, liminality, and reaggregation, and placed analytical weight on the middle phase as a distinctive social condition of being "betwixt and between." In liminal intervals, participants are set apart from everyday ordering and inhabit a space that is neither fully inside nor outside ordinary structures; this can loosen the force of routine hierarchies and role expectations. Turner (1967, 1982) described this as anti-structure—not simply the inversion of existing order, but a temporary suspension of its usual constraints that can enable intensified interaction, experimentation, and creativity. A key relational form associated with such moments is communitas, when people—briefly freed from the normal coordinates of rank and role—experience heightened shared affect, fellowship, and collective belonging (Turner, 1967, 1969). Importantly, Turner (1982) differentiated liminal experiences rooted in obligatory ritual transitions from liminoid experiences more typical of modern societies: voluntary, leisure-oriented, and frequently expressed through cultural performance and play, including sport.

Building on this conceptual foundation, sport scholars have used liminality/liminoid and communitas to explain why sporting events can feel socially "thicker" than everyday life—while

also showing that these effects are uneven and sometimes politically ambivalent. At a conceptual level, the liminal/liminoid distinction itself remains debated in sport studies. Rowe (1998), for instance, cautioned against treating the boundary as settled by arguing that modern sport can display features commonly associated with liminal phenomena. For many event-focused studies, however, the more productive move has been less about classification and more about using these concepts to analyze how event time—as a bounded, intensified social setting—can reorganize interaction, togetherness, and belonging.

A consistent finding across sport-event research is that compressed event periods can generate communitas, understood as a heightened feeling of togetherness that exceeds ordinary sociality and contributes to enjoyment, attachment, and intentions to return (e.g., Chalip, 2006; Jahn et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2020). Importantly, multiple studies have emphasized the temporality of this experience. Jahn et al.'s (2018) research across a U.S. track and field event and a hip hop festival showed that closeness and camaraderie among attendees—what they called temporary communitas—could be a strong driver of willingness to return, even more influential than satisfaction with the event itself. Yet the same study also highlighted conditions under which communitas could weaken: when perceived crowding became too high, the positive effect of communitas on return intention diminished (Jahn et al., 2018). This emphasis on time-bounded togetherness helps clarify why many authors have treated communitas in event settings as powerful but often fleeting rather than a stable social state.

Empirical work in spectator sport further specifies the mechanisms linking liminality to relational outcomes. Lee et al. (2015), studying spectators of a minor league baseball team, showed that liminality predicted communitas and team identification, and that liminality's influence on repeat attendance operates indirectly through communitas rather than directly. Their findings

supported the claim that transcendental or "set-apart" stadium experiences mattered not only for momentary enjoyment but also for longer-term attachments and fan retention. Related event-marketing scholarship has argued that organizers could actively scaffold these experiences by designing venues and programming for sociability: encouraging interaction among spectators, staging celebratory theming and local symbolism, and supporting participatory crowd practices (e.g., chanting, coordinated displays, dressing up) that turned spectators into co-producers of the event atmosphere (see, e.g., Chalip, 1992, 2006; Crawford, 2004; Lee et al., 2012).

Beyond spectator settings, research on festival-like and sport-for-development events showed how liminal/liminoid spaces can be mobilized for social capital outcomes. Welty Peachey et al. (2015), for example, reported that the Street Soccer USA Cup fostered liminality and communitas and was associated with both bonding and bridging social capital, including expanded networks and emergent norms of trust and reciprocity—illustrating how event-time can support relationship building beyond simple co-presence. In a similar vein, studies of community celebrations and festival-oriented sport events have suggested that organizers can intentionally cultivate liminal/liminoid conditions in which communitas becomes more likely and can be "leveraged" toward connection-making and community outcomes (e.g., Welty Peachey et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2020).

At the same time, scholarship has also warned against romanticizing event-based togetherness. Human and Robins (2011), using the 2010 FIFA World Cup as a "thought experiment," showed how intense solidarity and celebration could arise under late capitalism while remaining fragile and carrying an exclusionary underside. They described this as hyper-transient communitas: collective uplift might surge during the spectacle yet rapidly coexist with, or flip into, exclusion and xenophobic scapegoating. Their analysis also highlighted how some groups could

experience a more enduring condition of uncertainty that they characterized as persisting liminality, in which communitas functioned as a survival strategy without resolving structural marginalization (Human & Robins, 2011). Taken together, prior research has suggested that liminal/liminoid sports time could amplify connection, belonging, and networks, but these relational intensifications might be temporary and contingent, and they could be shaped by a variety of factors. To extend this discussion, the next section turns from the conditions of event-time (liminal/liminoid suspension) to what these conditions produce. Specifically, I examine the social impacts of sporting events that can emerge in and through the liminal/liminoid phase.

Social impacts of sports events

Sport events may generate, or be perceived as generating, a range of positive and negative social consequences for participants and host communities. Much of the sport-event social-impact literature, however, examines residents' perceptions of these consequences rather than independently observed changes. For example, Kim et al. (2015) identified perceived benefits such as community pride and community development alongside perceived costs such as traffic problems and security risks. A systematic review of sport mega-event research also documented direct forced evictions and indirect displacement among some host-community residents (Rocha & Xiao, 2022). It is therefore important to distinguish among perceived community-level impacts, self-referenced experiences, and independently observed changes. Other-referenced measures ask respondents to assess how an event affects the community or people generally, whereas self-referenced measures ask how respondents themselves expect to be or report having been affected. Other-referenced measures may be influenced by projection bias and can produce higher estimates of social impact than comparable self-referenced measures (Taks et al., 2020). Self-referenced

measures provide a more circumscribed account of respondents' own expected or reported experiences, but, as self-reports, they do not by themselves establish lasting behavioral change or community-wide impact. Accordingly, the literature reviewed below is interpreted according to the type of evidence each study provides. Within the sport event literature, perceived emotional and psychological benefits have often been discussed as "psychic income," a concept that captures experiences such as civic pride, excitement, and positive feelings toward the host community (Ghaderi et al., 2023; Oja et al., 2018). Studies of residents' perceptions have often identified local or national pride as a positively evaluated aspect of event hosting. Residents may experience a feel-good effect or sense of honor from being in the global spotlight. For example, events have been seen as raising the city's image and creating a civic pride legacy (Baade & Matheson, 2016; Smith, 2002). Likewise, Cai (2022) found associations among residents' perceived social capital, social identity, and forms of psychic income such as event excitement, city attachment, and city pride. In four Olympic host cities, residents also positively evaluated emotional and socialization-related legacy outcomes, although these evaluations varied across cities and demographic groups (Kaplanidou, 2012). Research on residents' perceptions has frequently identified that local pride is one of the most strongly perceived social benefits of events (Perić, 2018).

A further potential outcome discussed in the literature is the demonstration or inspiration effect, whereby exposure to sport events may encourage some spectators to become more physically active (Ramchandani et al., 2015). Using matched surveys conducted at and after nine non-mega sport events, Ramchandani et al. (2015) identified self-reported initial, sustained, and lagged increases in sport participation among some respondents. However, the authors cautioned that these changes could not be confidently attributed to event attendance alone and that evidence of attracting new participants remained unproven. Ohmann et al. (2006) included the

demonstration of fitness and health among the potential social impacts discussed in their study, but their empirical analysis concerned Munich residents' perceptions and did not establish that the 2006 FIFA World Cup increased their physical activity. By showcasing sporting excellence, events can improve attitudes toward exercise and boost participation in local sports clubs or recreational activities (Máté, 2022).

Moreover, large-scale sport events, including the World Cup, have often been justified and strategically leveraged in terms of their potential to stimulate economic activity, attract tourism, and support event-driven urban development or regeneration (see, e.g., Konstantaki & Wickens, 2010; Preuss, 2004; Soutar & McLeod, 1993). Within urban studies, the Olympic Games have also frequently been understood as a mechanism for large-scale urban transformation, often involving infrastructure development, the renewal of specific districts, and broader strategies of regeneration through event hosting (Essex & Chalkley, 1998; Smith, 2012). In parallel, hosting has frequently been justified as a form of place marketing and global repositioning: event hosting has been used to promote a desirable city image, enhance international visibility, and strengthen the symbolic status of cities and nations—particularly those seeking recognition or to shift external perceptions (see, e.g., Bull & Lovell, 2007; Gold & Gold, 2011; Roche, 2000; Waitt, 1999). More recently, this reputational logic has often been discussed through the language of soft power, where mega-events have been mobilized to project national attractiveness and legitimacy internationally (Grix & Houlihan, 2014). These examples describe rationales and strategies associated with event hosting; they should not be interpreted as evidence that economic growth, urban regeneration, an improved city image, or greater international visibility necessarily results from hosting.

Across studies using different research designs, sport events have been associated with, or perceived as contributing to, a range of social and cultural outcomes. They can shape residents'

perceptions of local quality of life, contribute to social cohesion and social capital, create shared feelings of excitement and patriotism, stimulate curiosity about other cultures, support community-building, encourage involvement in community activities, provide entertainment, and promote fitness and health (see, e.g., Gibson et al., 2014; Jamieson, 2014; Kim & Petrick, 2005; Kim & Walker, 2012; Kim et al., 2015; Ohmann et al., 2006; Pranić et al., 2012; Reis et al., 2017). Within this broader literature, researchers have also examined the relational opportunities that sport events may create. Such events can provide settings in which people meet and develop networks, build social capital, experience a sense of community and camaraderie, and form other meaningful connections (e.g., Chalip, 2006; Inoue & Havard, 2014; Kaplanidou, 2012; Taks, 2013; Warner & Dixon, 2011; Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018). In this thesis, relational experiences are understood as an important dimension of sport events' social impacts rather than as a separate category of impact. They are examined in dedicated sections because relationality is the thesis's central concern and therefore requires closer attention to the different forms, qualities, and temporal dimensions of connection than is possible within a general overview of social impacts. The following sections therefore examine social relationship experiences, cultural connections, and collective relational experiences, including how they emerge during event time and, in some cases, endure beyond it. This focused review also provides the foundation for considering deeper forms of relationality through resonance theory.

Relational impacts of sports events: Social relationship experiences

Sports events—from local matches to global mega-events—are not only athletic competitions but also social arenas where individuals forge meaningful relationships. Participation

in sports events (in any role: athlete, spectator, volunteer, etc.) can lead to forming new friendships, strengthening existing ties, experiencing camaraderie, and expanding one's social network.

Fan communities often emerge around teams or events, giving individuals a shared identity and opportunities for camaraderie. The Team Identification-Social Psychological Health Model posits that identifying with a sports team leads fans to form critical social connections which facilitate well-being (Wann, 2006). In practice, highly identified fans tend to seek out fellow fans, join supporter groups, and celebrate together, thereby expanding their circle of friends and acquaintances. Research has shown that team identification correlates with greater social connectedness and lower loneliness among fans. In other words, being a fan can fulfill the fundamental human need for belonging by providing enduring or even temporary friendships centered on the team (Wann, 2006; Wann et al., 2011).

For those directly participating in sports events—athletes or recreational participants—the experiences are replete with interpersonal relationships. Within sports teams or groups, camaraderie and friendship often develop naturally through the shared pursuit of a goal and the intense interactions involved in training and competition (Weiss & Smith, 2002). Decades of sports psychology research on group cohesion has attested that teams with high social cohesion (i.e., strong interpersonal attraction among members) report greater trust, support, and friendship among teammates (Gu et al., 2022). These friendships can extend well beyond the event itself—it is common to hear that "the friendships you make in sports carry on for years." Frequent interaction and collective effort toward victory forge strong bonds; teammates often become close friends who provide each other with social support off the field as well. In youth sports, for instance, peer friendships are a key motivator for participation and a source of enjoyment and life skills learning (Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018).

Sports events can create opportunities for athletes and participants to bond across teams and cultures. Research on Olympic-style multi-sport events has shown that athletes often value the informal, international socio-cultural encounters enabled by "village" settings and associated social programming, and some report sustaining networks and long-term friendships beyond the event (Parent et al., 2014; Stålstrøm et al., 2025). These cross-cultural ties exemplify sport events' capacity to facilitate bridging social capital—relationships that cut across social and cultural boundaries even among those who compete against one another (Chalip, 2006; Schulenkorf et al., 2011; Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018). Importantly, such bridging can emerge organically in celebratory event environments, but it can also be deliberately cultivated when events are designed to connect groups separated by conflict or social division. In sport-for-peace contexts, event organizers intentionally bring together youth from opposing groups, leveraging shared play, teamwork, and positive contact to foster interpersonal trust and friendship; even brief "team-ups" can humanize the "other" and generate bonds that persist after the event ends (Schulenkorf, 2013). Beyond elite or targeted programs, mass participatory events (e.g., marathons, charity runs, amateur tournaments) similarly place people in shared, emotionally charged settings where encouragement, conversation, and mutual recognition are common, often sparking new acquaintances and friendships while strengthening community pride (Peachey et al., 2015; Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018).

Importantly, spectators form relationships both with people they know (friends or family attending together) and with strangers. Recent research has distinguished these two interaction types: "familiar accomplice" interactions vs. "anonymous-other" interactions (Koenig-Lewis et al., 2018). Both contribute to positive experiences but in different ways. Interacting with friends/family at a game tends to heighten one's enjoyment and satisfaction with the event,

whereas interactions with unknown fellow fans—e.g., chatting with the person in the next seat or collectively chanting with the crowd—can strengthen one's identification with the team/community (Koenig-Lewis et al., 2018). Researchers have also discussed these fan relationships in terms of social capital. Attending live sports has been seen as participating in the production of relational goods—intangible benefits derived from social relationships (like companionship, recognition, and shared identity). Sports spectatorship provides an easy conversation starter and a common ground that brings people together across social divides (Rungo & Sánchez-Santos, 2022). For example, Rungo and Sánchez-Santos (2022) found that people who frequently attend sporting events tend to have larger and more diverse social networks than those who attend rarely. The stadium environment fosters interactions that can "give rise to or reinforce meaningful human ties… such as companionship and friendships," even between people of different socioeconomic backgrounds (Rungo & Sánchez-Santos, 2022). In this sense, sport events can foster bonding social capital by deepening relationships within relatively similar groups, such as fans of the same team, while also supporting bridging social capital by bringing together people across different social backgrounds or communities (Cai, 2022). This aligns with Peachey et al. (2015) and Schulenkorf (2013), whose work has suggested that sport events can reshape how residents perceive their social networks and, in turn, contribute to the development of social capital.

Volunteers play an integral role in the delivery of many sport events, and their involvement often provides opportunities for meaningful interpersonal connection. People may volunteer not only to support the event but also to meet others, become part of a team, and feel connected. Social motivations have therefore been identified as an important reason for volunteering at sport events (Zhigang et al., 2022). Scholars have often described volunteers as the "social glue" of events—

connecting different groups and facilitating interactions (Tidey, 2010, p. 1). Volunteers themselves can become nodes in social networks, linking organizers, participants, and spectators. They can be repositories of social capital, accumulating networks and trust through their engagement (Putnam et al., 2004). Kay and Bradbury (2009) similarly found that sport volunteering could strengthen social connectedness and bonding within groups while also helping volunteers develop bridging ties with people and organizations in the wider community. From a community perspective, the social relationships built by volunteers can persist and yield benefits long after the event. Volunteers who form new connections may continue engaging in community activities together, thereby strengthening local civic networks. This aligns with the notion of event legacy: while economic or infrastructural legacies are often discussed, social legacies like new friendships or community groups spawned by the event are equally important. Indeed, Chalip (2006) argued that event organizers should deliberately create opportunities for networking to enhance social benefits. For example, they could organize volunteer gatherings or community celebrations that bring participants, organizers, volunteers, and community members together. When volunteers (and other attendees) connect on a personal level, it contributes to a stock of social capital that can enhance community resilience and cooperation (Tidey, 2010).

Relational impacts of sport and non-sport events: Cultural connections

Sports events, especially large international competitions, have been widely seen as arenas for intercultural contact. Researchers have often described sport as a universal language that can transcend cultural and linguistic boundaries (Lindblom et al., 2022). Hosting or participating in international sports events can foster a sense of unity and collective identity among diverse sociocultural groups. For example, a study in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina found that an

international sports event (the Red Bull Cliff Diving Series in Mostar) created spaces for social cohesion and generated collective pride in a city divided by ethnicity (Lindblom et al., 2022). These events can bring together spectators, athletes, and communities in shared celebration, contributing to peace-building and mutual understanding in otherwise divided societies. In addition, sporting events offer opportunities for people from different cultures to interact informally, expanding their cultural perspectives. Volunteers and staff, for instance, often engage with international visitors and athletes. At the Beijing Winter Olympics, Chinese student volunteers reported engaging in formal and informal dialogues with foreign athletes (Yuan & Dervin, 2026). Such exposure allows locals to learn about other cultures and vice versa, aligning with the Sport for Development and Peace goal of "fostering intercultural exchange" through sport (Lyras & Peachey, 2011).

However, research has also underscored that sports events can produce negative cultural experiences or tensions alongside the positive. For instance, hosting global sports spectacles can also lead to cultural frictions off the field. Scholars compiling social impacts of mega-events hve noted risks of cultural commodification—local traditions and identities might be packaged as spectacles for tourists, potentially diluting their meaning. Host communities might respond with defensive attitudes, feeling the need to protect their regional culture from being stereotyped or exploited by outsiders (Máté, 2018). In the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany, for instance, researchers observed both an increased pride in local culture and instances of backlash against perceived external criticism, reflecting a mix of openness and defensiveness (Ohmann et al., 2006). Thus, while sports events can broaden cultural horizons, they may also provoke cultural tension, especially if local groups feel marginalized or if visiting groups experience discrimination.

Beyond sports events, non-sport cultural events—arts festivals, heritage celebrations, carnivals, and other community festivals—often function as key settings for intercultural relationship experiences. The festival literature has emphasized that these gatherings are intentionally structured as spaces for intercultural dialogue and exchange, bringing people from different backgrounds together through shared participation in music, dance, food, and ritual practices, which can help reduce social distance and challenge stereotypes (Oliveirra, 2024). Through collective experiences such as watching performances or taking part in activities, participants may form meaningful connections across ethnic and cultural lines, reflecting a unity in diversity dynamic that celebrates distinct heritages while also fostering a broader sense of community (see, e.g., Reis, 2018). Research on multicultural festivals has further suggested that such events can strengthen social cohesion by supporting heritage preservation and feelings of belonging, while also enabling the emergence of shared identities grounded in mutual respect (Fu et al., 2018; Kusmayadi et al., 2025; Rutagand, 2024). Because festivals operate as immersive, informal learning environments, they also expose attendees to cultural narratives and co-created moments of participation—processes linked to developing empathy and cross-cultural friendships (Giles et al., 2019). Building on this, by safeguarding each community's traditions while welcoming outsiders to participate in the celebration, festivals can cultivate respect and soften "us versus them" boundaries. In fact, some scholars have described well-organized cultural festivals as vehicles for social reconciliation, because they can create conditions where cross-cultural friendships emerge and more inclusive collective identities take shape within multicultural contexts (Oliveirra, 2024).

Collective Relational Experiences: Shared affect and togetherness

Whereas the preceding sections examine interpersonal relationships and cultural connections, this section addresses relationality at a different analytical level. Collective relational experiences refer to moments in which participants experience themselves as part of a shared "we," often through common attention, synchronized action, ritual, emotion, or celebration. Unlike friendship or networking, these experiences do not require participants to form identifiable or lasting interpersonal ties; they may emerge temporarily among teammates, spectators, volunteers, or host-community members. Concepts such as collective effervescence and communitas help explain this emergent sense of group-level togetherness.

Sport events may generate collective relational experiences among athletes, spectators, volunteers, organizers, and community members. These experiences involve shared emotions and a sense of togetherness that emerge during the event. Research on sport events has highlighted their capacity to generate collective social experiences, including intensified community feeling, togetherness, and close forms of camaraderie that may be experienced as "family-like" (Guo et al., 2024; Guschwan, 2018). Athletes have frequently described their teams as a "second family," emphasizing the trust, mutual care, and shared identity that develop through repeated training, travel, and competition. These relational features have commonly been understood through the concept of team cohesion, which refers to the dynamic tendency of a group to remain bonded and united while pursuing collective goals and/or fulfilling members' affective needs (Carron et al., 1989). Cohesion has also consistently been linked to important team outcomes, with evidence showing meaningful positive associations between cohesion and performance in sport (Carron et al., 2002) and broader group-functioning benefits discussed across sport group-dynamics research (Carron & Brawley, 2000). Related work has extended beyond cohesion to examine the sense of

community within sports teams to explain how belonging is cultivated in locker rooms and on the field. Warner and Dixon (2011) probed former collegiate athletes and found five interrelated conditions that fostered a community-like atmosphere on teams: administrative consideration (support and fair treatment), equity in decision-making, opportunities for athlete leadership, social spaces that enable interaction, and competition as a shared pursuit of common goals. These relational conditions matter because they shape athletes' experiences and their willingness to remain involved. Athletes who feel strongly connected to teammates and embedded in a supportive team environment tend to report greater satisfaction and personal growth through sport (Warner, 2015), and such bonds can strengthen commitment to the team or program. Importantly, the relevance of "community" dynamics extends beyond athletes: Kellett and Warner (2011), for example, show that retention among sport officials could depend heavily on whether individuals felt connected to peers, supported by administrators, and part of a group with shared interests—suggesting that belonging could provide resilience even in roles that are often stressful or isolating.

In addition, spectators and fans often experience intense togetherness at sports events, especially when a decisive play or victory triggers a sudden, shared emotional upswing. In such moments, crowds can erupt in synchronized celebration that sweeps individuals into a common affective state—an experience Durkheim (1915) conceptualized as collective effervescence (Koo et al., 2025). Thonhauser and Wetzels (2020) similarly noted that a decisive goal could carry spectators into a surge of collective joy that briefly overrides individual self-control. From an interaction ritual perspective, these high-energy episodes involve the mutual exchange of attention and emotion, producing collective euphoria and an elevated shared mood (Collins, 2014; Guo et al., 2024). These emotionally charged episodes can also take on a ritual-like quality that reinforces shared identity and a sense of "we-ness" among supporters (Koo et al., 2025). Practices such as

chanting, singing, and coordinated cheering can transform dispersed individuals into a cohesive unit, deepening feelings of belonging and solidarity (Doidge et al., 2020). Similarly, research on football fandom has shown that fans may form meaningful bonds not only with the team, but also with one another, producing communities sustained through shared traditions, collective practices, and emotional attachment (Guschwan, 2018). Consistent with this, Gantz (2013) suggested that spectators' repeated physical presence at events could strengthen relational bonds, showing how the event setting itself might help build interpersonal connections and collective identification.

Beyond the immediate event atmosphere, watching and engaging with sports alongside others—whether with family, friends, or within a broader community—can support mutual understanding, deepen relationships, and build social skills, potentially expanding access to social resources (Keyes et al., 2023). At a wider level, collectively rallying around a team, shared cause, or national pride can intensify cohesion and reinforce community or national solidarity (Guo et al., 2024). Importantly, such effects can translate into future engagement, as stronger felt togetherness has been associated with greater intentions to return and sustained loyalty to a team or event (Jahn et al., 2018).

Sports events depend not only on players and fans but also on a large volunteer workforce that helps plan, coordinate, and deliver the event. Volunteers, too, can develop strong collective experiences and social bonds through their shared roles. Volunteering for sport events has often been motivated by anticipated positive social emotions and relationships (Dickson et al., 2017), and volunteers have commonly valued the opportunity to work alongside others, meet people, form friendships, and feel part of a team (Clary et al., 1998; Kim, 2018). Evidence from pre-/post-event designs suggested that volunteers' perceived sense of community and belonging tended to increase from the pre-event period (e.g., training/orientation) to after the event (Jia et al., 2023; Kerwin et

al., 2017; Lachance et al., 2022). This matters because a sense of community has been linked to key volunteer outcomes, including stronger commitment and greater satisfaction—supporting the idea that volunteer training and management can be designed to intentionally cultivate connection among volunteers (Costa et al., 2006).

Sports events can also generate forms of togetherness that extend beyond immediate participants to include local residents and the wider host community. Sport management and sociological scholarship suggested that events—ranging from community tournaments to mega-events—can be leveraged to strengthen social cohesion, build community networks, and intensify shared identities and collective pride among residents (see, e.g., Chalip, 2006; Misener & Mason, 2006; Waitt, 2003; Inoue et al., 2018). Empirical work with local attendees also has shown that residents' perceived social impacts of events have been closely tied to the event's social atmosphere (e.g., feelings of social camaraderie) and related evaluations of the event experience (Inoue & Havard, 2014). Building on this, Zhou and Kaplanidou (2018) found that active participation in a local running event fostered social capital: bonding ties were strengthened as people trained and took part together, while bridging connections also emerged through interactions among participants from different backgrounds. Taken together, the literature has shown that sport events can bring people together in meaningful ways. Across athletes, spectators, volunteers, residents, and other participants, these events often create opportunities for social connection, allowing people to move beyond their usual social boundaries and experience moments of shared unity.

While the previous themes show that sport and non-sport events can foster different forms of social, cultural, individual, and collective relationships, they do not fully explain the deeper and more meaningful relational experiences that people may encounter during sport events. More

specifically, this literature has often identified that relationships, cultural exchange, belonging, or collective togetherness may emerge, but it has provided less insight into how such encounters are experienced as deeply affective, responsive, or transformative. Therefore, sport scholars have recently turned to Hartmut Rosa's theory of resonance to explore these deeper and transformative forms of relationship in sport contexts (e.g., Larsen, 2021; Plard, 2023). Besides helping to examine deeper forms of relationality, this framework also offers a way to understand the broader social, organizational, and sporting conditions that may enable, shape, or limit these relationships within athletic settings. Therefore, in the next section, I explain Rosa's framework and show how it provides the theoretical foundation for this thesis's analysis of relational encounters at the AWG.

Resonance theory

Hartmut Rosa (2016/2019) introduced resonance in response to modernity's logics, such as dynamic stabilization, social acceleration, competition, and their resulting alienation. He argued that modern societies have a serious issue with their dominant space-time regime, relying on dynamic stabilization to sustain their structures. This requires constant growth, acceleration, and innovation to maintain the socio-economic status quo (Rosa, 2005/2013; Rosa et al., 2017). Besides dynamic stabilization, pressures such as social acceleration and the triple-A approach to make the world and its resources more available, accessible, and attainable cause alienation, where the world feels within reach but unresponsive, leading to a loss of self-efficacy, intrinsic connection, and an instrumental approach to the world (Rosa, 2018-a, 2016/2019). As Charles Taylor stated, "This world doesn't 'speak to' us or 'answer' our attempts to find meaning" (Taylor, 2021, p. 43). This instrumental approach to life can result in psychological pathologies like burnout and depression (Montero & Torres, 2020; Rosa, 2016/2019). In response to alienation, there arises

a critical need for resonance, as alienation endures when the axes of resonance between the self and the world fall silent (Rosa, 2016/2019). Rosa's concept of resonance therefore helps outline the conditions of a meaningful or fulfilled life, understood as a relationship to the world in which the world is experienced as responsive rather than silent (Fuchs, 2020; Montero & Torres, 2020). Within this form of world-relation, the self and the world can enter into a mutual and responsive connection (Fuchs, 2020; Montero & Torres, 2020). Resonance can be understood as a distinctive form of relation that arises between the self and the self, including the embodied self, or between the self and other people, objects, or dimensions of the world. A relationship becomes resonant when it involves four key elements: 1) Affection: the individual feels addressed by something encountered in the world and is emotionally affected, moved, or gripped by it. 2) Self-efficacious response: the individual responds to this affection through an active movement toward the encountered person, object, or aspect of the world, seeking to engage with it, touch it, or influence it in some way. 3) Transformation: This interaction involves a dynamic, bidirectional process where both the individual and the external entity are transformed to some extent. 4) Uncontrollability: Resonance is inherently open-ended, meaning it is unpredictable and uncontrollable. It is impossible to foresee its occurrence, and if it does occur, the outcome or result of the transformation cannot be predicted or controlled (Rosa, 2016/2019).

Features of resonance

Even though some relational concepts such as social capital or social networking concern the predictable, strategic, and often controlled use of relationships (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011; Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000), Rosa (2016/2019) acknowledged the uncontrollable and unpredictable nature of genuine relationships, emphasizing that resonance cannot be fully planned,

instrumentalized, or guaranteed in advance, but instead emerges through openness, mutual responsiveness, and the possibility of being affected by others and the world. Resonance is about the depth, affective, and transformative potential of relationships (Rosa, 2016/2019), not the functional aspects of relationships (Putnam, 2000), the benefits derived from social relationships (Bourdieu, 1986), or the efficiency with which networks facilitate the flow of information and resources (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011).

Resonant encounter occurs when two bodies interact without being so interconnected that one's movement mechanically triggers the other. It happens when one body's vibration stimulates the other to produce its own frequency, allowing both to "speak with their own voice" and amplify their effects. This requires self-efficacy, ensuring autonomous and mutually enriching interactions (Rosa, 2016/2019). Resonance cannot be defined by specific experiences or activities, as it represents a unique form of relationship (Rosa, 2020). While activities like training with teammate or talking with other spectators at a sport event are social interactions, resonance is about the profound connection and the quality and depth of the relationship in any situation, not the activities themselves (e.g., training with teammate or talking with other spectators). Desiring all our relationships to be resonant overlooks their inherent inaccessibility. Resonant experiences are defined by response and a reciprocal relationship, where both parties speak in their own often unmanageable voice. This inherent unpredictability means the response may fail, making attempts to control or maximize resonant experiences counterproductive, as repeated exposure can dull their impact (Rosa, 2016/2019). Resonance should be clearly distinguished from linear interactions that produce predictable effects (Rosa, 2016/2019). Unlike resonance, where entities develop unique vibrations, concepts like social capital, social networking, or social interaction often yield more predictable outcomes. For instance, when volunteers at a sport event build connections with

organizers, other volunteers, or community members, these interactions may lead to anticipated outcomes such as future volunteering opportunities, access to information, expanded networks, or stronger community involvement. While these outcomes are socially valuable, they differ from resonance because they are more closely tied to identifiable goals, resources, and expected benefits rather than an open-ended and uncontrollable relation to the world.

For Rosa (2016/2019), resonance is not a matter of harmony, fusion, or sameness; instead, it emerges when distinct entities remain different from one another while entering into a responsive relationship. Unlike harmony, which implies smooth compatibility and lack of conflict, resonance involves meaningful interactions that often include tension and disagreement. Fusion suggests merging elements into a single, unified entity, losing distinct identities, while resonance maintains distinctiveness and engages with unique qualities. Unity implies a cohesive and uniform structure, whereas resonance involves a dynamic and relational connection where differences are essential for engagement. Additionally, consonance is not synonymous with resonance, and dissonance is not its opposite; rather, dissonance is a necessary element of resonance (Rosa, 2016/2019). In contrast, concepts such as social capital, social networking, and social integration value unity, fusion, and harmony. These relationships prioritize seamless integration, compatibility, and consonance, allowing for greater control and optimization, thus reinforcing connections and access to resources. In addition, Rosa (2020) rejected Haugaard's (2020) "field-habitus-resonance" concept, which posits that resonance occurs when an individual's habitus fits their social field. For Rosa, resonance inherently involves contradiction, friction, and disagreement. Another feature of resonance is its subjectivity; meaning that what resonates with one person may not resonate with another (Haugaard, 2020; Rosa, 2020). For instance, soccer might resonate for some but be

alienating for others. This ties to the idea that nothing can guarantee resonance or rule it out completely (Rosa, 2020).

Resonance as a holistic framework

Resonance offers a comprehensive framework for examining relational encounters across the self-axis (embodied), horizontal (social), diagonal (material), and vertical (existential) dimensions (Rosa, 2016/2019, 2020). The self-axis refers to one's relationship with oneself, including embodied forms of self-relation—for example, moments in which thought, feeling, and bodily movement become attuned during activities such as playing tennis, or when bodily needs align with personal aspirations and values (Rosa, 2016/2019, 2020). The horizontal axis concerns relationships with other people (e.g., teammates, coaches, friends, and community members), the diagonal axis refers to relations with objects, tools, and artifacts, and the vertical axis points to connections with broader existential horizons such as nature, art, history, or the cosmos (Rosa, 2016/2019). Thus, resonance provides a holistic understanding of relationships, covering human connections with the self, others, objects, and existential concerns.

Another feature of resonance is its universal applicability and relevance to individuals of all social and cultural backgrounds. Rosa (2020) countered Fuchs' (2020) claim that resonance is mainly relevant to privileged, white middle-class Europeans, arguing that resonance can be universally experienced. For instance, anyone can feel a profound connection with nature or friends, irrespective of race or social status. While resonance is universal, other relational concepts, like social capital, face inclusion criticism. For example, Bourdieu argued social capital mainly benefits privileged groups (Field, 2008), and Woolcock (2001) noted the poor rely on bonding social capital to "get by," while the non-poor use bridging social capital to "get ahead."

Resonance has the capability to intersect and interplay with other social relationship concepts. Social integration and social inclusion, for instance, can be viewed as potential consequences of resonance, highlighting its "transformative" element. Relational experiences are essential to achieve social integration and inclusion, as they facilitate individuals' connection and engagement with their communities (see, e.g., Alemu et al., 2021; Jung et al., 2022; Kısar Koramaz, 2014; Liamputtong, 2022; Puschner, 2023; Ware et al., 2007; Webster & Carter, 2007; Wong et al., 2014). Since resonance fundamentally involves relationships, it can be seen as a precondition for social integration and inclusion. The final point illustrating that resonance is a comprehensive framework is that subjects can experience resonance in various ways. Subjects can resonate with other entities through immediate, extraordinary experiences or routine actions in repetitive practices, known as 'second-order resonance' (Rosa, 2020). In contrast, concepts like bonding social capital may require multiple interactions over time to build strong connections, trust, and solidarity among group members, which means these connections develop gradually through repeated engagements.

Application of resonance theory in the context of sports

The resonance framework enables us to investigate relationships in sport using two broad approaches: 1) Resistance to Modernity's Logics: It allows us to investigate sport as a platform that sometimes resists modernity’s logics and helps individuals to resonate with the world. For instance, in response to the social acceleration people experience in their daily lives, engaging in sport can be a moment of deceleration and can help improve the quality of the relationships (Paintendre et al., 2023; Rosa, 2016/2019). 2) Impact of Modernity on Sport: Sport itself has been significantly influenced by the logics of modernity, such as dynamic stabilization, acceleration,

sportification, and the pursuit of better performance, high-performance and professionalized sport contexts. For instance, in professionalized sports like those played in the Olympics, the emphasis on sportification, better performance, and competition is critical. Athletes are expected to continually improve (dynamic stabilization) and pursue ever-higher performance, a pressure that can intensify acceleration and contribute to physical and psychological fatigue, thereby making experiences of alienation more likely. Conversely, when the logics of modernity are not dominant, athletes may decelerate and the chance for feeling a deep connection with the world might be higher. This is evident in sports not focused on accumulating physical or economic capital (Rosa, 2016/2019), where competition and sportification are not critical (Larsen, 2021), individuals are not seeking higher rankings or achievements (Frydendal & Thing, 2024), and athletes engage with nature rather than structured, modern facilities (Plard, 2023).

In the modern society, the focus on optimization and growth diminishes the resonant qualities of school, work, and family, making sports increasingly significant as a source of resonance (Rosa, 2016/2019). Athletic activity not only creates fields of practice for resonant relationships with the self and the material world but also establishes specific social and existential resonant connections (Rosa, 2016/2019). The self/embodied axis of resonance in sport is expressed through a responsive relationship to one's own body—where the body is encountered as something that "has a voice" and can be felt as a living counterpart rather than a mute instrument. In this sense, many sporting practices function as a dialogue between body and mind: athletes often describe physical activity as a way of "feeling oneself," and they may return from training or competition situated differently in the world—mentally freer and bodily enlivened or fatigued in a qualitatively distinct way. This self-axis becomes especially visible in how athletic skill cannot be reduced to sheer willpower or technical control: in ball sports, for example, the "perfect" hit or

coordinated movement cannot be forced instrumentally—when the resonant connection between head and hand/foot is absent, performance falters because "the will" can even block the body (Rosa, 2016/2019).

Resonance in sport can arise on the social axis when relationships become responsive, affectively charged, and potentially transformative—that is, when people do not merely coordinate or "get along," but genuinely affect one another and answer back in a living, two-way relation (Rosa, 2016/2019). In team settings, this can appear in moments of "flow" where athletes attune to one another so deeply that interaction seems to run ahead of deliberate thought: bodies anticipate, adjust, and create together in a prereflexive rhythm, as if the group were temporarily acting like a single, responsive organism (Rosa, 2016/2019). Importantly, these episodes are not reducible to technical efficiency or planned execution. Their distinctiveness lies in the felt vitality of the interaction—something emergent that cannot be fully scripted, controlled, or guaranteed, which echoes Rosa's emphasis on the uncontrollability of resonance (Rosa, 2016/2019). Social resonance in sport also extends beyond teammates. It may develop among spectators (e.g., shared excitement, chants, collective emotions) and between audiences and those on the field as mutual responsiveness circulates—crowd energy "moves" athletes, athletes' performances "answer" the crowd, and a shared emotional current forms through reciprocal influence (Rosa, 2016/2019). More broadly, sporting events create many relational "contact zones" where resonance can emerge between athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, managers, mission staff, families, and community members—especially in informal or semi-structured spaces such as dining halls, dormitories, common areas, fan zones, cultural programs, and social activities. In such settings, the event's social architecture can multiply opportunities for encounters that feel meaningful and connecting, even when they are not part of the formal competition itself.

On the material (diagonal) axis, resonance in sport can be understood as a responsive relationship with things and material environments that "answer back" through practice, meaning that the athlete does not merely use objects instrumentally but enters into a kind of dialogue with them. In many sports, equipment can function as an extension of the body, as with a racket, skis, surfboard, skateboard, or bicycle, while in equestrian sport a horse can become an embodied partner. Athletes learn to "listen" to subtle feedback concerning weight, grip, flex, vibration, and timing, so that action becomes a reciprocal exchange rather than simple control (Rosa, 2016/2019). Likewise, material resonance can arise through embodied attunement to surfaces and settings such as the pitch, snow, waves, ring, track, or any sport-specific field of action because these environments are experienced differently through sport practice than in everyday life, shaping how athletes move, perceive, and feel in the world (Rosa, 2016/2019). These examples illustrate the broader point: material resonance is not limited to particular sports or objects. It can emerge anywhere in and around sport and sport events when people, including athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, and spectators, become responsively attuned to the material world that enables the event, including its spaces, tools, technologies, and infrastructure, in ways that are affectively meaningful and potentially transformative. Finally, the existential (vertical) axis of resonance in sport concerns moments when sporting practice opens athletes and other event participants to wider existential horizons (e.g., nature) so that the encounter feels larger than the immediate task, outcome, or performance (Rosa, 2016/2019). Outdoor and "immersive" athletic practices are especially illustrative here because they place the moving body in sustained contact with landscapes and elemental conditions (e.g., snow, mountains, forests, rain), making the environment more than a backdrop and more like a horizon that can be experienced as meaningful and affecting (Plard, 2023). For instance, in Plard's (2023) discussion of ultra-endurance trail

running, athletes' narratives explicitly framed practice as a way of reconnecting to themselves through a relationship with wilderness, ranging from "the bottom of the sea" to "the top of the mountains."

Previous studies have shown that Rosa's framework is valuable in sport and physical education (PE) for shifting analysis from "what people do" (participation, performance) to how people relate to the world through sport and for diagnosing how late-modern pressures (e.g., acceleration, optimization, competition) shape those relations as either resonant or alienated. Across this literature, three core lessons stand out. First, research has consistently demonstrated that sport and PE are deeply entangled with the temporal conditions of late modernity, and that resonance-oriented analysis becomes especially powerful when it begins with time. For instance, work on elite student-athletes has shown how acceleration becomes normalized and individualized ("no time to waste"; "it is what it is"), such that optimization appears inevitable and structural time pressure is reframed as personal responsibility (Mateu et al., 2025). In PE settings, similar dynamics appear, as students can experience school life as accelerated and evaluation-heavy while valuing PE precisely because it offers a rare "pause button" from an otherwise hectic week (Frydendal & Thing, 2024). Second, scholarship has shown that resonance in sport and PE becomes analytically visible when researchers take embodiment and materiality seriously by tracing how practices cultivate or mute responsive relationships with the body, space, objects, and environments. Parkour research is especially instructive here. Van Kaldenkerken (2017) used resonance and alienation as normative tools to assess whether parkour in Berlin resists or reproduces late modern imperatives of dynamic stabilization, including acceleration, competition, and commodification. He argued that the playful and non-instrumental reappropriation of urban structures can generate resonant relationships among the body, self, and city. Larsen's (2021)

ethnography deepened this account by demonstrating that parkour's potential lies less in speed and more in tactile, sensory dialogue with concrete and steel, with wounds and bodily traces operating as identity-constituting signs of an ongoing call-and-response relation with the environment. Larsen (2021) further showed that resonance is not only "in the body" but also in place-making and shared worlds: repeated returns to spots accumulate stories, memories, and belonging, extending resonance beyond material engagement toward social and existential registers. Similar insights have appeared in nature-oriented work. For instance, Plard (2023) showed how trail running can foster active presence and wonder, and how resonance can be understood as a "liaison" where runner and landscape mutually affect and transform one another. PE didactic studies have also shown that experiences associated with resonance are not limited to "slow" practices. Despite its rhythmic intensity and optimization logic, step fitness may generate deceleration through sensory learning, self-regulation, and attentiveness to bodily feelings (Paintendre et al., 2023). Work on ocean-based PE and first-time nature walking reinforces a crucial point: resonance is uneven, profile-dependent, and reversible. Students may oscillate between alienation, resistance, and fragile "chords" of resonance depending on how the environment touches them (e.g., cold water as hostility or later as meaningful contrast) and how equipment mediates contact, efficacy, and perception (Gottsmann et al., 2026; Paintendre et al., 2026). Third, prior studies have shown that applying Rosa's framework to sport and PE is not merely descriptive. It also provides a critical and normative perspective that helps scholars consider which forms of sport, coaching, and pedagogy might support "better" relationships with the world without turning resonance into another performance target. Several works have explicitly used Rosa to critique how late-modern sport institutions drift toward dynamic stabilization and then proposed alternative orientations. In youth sport, acceleration appears as intensification, professionalization, and commercialization

that can generate alienation through stress, burnout, and misalignment with young people's developmental needs; resonance becomes a horizon for reimagining practice designs and relationships across bodily-material, social, and existential dimensions (Bjørndal & Espedalen, 2026). In coaching, Reinold (2026) drew on Rosa's concepts of dynamic stabilization, alienation, and resonance to question mainstream ideas of "effective coaching" under late modern conditions. He argued that coaching focused heavily on outcomes and optimization can deepen alienation and contribute to athletes' psychological distress. As an alternative, he proposed "resonant coaching," understood as a responsive relationship among the coach, athlete, and sport that involves affection, self-efficacy, transformation, and semicontrollability and helps athletes develop and express their "own voice." Garbini's (2022) thesis extended the framework into organizational coaching by treating resonance as an evaluative standard and identifying concrete "entry points" (recognizing alienation, rethinking efficacy, developing a different relation to time, problematizing leadership), while noting that coaching programs often do not explicitly cultivate resonance. Other scholarship has highlighted how late-modern sport cultures reorganize entire sporting lives: Quidu et al. (2026) showed how minimalist athletes attempt to detach from alienating intermediaries (devices, equipment accumulation, prescriptive programs, mass events) to re-open resonant relations framed as reconnection and liberation. Finally, more methodologically oriented contributions have showed that resonance research must resist the temptation to "capture" resonance as a stable variable: critical incident work in skateboarding has documented that resonance and alienation are dialectically intertwined (success after struggle, injuries and failures, post-peak "deserts"), while event-focused work on ultra-trail start zones has illustrated how resonance can be staged and intensified through atmosphere and ritual—yet unevenly experienced and potentially entangled

with commercialization and “engineered” mirages of resonance (Lancelevé & Plard, 2026; Visioli et al., 2026).

Research questions

What we learn from the literature reviewed above is that relationality in sport events should not be approached only as the presence of social interaction, friendship, or participation. Sport event scholarship has shown that events can foster social, cultural connections, while Rosa’s theory of resonance offers a more precise lens for examining the quality and depth of these relations, including how people relate to others, cultures, places, their bodies, and the event itself in affective, responsive, and potentially transformative ways. At the same time, this literature has shown that such relations are shaped by specific temporal, spatial, embodied, material, social, and institutional conditions, and may be enabled, intensified, constrained, or blocked by broader pressures such as acceleration, competition, optimization, control, and instrumental rationality. These insights help refine the research questions of this thesis by directing attention to the AWG not simply as a sport event that may generate connections, but as a particular event setting in which deeper relational experiences may become possible or limited.

Research Question 1: How do the Arctic Winter Games serve as an alternative model of sporting events by fostering conditions conducive to social resonance, and what elements and factors indicate this possibility?

Because this study relies on secondary data, the aim of this first research question is not to capture resonance as an immediate lived moment, but to examine the elements and conditions that may indicate the possibility of resonance within the Arctic Winter Games. In addressing this

question, I focus specifically on the social axis of resonance and on key elements such as affection, response, transformation, and uncontrollability, as well as factors that may be understood as preconditions of resonance, including openness, curiosity, and vulnerability. This question is important because social relationships are central to how people experience and value sport events. As the literature reviewed above has shown, sport events can foster friendship, belonging, sociability, community attachment, social capital, and collective togetherness. These social dimensions are often part of what motivates people to participate in, volunteer for, support, or return to sport events. However, much of the sport event literature has examined social relationships by focusing on their forms, functions, or outcomes, such as the creation of social networks, social capital, community attachment, volunteer engagement, participant satisfaction, or broader event impacts (see, e.g., Gibson et al., 2014; Kaplanidou, 2012; Misener & Mason, 2006; Taks, 2013; Uhrich & Benkenstein, 2010). These approaches are valuable because they show that sport events can generate important social benefits. However, they tell us less about the felt depth and quality of these encounters: how participants experience moments of openness, mutual response, emotional connection, transformation, or being meaningfully touched by others. Exploring social resonance therefore expands our understanding of social relationships in sport events by shifting attention from whether social connections occur or what benefits they produce to how these encounters are lived, experienced, and made possible.

This is particularly relevant for community youth sport events such as the AWG, which are not organized solely around competition or athletic achievement, but also around social, cultural, educational, and community purposes. If sport events are increasingly expected to generate social value, then it becomes important to understand not only their measurable outcomes, but also the conditions that may make deeper relational experiences possible. This does not mean

that resonance can be planned or produced directly, as Rosa (2016/2019) emphasized that resonance is inherently uncontrollable and cannot be manufactured at will. However, drawing on Rosa's (2020) concept of spaces of resonance, this question examines how certain conditions such as temporal, spatial, organizational, and psychological may make resonance more likely. In this sense, the first research question explores how the AWG may serve as an alternative model of sporting events by examining both the elements through which social resonance may become visible in participants' accounts and the conditions that may make such resonance possible, even if it cannot be guaranteed.

Research Question 2: How do the Arctic Winter Games mitigate dynamics associated with modern sport or professionalized sport events that may function as resonance blockers?

What we already know about the AWG is that the event can foster important relational experiences, including friendship, cultural exchange, social interaction and networking, community ties, and identity formation (e.g., Bertet et al., 2024; Fuchs, 2023, 2025; Mahadevan & Ren, 2019; Thomsen et al., 2018). However, we still know less about how the event may resist or soften modern sport or professionalized sport events dynamics that can limit the possibility of deeper relational experiences. This second research question addresses this issue by drawing on Rosa's (2018b) concept of resonance killers or resonance blockers to examine how the AWG may sustain conditions more favorable to resonance.

Although resonance cannot be engineered or guaranteed, it becomes more likely when resonance-blocking conditions are reduced (Rosa, 2018b, 2020). In Rosa's work, these blockers are linked to institutional pressures that prioritize acceleration, competition, performance, and instrumental relations aimed at securing and expanding resources (Rosa, 2016/2019, 2018b).

Resonance may also be weakened by psychic states such as fear, shame, burnout, and anxiety (Rosa, 2018b). In sport, similar dynamics have been identified in instrumental and outcome-oriented rationality, efficiency-driven stress, and the quantification of bodily experience (Reinold, 2026); in the intensification, professionalization, and constant evaluation of youth sport (Bjørndal & Espedalen, 2026); and in tracking practices, parametric optimization, and objectifying approaches to exercise and the body (Rosa et al., 2026). Related studies have also shown how sportification, commercialization, and objectification may weaken the conditions for resonance in sport (e.g., Larsen, 2021; Rosa, 2016/2019). Against this background, the second research question asks how the AWG may mitigate resonance-blocking dynamics associated with modern and professionalized sport, with particular attention to sportification, hyper-competition, and instrumental rationality.

The conditions examined in Article 1 and the resonance blockers examined in Article 2 can both be placed under the broader umbrella of conditions shaping the possibility of resonance. However, they operate at different analytical levels and perform different functions. Article 1 examines dimensions of the immediate event environment—organizational objectives and spatial, temporal, and psychological conditions—and considers how configurations within these dimensions may facilitate or constrain social resonance. Spaces of resonance therefore describe event configurations in which resonance may become possible. Article 2 adopts a more structural and critical focus by examining broader logics associated with modern and professionalized sport—particularly sportification, hyper-competition, and instrumental rationality—that can shape or weaken those event configurations. Resonance blockers are therefore not simply the negative equivalent of spaces of resonance. Although all resonance blockers can broadly be understood as conditions affecting resonance, not every unfavorable event condition necessarily constitutes a

resonance blocker in the more specific structural sense used in Article 2. For example, a compressed schedule may reflect pressures toward performance, optimization, and efficiency and therefore connect the two analyses, whereas the distance between venues may constitute a spatial obstacle without necessarily expressing a broader professionalized sport logic. The separate treatment of these concepts is therefore warranted by their different analytical functions: Article 1 asks what social resonance may look like at the AWG and how immediate event conditions make it more or less possible, whereas Article 2 asks what broader pressures threaten those possibilities and how the AWG tempers or resists them.

Research Question 3: What forms of relational encounters do athletes experience during and after the Arctic Winter Games?

Previous research has shown that the AWG is relationally significant, especially in terms of friendship, networking, community, and identity (e.g., Bertet et al., 2024; Fuchs, 2023; Mahadevan & Ren, 2019). Building on this work, the third research question asks what forms of relational encounters athletes experience within the liminoid time-space of the Games and how these encounters may continue into the post-liminoid period. Rather than focusing only on familiar forms of social connection, such as friendship or social capital, this question approaches relationality more broadly as a range of meaningful connections with others, cultures, communities, and the event itself. It also considers both individual and collective dimensions of relational experience, from personal feelings of deep relationships to shared moments of togetherness and belonging. Finally, by extending the analysis beyond the event itself, this question asks whether relational encounters remain temporary and bounded by the Games or whether they leave post-liminoid legacies, such as ongoing relationships.

Roadmap of the article-based chapters

Table 1 presents the alignment between the thesis research questions and the three article chapters, including their publication status.

Table 1

Alignment of the Research Questions with the Thesis Articles

Research question	Corresponding article/chapter	Publication status and outlet
How do the Arctic Winter Games serve as an alternative model of sporting events by fostering conditions conducive to social resonance, and what elements and factors indicate this possibility?	Chapter 4 (Article 1): "Sporting events and social resonance: The Arctic Winter Games model"	Published in Sport, Ethics and Philosophy, 20(1), 174–193
How do the Arctic Winter Games mitigate dynamics associated with modern sport or professionalized sport events that may function as resonance blockers?	Chapter 5 (Article 2): "The Arctic Winter Games: A subversive model of sporting event amid resonance blockers"	Published Online First in the International Review for the Sociology of Sport on August 17, 2026
What forms of relational encounters do athletes experience during and after the Arctic Winter Games?	Chapter 6 (Article 3): "The Arctic Winter Games as a liminoid configuration: Exploring relational experiences in a community youth sport event"	Published in Societies, 16(8), Article 254

Together, these chapters develop a layered analysis of relationality at the AWG. Article 1 identifies how immediate event conditions may facilitate or constrain social resonance. Article 2 examines the broader institutional and sporting logics that may threaten those possibilities and how the AWG tempers or resists them. Article 3 then examines the individual and collective relational encounters

experienced during the Games and considers how some of these relationships may continue beyond the event as post-liminoid legacies.

Chapter 3: Methodology

1. Introduction

This thesis examines the Arctic Winter Games as a community youth event that may foster meaningful relationships by (1) identifying elements that indicate resonance and the spaces or conditions that may make resonant encounters possible, (2) analyzing how the AWG resists or tempers common resonance blockers, and (3) exploring the individual and collective relational experiences during and after the event. This chapter outlines the methodological approach used to address these aims. It introduces the two parent study datasets on which the thesis is based, describes the overall research design and rationale for secondary data analysis (SDA), and explains the procedures used to select, manage, and analyze data across documents, interviews, open-ended survey responses, and observation materials. The chapter also clarifies the limitations that shape the scope of the claims advanced in the thesis and details strategies used to support analytical rigour and trustworthiness, including steps taken to address key considerations in secondary analysis (e.g., theoretical alignment and data fit). Finally, it discusses ethical considerations related to secondary use of data and participant confidentiality.

2. Overall research design

Epistemologically, this thesis is grounded in a constructivist stance. Constructivist qualitative research assumes that meaning is not simply discovered as an objective reality, but is produced, interpreted, and situated within particular social, cultural, historical, and experiential contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Schwandt, 1994). In this sense, participants' accounts and organizational texts are not treated as neutral reflections of reality, but as meaningful interpretations shaped by participants' experiences, roles, and locations, as well as by the broader context of the Arctic Winter Games. This stance is appropriate for the present thesis because the

study does not seek to measure resonance as a fixed variable or to establish causal relationships between event features and outcomes. Rather, it examines how participants and organizations make sense of relationships, cultural exchange, belonging, community, competition, and event values, and how these meanings may indicate the possibility of resonance within the AWG. At the same time, the thesis draws on a critical theoretical sensibility. Here, critical theory is used as an interpretive orientation rather than as a separate epistemological position. Critical qualitative inquiry relates participants' meanings and experiences to the broader social, cultural, historical, and institutional conditions within which they are produced (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). In this thesis, this sensibility directs attention to how logics associated with modern sport and modernity, including acceleration, instrumental rationality, professionalization, hypercompetition, and pressures centered on performance, shape the conditions for relational encounters. It therefore enables the analysis to examine not only how participants experience and interpret the AWG, but also how wider institutional and cultural logics may enable, constrain, block, or transform possibilities for relationality. The thesis thus combines a constructivist understanding of meaning-making with a critical concern for the broader conditions that shape those meanings and experiences.

Methodologically, this thesis adopted a qualitative case study design, with the AWG constituting the case. Case study research is particularly appropriate for developing an in-depth and context-sensitive understanding of a bounded phenomenon within the context in which it occurs (Stake, 1995). The case was defined organizationally and contextually by the AWG as a recurring circumpolar sport event characterized by the intersection of sport competition, cultural exchange, and social interaction. Empirically, the thesis focused primarily on the 2023 edition of the Games, while also drawing on retrospective accounts from former athletes who participated in

earlier editions. The AWG was examined both for its particular characteristics and as a case through which broader insights could be developed about relational experiences and the possibilities of community youth sport events. In this respect, the thesis can be understood as an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995), in which examination of a particular case contributes to understanding a broader issue. The case study design is also compatible with the use of multiple forms of evidence, which in this thesis included interviews, open-ended survey responses, organizational documents, and participant observation.

Within this case study design, the thesis used qualitative secondary data analysis to re-examine materials from two parent datasets, with thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) serving as the primary analytic method. Together, these datasets enabled a multi-study, multi-source approach: the thesis re-examined the materials through theoretical lenses that were not central to the original study designs to generate new interpretations about elements and spaces of resonance, resonance blockers, and relational experiences at the AWG.

3. Data sources and study descriptions

The two parent datasets provided complementary vantage points: Study 1 offered a multi-method view of the 2023 AWG (organizational documents, interviews, survey responses, and participant observation), whereas Study 2 consisted of semi-structured interviews focused on how former AWG athletes returning as leaders understood and enacted "giving back" to the AWG and northern communities.

3.1 Study 1: Study description and data generation

Primary Study 1 drew on the dataset "Arctic Winter Games 2023 – Arctic Youth, Culture, and Environment" (Dallaire et al., 2024). The study adopted a multi-method design, combining document analysis, semi-structured interviews, an online survey (including open-ended questions), and participant observation. Data collection and analysis were undertaken by an international research team of seven scholars and graduate students based in France, Canada, and Denmark. Broadly, the project examined social sustainability at the Games with attention to social relationships (individual and collective), identity and belonging, cultural exchange, as well as athletic experiences and environmental dimensions of the event.

The organizational document analysis included materials published by the 2023 Host Society and the Arctic Winter Games International Committee (AWGIC), drawn from publicly accessible webpages and documents (including final reports from previous Games). In addition, documents from the 2020 Host Society made available through an online OneDrive folder were consulted. The study involves 36 interviewees in several AWG roles: athletes (n = 29), cultural performers (n = 4), a volunteer (n = 1), the 2023 Host Society's general manager (n = 1), and a mission team member serving as a Chef de Mission (n = 1). Most were interviewed in individual conversations, while some athletes took part in small-group interviews of two or three participants. Recruitment combined purposive and convenience approaches. Some interviews were arranged in advance through mission team contacts, while others were conducted on site between competitions or activities according to participants' availability and willingness to participate. The general manager was interviewed before the Games, on November 21, 2022, while the remaining interviews were conducted during the 2023 AWG.

The athlete interviewees represented all eight AWG delegations: Alaska, Alberta North, Greenland, Northwest Territories, Nunavik, Nunavut, Sápmi, and Yukon. They participated in a broad range of sports, including alpine skiing, archery, Arctic Sports and Inuit Games, badminton, biathlon, cross-country skiing, Dene Games, figure skating, futsal, speed skating, and wrestling. Among the athletes whose ages were recorded in the transcripts, ages ranged from 13 to 18 years. The four cultural performers represented Alberta North, Northwest Territories, and Sápmi and participated in three interview sessions, including one interview with two performers. Their documented ages ranged from 16 to 18 years.

The interview materials comprised 27 unique transcript documents totaling more than 500 pages and more than 12 hours of recorded material. Individual transcripts ranged from a few pages to 42 pages, while recorded interview durations generally ranged from approximately 9 to 67 minutes. Most interviews were conducted in English. French was used in interviews involving three athletes. Two interviews with Greenlandic participants were conducted in Danish, and two interviews with Sápmi participants were conducted in Danish or Norwegian; English translations of these interviews were available for analysis. Some athlete interviews also included a drawing-elicitation activity in which participants were invited to represent their understanding or experience of the AWG visually and explain their drawing. The interview guide is provided in Appendix E.

An online survey consisting of closed-ended items and short open-ended questions was distributed near the end of the Games and again shortly afterward. The Host Society emailed the survey to delegation members on February 2, 2023 and redistributed it on February 8, 2023; several Chefs de Mission promoted a final distribution. The survey addressed demographic characteristics and experiences related to athletic participation, social relationships, cultural programming, broader social aspects of the event, and environmental issues. Data collection closed on February

20, 2023. The survey generated 689 response records representing all eight participating contingents: Alaska (n = 110), Alberta North (n = 131), Greenland (n = 73), Northwest Territories (n = 116), Nunavik (n = 27), Nunavut (n = 65), Yukon (n = 153), and Sápmi (n = 14). The survey platform reported a completion rate of 67% and an average completion time of 9 minutes and 41 seconds. Respondents could skip individual items, and branching logic directed participants and mission team members to different role-specific questions. Consequently, the number of responses varied across questions, and the platform-reported completion rate does not indicate that every respondent answered every item. Of the 627 respondents who answered the broad role question, 390 identified as athletes or artistic/cultural performers and 237 as mission team members. A separate participant-role item received 395 responses, of which 376 identified as athletes and 19 as artistic/cultural performers. The survey instrument is provided in Appendix G.

The parent study also included participant observation of the event's atmosphere and everyday functioning across athletic, cultural, social, and environmental domains. Observation took place during the 2023 AWG in Wood Buffalo, Alberta (Canada), from January 29 to February 4. Team members (four professors/lecturers, two doctoral students, and one master's student) attended a broad range of event settings, including sport competitions, ceremonies, cultural events, and daily organizing-committee meetings. Observation was guided by a structured grid that oriented attention to the physical environment (e.g., decorations, flags); ceremonial elements (e.g., symbols, speeches, guests of honor, languages, anthems, music); and features of cultural performances (e.g., selection of artists, choreography, genres, lyrics). The grid also prompted documentation of spectator composition and reactions; the organization and intensity of competitions; the conduct of athletes, coaches, and spectators; and informal interactions outside

competition and performance contexts (e.g., in the Athletes' Village, pop-up events, and the Cultural Gala). The observation guide is included in Appendix H.

3.2 Study 2: Study description and data generation

The second primary study drew on the project "Giving Back to the Community: Young and established leaders' perspectives of their contributions to the Arctic Winter Games" (MacKay & Dallaire, 2024). The study examined giving back as a form of community engagement within and around the Arctic Winter Games. It explored how different categories of AWG leaders understood the idea of "community" in the AWG context; whether and how they perceived their roles as contributing to the AWG community and, more broadly, to circumpolar northern communities; and how involvement in events such as the AWG might shape feelings of belonging. In addition to focusing on leadership and contribution, the study also invited participants to reflect on their broader experiences of AWG participation, including the relationships they experienced, formed, and maintained; their memories and overall impressions of the Games; and meaningful event moments such as the opening ceremony, cultural programming, social encounters, and other shared activities. These accounts provided insight into how participants made sense of the AWG as a social and community-oriented event, including how it fostered relationships, belonging, and a sense of community.

Data were generated through semi-structured interviews with three participant groups (total n = 19): a. Managers/board members (n = 5): Participants were affiliated with the AWGIC and/or a Host Society. They ranged in age from 35 to 73. Employment contexts varied: one held a full-time job outside AWG responsibilities, one was retired, and the remaining participants had employment connected to the Games. Recruitment occurred via email following a virtual

presentation delivered at a meeting involving the AWGIC and Chefs/Assistant Chefs de Mission. Interviews averaged approximately 75 minutes. b. Contingent leaders (n = 8): This group included 5 mission staff, 1 official, and 2 coaches, aged 40 to 60. Five held full-time employment outside AWG work, while three had employment related (at least in part) to Games responsibilities. They were recruited through Chefs de Mission. Interviews averaged approximately 69 minutes. c. young leaders (n = 6): All participants in this group were coaches, aged 22 to 36. All held full-time employment outside their AWG involvement. Recruitment was facilitated through Chefs de Mission. Interviews averaged approximately 59 minutes. Although the primary study included 19 participants, the present thesis did not draw on all Study 2 interviews equally. For Article 3, the analysis focused on a subgroup of 11 participants who had previously competed as athletes at the AWG and later returned in other roles. This subgroup comprised eight coaches, two mission team members, and one official, ranging in age from 22 to 59. Participants represented Alaska (n = 3), Alberta North (n = 2), the Northwest Territories (n = 4), Nunavut (n = 1), and Yukon (n = 1). Their earlier athlete participation encompassed seven sports: hockey, Arctic Sports, speed skating, badminton, cross-country skiing, basketball, and volleyball. The 11 individual interviews in this subgroup were conducted online in English between December 13, 2022, and January 25, 2023. Interviews lasted approximately 49 to 80 minutes, with a mean duration of approximately 63 minutes and a combined duration of approximately 11.5 hours. The resulting 11 transcripts comprised 394 pages. The interviews were conducted by Christine Dallaire, and I attended most of them as an observer, which provided contextual familiarity with the interview process and participants' accounts. The interview question guide is included in Appendix F.

4. Secondary data analysis strategy

4.1 Definition and scope of secondary analysis in this thesis

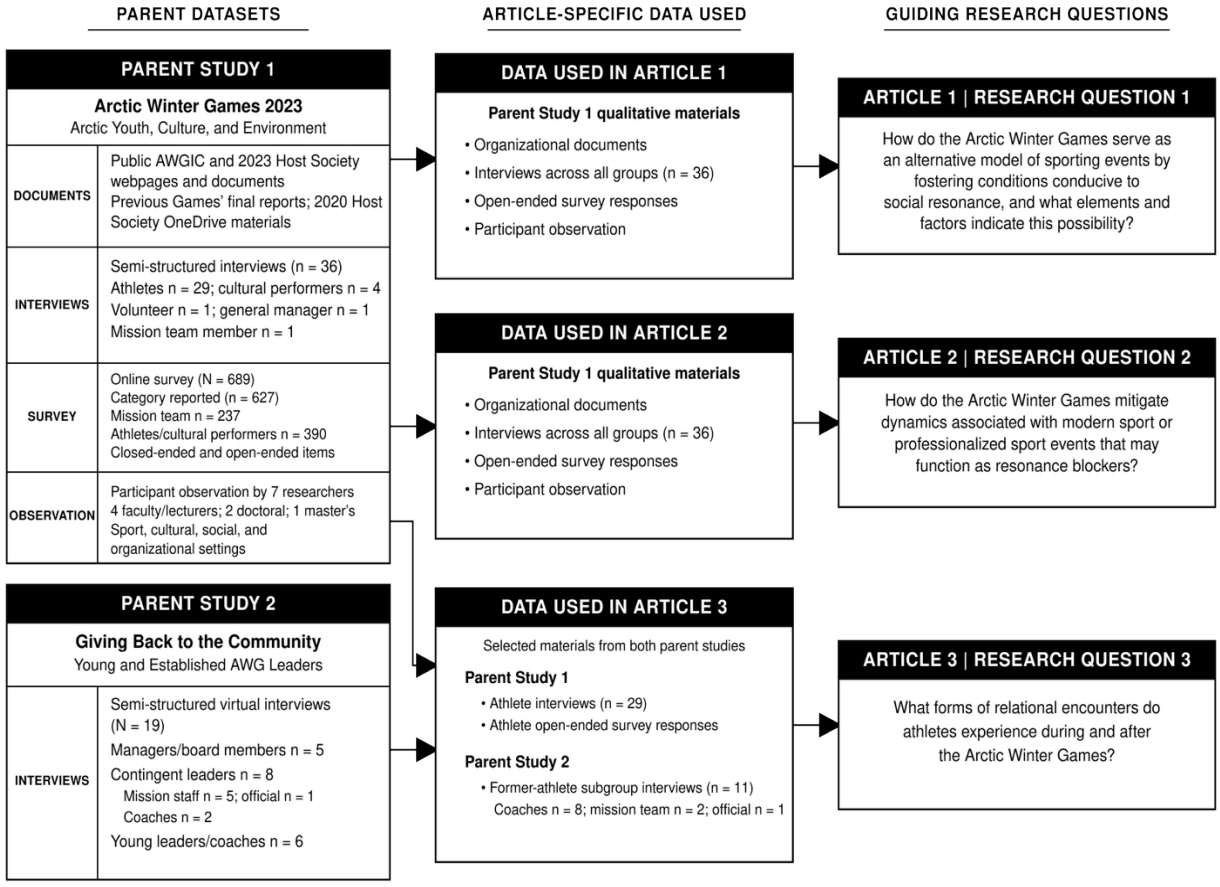
In this thesis, the analysis is described as secondary because I returned to existing Arctic Winter Games datasets and re-examined them through theoretical frameworks that were not central to the original study designs, with a more focused analytical emphasis on relational experiences and the conditions shaping them. My involvement differed between the two parent studies. Before beginning my PhD, my supervisor shared the Study 1 project proposal with me, which allowed me to become familiar with its aims and design. In fall 2022, I participated in research team meetings and contributed to developing the survey, interview guide, observation grid, and plan for identifying and collecting organizational documents. During the 2023 AWG, I conducted participant observation and contributed to organizational document collection. I did not conduct the interviews, although I attended some as an observer, which helped me understand their context and interactional atmosphere. My involvement in Study 2 was more limited. I did not conduct the interviews, but I attended most of them as an observer and became familiar with the questions, interactions, and context in which participants' accounts were generated. This involvement provided important contextual familiarity with the data generation process, but the thesis analysis remained secondary because I returned to the existing materials and reinterpreted them through theoretical frameworks that were not central to the original study designs. Although both parent studies included questions about relationships, cultural and athletic experiences, sense of belonging, and community, the thesis reinterpreted these existing relational dimensions through theoretical and conceptual frameworks that were not central to the original projects, with the specific framing varying across the three articles. This re-analysis enabled me to extend the original purposes of the parent studies by focusing more explicitly on relational experiences and on the conditions that make the AWG especially conducive to deeper forms of connections.

Articles 1 and 2 drew on all qualitative materials from Parent Study 1, including documents, interviews, participant observation, and open-ended survey responses, to examine elements and preconditions of resonance, spaces of resonance, and resonance blockers. Article 3 drew on selected materials from both parent studies, specifically athlete interviews and open-ended survey responses from Parent Study 1 and interviews with the former-athlete subgroup from Parent Study 2, to examine relational experiences during and after the event. It is important to note that Parent Study 1 and Parent Study 2 were distinct and independently designed projects, with different research aims, sampling strategies, and participant groups; in this thesis, they were treated as separate datasets that were brought into dialogue only where doing so was analytically appropriate. The inclusion and exclusion of materials were guided by their fit with the theoretically informed research questions and by the type of evidence each source could provide. The purpose was not to select materials because they supported the theoretical framework, but to determine whether they could meaningfully address the questions, including by supporting, complicating, or challenging emerging interpretations. In Parent Study 1, closed-ended survey responses were excluded because many items had been developed for the original study aims and did not directly address the thesis questions. Their predetermined response categories also offered limited interpretive depth for examining the meanings, contexts, and qualities of relational experiences sought in this qualitative analysis. Open-ended responses were included because they allowed participants to describe their experiences in their own words. Articles 1 and 2 included documents, interviews, open-ended survey responses, and participant observation because their questions concerned both participants' experiences and the organizational priorities, practices, spaces, temporal arrangements, and atmosphere of the Games. Article 3 had a narrower focus on athletes' relational experiences during and after the AWG. It therefore drew on athlete interviews and open-ended survey responses from

Parent Study 1 and interviews with the 11 participants from Parent Study 2 who had previously attended the AWG as athletes and later returned in another role. These participants could connect their earlier experiences with subsequent relationships, belonging, and continued involvement. Interviews with participants who had not previously participated as athletes were excluded because they could not provide firsthand accounts of this specific trajectory. Documents and observation materials were also excluded from Article 3 because, although they provided useful contextual information, they did not offer direct evidence of athletes' relational experiences of the Games. Figure 7 summarizes the materials available in each parent dataset and maps the specific data sources used in each article to its corresponding research question.

Figure 7

Mapping of Parent Study Datasets to Article-Specific Data Sources and Research Questions



Note. AWG = Arctic Winter Games; AWGIC = Arctic Winter Games International Committee. N indicates the total sample or dataset size, whereas n indicates a subgroup count. Closed-ended survey responses were available in Parent Study 1 but were not analyzed in this thesis.

Table 2 summarizes the interview materials used across the three articles, distinguishing the complete 2023 interview corpus from the athlete-only subset used in Article 3 and the former-athlete subset drawn from Parent Study 2.

Table 2

Scope of interview data used across the three articles

Interview dataset and analytic scope	**Participants**	**Breadth of representation**	**Article use**
Parent Study 1: complete 2023 interview corpus	29 athletes, 4 cultural performers, 1 volunteer, 1 general manager, and 1 mission team member	All eight AWG delegations	Articles 1 and 2
Parent Study 1: 2023 athlete subset	29 athletes	All eight AWG delegations	Article 3
Parent Study 2: former-athlete subset	11 former athletes	Five delegations	Article 3

Note. The 2023 athlete subset is part of the complete Parent Study 1 interview corpus and should not be added to its totals. Article 3 combined the 2023 athlete subset with the separate former-athlete subset from Parent Study 2.

The survey materials used in the three articles are summarized in Table 3. Because the survey allowed item nonresponse and included branch-specific questions, the number of respondents contributing to the analysis varied across questions.

Table 3

Survey materials used across the three articles

Article	**Survey output used**	**Scope of output**	**Material analyzed**
Articles 1 and 2	Full survey report organized by contingent	151 pages; 689 response records from all eight contingents	Open-ended responses relevant to each article's research question
Article 3	Athlete-specific survey report organized by sport	160 pages; 372 athletes who identified the sport	Open-ended responses relevant to athletes' relational experiences

		in which they competed, representing 20 sports	

Note. Both reports were generated from the same Parent Study 1 survey. The athlete-specific report used in Article 3 was a filtered output and did not constitute a separate survey. The page totals include closed-ended results, charts, and open-ended comments; they do not represent pages of continuous qualitative text. Because respondents could skip items and some questions were branch-specific, response counts varied across questions. Therefore, 689 and 372 describe the scope of the respective survey outputs, not the number of respondents contributing to every question or theme.

4.2 Rationale for secondary data analysis

Secondary data analysis is appropriate for this thesis because it enables a theoretically driven rereading of a rich, multi-source empirical corpus on the Arctic Winter Games. Across the two parent studies, the available materials include interviews, survey responses, participant observation, and organizational documents. Together, these materials capture both individuals' situated accounts of the Games and the institutional practices and priorities that shape event experiences. This breadth allows the thesis to examine relational experiences and the conditions that facilitate or inhibit them across multiple participant groups and event roles, as well as at both the experiential and organizational levels, without duplicating the logistical and ethical demands of large-scale data collection during the event. This thesis also contributes beyond the original analyses by reinterpreting relational questions already present in both parent studies through resonance theory and related conceptual lenses that were not central to the initial project designs.

Rather than introducing relationality as a new topic, I mobilized these frameworks to develop a theoretically focused reinterpretation of the existing materials.

4.3 Assessing theoretical fit and evidentiary sufficiency

The fit among the datasets, theoretical framework, and research questions was developed iteratively rather than established through a single preliminary assessment. Once both parent datasets were available during the first year of my PhD, I needed to determine what coherent thesis could be developed from the existing materials. Although relational questions were already present in both parent studies, I had not yet determined which theoretical or conceptual framework could organize these materials into a coherent thesis. I explored several possible organizing frameworks, including social and environmental sustainability, sport for development and peace, corporate social responsibility, and Hans Jonas's imperative of responsibility. For each framework, I returned to the datasets to examine what it made analytically visible, which dimensions of the materials it foregrounded, and whether it could provide a coherent foundation for the thesis. Although each framework offered useful insights, none provided an analytical direction that I considered sufficiently coherent for the thesis as a whole. A committee member who had also been a primary investigator in Parent Study 1 subsequently suggested Hartmut Rosa's resonance theory. After studying the framework, I returned to the datasets and discussed its potential fit with my supervisor, who had been a primary investigator in both parent studies and was closely familiar with their contents. This process highlighted that different types of relationships had already been addressed in the original studies and were prominent in the available materials, even though resonance had not informed their original conceptual frameworks. I therefore began examining

whether resonance could provide a coherent theoretical lens for reinterpreting these relational dimensions and organizing the thesis's analysis.

This assessment involved repeated movement among theory, research questions, and empirical materials. After developing provisional resonance-informed formulations of the thesis questions, I returned to the datasets to determine whether they contained the type and depth of evidence required to address those questions. I then refined the questions and their conceptual scope according to what the materials could sustain. This movement continued throughout coding and theme development. Theoretical concepts sensitized me to potentially relevant patterns, while the data supported, complicated, or challenged the usefulness of those concepts. When the empirical material did not adequately support a particular interpretation, I narrowed the claim, revised the question, or reconsidered the theoretical lens. The refinement of Article 3, discussed further in Section 5, provides the clearest example of this process.

Assessing data fit also required distinguishing the contribution and limitations of each source across the three articles. In Articles 1 and 2, organizational documents were used to examine the AWG's formal vision, mission, policies, rules, plans, symbols, technical arrangements, and initiatives, including how the Games publicly framed competition, culture, and social exchange. These materials could support claims about organizational priorities and formal event design, but they could not establish how those priorities were enacted or experienced. Participant observation was used to examine visible practices and conditions, including spatial and temporal arrangements, embodied coordination, mutual support, spectator responses, cultural programming, playfulness, competition intensity, and the event atmosphere. Observation could therefore support interpretations of visible interactions and event conditions, but it could not independently establish participants' internal meanings or emotional states.

Interviews and open-ended survey responses provided evidence of participants' own interpretations. Interviews generally offered greater contextual detail about relationships, emotions, cultural encounters, and event values. The former athlete interviews used in Article 3 also provided retrospective accounts of lasting memories, ongoing contact, anticipated reunions, role transitions, and belonging across multiple editions and years. These retrospective accounts could show how former athletes themselves connected earlier AWG participation with later relationships and continued involvement, but they could not establish that the Games caused their return. Open-ended survey responses varied considerably in length and depth. Detailed responses could support richer interpretations when they described affective responses, responsiveness or receptivity, cultural significance, shared emotion, or lasting salience. For example, the detailed account of the cultural feast provided sufficient contextual detail to examine emotional resonance and particular elements associated with possible collective resonance. Shorter responses were used more narrowly to document experiences explicitly identified by respondents, such as friendship, a family-like atmosphere, cultural learning, or scheduling constraints, and to reinforce or complicate patterns identified in other sources. Therefore, no source was treated as sufficient simply because of its format.

Evidentiary sufficiency was not determined through a fixed numerical threshold, nor was a theme required to appear in every data source. Instead, evidence was evaluated in relation to the nature and scope of the claim being advanced. This principle applied across all three articles, including claims about participant experiences, event conditions, organizational priorities and practices, broader sport logics, collective dynamics, and post-event continuities. The interpretive weight given to evidence depended on its specificity and contextual richness, its consistency with the defining features of the concept being applied, its recurrence within or across sources, and the

presence of converging, contrasting, or complicating evidence. A single detailed account could illustrate an individual experience or analytical possibility, but it was not used by itself to characterize a broader pattern. Brief open-ended responses were used to support what respondents explicitly conveyed unless they contained sufficient contextual and experiential detail to warrant a more developed interpretation. Throughout the analysis, ambiguities and contrasting cases were used to refine theme boundaries, and the strength of the wording was calibrated to the evidence through terms such as "may," "suggests," and "indicates" when stronger conclusions were not warranted.

For analytical purposes, I reserved "resonance" in Rosa's strict sense for contextually coherent evidence consistent with all four elements: affection, self-efficacious response, transformation, and uncontrollability. When the data supported only one or some of these elements, I identified those particular elements or described an indication, trace, or possibility of resonance rather than a complete resonant encounter. Positive evaluation, enjoyment, friendship, belonging, emotional intensity, or meaningfulness alone did not meet this threshold. Similarly, openness, curiosity, and vulnerability were treated as preconditions of resonance, while organizational, spatial, temporal, and psychological features were examined as conditions that might enable or constrain resonance; neither preconditions nor enabling conditions were taken as evidence that resonance had occurred. Emotional resonance and cultural resonance were treated as distinct concepts and assessed according to their respective definitions, rather than as substitutes for Rosa's four-element conception of resonance.

This distinction was particularly important because the parent studies were not designed to capture resonance as an immediate lived experience, and the thesis did not primarily seek to verify complete resonant encounters. In Article 1, the analysis focused mainly on evidence of particular

elements of resonance, especially affection and self-efficacious response; preconditions such as openness, curiosity, and vulnerability; and the organizational, spatial, temporal, and psychological conditions that might make social resonance more or less possible. Article 2 shifted attention from particular experiences to dynamics that might block resonance, examining how sportification, hyper-competition, and instrumental rationality were reproduced, tempered, or resisted at the AWG. Article 3 treated Rosa's resonance as one interpretive reference point alongside other relational concepts and did not assume that every meaningful connection constituted resonance in Rosa's sense. This approach allowed resonance theory to guide critical and relational interpretation while avoiding claims that the secondary data could definitively establish resonance as a complete lived experience.

4.4 Analytic framework and procedures

Data analysis across the thesis was conducted through thematic analysis, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach. This process involved familiarization with the data, the development of initial codes, the organization of codes into potential themes, the review of themes in relation to the full dataset, the refinement and naming of themes, and the production of written analytic accounts. The process was recursive rather than strictly sequential, as I returned to the data several times while developing and refining the themes.

While the procedural steps of thematic analysis were consistent across the three articles, all three analyses combined theory-guided deduction with inductive openness, although the balance varied according to the research aim. Articles 1 and 2 were primarily deductive and used concepts such as elements and spaces of resonance, sportification, hyper-competition, and instrumental rationality as sensitizing concepts. These concepts guided attention without

functioning as fixed categories into which all data had to fit. I remained open to patterns that were not anticipated by the framework. For example, Article 1 initially focused on spatial, temporal, and psychological conditions, but organizational objectives emerged inductively as an additional theme during analysis. Article 3 followed a more explicitly hybrid approach, combining theoretically informed analysis with inductive openness to patterns and concepts identified through engagement with the data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). It began with theoretical sensitivity to liminoid experience, communitas, and resonance while remaining open to other relational experiences. This openness allowed networking, friendship formation, emotional and cultural resonance, enchantment, and other relational intensities to be incorporated into theme development. Across the three analyses, themes were repeatedly compared with the full dataset and revised when the materials complicated or contradicted the initial conceptual expectations.

The following example illustrates how I conducted the thematic analysis, using sensitizing concepts to guide what I attended to during coding and theme construction. Instrumental rationality was used as a sensitizing concept to identify moments where performance outcomes, or efficiency could be prioritized over substantive values, and to examine how the AWG might resist or temper such logics. During familiarization (Phase 1), I noted recurring organizational talk about the "point" of the games and explicit trade-offs between cultural participation and expanding sport participation. In Phase 2 (initial coding), the excerpt in which the 2023 AWG general manager rejected excluding cultural participants in order to bring more athletes was coded as prioritizing cultural purpose over maximizing sport entries, protecting traditional/cultural highlights, and accepting limits on participation to uphold meaning—codes informed by the instrumental–value rationality distinction. In Phases 3–5, these codes were clustered with similar segments across the material to form and refine the theme "Value Rationality at the Heart of the AWG," capturing how

action was justified by commitment to substantive goods (e.g., culture, tradition, youth development) rather than by optimization of participation numbers or competitive outcomes. In Phase 6, I developed the narrative account by linking illustrative excerpts (such as this one) to the theme's conceptual interpretation.

5. Limitations of secondary data analysis

Secondary data analysis entails specific methodological considerations because data are generated for other purposes. Theoretical misalignment represents a significant challenge in SDA, potentially undermining the coherence and validity of research findings. This issue arises when the theoretical framework guiding the secondary analysis does not align with the theoretical assumptions or constructs underpinning the original data collection. Such misalignment can distort the analysis, as the operational definitions and measures used initially may not capture the nuances required by the new theoretical perspective. Consequently, researchers must critically assess the compatibility of their chosen theoretical lens with the original study's design and objectives (Cowton, 1998; Magee et al., 2006; Randall & Gibson, 1990; Robertson, 1993). Addressing this challenge necessitates transparent methodological adjustments and thorough justification for any theoretical recontextualization to ensure that the secondary analysis remains robust and credible.

As detailed in Section 4.3, I addressed this concern through a recursive assessment of the fit among the datasets, the resonance-informed framework, and the thesis's more focused relational questions. This process allowed the analytical focus, questions, and claims to be refined according to the contextual depth and type of evidence available, but it could not create information that had not been elicited in the parent studies. Although I initially assessed the datasets to ensure that they contained adequate material to address the research questions (Bibb, 2007; Pollack, 1999), the

limits of this fit became particularly evident in Article 3, whose research question required further refinement to match what the available data could sustain (Doolan & Froelicher, 2009). The final article was originally developed with Rosa's resonance theory as the primary lens for examining participants' accounts of deep relationships at the AWG and their potentially transformative qualities. However, as analysis progressed, it became clear that not all reported relational encounters could be convincingly interpreted as resonance in Rosa's stricter conceptual sense. Rather than stretching the concept beyond its definitional boundaries, we retained the central focus on relational connection and broadened the interpretive framework. Accordingly, alongside resonance theory, we drew on complementary concepts—liminoid experiences and communitas (Turner, 1967, 1982), enchantment (Bennett, 2001), emotional resonance (Schrock et al., 2004), and cultural resonance (Miller, 2015)—to capture forms of meaningful connection evident in the data that were not fully accounted for by resonance alone.

Another common challenge in secondary data analysis is the issue of not "being there": analysts must interpret materials generated by other researchers and may therefore have less immediate access to the interactional, procedural, and contextual circumstances under which the data were produced. Methodologists note that researchers' presence can matter in different ways across designs and questions, potentially affording a privileged relationship to the data and to the meanings negotiated during data generation (Heaton, 2008; Irwin & Winterton, 2011). Related critiques argue that secondary analysis may lack the immersion in context and meaning required to ground robust knowledge claims (e.g., Hammersley, 1997; Mauthner et al., 1998; Mauthner & Doucet, 2008; Mauthner & Parry, 2010). When secondary analysts were not present during data generation, concerns about distance from context can arise because secondary datasets may not retain the situational detail needed for nuanced interpretation—particularly in research involving

culturally specific social norms and values (Irwin, 2013). In the present thesis, this concern is substantially mitigated because I was involved in the parent studies from which the secondary analysis drew. For Study 1, I participated directly in the research design and data generation during the 2023 Arctic Winter Games, including active engagement in data collection and sustained familiarization with the AWG's social, cultural, and sporting context. For Study 2, I was familiar with the study's research questions and design and attended most of the interviews, which supported contextual understanding of the interview interactions and topics. Across both studies, continuity was also supported by my ongoing collaboration with my supervisor, who was co-investigator of the first project and the key researcher in the second, leading the original study designs and data collection. This contextual continuity was further strengthened through collaboration with other members of the research team. In particular, I worked closely with Julien Fuchs, who was the initiator and co-investigator of the first project. My international doctoral mobility at the Université de Bretagne Occidentale in Brest also provided an important opportunity to work more closely with Julien and Elina Bertet (a researcher involved in the first project), revisit the original research context, discuss the aims and design of the parent study, and reflect on emerging interpretations. Taken together, working closely with them—and having access to the original study materials (e.g., interview guides, protocols, and related documentation)—helped keep my secondary analysis transparent and firmly grounded in the context in which the data were produced.

6. Rigour and trustworthiness

To support the rigor and quality of the research process, I was guided by Lincoln and Guba's framework of trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Rather than relying on quantitative standards of validity and reliability, this framework provides criteria more suited to qualitative inquiry: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These criteria are explained below in relation to the present study.

6.1 Credibility

Credibility concerns the extent to which findings are plausible and convincing representations of the meanings present in the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this thesis, I employed persistent observation through an iterative and prolonged immersion in the datasets, which allowed for the identification of deep-seated relational, sociocultural, and institutional patterns that moved beyond surface-level descriptions. Credibility was also bolstered through triangulation across multiple data types and perspectives within the parent datasets (e.g., interviews, surveys, observation, and archival materials) and through iterative peer debriefing/analytic consultation (as is described in the Dependability and Confirmability sections) to interrogate emerging interpretations and challenge taken-for-granted assumptions.

6.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which findings may be applicable in other contexts, and in naturalistic inquiry it is addressed by providing the "thick description" needed for readers to judge whether a transfer is plausible rather than the researcher claiming external validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To support transferability, I provided thick description of the context, participants, and dataset boundaries so that readers can evaluate the fit of these findings to other settings. Chapter 1 provides a comprehensive description of the Arctic Winter Games, including key features of its event structure, cultural programming, and host-community context relevant to

the thesis questions. Additional contextual detail is integrated across the three thesis papers. The characteristics of the participant groups, including athletes, mission team members, cultural performers, and former athletes, are specified in the papers and in the methodology section when introducing the parent studies. Variation across delegations and regions, sports and roles, ages, and genders is also reported. The methodology also documents the boundaries and conditions of the datasets, including the time period (where applicable), data types (e.g., interviews and surveys), the purposes of the parent studies, and any notable absences or underrepresented voices. In addition, the appendices include the interview grids/guides, survey instrument, and observation template from the parent studies, providing further transparency about how data were generated and supporting readers' judgments about transfer.

6.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the extent to which the research process is coherent, consistent, and sufficiently documented such that readers can follow how analytic decisions were made over time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this thesis, dependability was supported through ongoing analytic consultation and peer debriefing. Because my supervisor and a thesis advisory committee member were primary investigators of the parent studies, we met regularly throughout study design and analysis to ensure that the thesis research questions, theoretical framework, and sensitizing concepts remained aligned with the scope, aims, and contextual conditions of the original datasets. These meetings functioned as iterative checkpoints where coding decisions, theme definitions, and shifts in interpretation were examined and refined, helping to maintain a stable analytic logic across the project. In addition, monthly scholarly discussions with colleagues in sport sociology provided repeated opportunities to "stress-test" the developing analysis, identify inconsistencies, and clarify the rationale for revisions.

6.4 Confirmability

To establish confirmability, the researcher ensured that the findings were clearly derived from the data rather than personal biases or researcher interest (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure the neutrality and transparency of this study, the researcher employed five key strategies: the implementation of peer debriefing, the use of data triangulation, the practice of reflexivity, the maintenance of a detailed audit trail, and attention to authenticity.

6.4.1 Peer debriefing and analytic consultation

As noted in the dependability section, I engaged in ongoing peer debriefing and analytic consultation to strengthen the transparency and defensibility of the analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Because my supervisor and a committee member were primary investigators of the parent studies, we held regular meetings across the study design and analysis to check the fit between the thesis research questions, the theoretical framework and sensitizing concepts, and the scope and context of the original datasets. These meetings created a structured space to surface and challenge my assumptions, interrogate emerging interpretations, and ensure that claims remained grounded in the data rather than in my preferences. I also presented developing analyses in monthly discussions with sport-sociology colleagues, using critical feedback to refine codes and themes and to document the rationale for interpretive decisions.

6.4.2 Data Triangulation

I employed triangulation across data sources by comparing and integrating evidence drawn from multiple forms of existing material in the parent studies (e.g., interviews, survey responses, observations, and archival documents). Rather than relying on a single dataset or data type, I

examined whether and how emerging codes and themes were supported, nuanced, or challenged across these sources and across the participant and organizational perspectives represented in the datasets. Where patterns converged across sources, this convergence increased confidence in the credibility of the interpretation; where sources diverged, these discrepancies were treated as analytically meaningful and used to refine theme boundaries, specify conditions under which interpretations held, and avoid overgeneralization. For example, when examining whether the AWG resisted mere instrumental rationality (as a potential resonance blocker), I traced value-rational orientations across multiple sources: archival materials articulated developmental and sociocultural sustainability priorities, interview transcripts described goals and experiences that exceeded performance outcomes, survey responses reflected broader endorsement of these values, and observational notes documented practices and interactions consistent with these orientations.

6.4.3 Reflexivity

I recognize that my interpretations are shaped by my social location, biography, and disciplinary training. I am a 35-year-old man who lived more than 30 years in Iran, a sociopolitical context that has informed my assumptions about sport, community, and the purposes sport events can serve. My professional formation has been in sport since 2013—first through undergraduate and master's training in sport management, and now as a PhD student in sport sociology. These experiences provide conceptual resources for analysis, but they may also predispose me to notice certain patterns (e.g., organization, governance, strategic objectives, "legacy," program design) and to interpret practices through managerial or institutional lenses.

This positionality matters in the context of the Arctic Winter Games. The delegations and host communities are rooted in northern lifeworld with cultural traditions, languages, values, and

everyday rhythms that differ substantially from those I grew up with. I am not Indigenous, whereas some AWG participants and communities are Indigenous and may interpret the Games through relationships to land, ancestry, and cultural responsibilities that I can understand only partially. Likewise, I grew up primarily within mainstream sport structures; my familiarity with Indigenous games and northern cultural practices has developed mainly during my PhD work, which may limit what I can "see" as meaningful in participants' accounts or lead me to over-rely on academic categories to make sense of culturally embedded experiences.

My positionality also involved a dual relationship to the research context: I was a partial insider to the data-generation process but an outsider to many of the northern and Indigenous contexts represented in the data. As detailed in Section 4.1, I contributed to the design and data generation of Study 1 and attended most Study 2 interviews as an observer. This involvement gave me contextual familiarity with the studies' aims, the event atmosphere, and the circumstances in which participants' accounts were produced, reducing some of the distance commonly associated with secondary analysis. At the same time, it meant that I entered the analysis with impressions and expectations formed during data generation and with an intellectual investment in the projects. Such familiarity could make certain patterns appear self-evident or encourage interpretations consistent with my earlier observations and research-team discussions. I therefore treated my involvement as both an interpretive resource and a potential source of bias.

Accordingly, I treated reflexivity as an ongoing practice of "calibrating" the human instrument. Concretely, I acknowledged that my preconceived notions and prior involvement could influence how I coded and interpreted the data, including the risk of privileging themes that fit familiar scholarly debates (e.g., professionalization, sportification) while under-attending to culturally specific meanings, silences, or forms of expression. To mitigate these risks, I discussed

my assumptions and decision points throughout data analysis with my supervisor and peers (e.g., moments of surprise or discomfort and coding choices), and I repeatedly revisited datasets with attention to alternative interpretations—especially where participants' meanings did not align with my initial expectations. This reflexive stance is intended to make the interpretive process more transparent and to strengthen the trustworthiness of the analysis by clarifying how my standpoint may have shaped the questions asked, the categories developed, and the claims advanced.

6.4.4 Audit Trail

I also maintained an audit trail to document the progression from raw materials to final themes and to support the transparency of the analytic process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This audit trail included the original empirical materials, such as interview transcripts, open-ended survey responses, field notes, and organizational documents, as well as annotated transcripts that recorded my early engagement with the data. I also kept analytic memos in both written and audio-recorded forms, which captured emerging ideas, reflections, uncertainties, connections across data sources, and developing links between the data and the theoretical framework. In addition, supervisory feedback and peer debriefing notes formed part of the audit trail, as they documented how interpretations were discussed, questioned, refined, and clarified throughout the research process. Together, these materials created a record of how I moved from the raw data to initial interpretations, and then toward the themes and conceptual claims presented in the thesis. As demonstrated by the coding sample in Section [4.3], the audit trail provides a transparent pathway through which an external reader can follow the logic of interpretation and assess how the findings were grounded in the data.

6.4.5 Authenticity

I also considered Guba and Lincoln's (1989) authenticity criteria, later situated within their broader discussion of the constructivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), as a complementary standard of quality in constructivist inquiry. These criteria focus not only on methodological rigour but also on whether an inquiry fairly represents the diverse constructions of the people and groups involved and potentially supports shifts in understanding or action. Their framework includes five authenticity criteria: fairness, understood as the balanced representation of diverse constructions; ontological authenticity, which relates to the development of more informed understandings of one's own constructions; educative authenticity, which concerns increased understanding of others' constructions; catalytic authenticity, which refers to the inquiry's potential to stimulate action; and tactical authenticity, which concerns the extent to which the inquiry enables action. Given the secondary nature of the data and the absence of iterative member engagement, this study is best positioned to address fairness, while the other authenticity criteria were not directly assessed and are therefore not claimed. Both datasets included accounts from people in a wide range of roles, including athletes, cultural performers, mission team members, and leaders. Participants included Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and varied across sports, delegations and regions, ages, and genders. To support fairness, I intentionally attended to this diversity during analysis and reporting by drawing on accounts from different participant groups, using illustrative excerpts reflecting a range of roles and perspectives, and noting points of convergence and divergence rather than privileging a single viewpoint.

7. Ethical considerations

Both parent studies received ethics approval from the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board: Study 1 under file no. H-06-22-8134 and Study 2 under file no. H-06-17-04. For both studies, the Research Ethics Board reviewed and approved the procedures for data collection and confirmed their alignment with ethical standards for research with human participants. The ethics approval letters are included in Appendices A and B, and the consent forms are included in Appendices C and D. My thesis involves secondary analysis of existing datasets only; I conducted no new recruitment and had no new contact with participants for the purposes of this research.

Access to the parent study materials was authorized by the original principal investigators, who are also my supervisor and a member of my thesis advisory committee. All use of these materials was consistent with the scope of the original consent and the REB approval. Given the small and potentially identifiable nature of Arctic and northern communities, I took care to protect confidentiality in both analysis and reporting. No participant names were used, and names do not appear in any reported quotations. When presenting findings, I relied primarily on broad role descriptors (e.g., athlete, mission team member, cultural performer, former athlete) and only included contextual identifiers (e.g., delegation and sport) when they were analytically necessary and did not reasonably increase the risk of identification. All datasets and analytic materials were stored on institution-approved secure storage, with access restricted to the research team. Data handling and retention followed institutional requirements and the conditions specified through the ethics review process.

Because the datasets include Indigenous participants and accounts situated within Indigenous cultures and northern lifeworld, I approached analysis and reporting with cultural humility and attention to respectful representation, recognizing my positionality as a non-

Indigenous researcher. This included avoiding deficit framings, contextualizing interpretations, and being cautious about how culturally situated meanings and practices were represented in written claims. This study did not involve formal community governance or co-ownership arrangements; accordingly, I do not claim participatory governance or community control over the analysis. Instead, I sought to mitigate ethical risks through careful de-identification, responsible contextualization, and dissemination practices oriented toward respect and minimizing harm.

8. Chapter summary

In sum, this chapter has detailed how a secondary thematic analysis of two parent-study datasets was designed and implemented to address the thesis aims. By clarifying the datasets, analytic procedures, the study's delimitations, strategies for trustworthiness, and ethical safeguards, it provides the methodological foundation for the three papers and for the claims advanced across the thesis.

Chapter 4 (Article 1): Sporting events and social resonance: the Arctic Winter Games model

The version included in this thesis is the manuscript originally submitted to the Sport, Ethics and Philosophy. The post-review revised article was subsequently published as:

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Author contribution: I contributed to the design of the primary study, including the development of the survey, interview guide, and observation grid. I also contributed to data collection through observations and archival research and was present during some interviews, although I did not conduct them. I analyzed the materials relevant to this article and prepared the initial manuscript draft. The manuscript was subsequently refined through ongoing discussions, feedback, and collaborative revisions with my co-authors.

The REB ethics file: The approval was granted under File Number H-06-22-8134.

Abstract

Drawing on Hartmut Rosa's theory of resonance, this article examines how the Arctic Winter Games (AWG), as a community sport event, may create conditions for social resonance. This analysis is based on a qualitative research design with a multimethod approach that included archival analysis, semi-structured interviews, surveys, and observations conducted during the 2023 AWG. The findings identify key elements of resonance, particularly expressions of affection and self-efficacious response, supported by preconditions such as openness, curiosity, and vulnerability. These elements emerged across different relational contexts, including relationships among teammates, encounters with spectators, and friendships formed in informal event spaces beyond the field of play, such as dormitories, hallways, and other shared social settings. They also suggest that resonance becomes more likely through the spaces of resonance created by the event, including its organizational objectives and spatial, temporal, and psychological conditions. In doing so, the article contributes to the literature on social relationships in sport events by showing how social resonance may emerge within a community sport event shaped by sport, festivity, sociability, and culture.

Keywords: Arctic Winter Games, resonance, social relationships, community sport event

Introduction

This paper is driven by the question of how Hartmut Rosa's theory of resonance offers an interesting framework for analyzing social relationships within sporting events. It focuses on the Arctic Winter Games (AWG), a distinctive community event recognized for its ability to foster meaningful connections within and among northern communities. To explore this perspective, we turn to Rosa's concept of resonance, which outlines a vision of the good life where the world is responsive rather than silent. Rosa (2018a, 2016/2019) contests the dominant logic of endless growth, acceleration, and the so-called triple-A approach (availability, accessibility, and acceleration), which, according to him, leads to alienation. Conversely, he contends that a fulfilling life is maintained by axes of resonance encompassing the social, material, and existential dimensions. Resonance is defined as a unique relational experience between a subject and the world, which he conceptualizes through four key elements: (1) an initial emotional engagement where an individual feels moved by an entity; (2) a subsequent self-efficacious response prompted by that affection; (3) a dynamic and transformative interaction that influences both the individual and the entity; and (4) an inherent uncontrollability and unpredictability, meaning that its occurrence and the outcomes of such interactions cannot be controlled or foreseen (Rosa, 2016/2019). In light of this definition, the AWG offers a valuable context for using resonance as an analytical lens to examine the event's structure and participants' lived experiences. Its emphasis on cultural exchange, intense socialization, and the construction of a shared identity (Fuchs, 2023) makes it especially useful for exploring whether and how resonant relationships may emerge.

The application of Rosa's theory of resonance to sport remains in its early stages. Existing studies have begun to examine resonance in relation to youth sport (Bjørndal & Espedalen, 2026), sport coaching (Reinold, 2026), physical education and play (e.g., Eichberg, 2016; Frydendal &

Thing, 2024), and specific physical activities such as running, parkour, and yoga (e.g., Gibout, 2022; Larsen, 2021; Paintendre et al., 2023; Plard, 2023; Van Kaldenkerken, 2017). Collectively, these studies suggest that sport and physical activity can enable experiences of resonance across embodied, social, material, and existential dimensions. Although these practices are often subject to modern pressures such as sportification, competition, acceleration, and optimization, they may also resist such alienating forces by creating opportunities for presence, playfulness, bodily awareness, and connection with oneself, others, materials, spaces, and nature.

Within this emerging literature, however, relatively few studies have focused specifically on the social axis of resonance (e.g., Frydendal & Thing, 2024; Larsen, 2021; Plard, 2023). These studies show that different sport and physical activity contexts may foster social resonance in distinctive ways. In physical education, for example, relaxed and informal atmospheres can support mutual engagement, shared humor, affectionate gestures, and close proximity among students (Frydendal & Thing, 2024). In parkour, deliberate pacing, rhythmic repetition, and engagement with urban spaces can encourage dialogue about movement and surroundings, thereby strengthening social relationships (Larsen, 2021). Similarly, endurance running can generate forms of communal identity, mutual care, and support that extend beyond the race itself (Plard, 2023). Yet, these studies provide limited insight into the specific forms that social resonance and social alienation may take, or the conditions that impact such experiences. Moreover, resonance has rarely, if at all, been examined in the context of sport events. Therefore, this article extends the discussion of resonance in sport to the context of community sport events by examining how social resonance may emerge across different relational settings and how event-specific conditions may impact such experiences.

Indeed, this article focuses on the potential of sport events to foster social resonance, particularly when they are not organized solely around competition but are also shaped by tradition, cultural heritage, and community values. The Arctic Winter Games represent one such event. Although originally founded to recognize northern athletes and provide opportunities for competition in contemporary sports, the AWG has developed into a community-oriented event that brings together sport, sociability, culture, and education (Fuchs, 2023, 2025). Over time, organizers integrated Northern Indigenous games, including the Dene Games and Arctic Sports, strengthening the event's association with northern cultures, while cultural programming and increased attention to Indigenous populations enhanced its public visibility (Paraschak, 1991). Today, Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants from northern regions—including Greenland (Denmark), Northern Alberta, the Northwest Territories, Nunavik, Nunavut, and Yukon (Canada), Alaska (United States), and Sápmi (Norway, Sweden, and Finland)—gather at the AWG to meet, share experiences, and engage with one another. As a youth-focused event for participants aged 14 to 20, the AWG also includes a cultural festival and educational programs that promote cultural exhibition and understanding (Bertet et al., 2024; Fuchs, 2025). In this sense, the AWG stands out as a community sport event that celebrates athletic achievement while also fostering cultural and linguistic exchange, social interaction, friendship, and a shared Arctic and northern identity (see, e.g., Arctic Winter Games International Committee, n.d.-a, n.d.-b; Fuchs, 2023; Mahadevan & Ren, 2017).

Given these characteristics, the AWG provides a valuable context for examining not only whether social relationships emerge within a community sport event, but also how these relationships are experienced and what conditions may make deeper forms of connection more likely. Previous studies have examined several dimensions of the AWG, including its cultural,

social, and community impacts (e.g., Fuchs, 2025; Mahadevan & Ren, 2019; Szabo, 2003; Walter, 2011), identity building (e.g., Thomsen et al., 2018), tourism (e.g., Hinch & de la Barre, 2007; Hinch & Ramshaw, 2014), volunteerism (e.g., Mahadevan & Ren, 2017; Mahadevan & Ren, 2019), festivity (Bertet et al., 2024), community engagement (MacKay & Dallaire, 2024), and social and environmental sustainability (Dallaire et al., 2024; Fuchs, 2023). Several of these works suggest that the event can facilitate socialization, strengthen community ties, nurture familial and communal connections, and help participants meet new people and form friendships (e.g., Bertet et al., 2024; Dallaire et al., 2024; Fuchs, 2023; Walter, 2011). However, these studies tell us less about the felt quality of these encounters, the extent to which they move beyond instrumental interaction, and the event conditions that may facilitate or obstruct more responsive forms of deep social connection. Accordingly, this article examines the AWG as an illustrative case for exploring how a community sport event may create conditions conducive to social resonance. Rather than assuming that participation in the AWG automatically produces meaningful social connections, the article examines how resonant relationships may become visible in participants' accounts, while also considering moments of social alienation and the conditions that shape these relational encounters.

Methodology

We conducted a secondary data analysis of a parent dataset from the 2023 Arctic Winter Games, entitled "Arctic Winter Games 2023 - Arctic Youth, Culture, and Environment." (Dallaire et al., 2024) generated through qualitative research using a multimethod approach (documentary analysis, interviews, open-ended survey questions, and observation). The parent research was carried out by an international team of seven individuals from France, Canada, and Denmark. This

dataset largely concentrated on athletic experiences, relationships, sense of belonging, culture, and other social and environmental aspects of the events. The secondary analysis sought to capture elements and preconditions (facilitators) of social resonance as well as to investigate the factors influencing the possibility of experiencing it (spaces of resonance). The document analysis included materials published on the 2023 AWG host society's website, as well as publicly available documents from the Arctic Winter Games International Committee (AWGIC), including final reports from previous editions of the Games. We also reviewed documents from the 2020 AWG host society that were available through an online OneDrive folder. For this paper, the analysis focused specifically on the AWG's vision, mission, policies, plans, and initiatives in order to understand how the event's organizational language and practices may support conditions associated with resonance. In the parent study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with people involved in the Games in several roles: a volunteer (n = 1), a general manager (n = 1), a mission team member (n = 1), athletes (n = 29), and cultural performers (n = 4). Participants were recruited through a combination of purposive and convenience sampling. Additionally, an online survey gathered delegation members' perspectives on the athletic, relational, cultural, social, and environmental dimensions of the AWG. The full survey report contained 689 response records from all eight contingents and comprised 151 pages. Of the 627 respondents who answered the broad role question, 390 identified as athletes or cultural performers and 237 as mission team members. Because respondents could skip items and some questions were branch-specific, response counts varied across questions. Although the survey contained both closed-ended and open-ended items, the present analysis used only open-ended responses relevant to participants' experiences and the conditions associated with resonance. In addition, the parent study encompassed observations intended to document the event's atmosphere alongside its athletic,

cultural, social, and environmental initiatives. The observation period spanned from January 29 to February 4 during the AWG 2023 in Wood Buffalo, Alberta (Canada). The researchers participated in a wide range of activities, including competitions, ceremonies, cultural events, and the organizing committee's daily meetings. The data collection process was assessed and approved by the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Boards, ensuring compliance with ethical standards for research involving human participants[1].

To analyze the multimethod dataset, we used a theory-driven thematic analysis informed by Hartmut Rosa's theory of resonance (Rosa, 2016/2019). Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis, we first engaged closely with the different data sources to develop a broad understanding of the material. Coding was then guided by central concepts from Rosa's (2016/2019) framework, including the elements of resonance (e.g., affection), its facilitating factors (e.g., openness), and experiences of alienation. Particular attention was also given to the conditions that may shape social resonance. For this purpose, we drew on Rosa's notion of spaces of resonance (Rosa, 2020), especially its spatial, temporal, and psychic dimensions. As the analysis developed, organizational objectives also emerged as an important dimension for understanding how the event may support or constrain resonant experiences. Throughout the process, coding and theme development were conducted iteratively, moving between theoretical concepts and the meanings expressed in the data.

The AWG as a Harbor of Social Resonance

Our examination of the Arctic Winter Games suggests that the event is more than a conventional sporting competition. Rather, the AWG can be understood as a dynamic arena in

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which social resonance may emerge through relationships among athletes and cultural performers, encounters with spectators, and friendships formed beyond the field of play. At the same time, the event is not presented here as an exclusive source of resonance, as our data also reveal moments of potential alienation. Although resonance is inherently unpredictable and cannot be directly controlled (Rosa, 2016/2019), the analysis focuses on the conditions that may facilitate or constrain its emergence during the AWG, including the event's organizational objectives and its spatial, temporal, and psychological dimensions.

Social Resonance Among Teammates and Co-performers

One notable form of social resonance that may emerge during sporting events involves interactions among teammates (Rosa, 2016/2019). During the AWG, observations of team sports and cultural events suggested that some groups created moments of shared rhythm, coordination, and mutual responsiveness. This was visible, for example, in team sports such as hockey and Dene games, as well as in cultural performances involving traditional and modern dance. In these moments, participants did not appear simply to perform individual roles side by side; rather, their movements, gestures, and responses seemed to become connected within a broader collective flow. The significance of these moments lies not only in their technical success, but in the vitality they carried: something appeared to emerge through the interaction itself that was not entirely planned, rehearsed, or controlled. In this sense, these moments reflected the uncontrollable quality of resonance described by Rosa (2016/2019, 2020). This form of embodied connection also recalls McNeill's (1997) notion of muscular bonding, which refers to the sense of solidarity that can arise when people move together rhythmically. Similar forms of social resonance have been discussed in other sport and physical cultural contexts, such as trail running, where participants describe a

distinctive bond with fellow endurance athletes (Plard, 2023), and parkour, where shared movement practices can become integrated into collective stories and experiences (Larsen, 2021).

At the same time, the AWG observations also suggest that social resonance within teams might be uneven and fragile rather than automatic. In some matches and performances, participants appeared less connected to one another: movements were less synchronized, responses to teammates' cues were delayed, and transitions sometimes seemed hesitant or fragmented. In such moments, participants appeared to be performing alongside one another rather than with one another. This does not necessarily mean that cooperation was absent, but that the interaction lacked the mutual responsiveness and affective connection that characterize resonance. From Rosa's perspective, this points toward alienation: a mode of relating in which the world, or in this case one's teammates and shared performance environment, does not fully "speak back" in a meaningful way (Rosa, 2016/2019, 2018a). This variability may partly reflect the different conditions under which AWG teams and delegations arrive at the Games, including differences in prior experience, training time, resources, team familiarity, and opportunities to build trust before the event. Resonance may therefore be more difficult to experience when participants have not had sufficient time to develop shared rhythms, when they feel excluded or injured, when performance pressures dominate, or when poor results undermine the meaning of participation (e.g., Frydendal & Thing, 2024; Rosa, 2016/2019; Thomas & Rintala, 1989). In this sense, the AWG shows both the possibility and the fragility of social resonance: even in a setting rich with opportunities for connection, resonant team experiences remain dependent on particular social, embodied, and organizational conditions, and cannot be guaranteed.

Spectatorial Social Resonance at the AWG

Another form of social resonance observed at the AWG emerged through spectatorship. For Rosa (2016/2019), spectators do not simply watch sporting events from a distance; they may become bodily and emotionally involved in the unfolding action through what he describes as kinesthetic sympathy. In this sense, spectating can become a socially resonant experience when cheers, applause, gasps, gestures, and emotional reactions circulate among the crowd and intensify the shared atmosphere of the event. At the AWG, this was especially visible in accounts of spectators supporting athletes during Arctic Sports and Dene Games. One participant from Alaska, reflecting on what they appreciated about Arctic Sports and Dene Games, stated: "I love the support of the observers. Sometimes they're right there by the athletes, clapping, and cheering." Similarly, a participant from the Northwest Territories emphasized the sense of collective support surrounding the Dene Games: "I loved how no matter what team you were from you still cheered as hard and loud as you can for everyone else as well. It was like we were a big family."

These accounts, alongside our observations, suggest that spectatorship at the AWG could move beyond passive observation and become a form of shared bodily and affective participation. Although spectators were not physically performing the sport, their clapping, cheering, emotional tension, and collective encouragement brought them into relation with both the athletes and one another. This collective emotional attunement resembles a weaker form of muscular bonding, as spectators become connected through their shared responses to the unfolding action (McNeill, 1997). Our observations of these moments therefore point to a form of social resonance in which spectators were drawn into the rhythm of the event through bodily and emotional responsiveness. Bertet et al. (2024) similarly describe the atmosphere surrounding hockey games at the 2023 AWG, noting the shared emotions expressed through hugs, raised arms and sticks, cheers, and

crowd reactions. They observe that spectators followed the movement of the puck closely and responded vocally to players' actions, while players also displayed intensity through bodily engagement and sound, including contact with the boards and sticks on the ice (Bertet et al., 2024, p. 82). These examples illustrate how spectators can become caught up in the rhythm and emotional movement of the event. Through their bodily and affective responses, they participate in a shared atmosphere in which the action on the field, court, or ice is echoed, amplified, and socially experienced among the audience.

Social Resonance Through Friendship and Informal Interaction

A third form of social resonance at the AWG emerged through friendship and informal social interaction across delegations. Unlike resonance among teammates and spectators, this form of resonance was less directly tied to synchronized movement or shared attention to sporting action. Instead, it developed through meeting others, exchanging stories, learning about different cultural backgrounds, and becoming emotionally open to participants from other teams, delegations, and regions. In this sense, the AWG created opportunities for social resonance in the wider social life of the event, involving athletes, mission staff, coaches, spectators, officials, volunteers, and others.

For Rosa (2016/2019), friendship can be understood as a form of social resonance because it is grounded in sympathy, trust, and mutual responsiveness. Friendship is not simply a useful social connection or a casual interaction; rather, it involves an affective relation in which individuals become open to one another and allow themselves to be moved by the other's presence, stories, and experiences. The preconditions of resonance—openness, curiosity, vulnerability, and a willingness to be affected—are therefore central to friendship. At the AWG, these qualities were visible in participants' accounts of meeting people from other contingents, learning about their

lives and cultures, and forming relationships that extended beyond the competitive structure of the Games. For instance, when participants were asked about their experiences of socializing with individuals from other teams or contingents, a participant from Alberta North emphasized the importance of learning from others and making friends:

> You get to learn their stories and stuff about their sports. Along with honestly just making new friends and meeting new people. I made some amazing friends. I loved going to other teams such as the Dene Games or even the Arctic Sports to hear all the stories and watch. And I loved learning new cultural stories from others.

This account suggests that friendship at the AWG was not only based on casual socializing, but also on curiosity, listening, and openness to cultural difference. The participant's enjoyment came not simply from meeting others, but from hearing their stories, learning about their sports, and engaging with cultural narratives shared through Arctic Sports and Dene Games. In Rosa's (2016/2019) terms, such moments can be understood as resonant because the other is not encountered as distant, silent, or irrelevant, but as someone who "speaks back" through stories, experiences, and cultural expression.

A similar pattern appeared in the account of a futsal player from Yukon, who stated: "Team Alaska was so nice to us and we ended up really becoming friends with them. It was nice to know that even though we were competing against each other we could still get along." This quotation is significant because it shows how friendship could emerge even within a competitive context. The interaction did not eliminate competition, but it softened its boundaries. Opponents were not experienced only as rivals to defeat, but as people with whom kindness, trust, and emotional

connection could develop. In this sense, the AWG provided a social environment in which competition and connection could coexist, allowing participants to experience relationships that exceeded the instrumental logic of winning and losing. Mission team members also described the AWG as a space where friendship and social connection extended across roles and delegations. A mission team member from Alaska explained:

> I enjoyed meeting athletes and coaches and mission staff from other contingents. It was amazing to see athletes mingle with athletes from other contingents, coaches and mission staff also all meeting and making new friends.

This quote shows that social resonance at the AWG was not limited to athletes. Rather, the Games created a broader social atmosphere in which athletes, coaches, mission staff, and other attendees could encounter one another across regional and organizational boundaries. Although these comments may appear simple at first glance, they reveal important resonant qualities: affection, trust, curiosity, hospitality, and mutual recognition. Participants did not merely occupy the same event space; they engaged with one another in ways that opened possibilities for friendship and belonging. This is particularly important in the context of the AWG, where participants often come from northern and culturally distinct regions. The Games bring together delegations that may share certain experiences of geographic distance, regional specificity, cultural difference, and limited opportunities for large-scale interregional exchange. Within this context, friendship may become more than an individual social benefit. It can also function as a resonant relation through which participants recognize commonalities, encounter difference, and develop a sense of connection across regional and cultural boundaries. Previous studies have similarly suggested that social

resonance can emerge within restricted or distinctive physical cultural communities, such as trail running and physical education, where shared experience, mutual recognition, and interaction with others facilitate friendship and belonging (Frydendal & Thing, 2024; Plard, 2023).

Although participants often described the AWG as enjoyable and less dominated by winning than other sport contexts, the event was still shaped by structured schedules, transportation demands, early mornings, team responsibilities, and physical and emotional fatigue. These conditions could limit opportunities for resonance within the formal sport program. Yet the less structured moments in the Athletes' Village, especially after competitions and performances, seemed to offer another space for social resonance. These moments provided participants with time to talk, listen, share emotions, and become vulnerable with one another outside the immediate pressures of performance. When asked what they liked most about the Games, a speed skating athlete from the Northwest Territories reflected on returning to the Village at the end of the day and listening to other athletes' stories:

> Hmm, 12-year-old Callie would have said training. This time around, I think, I don't know, I just like going back to the Village at the end of the day and then just getting to hear the stories of all the other athletes and how their days went because some kids are really upset with their days, and some are hurt, and some are so pumped because they broke records that day. So I think that, like last night was a super fun night. I feel like we all got back late and everyone was eating dinner at 11 o'clock at night because it's all when we got back, and we just got to hear the stories of people all over.

This account highlights the emotional range of the Games and the importance of informal storytelling. The athlete valued not only the sport itself, but the opportunity to hear how others had experienced the day: their excitement, disappointment, pain, frustration, or pride. These shared stories created conditions for sympathy and emotional responsiveness. Participants became open to one another's experiences, including moments of vulnerability when others were hurt, upset, or disappointed. In this sense, the Village functioned as a social space in which resonance could emerge through listening, affective exchange, and mutual understanding.

Making Social Resonance Possible: Obstacles and Catalysts

For Rosa (2016/2019), resonance is not something that can be planned, manufactured, or guaranteed; its emergence remains unpredictable and uncontrollable. Nevertheless, he argues that particular contexts can create more favorable conditions for resonance to arise, which he describes as "spaces of resonance" (Rosa, 2020). Drawing on this perspective, this article considers four conditions that may influence the emergence of social resonance at the AWG: organizational objectives, spatial conditions, temporal conditions, and psychological states.

Organizational Objectives

Organizational objectives can play an important role in shaping the conditions through which social resonance becomes more likely. When an event's mission, policies, and initiatives emphasize not only competition but also values such as socialization, friendship, community, and cultural understanding and exchange, they may help create an environment in which participants are more open to meaningful encounters. By contrast, events organized primarily around performance, efficiency, commercialization, or measurable outcomes may give less attention to

relational and sociocultural dimensions, thereby limiting opportunities for resonance (see, e.g., Bjørndal & Espedalen, 2026; Frydendal & Thing, 2024; Larsen, 2021; Reinold, 2026; Rosa, 2016/2019). In this sense, organizational objectives do not produce resonance directly, but they can help structure the kinds of spaces, values, and interactions through which resonant experiences may become possible.

The AWG illustrates this point, as the Arctic Winter Games International Committee (AWGIC) defines its mission as "providing a meaningful Arctic Winter Games experience" by promoting athletic competition, cultural exhibition and exchange, and social interaction among Northerners, symbolized by the three interlocking rings in the AWG logo (Arctic Winter Games International Committee, n.d.-a). These objectives are reinforced through the event's organizational design, policies, and initiatives, which position the AWG as more than a sporting competition (Fuchs, 2023). Through contemporary sports, Indigenous games, cultural programming, and festivities, the event celebrates both athletic excellence and the cultural traditions of northern communities (Bertet et al., 2024; Fuchs, 2025). This organizational framing helps create conditions in which participants may encounter others with openness, curiosity, and emotional engagement, thereby supporting the possibility of social resonance. Host societies and other event actors also contribute to these conditions by emphasizing community development, cultural celebration, and social engagement, a commitment reflected among chefs de mission, coaches, host society members, and other leaders involved in the AWG (MacKay & Dallaire, 2024). For example, the general manager of the 2023 AWG highlighted objectives such as bringing youth participants together, including Indigenous sports, showcasing northern cultural traditions, and celebrating Indigenous cultures. These priorities suggest that the 2023 AWG was organized

not only as a competitive event, but also as a social and cultural space in which meaningful connections could emerge.

Spatial Conditions

Resonance flourishes in spaces that cultivate optimal conditions, rendering it imperative to establish environments where individuals can authentically connect (Corrêa et al., 2021; Rosa, 2020). Individuals should enter spaces where they become vulnerable. Being able to resonate necessarily entails vulnerability, requiring openness to others and a readiness to embrace transformative experiences outside one's control (Plard, 2023; Rosa, 2016/2019, 2023). For instance, in relation to existential resonance, particularly resonance with nature, natural environments such as gardens, parks, and forests may offer more favorable conditions for resonant experiences than rigid and enclosed spaces such as concrete cellars (Corrêa et al., 2021). The Arctic Winter Games foster an atmosphere that promotes curiosity and vulnerability through diverse activities, such as outdoor sporting events, cultural gatherings, Indigenous sports, Indigenous music and dance, and other programs (Fuchs, 2023; Walter, 2011). This spatial openness is reflected in Fuchs's (2023) findings from the 2016 AWG, which show that the event environment exposed participants to a variety of people and cultures. Such exposure encouraged greater openness toward different ethnicities and increased interest in participating in cultural activities. Similarly, in the analysis of the 2023 AWG, a mission staff member from Greenland indicates in the survey how the AWG's environment – rich in diverse languages, narratives, and cultures – renders them profoundly vulnerable and emotionally impacted, "Sharing language and talking about hunting stories in the Arctic. Talking about culture and listening to the local culture is so emotional."

Another example is the pin-trading area in the 2023 AWG that functions as a dynamic hub where participants and the public trade collectible pins representing different contingents, the International Committee, and the host society. This tradition transcends mere exchange of objects – it cultivates spontaneous interactions, social bonding, and shared excitement, creating an inclusive and vibrant atmosphere where individuals feel connected. In this context, a badminton player from Greenland expressed that pin trading facilitates social interaction, illustrating how supplementary social activities/spaces during the event can purposefully foster meaningful social connections:

> I also think that the fact that we have pins, I don't know, maybe it's a bit random, but the pins really make it so… because otherwise I think we stick to ourselves a bit, all the countries, and then I really think that the pins, it's such an icebreaker, if you can say it like that, it's really like, you can go to a person, do you want to exchange pins? Or something. Then you can, and then you can exchange pins, but then you can also start talking to these people, that are from other places.

While the Arctic Winter Games create a favorable atmosphere for fostering social resonance, specific spatial conditions may impede interactions among individuals. A significant spatial challenge identified by participants and mission staff was the considerable distance between some athletes' venues, and between venues and dorm necessitating extensive transit. For example, when inquired about elements constraining interaction with members of other teams or contingents, a mission staff member from Alberta North replied in the survey, "Distance between some venues

make attendance difficult." This comment emphasizes how logistical obstacles might limit prospects for social interaction and shared experiences.

Spatial challenges associated with staging sporting events, especially in northern areas, are often inevitable. The AWG welcomes around 2,000 individuals, featuring a variety of contemporary and Indigenous sports in addition to cultural events. Accommodating such a large number of people and organizing this variety of athletic and cultural programs within a singular concentrated venue is impractical. Consequently, owing to financial and logistical limitations, organizers are compelled to utilize various venues and accommodations for the event. Thus, spatial concerns, particularly the distance between venues and dorms, are unavoidable. This dispersion can make it difficult for some participants to attend certain sports or cultural activities, potentially restricting their ability to fully engage with the event. However, organizers often implement proactive strategies to address these challenges by incorporating supplementary activities and communal spaces that foster social interaction and cultural exchange. For example, at the 2023 AWG, game rooms and the communal dining hall in the dormitory were established as spaces where participants could play and eat together while socializing and engage in meaningful interactions. Additionally, cultural programs, including traditional dances and music performances, were held within the dorm, allowing individuals unable to attend larger cultural galas to still immerse themselves in Indigenous traditions. These initiatives illustrate how thoughtful spatial planning can help counteract logistical constraints, creating alternative opportunities for meaningful connections among participants.

Temporal Conditions

Temporal conditions constitute another important factor shaping the possibility of resonance (Rosa, 2020, 2023). Resonance requires time for immersion, attentiveness, and openness, whether individuals are engaging with people, nature, art, or their surroundings more broadly (Gibout, 2022; Larsen, 2021; Plard, 2023). Frydendal and Thing (2024), for example, show that physical education can provide students with a relaxing and enjoyable atmosphere that allows them to step outside the accelerated rhythm of everyday life and connect more deeply with themselves and others. Students in their study described PE as a space for positive experiences and friendship formation, including with students from other classes. This is consistent with Rosa's theory of social acceleration, which identifies technological acceleration, rapid social change, and the acceleration of daily life as resonance killers because they reduce the time and openness needed for meaningful relational encounters (Rosa, 2005/2013, 2018b).

In the context of sport events, temporal organization may either support or restrict opportunities for resonance. Strict schedules and tightly managed programs can limit attendees' ability to participate in activities beyond their immediate competitive or organizational responsibilities. Even when participants are physically present, time pressure related to upcoming competitions, duties, fatigue, or stress may prevent them from engaging meaningfully with others. In such cases, the temporal structure of the event may obstruct resonance and, in some moments, contribute to experiences of alienation (Frydendal & Thing, 2024; Rosa, 2016/2019). This pressure is especially visible in mega events, where time is highly compressed and carefully controlled. Because these events involve multiple sports, large numbers of athletes, global media coverage, sponsorship expectations, and international audiences, their schedules must be tightly coordinated. In such settings, the logics of professionalization and sportification become particularly strong:

athletic performance is transformed into a highly visible spectacle shaped by commercial, media, and organizational demands. As a result, flexibility, downtime, and informal social encounters may be reduced. Under these conditions, time is often organized around performance and spectacle rather than cultural participation, social immersion, or emotionally meaningful interaction.

At the AWG, participants' experiences revealed both the possibilities and limits of the event's temporal structure. While some respondents emphasized opportunities for socialization, friendship formation, and participation in sport and cultural programs, others described challenges related to time constraints. For example, when participants were asked about the AWG's capacity to promote attendance at other sports and cultural activities, an Alaskan athlete from Arctic Sports/Inuit Games explained:

> I know that's been a challenge, especially, I mean, for Arctic Sports, Open Male, we have 10 games throughout the whole week. So, we're here at 8am and sometimes it ends at 7, 8pm. I think they ended at 10pm. So sometimes it's just about time and there's not enough time to make it to check out other sports.

This quotation shows how the temporal demands of the AWG can limit participants' opportunities to engage with other sporting, social, and cultural activities. In this sense, traces of social acceleration are still present within the event, even though the AWG is not organized according to the same commercial and media pressures as mega-events. At the same time, these temporal constraints should be understood in relation to the practical challenges faced by organizers, who must balance the duration of the event, the scheduling of each program, facility availability, funding, sponsorship requirements, and participants' needs. The AWG's temporal conditions

therefore appear ambivalent: they can create openings for resonance through shared time, repeated encounters, and participation in diverse activities, but they can also restrict these possibilities when schedules become too compressed.

Psychological Condition

Psychological conditions are another important factor shaping the possibility of resonance (Rosa, 2020). Mental health difficulties, depression, burnout, fear, stress, shame, anxiety, and combative or defensive moods can limit individuals' capacity to connect with themselves, others, and their surroundings (e.g., Gutjahr, 2024; Rosa, 2016/2019, 2018b, 2023). As noted earlier, the AWG includes athletic competition and therefore cannot be separated entirely from broader logics of performance, optimization, and sportification. However, it also functions as a community sport event that emphasizes cultural exchange, social interaction, friendship, sport development, and community development (Bertet et al., 2024; Fuchs, 2023; Walter, 2011). This broader orientation help create a more positive affective atmosphere, marked by enjoyment, camaraderie, curiosity, and joy (see also, Walter, 2011), which can make participants more open to resonant encounters.

By contrast, when sport events are organized primarily around performance and competition, participants may be more likely to adopt a narrowly competitive mindset focused on winning, comparison, and advantage. Such a mindset may intensify stress or pressure and limit opportunities for experiencing resonance across different axes. The 2023 AWG data suggest a more complex picture. While competition remained present, many respondents described the event through broader values and experiences, including enjoyment, friendship, cultural exchange, language exchange, pin trading, and opportunities to present their own cultures (see also, Bertet et al., 2024; Fuchs, 2023). Survey responses about the Dene Games and Arctic Sports similarly

emphasized positive emotional experiences, with participants and mission staff describing them as "exciting and interesting to see," "very fun to watch," "so friendly and family-like," "competing like family," and even "no competition, just love." These responses suggest an atmosphere characterized by excitement, interest, fun, friendliness, and a sense of family, with relatively limited emphasis on hyper-competition. Walter's (2011) findings from the 2010 AWG similarly indicate that participants experienced the event as enjoyable, exciting, adventurous, and memorable. Such positive emotional conditions may not produce resonance directly, but they can make participants more receptive to meaningful encounters and therefore more likely to experience resonant relationships.

Concluding thoughts

The analysis suggests that the AWG creates possibilities for social resonance in various settings, as reflected in the elements and preconditions identified throughout the findings. It also shows that the event provides several spaces that may facilitate the emergence of resonant encounters. This raises an important question: what is it about the AWG that makes these possibilities more likely? The Arctic Winter Games can be understood as a sporting event that challenges dominant Westernized and performance-oriented models of sport by placing local identities, northern cultures, and Indigenous practices—such as Arctic Sports and Dene Games—at the center of its organization. Although it has sometimes been described as the "Arctic Olympics," its meaning lies less in nationalist rivalry than in being an event "full of the aims of sharing and meeting" (Fuchs, 2025, p. 46). In this sense, the AWG appears as "more than a, or at least an alternative kind of, sports event" (Thomsen et al., 2018, p. 106). Its significance rests in the way it brings together sport, culture, education, and relationships in the service of northern

communities, reflecting what Fuchs (2023, p. 44) calls “humanized” Games. By foregrounding social and cultural connection rather than treating competition as the sole purpose of the event, the AWG “questions, even destabilizes, the contemporary sports movement” (Fuchs, 2023, p. 38). This is precisely where its relevance as a community sport event becomes visible.

The community sport event character of the AWG is important because community sport events are not usually defined only by athletic performance or spectatorship. Rather, they are often staged around social, fun, and entertainment value for community audiences (Batty, 2014), and may emphasize mass participation, healthy lifestyles, and the strengthening of social bonds among community members (Setiawan et al., 2025). The attraction of these events, then, does not rest primarily on elite athletic performance. Instead, it often comes from the chance for community members to gather, cheer for people they know, spend time with family and friends, and take part in a festive setting that strengthens social connection (Kurpis et al., 2010). Similarly, Bozman et al. (2016) show that participants, volunteers, and spectators may value community sport events as spaces for social affiliation, belonging, warm relationships, enjoyment, self-fulfillment, and a sense of accomplishment. From a resonance perspective, these features matter because they suggest that community sport events can create conditions in which people are invited not only to watch or compete, but also to meet, share, participate, and become open to others. In the case of the AWG, this community ethos is reinforced by its emphasis on northern cultures, community building, Indigenous practices, education, youth development, and social interaction, all of which help explain why the event may function as a space of social resonance.

However, this argument should not be read as suggesting that other sport events cannot become stages of social resonance. Social resonance is not exclusive to community sport events, nor is it automatically produced by the AWG. More professionalized or commercialized sport

events may also become stages for resonant encounters, for example, through relationships among teammates, between athletes and coaches, among spectators, or between athletes and audiences. In this sense, sport events of many kinds can provide moments in which people are touched, respond, and experience meaningful connection. The key issue, therefore, is not whether resonance is possible in one type of event and absent in another, but what kinds of social resonance are made more likely, under what conditions, and through which event structures, values, and practices.

What appears distinctive about the AWG is that its community ethos expands the range of spaces in which such encounters can occur. In more professionalized events, the main attention of organizers, participants, media, and spectators is often directed toward competition, athletic performance, efficiency, and visibility. This does not eliminate the possibility of social resonance, but it may narrow the time, attention, and openness available for encounters beyond the athletic dimension of the event. By contrast, the AWG's emphasis on culture, education, social exchange, Indigenous practices, and community building creates conditions in which participants are invited to engage with the event as more than a competition. As the findings suggest, organizers, mission team members, and participants often orient themselves toward meeting others, learning about different cultures, sharing experiences, and taking part in informal interactions beyond the field of play.

This matters because social resonance depends not only on physical proximity, but also on openness, attentiveness, vulnerability, and the possibility of being affected by others. The AWG seems to provide more opportunities for these conditions to emerge because its design encourages participants to encounter people, cultures, and communities outside the narrow frame of athletic performance. Informal friendships, dormitory interactions, pin trading, shared cultural activities, ceremonies, and everyday conversations become important because they create spaces where

participants may move from simply attending an event to being addressed by others and responding to them. Thus, the AWG does not guarantee resonance, but its community-oriented philosophy and event design appear to increase the likelihood that social resonance can occur across multiple relational settings.

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Chapter 5 (Article 2): The Arctic Winter Games: A subversive model of sporting event amid resonance blockers

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Author contribution: I contributed to the design of the primary study, including the development of the survey, interview guide, and observation grid. I also contributed to data collection through observations and archival research and was present during some interviews, although I did not conduct them. I analyzed the materials relevant to this article and prepared the initial manuscript draft. The manuscript was subsequently refined through ongoing discussions, feedback, and collaborative revisions with my co-author.

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Abstract

This research draws on resonance theory to analyze how the Arctic Winter Games (AWG), a community sporting event, mitigates features linked with professionalized sport events—dynamics that can act as resonance blockers—to sustain conditions more conducive to resonance (Rosa, 2016/2019). Utilizing a qualitative multimethod approach, we analyzed organizational documents, interviews, surveys, and participant observation from the 2023 AWG and found that the AWG actively resist resonance blockers by challenging sportification through event governance and vernacular games, tempering hyper-competition, and emphasizing value-rational orientations. These conditions create a sport event comparatively favorable for resonance experiences, illustrating how community-based sports events can be organized to protect spaces more conducive to meaningful relationships amid growing professionalization pressures.

Keywords: alienation, Arctic Winter Games, community sporting events, professionalization, resonance blockers

Introduction

On 27 January 2023, we arrived in Wood Buffalo (Alberta, Canada) to participate in and observe the week-long Arctic Winter Games (AWG). As we moved between venues, what struck us first was not the results board but a remarkably friendly, almost informal atmosphere. Spectators followed the games eagerly, shouting encouragement and clapping for all teams, not only their own. Athletes sometimes practiced with members of other contingents, exchanging tips during warm-ups, and applauding strong performances regardless of jersey color. Between events, youth clustered in hallways and common spaces, chatting, laughing, and trading flags, gear, and pins as tangible reminders of new connections. Threaded through this sporting activity were northern songs, dances, and traditional instruments that animated cultural performances and evening gatherings. By integrating Dene Games and Arctic Sports, the AWG more deeply embeds northern indigenous cultural practices and broaden their reach in Northern communities (Paraschak, 1991). The AWG clearly felt less like a win-at-all cost competitive tournament and more like a community-based gathering focused on building friendships, celebrating northern and Indigenous cultures, and nurturing northern youth as much as chasing rankings and results (Thomsen et al., 2018).

Prior studies highlight the AWG's relational dynamics—interaction and networking, community ties, friendships, cultural connection, emotional attachment, and identity formation (e.g., Bertet et al., 2024; Fuchs, 2023; Heine, 2005; Mahadevan & Ren, 2019; Thomsen et al., 2018). More recently, we examined the spaces the AWG provides that can support resonant connections (Alavi et al., 2026). However, this literature offers limited insight into how the event is organized and experienced in ways that counter conditions that may limit the likelihood of

resonance. Accordingly, this paper asks how the AWG functions—particularly in relation to resonance blockers—to create conditions that can support resonance.

Resonance names a way of relating to the world that stands in response to experiences of alienation—those moments when the world feels mute, indifferent, and unreachable and becomes intertwined with depression, stress, and burnout (Rosa, 2016/2019). Hartmut Rosa argues that in a modern social order governed by dynamic stabilization, where continuous growth, acceleration, competition, and efficiency are required simply to maintain the status quo, opportunities for deep relationships shrink. Resonance names an alternative mode of relating in which individuals experience the world as responsive, transformative, and alive (Rosa, 2016/2019). The dynamics of resonance rest on four elements: first, an individual is affectively touched or moved by a person, object, practice, or place; second, this experience calls forth a self-efficacious response—one feels capable of answering what addresses them; third, the relation is dynamic and transformative, leaving both self and world changed; and finally, resonance remains fundamentally unpredictable and uncontrollable—neither its occurrence nor its effects can be guaranteed or fully planned (Rosa, 2016/2019). In this context, a good life requires the presence of axes of resonance across all dimensions—self-axis (embodied), social (e.g., friends), material (e.g., objects), and existential (e.g., art, nature) (Rosa, 2018a).

Although resonance cannot be engineered or guaranteed, its likelihood increases when the conditions that tend to obstruct it are limited (Rosa, 2018b, 2020). These resonance blockers are closely tied to institutional emphases on competition, performance, and instrumental relations oriented toward securing and expanding resources. They are further intensified by what Rosa describes as the "Triple-A" orientation, through which the promise of the good life is increasingly cast as making the world fully "available, accessible, and attainable"—an object to be planned,

optimized, and controlled (Rosa, 2018a: 42). Moreover, resonance can be undermined by reification that turns people and practices into manipulable objects, and by psychic states such as fear, shame, burnout, and anxiety (Rosa, 2018b). In the realm of sports, Reinold (2026) argues that when coaching is framed instrumentally—treating practice as optimization and achievement—it can inhibit deep relationships among athletes, coaches, and sport. He further shows how elite sport's dynamic-stabilization pressures (constant acceleration to avoid falling behind), the pursuit of efficiency and bodily optimization associated with stress and burnout, and the quantification of bodily experience through wearable and surveillance technologies can contribute to alienation and mute relationships. Bjørndal and Espedalen (2026) argue that youth sport is increasingly moving away from informal, community-based play and toward more organized, fast-paced, and performance-centered systems, where intensified demands and ongoing assessment may contribute to stress, burnout, and alienation. They therefore call for moving beyond instrumental goals toward youth sport that prioritizes relational engagement, affective connection, and sustainable long-term participation. In addition, Rosa argues in an interview that there is no resonance in tracking practices as such, nor in parametric optimization, which is driven by the urge to plan, control, and optimize every aspect of movement (Rosa et al., 2026). He also criticizes instrumental and objectifying approaches to exercise, such as exercising mainly to achieve a more attractive body or improve numerical indicators, rather than valuing movement for its own sake. Besides these factors, resonance experiences may be undermined when sport is shaped by economization, commercialization, and objectification (Rosa, 2016/2019), sportification (Larsen, 2021), and performance-based assessment (Frydendal & Thing, 2024).

These resonance blockers appear especially pronounced in professionalized sport events, where commercialization and result-oriented institutional logics tend to overshadow community

"sport-for-all" aims (Stenling & Fahlén, 2009). At the organizational level, professionalization often involves the rationalization of management practices and the adoption of specialized tools designed to enhance efficiency and output, with success increasingly assessed through quantifiable indicators (Melnick et al., 2025; Ruoranen et al., 2016). At the athlete level, results- and business-driven environments can foster "robotisation" and commodification, positioning athletes as assets within asymmetrical power relations and a performance culture dominated by results-oriented logic (Schubring et al., 2024). Professionalized events are marked by formal coaching structures and structured training regimens, the prioritization of performance and marketability, and an intensified reliance on performance metrics (Choi & Byun, 2024). They are also embedded in extensive media coverage and treated as premium entertainment products, with their management oriented toward maximizing commercial value across multi-sided markets, further reinforcing commercialization and commodification (Lim, 2025).

In these environments, several organizational dynamics commonly converge. Professionalized sport events tend to be highly sportified: practices are processed into sport through formal rules and standards, institutional oversight (Lebreton et al., 2010), and broader processes of "the institutionalization of practices, the formalization of standards, and the specialization of roles" (Yang et al., 2022, p. 1). Professionalized events are also influenced by hyper-competition, where winning becomes the organizing principle and medals, rankings, and other metrics serve as primary currencies of value (Reinold, 2026). They are frequently organized through instrumental rationality—an approach that privileges efficient means to predetermined ends without interrogating the ends' inherent value (Weber, 1922/1978). The dominance of these dynamics can constrain conditions for resonance (see, for example, Bjørndal & Espedalen, 2026; Larsen, 2021; Reinold, 2026; Rosa et al., 2026). However, even though these dynamics have

increasingly begun to shape community sporting events as well (see, e.g., Bjørndal & Espedalen, 2026; Lim, 2025), such events may still resist their full dominance—potentially preserving more favorable conditions for resonance. Taking the AWG as a community sporting event, we explore how the Games are organized and experienced in ways that temper these dynamics. While resonance blockers take multiple forms, and our analysis remained attentive to this broader set, we focus primarily on three dynamics that are especially salient in the professionalization of sport event organization: sportification, hyper-competition, and instrumental rationality. We use these dynamics as sensitizing lenses in our analysis to examine how the Games are organized and experienced in ways that limit these resonance-blocking pressures.

Methods

We conducted a qualitative secondary analysis using a multimethod design comprising document analysis, semi-structured interviews, open-ended survey items, and participant observation. The primary dataset, entitled 'Arctic Winter Games 2023: Arctic Youth, Culture, and Environment' (Dallaire et al., 2024) focused primarily on athletic experiences, relationships, sense of belonging, identity, culture, and social and environmental sustainability. In this paper, we reanalyzed our own research material through a theoretical lens that was not built into the original research design.

The document analysis drew on all materials posted by the 2023 AWG host society and all publicly accessible items from the Arctic Winter Games International Committee (AWGIC) website, including final reports from earlier Games. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with people involved in the Games in several roles: a general manager (n = 1), a mission team member (n = 1), a volunteer (n = 1), athletes (n = 29), and cultural performers (n = 4). Participants

were recruited via purposive and convenience strategies. Some interviews were scheduled in advance through mission staff; others were conducted onsite between competitions, contingent on availability and willingness. The host society's general manager was interviewed prior to the 2023 AWG, whereas all other interviews occurred during the Games. The Host Society also emailed an online survey to delegation members near the end of the Games and redistributed it after the event. The survey contained multiple-choice and short open-ended questions addressing demographic characteristics and the athletic, relational, cultural, social, and environmental dimensions of the AWG. The full team-based report contained 689 response records from all eight contingents and comprised 151 pages. The survey platform reported a completion rate of 67%. Of the 627 respondents who answered the broad role question, 390 identified as athletes or cultural performers and 237 as mission team members. Because respondents could skip individual items and some questions were branch-specific, response counts varied across questions. The present analysis drew only on open-ended responses relevant to the themes examined in this article. The primary project also included participant observation to capture the event's overall atmosphere alongside its athletic, cultural, social, and environmental facets. Fieldwork ran from January 29 to February 4, 2023, during the AWG in Wood Buffalo, Alberta (Canada). The research team—three professors, a lecturer, two doctoral students, and a master's student—observed competitions, ceremonies, cultural programs, and daily organizing-committee meetings. An observation grid structured notetaking, specifying setting characteristics and behaviors to record physical environment (e.g., decorations), ceremonial elements (e.g., music), and cultural performances (e.g., musical genres). It also directed attention to spectator composition and reactions; the structure and intensity of sport contests; behaviors of athletes, coaches, and audiences; interactions beyond competition; and cultural programming. The University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board reviewed and approved

the data collection procedures, confirming compliance with ethical standards for human-participant research (File no. H-06-22-8134).

Analysis: Subverting the dominant professionalized sport event model

We conducted a theory-driven thematic analysis using Rosa's (2016/2019) resonance theory—particularly the notion of resonance blockers. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach, we analyzed the material in dialogue with scholarship identifying sportification, hyper-competition, and instrumental rationality as dynamics that can function as resonance blockers in sport contexts (see, e.g., Bjørndal & Espedalen, 2026; Larsen, 2021; Reinold, 2026; Rosa et al., 2026). We used these dynamics as sensitizing concepts to guide coding toward instances where the AWG reproduced, tempered, or resisted resonance-blocking pressures. Four overarching themes structure the analysis: contesting sportification through specific means of designing and overseeing the event, contesting sportification through the highlight on vernacular games, tempering hyper-competition through purposeful strategies, and foregrounding value-rational orientations.

Sportification contested through event governance

Sportification refers to the process through which a practice (or event format) is increasingly processed into sport via formal rules and standards, institutional oversight, and broader processes of institutionalization, standardization, and role specialization (Lebreton et al., 2010; Yang et al., 2022). While these processes can stabilize and legitimize participation, critical accounts argue that highly sportified sport can also become alienating: regulation, optimization pressures, and institutional control may encourage athletes to relate to their bodies and activities in objectified,

instrumental ways rather than as open-ended sites of meaning and responsive engagement (Larsen, 2021). This matters for resonance because, for Rosa (2016/2019), resonant relations cannot be produced on demand; they remain partly uncontrollable and unpredictable, requiring openness to being affected and responding in ways that exceed calculation and command. By increasing predictability through codification and standardization, sportification can narrow the space for spontaneity, surprise, and responsive encounters—conditions that are critical for the likelihood of resonance. As Larsen (2021) shows in the case of parkour, sportification can reconfigure an informal, playful practice through codification, governance, and commercialized competitions, pushing participants toward disciplined performance rather than exploratory play.

Sportification can become visible in how sport events are organized, governed, and evaluated. Our observations and documentary analysis show that, despite its community orientation, the AWG reproduces several features associated with sportified event formats. First, many competitions are structured through codified rules and formalized formats. Sport-specific rulebooks and technical manuals define event categories, tournament structures, and procedures, leaving limited room for improvisation in how contests are organized. These arrangements are overseen by formal institutions—notably the AWG International Committee and host society organizing committees—which legitimize, regulate, and periodically update the sport program in ways comparable to other multisport events. Second, the Games rely on standardized infrastructures and procedures. Many disciplines (e.g., ice hockey) use regulated equipment and are staged in facilities that meet specified size and layout requirements; officiating follows consistent protocols, with certified referees, formalized pre-/post-game routines, and established channels for appeals or disputes. Third, the AWG is embedded in sportified temporalities and evaluative regimes. Events follow predictable timetables with preliminaries, playoffs, and finals,

and performance data are systematically produced and circulated through timing systems, scoresheets, rankings, statistics, medal counts, and the celebration of records.

However, our data suggest that the AWG tempers the dominance of sportification by institutionally embedding athletic competition within broader cultural and social purposes. Here, resistance does not take the form of abandoning codified rules or standardized procedures; instead, it appears as a consistent effort to prevent sportified logics from becoming the Games' sole organizing rationale. The AWG mission, "to provide a meaningful Arctic Winter Games experience," frames the event as experiential and relational rather than as an enterprise driven solely by performance (AWGIC, n.d.-a). This orientation is also reflected in the AWG logo. Although its three interlocking rings may visually echo the Olympic symbol, the AWG defines them as representing athletic competition, cultural exhibition, and social interaction. Competition is therefore positioned as one of three pillars rather than as the event's overriding purpose (Fuchs, 2023). In this way, the Games publicly value cultural and social goals alongside athletic performance, signaling a partial resistance to the totalizing tendencies of sportification. The mottos of recent AWG editions similarly articulate an event identity that exceeds record-seeking ideals. Themes such as "Resilience, Inclusion, Strength and Excellence", as well as earlier slogans like "Join—Feel—Jump" and "Great Spirit—Northern Dreams", foreground inclusion, participation, emotion, and collective spirit alongside athletic achievement. This branding pattern is consistent with other community-based sport events hosted in Canada such as the *Jeux de la francophonie canadienne*, which frames itself as a youth event that cultivates identity and strengthens belonging within the Francophonie through friendly competition (Dallaire, 2014). Finally, this re-embedding of sport within northern identity is expressed materially in the medal design: rather than generic circular medals, the AWG awards gold, silver, and bronze ulus, anchoring athletic achievement in

a northern Indigenous object associated with everyday land-based practices and local cultural traditions (Thomsen et al., 2018). Taken together, these symbolic and institutional cues do not eliminate sportified structures, but they qualify their meaning by linking competition to cultural continuity, social connection, and communal pride.

Sportification contested through vernacular sports

The AWG officially incorporated Arctic Sports into the sport program in 1974, followed by the addition of Dene Games in 1990. These Indigenous Games—like many forms of play—are exposed to ongoing sportification (Fabian, 2022) and potentially alienating pressures in the modern sport system (Eichberg, 2016). Sportification may involve the increasing imposition of logics associated with modern sport. Guttmann (1978/2004) identifies these as "secularism; equality; specialization of roles; rationalization; bureaucratic organization; quantification; and the quest for records" (p. 16). These logics can shape how such games are staged and interpreted. At the same time, Fabian (2022) argues that their presence, promotion, and popularity can symbolize Indigenous self-determination. Arctic Sports and Dene Games can therefore be understood as vernacular sports (Robidoux, 2002) because they are partially sportified without being fully assimilated into modern sport. They may adopt some features of modern sport events while continuing to carry distinct local meanings, embodied knowledge, and cultural purposes that resist complete assimilation into highly sportified forms of sport. Our observations of the 2023 AWG show that these games function as institutionalized vernaculars: selectively codified for fairness, yet unmistakably rooted in northern lifeways. Their techniques and tools remain close to everyday practice—often using simple, locally available materials (e.g., sticks) rather than specialized, commercial equipment; performances are embedded in cultural protocols (e.g., traditional

drumming accompanying Dene Games); and etiquette foregrounds teaching, storytelling, and communal pride as much as winning. Formats frequently include demonstrations and explanations that transmit knowledge across generations, with elders, coaches, and peers guiding Indigenous and non-Indigenous athletes toward mastery and resilience linked to land-based skills and histories, not merely to records or victory. Framed this way, these games remain only partially convergent with sportified modern sports: standardized enough to stage fair contests, yet still vernacular in purpose, texture, and communal address. This was echoed in survey responses by athletes from other sports who came to observe Arctic Sports and Dene Games: they remarked that these events are "not all about competition," that "the games help [you] learn how they were used back in the day," and that "I really enjoyed that culture beyond the games." A mission team member likewise reflected in the survey:

> It was so amazing getting to see and learn more about the origins of Arctic sports and Dene Games. Learning from these sports was incredible. Indigenous kinetics, these Arctic sports and Dene games represent the presence of culture and how it lives through all of them in physical forms… beyond verbal typical to western ways of being.

Similarly, a Dene Games participant from Northwest Territories in interview explained how culture and indigenous games are intertwined:

> So, sports and culture, you can't really separate the two in a sense. Yeah, you can't really separate the two in a sense. Like these sports, we call them sports because that's what the name we were given to us. Like these games, these things, they're a part of our culture. They

> intertwine. They show us skills we need to use every day in our culture. Like without these games, I don't know [emotional laughing]. (NWT, Male, Dene Games, Feb 3, 2023)

These accounts suggest that Arctic Sports and Dene Games are not experienced primarily as specialized performance domains but as living embodiments of Indigenous knowledge, history, and everyday skills (see, e.g., Frazer & Giles, 2023; Giles, 2004, 2005; Heine, 1999). Research on Arctic sports shows that they are deeply tied to survival on the land, building strength, endurance, agility, and community bonds, and are closely linked to cultural pride and continuity rather than only to competitive success (Frazer & Giles, 2023). Similarly, work on Dene Games emphasizes their roots in hunting and travel skills, where games cultivate speed, endurance, accuracy, and other survival capacities embedded in broader cultural teachings and community life (see, e.g., Fabian & Giles, 2023; Giles, 2004; Heine, 1999). In this sense, vernacular games subtly reframe sportification at the AWG: standardization and formal competition are present, but they are nested within value-rational aims of cultural continuity, education, and community pride (Fuchs, 2023). This configuration tempers sportification's pull as the overriding event logic and helps preserve the Games as a favorable space for resonance.

In addition, vernacular games—especially the Dene Games—retain playful qualities that partly subvert the hyper-sportification logic of many sporting events, pushing back against some of the alienating tendencies of modern sport. Descriptive and instructional work on Dene Games portrays them as tests of physical and mental skill rooted in life on the land and travel, but also as festive, social events characterized by drumming, humor, and collective excitement, where enjoyment, pride, and community bonds are central alongside competition (Giles, 2005; Heine, 1999, 2005). Field data from the 2023 AWG mirror this: competition pressure is often relatively

low, with athletes routinely collaborating, advising, and cheering across team lines; the prevailing autotelic stance is evident in observations of participants playing “for fun” and “for the stories,” where freedom, joy, laughter, and friendships are foregrounded over outcomes. In the survey, when asked, “What did you like about Arctic Sports or Dene Games?” one Arctic Sports athlete from Alberta North stated:

> "I loved the stories behind all the events and how I felt like I wasn’t really competing against others it’s like we were all one. I loved that instead of just trying to beat the other people, they would help you to learn more and be better. If you were struggling, people would run over with hugs or tips on what to do and it felt like such a safe in environment and I wish all sports were like that".

Such accounts indicate that Indigenous games at the AWG occupy an in-between position: they are clearly competitive, and winners are declared, yet norms continue to emphasize cooperation, mutual aid, and enjoyment, sustaining a comparatively playful ethos rather than pure win-maximization (See also, Giles, 2004, 2005; Heine, 2005). Spatially, our observations show that Indigenous games unfold in warm, friendly settings with minimal structural separation—participants remain physically close rather than siloed (e.g., no rigid, team-only seating). This configuration sustains easy conversation, spontaneous micro-coaching, and shared celebration, which suggests that such spaces can facilitate resonance experiences (Alavi et al., 2026). Intergenerational participation further amplifies this tone: youth and elders often occupy the same frame of action and meaning (for instance, elders providing music and rhythmic cueing in Dene Hand Games), reinforcing tradition while inviting improvisation and play. Although winning and

competition are still present, our observations show that Indigenous games tend to be pursued as ends in themselves rather than subordinated to logics of economization, optimization, or mechanization, thereby reopening possibilities for resonant encounters in which individuals feel addressed by, and responsive to, the world (Rosa, 2016/2019). Consistent with this, participants in our survey frequently emphasized enjoyment and absorption in the activity; for some, competition and outcomes were explicitly secondary, so the games were undertaken for their own sake (Gray, 2017), echoing Huizinga's (1938/1950) classic view of play as set apart from ordinary life, non-serious, and without profit motive. In the context of Indigenous games, the playful affordances—low stakes, voluntary participation, and flexible norms—create a safe, enjoyable space with latitude to explore, fail, and try again (Gray, 2017). Research on parkour similarly shows that, in its original playful form, it can resist temporally induced alienation and become a space of resonance; it has also been described as a form of serious play that resists records, standardization, and formal competition, cultivating resonance within an otherwise alienating sport culture (Larsen, 2021; Van Kaldenkerken, 2017).

Tempering hyper-competition

While competition might be unavoidable in sporting events, its overemphasis may act as a resonance blocker. When the stakes keep rising, athletes start to feel like their whole self is riding on the next performance. In professionalized and high-performance sport contexts, coaches, fans, sponsors—even national pride—lean in, and the body becomes something to manage and optimize rather than a lived part of who they are; other identities fade until only the athletic identity remains (Sarremejane, 2015). In that world, people are treated less as ends in themselves and more as vehicles for medals, metrics, and marketing—bought, sold, and leveraged in deals that turn bodies

into assets (Sarremejane, 2015). Within these tightly managed routines and surveillance-laden systems, discipline produces what Foucault called "docile bodies" (1977), and the cost is felt from the inside out: shrinking autonomy, quieter voices, and fewer moments where the world can genuinely "speak back"—the very conditions resonance depends on (Reinold, 2026; Rosa, 2016/2019). Research has shown how the intensive use of monitoring and performance technologies reinforces this dynamic, as athletes come to experience themselves as measurable and optimizable data sets rather than autonomous subjects who can speak with their own voice (Reinold, 2026). These dynamics resonate with what Donnelly (1996) describes as prolympism—a sport monoculture organized around elite achievement, medal production, and rationalized outcomes in Olympic and professional sport systems.

In this context, the AWG offer a counterexample that resists the hyper-competition mindset as made evident in the AWGIC's mission, host-societies' initiatives, and individual goals for participation. For instance, when responding to the survey question on their motivation to participate in the 2023 AWG, one athlete wrote: "… I wanted to be able to learn all the new things and new people and have fun with my team. [H]ave new experiences and learn about the culture and the stories behind my sport". Mission team members also cited motives beyond competition in their survey responses. For example, one explained, "To be able to share culture and our games with other along with trades from our area and other. Trading with cultural regalia, earrings, gear, and pins." Similarly, another stated, "I love the mission, the vision and the ability to shape young people's lives, build confidence and connect them with other youth from the north." Collectively, these motives—new experiences, connection, learning, cultural exchange, enjoyment, and mentoring youth—signal a low-pressure climate that resists treating participants as vehicles for

competition, medals, and metrics, that may preserve autonomy and voice, conditions for resonance to emerge (Rosa, 2016/2019).

This broader orientation is also institutionalized in how the Games allocate prestige and recognition. The AWG's Hodgson Trophy formalizes the event's resistance to hyper-competition and narrow performance metrics. Donated in 1978 by founding commissioner Stuart Hodgson, the trophy is an Inuit artwork featuring a narwhal tusk mounted on a soapstone base with a walrus and a polar bear carved into it, symbolizing both striving and northern cultural rootedness (AWGIC, n.d.-b). It is awarded at the Closing Ceremony to the contingent that "demonstrates the best understanding of the philosophy of the Arctic Winter Games and most exemplifies the spirit of fair play during Games week," rather than to the jurisdiction with the most medals. The assessment process itself reinforces this alternative hierarchy of recognition. Throughout the week, mission staff, chefs and assistant chefs de mission, coaches, AWGIC directors, media, Host Society board members, and senior staff observe how contingents behave in competition, around venues, and in cultural and social activities, and then vote on the winner at the end of the Games. At the Closing Ceremony, the winning contingent receives a framed picture of the trophy as well as distinctive Hodgson Trophy pins, marking fair play, team spirit, and alignment with AWG philosophy as the highest form of distinction. In this sense, the Hodgson Trophy institutionalizes a value-rational form of recognition—teamwork, respect, cultural stewardship, and engagement with the host community—over purely instrumental performance outcomes, thereby qualifying the dominance of medal counts and rankings as the central measures of success (AWGIC, n.d.-b).

Figure 8

The Hodgson Trophy



Note. From *Hodgson Trophy & Fair Play Pin*, by Arctic Winter Games International Committee, n.d.-b (https://arcticwintergames.net/Galleries/Hodgson-Trophy).

In sport events organized around hyper-competition, athletes face heightened psychological pressures that can block resonance. These pressures often materialize in practices of overtraining, pressure to perform and optimize the body, a relentless drive for efficiency, and coaches' expectations, which have been linked to mood disturbances, anxiety, depression, burnout, and other mental health problems (Nixdorf et al., 2023; Reinold, 2026). Competitive anxiety and fear of failure become more salient in settings that prioritize winning (Sagar & Stoeber, 2009), narrowing the openness and vulnerability needed for resonant experiences and pushing athletes into a mood of alienation (Bjørndal & Espedalen, 2026). Rosa (2016/2019) labels fear and anxiety

"resonance killers" because, when overpowering, "they prevent the subject from opening up to, tuning into, or becoming involved in the world" (p. 121). Put differently, these emotions prompt protective barriers that close people off from being touched or moved by others and their surroundings (Rosa, 2017). Over time, such acute pressures can harden into chronic psychic burdens—depressive affect following unfulfilling results and burnout fueled by overtraining and external expectations (Gustafsson et al., 2017; Kellmann, 2010). In Rosa's terms, these states are signs of a "muted world," where one's relations to self, others, and the activity no longer resonate (Rosa, 2016/2019: 184). By contrast, resonance presupposes contexts of mutual trust and relative fearlessness (Rosa, 2017). Consistent with this view, participants survey responses described the AWG—especially Indigenous events—as "friendly and family-like," "competing like family," "feeling at home," "close as a friend," and "no competition, just love!!" These accounts indicate low competitive pressure and a safe, low fear, trusting climate. Similarly, another athlete answered in the survey:

> "Everyone here has been so nice and I've had a great time even though (to be completely honest) I only signed up to make my uncle happy. I was not super excited about coming. I have social anxiety and didn't know a single girl on my team but I feel like I've made some friendships that will last forever. I am so happy I came."

The athlete moves from reluctance and social anxiety to feeling safe, welcomed, and emotionally open—precisely the mental state required for resonance (Rosa, 2017). In contrast, in more performance-driven environments, highly competitive stakes are frequently associated with elevated competitive anxiety, fear of failure, depressive symptoms, and an increased risk of

burnout among athletes (see, e.g., Gustafsson et al., 2017; Rice et al., 2016; Sagar & Stoeber, 2009), which can limit the likelihood of resonance experiences.

Value Rationality at the Heart of the AWG

Our combined research material indicates that organizers and participants at the AWG routinely prioritize values—culture, community, unity, friendship, education, and youth development—over maximizing competitive outcomes. This pattern is especially clear in how hosts talk about setting priorities. For example, the general manager of the 2023 AWG rejected in an interview the idea of excluding cultural participants to bring more athletes:

> I think it would be possible for people to say, "We don't need to bring culture participants, so we can bring extra football participants," or something to that nature, and I think as a host we know that the history of these [the AWG] and the point of this [the AWG] is to showcase culture so that sacrifice shouldn't be made. Our intention is to make sure that as much focus is put on, not the Indigenous necessarily, but the traditional parts of this event that are really the highlight of it. The other sports are great and highlighted, but when we go out and we talk and promote this event, we highlight those traditional ones.

Here, the organizer explicitly accepts a trade-off in limiting the number of participants in futsal—very popular amongst AWG athletes and spectators—to uphold the Games' cultural purpose and save space in delegations to integrate participants involved in the artistic activities, indicating a form of value rationality (Weber, 1922/1978) in which action is guided by commitment to substantive goods—tradition, cultural expression, and the event's meaning—rather than by

maximizing entries or competition. This value-rational orientation also resonates with Taylor's (1989) concept of strong evaluation: the organizer is not merely expressing a preference among options but making a qualitative assessment regarding what is superior and more worthy and therefore should guide priorities in the AWG—treating cultural showcasing and tradition as a non-negotiable good that should not be sacrificed for expanding the athletic roster or maximizing competitive results.

Similar value orientations appear across the survey results when we asked participants about their aims for taking part in the AWG. Athletes emphasized aims such as "learn all about other regions' cultures," "meeting more northern people," and "to see new places/cultures," while mission team members spoke about "spend time with my child who is an athlete," "help young people with their sports," "share my experiences with the other athletes," "meet old and new friends," and "support Northern communities." Although some respondents also mentioned competition and winning medals as important goals, these tended to be embedded within, and often subordinated to, broader aims of cultural exchange, relationship-building, education, and community contribution. This reading is consistent with our prior work portraying the AWG as a youth-focused festive event in which sport is deliberately intertwined with the promotion of Arctic cultures, social exchange, social relationships, and a sense of northern unity, rather than sporting excellence alone (Dallaire et al., 2024). This value-oriented framing aligns the AWG with research on Francophone youth games in Canada, which shows that such events foster Francophone identity, belonging, and civic engagement among youth, while positioning athletic excellence within broader community-development aims (Dallaire, 2003, 2014; Forgues et al., 2018). Similarly, the North American Indigenous Games emphasizes Indigenous cultures, identity, and

community alongside competition through an integrated sport–culture model (Forsyth & Wamsley, 2007).

In line with Weber's (1922/1978) account of instrumental rationality, modern professionalized sport becomes organized around means–ends calculation: every aspect of play is regulated and optimized as a means to the end of victory (Guttmann, 1978/2004). Players, coaches, and organizations are expected to use the most efficient means to achieve measurable performance; formal rules aim to minimize randomness and privilege skill; training methods draw on sports science; and tactics are developed through analysis of opponents and probabilities (Guttmann, 1978/2004; Lopez-Gonzalez, 2014). Yet as more elements are brought under control and rendered predictable, the openness, contingency, and mutual answerability that enable resonance are squeezed out (Rosa, 2016/2019). This instrumental-rational mindset encourages an attitude to the world that seeks to render it "accessible, available, and attainable" (Rosa, 2018a: 42). Pursued consistently, this stance intensifies control and predictability but risks "disenchantment" (Entzauberung)—the sense that the world loses its magic and mystery (Weber, 1946: 155)—and alienation, as meaning recedes when the world no longer answers back (Rosa, 2016/2019). The pressures of rationalization may push sport toward bureaucratic organization: once ends are defined in calculable terms, actors adopt rule-bound, expert-driven means. This logic is embedded in contemporary sport technologies: wearables translate embodied experience into dashboards (steps, distance, and calories), reconfiguring movement as a series of metrics to be managed (Reinold, 2026). Likewise, high-performance youth multi-sport events framed as talent pathways (e.g., the Commonwealth Youth Games) prioritize selection criteria, measurable outcomes, and pipeline progression, evaluating participation mainly in terms of future elite careers (MacIntosh & Sotiriadou, 2019). This instrumental-rational orientation aligns with what Rosa (2025) calls

parametric optimization: sport is broken into indicators to be quantified, compared, and continually adjusted upward, shifting from questions of being to doing (rankings, scores, outputs) and leaving little room for resonant relations to the world (Rosa et al., 2026). Rosa (2025) links this to modernity's dynamic stabilization, which compels ongoing improvement, acceleration, and innovation. Against this context, the AWG case stands out. Our analysis suggests that the Games—through their vision, organizational choices, and the orientations of organizers, participants, and mission team members—resist a narrowly instrumental rationality aimed at results alone. Instead, actors pursue values such as cultural understanding, friendship, and community, aligning with Weber's (1922/1978) notion of value-rational action.

Concluding thoughts: toward a "resonant sporting event"

Although community-oriented sport events have been impacted by professionalization logics—and may at times need to focus on elements such as competition, commercialization or sportification to sustain legitimacy, viability, and appeal—they are often experienced as "more than just games" and may therefore offer especially promising stages for deep relationships. They are typically distinguished from professionalized sport events by their emphasis on broad participation, health promotion, developmental and educational aims, and community bonding (Lim, 2025; Setiawan et al., 2025), and by their role as spaces for collective action, the strengthening of social networks and relationships, reinforcing identity and pride, and cultural exhibition and exchange (Ruhanen & Whitford, 2011; Schulenkorf, 2013). Within this broader landscape, the AWG provide a particularly illustrative case, as they have been described as an alternative model of sporting event, characterized by their festive atmosphere and by being more than a competition venue (Bertet et al., 2024). In doing so, the event questions and partially

subverts the dominant logics of professionalized sporting events by integrating sport, culture, and relationships (Fuchs, 2023), making it a distinctive space for meaningful connections, including networking, community ties, friendships, cultural connection, emotional attachment, and identity formation (see, e.g., Bertet et al., 2024; Fuchs, 2023; Heine, 2005; Mahadevan & Ren, 2019; Thomsen et al., 2018). Our recent research also indicates that the AWG distinguishes itself by providing spaces (facilitators) of resonant encounters by its organizational objectives, as well as spatial, temporal, and psychological states (Alavi et al., 2026).

Building on this research, our analysis suggests that the AWG tempered three resonance-blocking dynamics commonly associated with professionalized sport events: sportification, hyper-competition, and instrumental rationality. This conclusion concerns how these dynamics were configured within the AWG case. Because the study did not directly compare the AWG with professionalized sport events or collect data designed to establish the prevalence of resonance, it cannot demonstrate that community sport events are generally more resonant or that resonance occurs more frequently at the AWG. Instead, the findings support two more limited propositions.

First, participants' accounts and organizational materials indicated that possible resonance at the AWG was not confined to athletic competition. The event's social, cultural, participatory, inclusive, and educational dimensions provided potential sites of relation across multiple axes, including embodied relations, relationships among individuals and cultural communities, engagement with material and cultural objects, and existential connections to land and history. An event organized primarily around athletic competition might configure these relational possibilities differently, but this remains a theoretical proposition requiring comparative empirical investigation.

Second, the AWG displayed conditions that resonance theory identifies as potentially conducive to resonance while tempering some structural pressures that may inhibit it. These conditions cannot produce or guarantee resonance, nor do the data allow us to determine its likelihood relative to other event types. Rather, the findings suggest that a community-oriented event design may preserve a broader range of possibilities for responsive and meaningful relationships. The AWG is therefore best understood not as proof that community sport events are more resonant than professionalized events, but as an illustrative case of how event organization may expand or restrict the conditions under which resonance might become possible.

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Chapter 6 (Article 3): The Arctic Winter Games as a Liminoid Configuration: Exploring Relational Experiences in a Community Youth Sport Event

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Author contribution: This article draws on data from two primary studies. For the first study, I contributed to the study design, including the development of the survey, interview guide, and observation grid. I also contributed to data collection through observations and archival research and was present during some interviews, although I did not conduct them. For the second study, which was led by my co-author, I was present during most interviews but did not conduct them. I analyzed the materials from both studies that were relevant to this article, prepared the initial manuscript draft, and revised the manuscript through ongoing discussions and collaboration with my co-author.

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Abstract

This study investigates how athletes describe relational experiences at and beyond the Arctic Winter Games (AWG). Utilizing a qualitative approach, we analyzed interviews and open-ended survey responses from athletes at the 2023 AWG, as well as interviews with former athletes returning to the 2023 Games in a supportive or leadership role. Our analysis shows that the AWG offers a range of social and cultural opportunities that make the event especially conducive to cultivating relational experiences. We highlight athletes' accounts of friendship and network formation, feelings of enchantment, and resonance encounters, alongside collective encounters characterized by a sense of communitas. We also highlight post-liminoid legacies in former athletes' accounts, including enduring memories, sustained social ties, and an ongoing sense of belonging and community. Taken together, the findings suggest that the AWG's liminoid, festive, and community-oriented character helps suspend ordinary routines and soften everyday distinctions in ways that make meaningful relational encounters more likely.

Keywords: Arctic Winter Games, communitas, community youth sport event, liminoid, relational experiences

Introduction

The Arctic Winter Games (AWG) are a circumpolar multi-sport event that brings together youth from northern regions and nations and, crucially, combines athletic competition with cultural and artistic programming that foregrounds Indigenous practices such as Arctic sports and Dene games (Fuchs, 2023). As a youth-focused event, they have been described as intentionally oriented toward socialization, cultural exchanges, and unity among northerners alongside its sporting dimension (Thomsen et al., 2018). Attending the AWG can be read as a "pause" from the temporal pressures of modern life, structured by social acceleration—intensifying rates of change and rhythms of everyday life that generate time pressure and a persistent need to keep up (Rosa, 2005/2013). In this context, the AWG's week-long format—marked by travel away from ordinary routines and immersion in a dense social-cultural setting—creates conditions in which athletes can momentarily step outside daily life. Turner's (1969) work on rites of passage, particularly his account of liminality as a condition of being "betwixt and between" ordinary social positions, provides a useful lens for interpreting the AWG as a threshold-like event time-space in which participants' relations to places, people, and practices may become especially salient. Individuals are set apart from the everyday social order, inhabit a zone that is neither fully inside nor outside its structures, and later re-enter the world of roles and positions (Turner, 1967, 1969). In such interval zones or phases, ordinary hierarchies can be loosened, and social life can take on an anti-structural quality—less a simple inversion of structure than a temporary suspension of the usual constraints of rank and role that can open space for intensified togetherness (Turner, 1967, 1969). He describes this intensified sense of togetherness as communitas (Turner, 1969).

At the same time, Turner (1982) distinguishes between liminal experiences, which are tied to obligatory ritual transitions in small-scale societies, and liminoid experiences, which are more

characteristic of modernity—voluntary, leisure-oriented, and often linked to play, cultural performance, and sport. This distinction has not gone uncontested in sport studies. Rowe (1998), for example, challenges Turner's classification of modern sport as liminoid, arguing that sport often aligns more closely with liminality because of its collective character, cyclical rhythms, integration into social life, ritual dimensions, and capacity to generate public reflexivity and transformation. Although sport events remain highly ritualized and may generate liminal-like experiences, the event space itself may be more accurately understood as liminoid in contemporary society (see, e.g., Garlick & Ali, 2020; Lockstone-Binney et al., 2022). Hence, we use liminoid as the more precise lens for the AWG because it is a modern sport-cultural event marked by selective and voluntary participation, situated within the sphere of leisure and performance, and not formally or universally tied to a socially required passage in status. This does not mean that the event lacks features often associated with liminality, such as ritual intensity and a festive atmosphere. Our aim, however, is less to settle whether the AWG is ultimately liminal or liminoid than to use this framing to examine relational experiences within and through the event.

Prior research on liminality/liminoid and communitas shows that sport events can create bounded, set-apart spaces in which ordinary distinctions are loosened, interaction becomes more fluid, and participants experience heightened togetherness, celebration, and collective feeling (e.g., Chalip, 2006; O'Brien & Chalip, 2008; Serazio, 2013). This has been demonstrated across varied contexts, from intercultural and anti-racist sport festivals, where liminal design can unsettle hierarchies and foster open, heterogeneous communitas (Sterchele & Saint-Blancat, 2015), to spectator settings, where ritualized fan practices and atmospheres strengthen belonging, attachment, and identification (e.g., Lee et al., 2015; Serazio, 2013). Related work further suggests that these dynamics are not merely spontaneous by-products of sport events but can be deliberately

fostered through event design strategies centered on sociability, celebration, theming, ancillary activities, and other symbolic or sensory features that intensify immersion and interaction (Chalip, 2006; Garlick & Ali, 2020). Moreover, research suggests that sporting events can cultivate communitas (e.g., O'Brien & Chalip, 2008), although this sense of togetherness is often described as temporary and contingent rather than enduring or stable (Jahn et al., 2018; Lockstone-Binney et al., 2022). Research also indicates that communitas may enhance bonding and bridging social capital (Welty Peachey et al., 2015) and may also contribute to enjoyment and intentions to return; however, such effects are not guaranteed and may not persist beyond the event without deliberate support or favorable conditions (Jahn et al., 2018).

Across sport events, the event time is widely described as a relational intensifier: by concentrating people, shared routines, and social spaces, events can catalyze networking, friendship, and bonding and bridging social capital (e.g., Chalip, 2006; Misener & Mason, 2006; Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018). This is especially visible in participatory and volunteer-heavy events, where common interest, repeated interaction, and designated social spaces help produce a felt sense of community and belonging (Kerwin et al., 2015), and where intergroup contact can work as a vehicle for building social ties across community boundaries (Schulenkorf et al., 2011). In addition to social relationships, events create chances to share, negotiate, and validate collective identities and cultural attachments through ceremonies, symbols, and everyday interactions (Green & Chalip, 1998; Thomsen et al., 2018). Importantly, the relational effects of sport events may extend beyond event time, as positive social experiences can shape ongoing community support such as future volunteering (Doherty, 2009), while event-generated social ties may continue through everyday socialization, sustained friendships, and broader community involvement (Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018).

Prior scholarship on the Arctic Winter Games has shown that the event is relationally significant, particularly through friendship formation, networking, community, and identity (e.g., Bertet et al., 2024; Fuchs, 2023; Mahadevan & Ren, 2019). Building on this work, this paper examines a broader range of relational experiences at and beyond the AWG. In this paper, relational experiences refer to participants' meaningful experiences of connection with others, cultures, and communities within and beyond the liminoid event. The focus is therefore on forms of relationality that participants experienced as socially, emotionally, culturally, or existentially significant. While Turner (1969) and subsequent sport-event scholars (e.g., Welty Peachey et al., 2015) have often emphasized the emergence of communitas within liminal or liminoid time-spaces, this paper considers relationality more broadly. It examines not only communitas and commonly documented forms of connection, such as friendships and social capital, but also less immediately visible and more affectual forms of relationality, including emotional and cultural resonance. The paper also adds a temporal dimension to the analysis. Building on Turner's (1969) account of the postliminal phase, in which participants are reincorporated into ordinary life after a liminal passage, and Garlick and Ali's (2020, p. 61) notion of the "liminal bubble," where the intensity of the event experience may continue to shape participants after the live event has ended, the analysis asks how relational experiences may extend beyond the AWG itself. This is especially important because communitas in sport event research is often understood as temporary and bounded by the event time-space (e.g., Lockstone-Binney et al., 2022). Rather than assuming that togetherness simply disappears after the event, this paper examines what kinds of relational effects may endure in post-event life. Previous research has associated temporary communitas with intentions to return to an event (Jahn et al., 2018), while research on sport-event legacies has identified post-event changes in the structure and connectivity of networks among local and

external actors in the sport and tourism sectors (Sallent et al., 2011). In this sense, the paper considers how liminoid sport event experiences may have not only temporary relational effects, but also more enduring relational consequences.

Distinguishing Relational Concepts

Taken together, liminoid experience, communitas, Rosa's resonance, and the post-liminoid perspective constituted the study's initial theory-guided framework. The liminoid provided the primary lens for understanding the AWG as a bounded time-space set apart from everyday routines. Communitas directed attention to intensified and often temporary collective experiences of equality, togetherness, and shared humanity within that setting. Rosa's resonance sensitized the analysis to a particular quality of relationship involving affection, self-efficacious response, transformation, and uncontrollability. The post-liminoid perspective directed attention to relational traces that might continue after participants returned to ordinary life. These concepts initially guided the analysis deductively, but they were treated as sensitizing concepts rather than an exhaustive classification of relationality.

We therefore remained open to additional relational patterns that emerged inductively from participants' accounts, including friendship and network formation, belonging, ongoing social connection, and affectively or culturally significant encounters. Friendship and networking referred to identifiable interpersonal ties and expanded contacts, whereas belonging concerned feeling accepted by, attached to, or part of a group, community, place, or event. Social connection was used more broadly to encompass interactions, relationships, and attachments that could occur during the Games or continue afterward. When the emerging patterns required more specific

interpretation, related theoretical concepts were introduced abductively. Enchantment described moments of being unexpectedly struck by wonder, mystery, beauty, or heightened vitality (Bennett, 2001). Emotional resonance concerned the alignment between a collectively framed encounter and participants' emotional lives (Schrock et al., 2004). Cultural resonance concerned the salience and commensurability of cultural practices with participants' familiar cultural repertoires, values, and lived experiences (Miller, 2015).

Although these concepts may intersect within the same account, they illuminate different dimensions of relational experience and were not treated as interchangeable. Friendship, belonging, or social connection could occur without constituting Rosa's resonance; communitas described a collective mode of togetherness rather than necessarily a complete resonant encounter; and enchantment could capture affection or wonder without demonstrating all four elements of resonance. Despite sharing the term "resonance," emotional and cultural resonance were assessed according to their own definitions and were not treated as evidence of Rosa's resonance unless the relevant elements of his framework were also supported. The same account could therefore be interpreted through more than one concept, but each concept was used to explain a distinct quality, level, or temporal dimension of the experience.

Methods

We conducted a qualitative secondary data analysis, drawing on interviews and open-ended survey responses from two studies related to the Arctic Winter Games. We use the term "secondary analysis" here because, although both studies included questions concerning relationships, belonging, friendship, cultural exchanges, and community, we returned to the data and

reinterpreted these relational dimensions using theoretical concepts that were not central to the original research designs, particularly resonance, liminoid experience, and communitas.

Primary study 1*:* 'Arctic Winter Games 2023: Arctic Youth, Culture, and Environment', funded by the French Polar Institute Paul-Émile Victor (IPEV) (Fuchs, Dallaire, & Thomsen 2022-2023) and « Les jeux d'hiver de l'Arctique 2023 – Jeunesse, culture et environnement arctique », funded by the *Fonds France Canada pour la Recherche* (Dallaire & Fuchs, 2022-2024). University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board File No. H-06-22-8134.

The present analysis focuses only on athletes' semi-structured interviews and open-ended survey responses from the broader data collected in the primary study (Dallaire et al., 2024). Within this dataset, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 29 athletes, who were recruited through purposive and convenience sampling strategies. Interviews were arranged either in advance—often facilitated by mission staff—or conducted on site between competitions, depending on athletes' availability and interest. An online survey combining closed-ended questions with short open-ended prompts was distributed by the Host Society to delegation members near the end of the Games and redistributed after the event. It addressed demographic characteristics and participants' reflections on sport participation, social and relational experiences, cultural engagement, and environmental initiatives. In the full survey, 376 respondents identified as athletes. The athlete-specific report used in this article contained the 372 athletes who also identified the sport in which they competed, representing 20 sports. This report comprised 160 pages and included closed-ended results, charts, and open-ended comments. Because respondents could skip individual questions, response counts varied across items. The present analysis drew only on open-ended responses relevant to athletes' relational experiences.

***Primary study 2**:* « Giving Back to the Community »: Youth Community Engagement as Sport Leaders, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada (Dallaire, 2017_2024). University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board, File no. H-06-17-04.

This study generated data through semi-structured interviews with three groups involved in the Arctic Winter Games (MacKay & Dallaire, 2024). For the present analysis, we drew exclusively on interviews with 11 individuals who had previously participated in the Arctic Winter Games as athletes and subsequently returned in other roles. This subgroup comprised coaches (n = 8), aged 22 to 59; mission team members (n = 2), aged 51 and 59; and one official, aged 53. All interviews were conducted virtually between November 2022 and February 2023 (mean duration ≈ 67 minutes). They were digitally recorded, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized using pseudonyms.

We used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to examine the selected interview transcripts and open-ended survey responses, looking for patterns in how current and former athletes described different kinds of relational experiences. The analysis began with repeated reading of the selected data to become familiar with participants' descriptions of relationships, including friendship, networking, belonging, cultural exchange, emotional attachment, togetherness, and forms of ongoing connection to the AWG after the Games. We then coded segments of data that spoke to meaningful forms of connection with others, cultures, and communities within and beyond the event context. Coding was guided at first by key ideas from the theoretical framework, especially resonance, liminoid experience, and communitas. However, we did not limit the analysis to these concepts. We also remained attentive to other forms of relational experience that emerged from participants' accounts. We then compared codes across the different datasets and participant groups to identify recurring patterns, differences, and how

relational experiences extended over time. Through this iterative process, we brought related codes together into broader themes and continued moving back and forth between the themes and the data to make sure they reflected participants' accounts. We also discussed emerging interpretations within the research team, which helped us clarify the themes, consider alternative readings, and strengthen the overall analysis.

The Arctic Winter Games as a site of connections

The Arctic Winter Games emerged in participants' accounts as a space of connections—a setting in which everyday routines receded and it became easier to meet others, build friendships, and encounter different northern cultures. Rather than simply travelling to "do their sport," participants described entering a special time and place to seek connections. This orientation becomes clear in athletes' accounts of why they chose to attend the event. Some athletes emphasized that their motivation to attend the Games went well beyond the pursuit of medals or performance, as they came hoping to experience new social and cultural connections. For instance, an athlete highlighted that what drew her to the event was precisely its emphasis on togetherness and cultural encounter:

> I really like the togetherness attitude about it [AWG]... It's very encouraging of cultural and social interaction, and you don't really find that with any other tournament. So, I was very excited about this one in particular because then I got to meet people from all around the world, and that's one of my major reasons as well because it's very interesting to see different cultures (Interview, 2023 female athlete, 17 years old, Alberta North, wrestling).

Similarly, a futsal player from Nunavut described the Games as a rare chance to expand his social world beyond everyday contacts and online interactions: “It’s a great experience that, for some people, [is] once in a lifetime. You get to meet so many people that you wouldn’t regularly meet unless it was online or something and seeing people in person” (Interview, 2023 male athlete, 15 years old, Nunavut, futsal, A). These accounts show that participants understand the AWG as an occasion for connection-seeking, not merely athletic competition. In Turner’s (1982) sense, this orientation matters because the Games are entered as a voluntary, bounded special time and place that suspends ordinary routines and amplifies social and cultural availability. In this liminoid interval, participants anticipate new relationships and cultural contact that would be less likely in everyday life. This resonates with research on sport events, where social motivations—such as taking part with friends and family, meeting new people, and reconnecting with others—are identified as motivations for participation (e.g., Filo et al., 2011), and with research on festivals and cultural events, where family togetherness, socialization and cultural exploration are likewise highlighted as key motives for attendance (e.g., Crompton & McKay, 1997; Duran et al., 2014).

The Games were also distinguished from other events by an atmosphere that seemed to invite social interactions. Several athletes contrasted the AWG with previous multisport or championship competitions where the focus remained narrowly on sport. One participant remarked on the distinction:

> It’s very different. I find the people here are way more friendly. They want to talk to you. They want to meet you. I found at the Alberta Winter Games, the people were obviously still nice, but no one was really there to get to know you. They were kind of like ‘we’re here for a sport. Like you're on my team.’ They weren’t like, ‘oh, you're an actual teammate of mine.

> Let me get to know you so we feel comfortable together' (Interview, 2023 female athlete, 15 years old, Alberta North, wrestling).

By contrast, the AWG environment was described as actively lowering social barriers and making it easy—even expected—to approach others. A 2023 athlete pointed to specific features of the event design that encourage spontaneous encounters:

> "The pins really allow interactions… you just walk down the hallway… I can just walk up and take a look and say, 'hey, you want to trade?' … The uniforms, trading those and then the housing… The cafeteria, we're all together and the environment is you could just sit down at any table and just randomly talk to somebody. So, I feel like it's not awkward. There's no barriers. People are very accepting of someone coming up and just sitting next to you or giving you a high five. I think Arctic Winter Games has that atmosphere" (Interview, 2023 male athlete, Arctic Sports/Inuit Games).

Here, the liminoid character of the event is not only temporal (a week away from home) but also material and spatial: the village, housing, cafeteria, and delegation attire and pin-trading practices all work together to create spaces where interaction is expected and easy. These accounts echo recent analyses of the AWG that emphasize how the event intentionally combines competition with social exchange and cultural celebration, foregrounding symbolic unity and a shared northern "we" rather than results alone (Fuchs, 2023; Thomsen et al., 2018). Similar patterns have been observed in other community sporting events such as different Francophone games across Canada and the North American Indigenous Games, where sport is explicitly mobilized as a vehicle for

social interaction, cultural expression, identity affirmation, and community building (e.g., Dallaire, 2014, 2021; Forsyth & Wamsley, 2007).

The AWG also opens possibilities for cultural understanding and connection, particularly critical for youth who had limited prior exposure to the diversity of northern peoples. For instance, a futsal player emphasized how the AWG brought together multiple Indigenous and northern cultures in ways he had not encountered before:

> "When I first came to Nunavut, I didn't really know about the Inuit people… But then when I came to the Arctic Winter Games I learned about the Métis, the Cree… The Dene, yeah. I learned about them, their language in the opening ceremony. So, I think it's important because bringing them together can connect us and have a connection in differences and similarities between the cultures" (Interview, 2023 male athlete, 15 years old, Nunavut, futsal, B).

For the participant, the Games function as a setting where learning about other northern cultures become routine parts of everyday life for a week, offering multiple entry points for cultural curiosity and connection. These accounts resonate with research on the AWG that portrays the event as deliberately promoting northern cultures (e.g., Bertet et al., 2024; Fuchs, 2023) and with studies of the North American Indigenous Games and Canadian Francophone youth games, where sport provides a platform for cultural understanding (e.g., Dallaire, 2014; Forgues et al., 2018; Forsyth & Wamsley, 2007).

"It meant something to me"—Relational experiences at the individual level

Within this liminoid week participants described moments of being personally touched and moved through encounters with other entities, as relationships were made and felt with people, cultures, stories, and a wider northern world that becomes accessible through encounter. In this context, one of the most immediate and recurring relational encounters at the AWG was networking and friendship-building through everyday interactions. For instance, a 2023 Arctic Sports athlete from Alberta North emphasized in his survey response that being with other contingents meant "making new friends and meeting new people," while also exchanging narratives: "you get to learn their stories… I loved going to other teams… to hear all the stories… and I loved learning new cultural stories from others." A figure skater from Alberta North similarly highlighted the relational tone of the Games in her survey comments: "How friendly they are and how much we can relate… It was easier making friends than I thought it would be." These comments point to the AWG as a socially open and welcoming environment in which friendships could emerge with relative ease. Viewed more broadly through Putnam's (2000) distinction between bonding and bridging social capital, however, the data suggest a more differentiated pattern. Although the Games created opportunities for bridging ties across contingents, participants often appeared to spend more time with, and build closer friendships, among members of their own contingent, thereby reinforcing bonding ties rooted in familiarity, proximity, and shared experience. This tension between bonding and bridging is illustrated in one former athlete's reflection: "For me, with my personality, I just stayed with the NWT people, but I know a few, like a few of the boys, I know that they for sure like mingled a lot. They would often like trade their jackets with the friends they made, but I was content staying with my little group of friends" (Interview, coach, 24 years old, cross-country skiing, Northwest Territories). This former athlete's account captures both dynamics at once: the tendency for some participants to remain within the comfort of their own contingent and the

possibility for others to form bridging friendships across delegations. This relational pattern echoes research suggesting that events can operate as infrastructures for network-building and social capital, particularly when they foster sociability, informal social interaction, and opportunities for community engagement (e.g., Chalip, 2006; Misener & Mason, 2006). In addition, Welty Peachey et al. (2015) show that the Street Soccer USA Cup cultivated liminality and communitas, which were leveraged to foster bonding and bridging social capital, pointing to the capacity of event encounters to support connections beyond mere co-presence.

While these accounts emphasize the AWG's everyday sociability, other moments were described in more intense affective terms—instances of being moved by what the Games stage. For instance, an athlete describes the opening ceremony less as a "nice show" and more as a deeply affecting encounter—a moment where she feels seized by what she sees and hears. Asked to describe the sensory experience, she responds, "Oh my god. It was so beautiful. I even dreamt about it…" and later adds that "some of them were emotional somehow, for me" (Interview, 2023 female athlete, 18 years old, badminton, Nunavik). Read through enchantment, this language fits Bennett's (2001) idea of being struck by an experience that carries a fleeting sense of mystery and even the magical amid the everyday—reanimating one's attachment to the world rather than remaining a detached appraisal. It also aligns with Fisher's (1998) account of wonder as a sudden encounter with something extraordinary that arrests attention; in this case, that arresting moment appears to continue beyond the event itself, quite literally in the form of a dream. Importantly, the excerpt can be read as capturing the early movements of a resonant relation (Rosa, 2016/2019): first, affection—she is touched by what addresses her from the ceremony ("so beautiful"); second, emotion—a responsive stirring as she describes it as "emotional somehow"; and, at least in a hint, unavailability—the experience exceeds her control and full narration.

For some athletes, the most memorable moments of connection unfolded in the cultural spaces of the Games—where encounters felt spiritually and emotionally charged. In a survey response, one athlete from Alaska describes the AWG cultural feast as a peak moment of deep relational connection, recalling, "Meeting other native people… it was beautiful. Very spiritually fulfilling… I will never forget the night of the cultural feast. My whole group cried from happiness. Everyone was so receptive and eager to learn about our culture…". This excerpt suggests a form of emotional resonance, in Schrock et al.'s (2004) sense, if the cultural feast is understood as a collectively framed cultural encounter that aligned with participants' emotional lives. At the same time, the line "my whole group cried" points to joint/collective emotion (emotion experienced with others in a socially coordinated way) (Rosa, 2016/2019) and resembles Durkheim's (1912/1995) collective effervescence, in which gathered bodies and shared participation in a meaningful collective occasion generate intensified, contagious feelings and a sense of unity. Reading through Rosa's (2016/2019) resonance framework, the account supports a collective resonance interpretation: participants describe being touched and responding together (e.g., "my whole group cried from happiness"). The respondent also points to a key precondition for resonance—openness and receptivity—by noting that "everyone was so receptive and eager to learn about our culture," suggesting that this stance helped the encounter become responsive and meaningful rather than indifferent or instrumental. This openness and curiosity also appears in other athletes' reflections on intercontinental encounters: in the survey, a Dene Games athlete from the Northwest Territories emphasized curiosity and learning— "They wanted to learn about my culture and I wanted to learn about theirs"—while a volleyball player from Greenland similarly explained that they valued being with other teams because they were "interested in their culture [and] the way they live". Notably, this emphasis on receptivity and curiosity echoes our prior resonance-based analyses of the AWG,

which argue that expressions of affection and self-efficacious response are supported by fundamental preconditions such as openness, curiosity, and vulnerability (Alavi et al., 2026).

Beyond these emotionally intense moments, some athletes' comments also point to a form of cultural resonance, in Miller's (2015) sense: the extent to which AWG practices draw on familiar cultural repertoires and align with participants' values and lived experience, making them feel both salient—important to participants' lives—and commensurable, that is, credible and understandable in relation to their life histories and experiences. In survey responses on what they thought about the Arctic Sports and Dene Games, this "fit" is articulated in explicitly cultural-historical terms, as when a Dene Games athlete from Yukon noted that participation "gives us a sense of what our ancestors went through." A similar logic appears in a snowshoeing athlete's comment that they valued the games because "they were based off of things people would do in real life," grounding enjoyment in perceived authenticity and cultural correspondence rather than novelty alone. Read this way, cultural resonance helps specify why these Indigenous practices can become deeply meaningful at the AWG: they are experienced as continuous with ancestral memory and everyday lifeworld, which can prime participants to be moved by—and respond to—the encounter.

"We're all in it together" – Communitas as collective relationship

Beyond individual experience of connections, many participants described the Games as generating a strong sense of being part of a larger "we," where they felt bound together in a shared experience. This echoes Turner's (1969) notion of communitas as an extra-structural mode of social relationship that emerges in liminal (or liminoid) moments, when ordinary hierarchies and social distinctions are temporarily suspended, and participants experience a direct sense of

equality, togetherness, and shared humanity. Several athletes emphasized that, although the event is framed around competition, what stands out is "everyone… coming together" for something more than results. As an athlete explained, "there is a sense of community and a sense of everyone is coming together to do sports. So, there is a sense of understanding between everyone" (Interview, 2023 female athlete, 17 years old, Yukon, cross-country skiing). Another athlete similarly described the AWG as "a really big event that is initially meant for sports and competition. But in the end, even though it still has competition, it also encourages community and culture, and it just really brings people together" (Interview, 2023 female athlete, 16 years old, Alberta North, wrestling). A former athlete likewise recalled that participating in the Games with a core group who "had all experienced the same thing" "just kind of brings you together," as participants "get to hang out with those guys and form some of those bonds and friendships." He added that he still knew "one or two guys" from the 1998 Games years later (Interview, coach, 40 years old, hockey, Northwest Territories). His account points to a sense of togetherness and camaraderie forged through shared participation in the AWG, one that extended beyond the event itself. In their accounts, competition is not erased but is re-situated within a broader atmosphere of community, mutual understanding, and togetherness, resonating with research on sport events that can foster a heightened sense of community and communitas (e.g., Chalip, 2006; Wu et al., 2020).

Survey responses from 2023 athletes reinforced this picture of the Games as a site of intense togetherness, frequently articulated through metaphors of family. An Arctic Sports athlete noted that what they liked most about the AWG was "how the other teams supported one another and how close you can get with teammates, as if they become one or family." Similarly, a Dene Games athlete wrote that "the people that attend, it was like we were all one big family." When asked specifically about Arctic Sports and Dene Games, athletes again emphasized this family-

like atmosphere: one Arctic Sports participant highlighted “the spirit and the competing like family,” while a Dene Games athlete remarked, “I liked how everyone is so friendly and family like.” For some athletes, communitas was expressed more in terms of celebration and community. For instance, one cross-country skier contrasted the AWG with other events by noting that “it is more of a celebration than a competition. Even though we are competing with athletes from other countries, we created a community between all athletes in the sport,” and another cross-country skier wrote that what they liked most was “the sense of community and the variety of cultures.” Across these survey responses, athletes not only describe positive interactions but also portray the Games as a community in which they feel emotionally close, supported, and “as one.” Similar to findings from endurance running, where participants experience a shared emotional bond and being in it together (Lev, 2023), these accounts suggest that the AWG enables participants to step into a collectively shared, celebratory social world.

For some athletes, this collective bonding deepened into what they themselves described using the language of home. One wrestler explained that, after only a few days,

> I kind of feel like this is my home now… You kind of develop a sense of family with people. I feel like that’s the most important thing I do. I feel like I do belong here… everyone just makes everyone feel so welcome. Like you're here. This is your home for the next week. It’s really nice (Interview, 2023 female athlete, 17 years old, Alberta North, wrestling).

Here, the Games are experienced as a temporary but intense “home” where usual boundaries of region and status fade and are replaced by a sense of belonging. The emphasis on feeling “welcome” and “belong[ing] here” illustrates how the event can temporarily reduce everyday

social distance and foster a sense of inclusion within a collective. This resembles what Turner (1969) calls communitas, a mode of togetherness in which established social structures are temporarily loosened and people encounter one another more as equals than as holders of formal roles. Studies of sport-for-development and festival-like sport events similarly show how organizers can cultivate liminal spaces and community celebration that allow communitas to materialize and be leveraged for social capital (e.g., Welty Peachey et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2020). In addition, these experiences of feeling "togetherness," "like a family," or "at home" echo previous work on the AWG suggesting that the event is designed as an alternative to conventional international sport events by prioritizing friendship and cultivating a sense of Arctic community (Fuchs, 2023), while also contributing to the construction of a shared "We are the Arctic" identity that transcends regional and national boundaries (Thomsen et al., 2018).

The AWG's post-liminoid legacies: What endures beyond event time

Although the AWG unfolds within a bounded, week-long liminoid time-place, former athletes' accounts suggest that its significance is not confined to the event itself. In this respect, Garlick and Ali's (2020, 61) notion of a "liminal bubble" is useful, as it captures how the liminal experience of sport may continue beyond the live event across the wider event cycle, rather than ending neatly at closure. This focus on what endures resonates with the argument that liminal event-time matters most when the connections and solidarities it generates are taken home and put to use beyond the event, rather than remaining sealed within the event-world (Welty Peachey et al., 2015). This resembles a postliminal moment: a movement out of the in-between interval and back into ordinary life through a process of reincorporation or reaggregation, as participants resume relatively stable social roles beyond the event (Turner, 1969). In former athletes' accounts, what is experienced

during this concentrated episode of connection does not simply dissipate at the closing ceremonies; instead, it leaves an enduring trace that continues to shape how they relate to the AWG in the months and years that follow, through lasting memories, sustained social ties, and an expanded sense of community and belonging.

In several accounts, the AWG is remembered not as a discrete competition that ends when athletes leave the village, but as a formative episode that continues to structure how participants narrate their sporting lives and what they consider the event to be "about." When asked what she liked most about the Games as an athlete, a former athlete responded, "The friendships that were created. I mean, I remember the competitions but it's the friendships, [and] the fun that we had" (Interview, Official, 53 years old, Arctic sports, Alaska). Importantly, participants' memories are not limited to sporting outcomes. They carry forward vivid recollections of the AWG as an inclusive social and cultural gathering—one that exposes youth to other sports, languages, and northern/Indigenous cultures, and offers informal interaction rituals that make connection easy. As a former athlete put it, the Games are "so much more inclusive to the northern teams and northern athletes," recalling how the village social texture extends into "just meeting a lot of people," and practices like "the clothes trading and the pin trading" as "such a great avenue to meet people from other jurisdictions" (Interview, mission team member, 51 years old, volleyball, Yukon). In the same interview, she emphasized that "the exposure culturally… is really neat to see too and different languages and all of that." Taken together, these accounts suggest that what endures beyond the liminoid week is a durable constellation of memories—of inclusivity, cultural encounter, and relational connections—that continues to orient how participants remember the Games and what they believe the Games are for. This pattern aligns with sport event and festival scholarship showing that emotionally intense, socially dense gatherings generate memorable

experiences that remain salient through nostalgic recollection, storytelling, and ongoing social reaffirmation (e.g., Fairley et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2012; Tung & Ritchie, 2011; Wood et al., 2024).

Former athletes also described forms of social connection that persist beyond event time as ongoing ties rather than recollections alone. One former athlete identified the highlight of her athlete experience as "making friends along the way" and explained that "I definitely am still friends with them on like Facebook and Instagram, and so we still see what each other are up to" (Interview, coach, 22 years old, speed skating, Alberta). Read through the liminoid framing developed above, this continuation of contact suggests a post-liminoid "afterglow" that is not only remembered but sustained through everyday channels of communication, allowing relationships initiated in the intense temporal-spatial concentration of the Games to be carried into ordinary life. In this way, the AWG's relational impacts can persist as durable networks and ongoing attachments that continue to shape how former athletes relate to the Games long after participation ends. A similar pattern has been identified in related sport-event and sport-tourism research, where participants' connections extend beyond the bounded event as ongoing social ties and a desire to reconnect with the event's social world (e.g., Fairley, 2003; Fairley et al., 2007). Similarly, Lev (2023) shows how sport-based ties can be sustained beyond the official activity through third-place sociability (e.g., post-session café gatherings) and everyday talk that links participants across group boundaries, helping relationships carry into ordinary life.

Not all enduring connections, however, depended on continuous contact between editions. For some former athletes, relational continuity took the form of anticipating reunions and returning to the Games. A former Arctic Sports athlete recalled that, following her first AWG, the prospect of seeing friends became part of what drew her toward the next edition:

> "After that, I loved it and that kept me going, like I can't wait for the next Arctic Winter Games, see all my friends from like other countries, provinces, territories" (Interview, coach, Arctic Sports, Nunavut).

When discussing her second Games, she similarly remembered "just wanting to see everyone." The supportive character of Arctic Sports was important to these relationships: although participants competed against one another, they also offered advice, encouragement, and assistance. Returning therefore provided an opportunity not only to compete again but also to renew connections developed through this distinctive competitive environment. Her continued involvement as an athlete and subsequent participation as a coach and official created repeated opportunities for these relationships to be reactivated across different editions and roles.

Another former Arctic Sports athlete described a similar pattern across numerous editions. Although her continued participation was also strongly connected to her passion for Arctic Sports and her ability to remain competitive, familiar relationships formed part of the Games' attraction. She recalled, "I looked forward to seeing who's going to be at Arctic Winter Games, who's going to be there from last year?" (Interview, official, Arctic Sports, Alaska). Her later movement into officiating and organizational roles maintained her connection to this recurring event community. These role transitions suggest that the AWG's post-event legacy may also be enacted through continued involvement: attachments formed during earlier participation can shape not only the desire to return but also decisions to assume new roles through which former athletes remain connected to the Games and contribute to their continuation.

Together, these accounts broaden what it means for an event-formed relationship to endure. Relational continuity does not necessarily require uninterrupted communication or continuously

close friendship between editions. Connections may become less active during ordinary life and regain salience through anticipation of the next Games and face-to-face reunion when participants return. The recurring structure of the AWG therefore enables an episodic form of relational continuity in which familiarity and shared histories can accumulate over time. Reaggregation, in these cases, does not represent a complete separation from the event-world: ordinary life may include anticipation, intermittent contact, and continuing attachment, while subsequent editions provide opportunities to renew earlier relationships. From this perspective, the AWG's post-liminoid legacy includes not only what participants carry away from one edition but also what they carry forward into later editions.

Beyond enduring memories and social ties, former athletes' accounts also point to post-liminoid incorporation in the form of belonging and identification—attachments that persist after participation ends and help explain why the AWG remains meaningful over time. For some, the Games contributed to a broader sense of belonging to the North itself. A former volleyball player reflected that the AWG "did help" her sense of belonging because she was new to the North and the Games offered "a way broader understanding… understanding the North a little bit better," including recognition of similarities across northern and rural contexts ("the Scandinavian countries and rural Québec") (Interview, mission team member, 51 years old, volleyball, Yukon). Others described the AWG as a community-making institution operating at multiple scales, simultaneously gathering host communities, and creating new intra-delegation networks across vast distances. A former hockey player suggested it was "a little bit of both," noting that "wherever Arctic Winter Games is, like the community comes together," while also connecting athletes from "Anchorage, Fairbanks… Kodiak" who "never would have even met," thereby creating community within a team through relationships that can become "life-long friends." (Interview,

coach, 27 years old, hockey, Alaska). In the same interview, she also distinguished between pride in representing Alaska and a deeper identification with the Games as an institution: "so much of it is about the Games as a whole—why you're going, who you're meeting, what you're doing… not just 'oh, I'm here to represent Alaska.'" These accounts suggest that a key post-liminoid legacy of the AWG lies in the formation of durable belongings—to northern life, to new social networks, and to the Games as a meaningful community—that continue to orient how participants relate to the AWG beyond the week of competition. These post-liminoid belongings echo the prior AWG research that positions the Games as a social-cultural gathering where northern identity, community-making, and symbolic unity are central to participants' experiences (Thomsen et al., 2018). More broadly, participatory sport-event research suggests that interaction can generate lasting social belonging, with some event-formed ties and attachments persisting beyond the event itself (e.g., Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018).

Concluding thoughts

Our results showed that the AWG is a favorable setting for relational experiences, as both current and former athletes reported individual and collective forms of connection, some of which endured beyond the event. This raises an important question: what is it about the AWG that helps generate these outcomes? One explanation is that northern athletes step out of school routines, work schedules, and everyday responsibilities into a bounded event world that feels set apart from ordinary life, a quality consistent with liminoid experience (Turner, 1982). This temporary displacement from routine can also be understood through Oldenburg's (1989) notion of the third place: a social setting beyond the dominant spheres of home and work where people can gather, interact, and form new relationships. In a similar vein, Lev (2023) shows that leisure-based sport

settings may function as such third places by opening space for sociability and connection. Yet, as Chalip (2006) argues, what matters is not only that events provide a break from routine, but also how they are organized to generate sociability, create event-related social occasions, facilitate informal opportunities for interaction, produce ancillary activities, and extend event theming more widely. Through these strategies, events can leverage liminality and communitas toward desirable social outcomes by fostering celebration, shared meanings, and positive affect (Chalip, 2006). Read in this way, the AWG appears to embody many of these conditions in both its structure and atmosphere. Its ceremonies, cultural programming, Indigenous sports, shared celebrations, informal gathering spaces, ancillary activities, and broader northern and Indigenous theming do not merely accompany the competition; they help create a space that is relationally fertile. In this respect, Bertet et al. (2024) are especially useful in showing that the AWG is experienced primarily as a festive event, where socialization, celebration, and symbolic unity are central and where ordinary status distinctions are softened in ways that enable more spontaneous and informal relationships. The event may also be read more broadly through Ehrenreich's (2006) notion of the carnivalization of sport, insofar as its collective celebrations, embodied participation, rhythmic gatherings, and shared joy give the Games a carnival-like quality that exceeds the instrumental logic of competition. In this way, the AWG appears to provide conditions that make meaningful relational experiences more feasible. This interpretation can also be connected to Rosa's (2020) concept of spaces of resonance, which suggests that resonance becomes more likely under favorable temporal, spatial, social, physical, and psychological conditions. Building on this broader theoretical insight, our previous research found that the AWG provides such conditions through its organizational objectives and favorable spatial, temporal, and psychological states that support the likelihood of resonance (Alavi et al., 2026).

Taken together, these conditions are not incidental; rather, they reflect the AWG's broader orientation as a community youth sport event. We argue that the AWG is best understood in these terms and that this orientation makes its design and atmosphere especially conducive to relational experiences. Community sport events such as the AWG tend to emphasize participation, socialization, cultural exchange, education, and shared experience, rather than reducing the event to performance alone (Fuchs, 2023; Ruhanen & Whitford, 2011). By contrast, more professionalized and competition-driven events are typically organized around performance, results, and visibility (Reinold, 2026), shaped by processes of institutionalization and standardization (Lebreton et al., 2010), and often tied to commercial imperatives (Schubring et al., 2024). In such contexts, the event may feel less like a relational pause than an extension of work. This contrast helps clarify the significance of the AWG: rather than subordinating all activity to competition, it embeds sport within a broader community and cultural celebration (Thomsen et al., 2018). In this respect, Welty Peachey et al. (2015) show that an overemphasis on competition can weaken inclusion and community, whereas Sterchele and Saint-Blancat (2015) found that situating sport within a broader intercultural festival and softening competitive intensity can better sustain the conditions for social mixing and connection. Read in this way, the AWG's community-event orientation helps explain why athletes experienced the Games not simply as a competition to be performed, but as a meaningful social world in which relationships could emerge, intensify, and, in some cases, endure beyond event time.

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Chapter 7: Overall Discussion, Contributions, and Conclusion

1. Introduction

This final chapter brings together the main insights of the thesis and situates them within broader debates about community sport events and relationality. Although the three articles primarily examined the community dimensions of the Arctic Winter Games, the event is also a youth-focused event. For this reason, this final chapter extends the discussion toward community youth sport events and asks what the AWG can teach us about their relational possibilities. Rather than providing a paper-by-paper summary, the chapter uses the Arctic Winter Games as a case through which to reflect on the pressures currently reshaping youth sport events, community sport events, and the need to imagine alternative event models. It then discusses what can be learned from the AWG about designing community youth sport events that are more conducive to relational experiences, while also considering the limits, tensions, and fragility of such possibilities. The chapter concludes by outlining the thesis's contributions, identifying directions for future research, and reflecting on what the AWG reveals about alternative possibilities for community youth sport events in contemporary society.

2. Current Pressures Reshaping (Community) Youth Sport Events: The Need for a Relational Alternative

Professionalization brings a particular logic of operation into sport events. This process has often been associated with a movement away from amateur, volunteer-based arrangements toward more business-like forms of organization (Dowling et al., 2014; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011). With this shift come expectations for more formal governance, attention to performance and conformance, clearer policies and operations, and more managerial approaches to decision-making and event delivery (Annala, 2019; Shilbury & Ferkins, 2011). While these developments may

strengthen the planning, organization, and delivery of sport events, they become problematic when professionalized logics begin to dominate the event experience. Youth sport event research offers cautionary examples of this tension. The Youth Olympic Games, for instance, have been described as having a similar "look-and-feel" to the Olympic Games, despite being smaller and less commercially and media-saturated, suggesting that youth events can reproduce aspects of adult elite sport events (Hanstad et al., 2013). These pressures are also institutional and organizational. Parent et al. (2015) showed that the Youth Olympic Games were shaped by pressures from the IOC, the media, and athletes' parents, requiring organizers to balance international sport expectations with youth-related concerns. Youth events can also become positioned within high-performance development pathways, as shown in studies of the Youth Olympic Games and Commonwealth Youth Games (see, e.g., Kristiansen et al., 2018; MacIntosh & Sotiriadou, 2020). At the experiential level, studies have shown more directly that when competition schedules and formal event programming dominate athletes' experiences, cultural and educational aims may not be experienced as intended (Krieger, 2013; Kristiansen, 2015). This provides an important starting point for asking what alternative forms of youth sport events might look like: forms that are less dominated by professionalized and high-performance logics, and more capable of supporting educational, developmental, cultural, social, and relational experiences.

In this context, community youth sport events matter because they offer a different event logic from elite or highly professionalized youth events. Drawing on the broader community sport event literature, such events can be understood as spaces organized not only around athletic performance, but also around social, fun, and entertainment value for community members (Batty, 2016). Their significance lies in creating participatory and festive environments where the event is valued not only for athletic performance, but also for supporting family and friends,

experiencing camaraderie, and taking part in a community-bonding atmosphere (Kurpis et al., 2010). Research has shown that participants, volunteers, and spectators have often been motivated by socially based values, with belonging, warm relationships, enjoyment, self-fulfillment, respect, and accomplishment forming important parts of the community sport event experience (Bozman et al., 2016). Such events may also support broader community outcomes, including the strengthening of social cohesion, the enhancement of cultural traditions, and community empowerment (Schulenkorf & Edwards, 2012). In this sense, community youth sport events can be important because they create conditions for individuals to encounter sport events as more than competition: as a space for social connection, cultural exchange, learning, and shared community experience (see, e.g., Fuchs, 2023, 2025).

Despite their potential as an alternative to more professionalized sport events, community sport events should not be treated as automatically protected from pressures that may affect their community ethos and social possibilities. Research suggests that community sport events may be shaped by pressures from sponsors and other influential groups, dependence on sponsorship revenue, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) expectations. Organizers may therefore need to balance financial viability, sponsor priorities, public health concerns, and community values (Batty, 2016; Batty et al., 2016). Similar tensions can be seen in culturally grounded sport events. For example, Hinch and de la Barre (2007) showed that the Arctic Winter Games may face pressures related to tourism development, commodification, globalization, and control when its cultural and northern identity is positioned for external audiences. Research on Indigenous sporting events and traditional games has similarly shown that practices rooted in cultural and community purposes can be shaped by dominant Euro-Canadian or Western sport systems, media discourses, and sport-for-development logics (e.g., Fabian & Giles, 2023; Paraschak, 1997). Studies of the

Jeux de la Francophonie have also shown how such large-scale multisport events can be shaped by institutional pressures, political agendas, funding and commercialization concerns, and negotiations between local, national, and transnational expectations despite the primacy of the French language and culture in staging the event (e.g., Parent & Slack, 2007; Youngstedt, 2008). These examples suggest that sport events integrating significant social and cultural objectives can be pulled toward more marketable, managerial, and externally accountable forms of organization. If these logics become dominant, they may weaken the social, cultural, educational, and relational possibilities that make community youth sport events valuable. For this reason, community youth sport events need to be reimagined not only as alternatives to professionalized youth sport events, but as events whose community ethos should be actively protected and strengthened. In this thesis, the focus is specifically on the relational potential of community youth sport events; the following section develops this argument through lessons from the Arctic Winter Games, showing how such events can be reimagined to better support meaningful relational encounters.

3. Reimagining Community Youth Sport Events for Relationality: Lessons from the AWG

The AWG offers a useful entry point for reimagining community youth sport events for relationality because it combines several features that are sometimes weakened in more professionalized event formats. As a community youth sport event, the AWG is grounded in a developmental and educational orientation rather than being organized solely around elite performance or commercial visibility (see, e.g., Fuchs, 2023, 2025). This matters because community sport event settings can place participation, local involvement, volunteering, inclusion, and shared experience closer to the center of the event, creating more opportunities for social

interaction, sense of community, and relationship building among participants and community members (e.g., Bozman et al., 2016; Chen et al., 2025; Daigo & Filo, 2020). At the same time, the AWG's festive and carnival-like qualities—ceremonies, cultural programming, social gatherings, symbols, Indigenous performances, and informal interactions—help transform the event into more than a contest space (see, e.g., Bertet et al., 2024). Festive features matter because sport events' celebratory qualities can create liminoid spaces that foster sociability and communitas (Chalip, 2006), while carnival-like sport event atmospheres can soften seriousness, loosen social boundaries, encourage playful behavior, and create community spirit (Kristiansen et al., 2025). In this sense, the AWG suggests that relationality-friendly community youth sport events are more likely when competition is embedded within a wider community ethos, a celebratory atmosphere, and opportunities for youth to socialize, learn, play, and experience the event beyond performance alone.

Following this broader framing, the missions, values, and public framing of the event become central. A relationality-friendly community youth sport event should situate competition within broader social, cultural, educational, and developmental purposes rather than organizing the event only around measurable outcomes such as medals, rankings, records, or athlete progression. Drawing on Weber's (1922/1978) distinction between instrumental and value rationality, this means that community, socialization, cultural exchange, learning, fair play, team spirit, friendship, and belonging should not be treated merely as secondary benefits of competition but as values meaningful in themselves. This does not require removing competition; rather, it requires preventing metric-oriented and high-pressure performance logics from becoming the only criteria through which the event is valued. This is important because contemporary youth sport is increasingly shaped by optimization, standardization, and control, often making sporting

experiences more visible, comparable, and manageable at the expense of well-being, spontaneity, and engagement (Bjørndal & Espedalen, 2026). When youth sport becomes shaped by optimization, standardization, control, and measurable achievement, opportunities for play, friendship, and enjoyment may be pushed to the margins, while pressure-related outcomes such as stress, exclusion, burnout, and injury become more likely (Bjørndal & Espedalen, 2026). The AWG illustrates a different orientation: while medals and competition remain important, its emphasis on athletic competition, cultural exhibition, and social exchange, together with cultural programming, informal social spaces, playful atmospheres, and symbolic recognitions such as the Hodgson Trophy or Ulu medals, signals that the Games value more than athletic output alone. This broader framing is also communicated by organizers, mission team members, and Chefs de Mission, who often describe the AWG as a holistic northern youth experience rather than merely a competition, encouraging participants to approach the event with greater openness to friendship, cultural understanding, exploration, and connection beyond sport performance alone (see, e.g., Bertet et al., 2024; Fuchs, 2023, 2025; Thomsen et al., 2018).

A relationality-friendly community youth sport event should also provide a plurality of programs rather than reducing the event to athletic contests alone. When events include athletic, social, cultural, ceremonial, and informal activities, they multiply the possible pathways through which participants may encounter other people, places, symbols, bodies, and cultural practices. This matters because relationality in sports events is not limited to individual-to-individual interaction; it can also involve embodied engagement with movement, material and spatial environments, cultural symbols, and broader experiences of meaning. Rosa's (2016/2019) account of horizontal, diagonal, and vertical axes of resonance is useful here because it shows how meaningful relations may unfold socially, materially, and existentially. In this concern, Bjørndal

and Espedalen (2026) suggested that youth sport can be reimagined through social, embodied-material, and existential forms of engagement rather than through performance outcomes alone. Yet the value of such programming lies not only in its variety but also in the affective atmosphere it can create. Relational encounters are more likely when participants are not only present in the same space but also emotionally moved, curious, and open to what people, places, and practices may offer. This does not mean that relationality can always be produced on demand (Rosa, 2016/2019); rather, event design can create conditions of receptivity through theming, ceremony, symbols, music, movement, storytelling, and shared celebration (see, e.g., Chalip, 2006). The AWG illustrates this point through its combination of sport competition, cultural programming, ceremonies, social interchange, Indigenous games, and informal encounters. Northern and Indigenous songs, drums, dances, ceremonies, Arctic Sports, Dene Games, and cultural performances contribute to an atmosphere that invites participants to see, hear, feel, and engage with social and cultural worlds beyond their own, thereby expanding the event beyond a single athletic axis of experience.

A relationally oriented community youth sport event also requires tempering control and predictability. This does not mean rejecting organization, rules, schedules, or fairness; these remain necessary for any sport event. Rather, the point is that relationality may be weakened when every aspect of the event is overly scripted, managed, measured, and made predictable. In Rosa's (2016/2019) terms, meaningful encounters require some openness to uncontrollability: participants need room to be surprised, affected, and drawn into relationships with people, places, practices, and atmospheres that cannot be fully planned in advance. Sportification illustrates this tension. While sportification can provide shared standards and recognizable competitive structures, its expansion across the whole event may reduce spontaneity, playfulness, contingency, and

participant autonomy (See, e.g., Larsen, 2021). The AWG is instructive here. Although it includes formal competition, rules, schedules, and organized sport structures, it also creates less controlled spaces through cultural programming, ceremonies, social activities, informal encounters, playfulness, and the inclusion of Arctic Sports and Dene Games. These elements help prevent the Games from becoming only a managed contest space and preserve room for exploration, contingency, and surprise.

A relationality-friendly community youth sport event also requires temporal spaciousness. If event schedules are too compressed or optimized, participants may have little time to explore places, attend cultural or social programs, mingle informally, play, or simply be present with others. Viewed through Rosa's (2005/2013) theory of social acceleration, this matters because time pressure can weaken the conditions for meaningful connection by intensifying the feeling of always having to move to the next task, thereby contributing to alienation rather than deep relationality (Rosa, 2016/2019). In youth sport specifically, Bjørndal and Espedalen (2026) showed how time scarcity, constant evaluation, conflicting demands, and fragmented environments can contribute to stress, fatigue, burnout, and dropout. A relationally oriented event should therefore create moments of relative deceleration: less crowded schedules, informal time between activities, longer event duration where possible, and opportunities for youth to become immersed, linger, explore, and interact without every moment being organized around performance. This does not mean abandoning ambition or structure; rather, it means protecting time for experience and exploration. Slow sport and slow philosophy approaches have similarly suggested that slowing down can create possibilities for embodied awareness, sensory attentiveness, and deeper engagement with one's environment, rather than reducing sport to speed, output, efficiency, or performance maximization (e.g., Allen-Collinson et al., 2026; Martínková et

al., 2022). The AWG offers a useful example: although participants' days can still be busy, its seven-day structure, smaller scale, community-centered mission, and combination of sport, cultural activities, and social programming appear to create a more flexible temporal rhythm. Some participants still experienced time scarcity, especially in relation to exploring cultural programs or watching other sports, but others had opportunities to attend cultural galas, experience different sports, and meet new people. What makes the AWG particularly instructive is that organizers appeared to respond to these temporal constraints by creating flexible relational opportunities within everyday event spaces: in the dormitories, through evening activities, game rooms, cultural activities, and shared cafeterias; and in sport venues, through cultural performances, pin trading areas, pop-up activities, and themed hallways. These informal and semi-structured opportunities allowed participants to encounter other entities and engage with the event beyond the limits of their sport schedules.

4. Community Youth Sport Events and Relationality: Critical Considerations and the Fragility of Community Ethos

Although this thesis suggests that community youth sport events such as the AWG may be especially conducive to relational encounters, this claim requires careful qualification. A community orientation can enable, facilitate, or increase the likelihood of relational experiences, but it does not automatically produce them. This is especially important in relation to resonance, since it cannot be planned, controlled, or guaranteed; it depends on openness, responsiveness, and a degree of uncontrollability and unpredictability (Rosa, 2016/2019). Therefore, the point is not that event organizers can make relationality happen, but that they can create conditions in which different forms of relationality become more possible. It is also important to clarify what kind of

relational encounter is being considered. Some relationships, such as bonds among teammates or connections between athletes and spectators, can emerge in both community-oriented and more professionalized youth sport events. However, community youth sport events may offer a wider range of relational opportunities across multiple axes, including social, cultural, spatial, material, and existential relations. In this sense, the argument is not that commercialized or professionalized events lack relational possibilities, but that community youth sports events may be better positioned to limit some inhibitors of relationality such as instrumental rationality and time pressure while providing more varied facilitators, such as cultural programs, informal sociability, and playful atmospheres.

This qualification leads to a broader point: the relational potential of community youth sport events depends, in part, on whether they are able to maintain their community ethos. Community youth sport events are not insulated from the broader pressures of late-modern society. Rather, they are embedded in social contexts increasingly shaped by acceleration, competition, measurement, visibility, productivity, and institutional accountability. In this sense, the community ethos of youth sports events is fragile and contingent (see, e.g., Lim, 2025).

Hartmut Rosa's critique of modernity provides a useful starting point for understanding this fragility. For Rosa (2018a, 2016/2019), modern societies are marked by dynamic stabilization: individuals and institutions must grow, innovate, and accelerate simply to reproduce themselves and maintain their current position. This logic can also shape community youth sport events. Even when such events are initially organized around participation, community development, education, social and cultural exchange, and belonging, they may gradually face pressure to become larger, more visible, more efficient, and more professionally managed. They may need to attract more

participants, secure funding, improve facilities, satisfy sponsors, respond to policy agendas, and compete with other events for recognition and legitimacy. Professionalization, therefore, does not necessarily emerge because organizers intentionally abandon community values. It may emerge because the event is drawn into a wider late-modern condition in which survival appears to require expansion, innovation, optimization, and constant improvement. This tendency is also connected to Rosa's (2018a) argument that modern subjects and institutions are driven by the desire to make the world more available, accessible, and attainable. Although this logic can support inclusion, expand participation, and allow more young people to experience meaningful events, it can also produce pressures toward standardization, planning, control, and expansion, while encouraging more instrumental orientations toward event experiences. Community youth sport events may be expected to provide more opportunities, smoother logistics, better services, stronger media presence, and more predictable experiences. The risk is that the event becomes increasingly organized around delivery, management, control, and optimization, rather than playfulness, spontaneity, and relational encounter.

Although not situated in the sport event context, some recent sport studies suggested that late-modern pressures are already reshaping sport in ways that speak to this argument. Bjørndal and Espedalen (2026), for example, showed how youth sport could shift from participation-oriented and volunteer-driven ideals toward more formalized developmental pathways, year-round training and competition, earlier identification and selection, marketized and specialized training opportunities, and performance-oriented expectations. Interpreted through Rosa's framework, such shifts reflect the logic of dynamic stabilization: youth sport institutions and the actors around them may feel compelled to keep improving, expanding, and optimizing in order to remain competitive, relevant, or simply not fall behind. In the context of coaching, Reinold (2026)

similarly argued that late-modern sport is shaped by a logic in which athletes and coaches are pushed to accelerate, innovate, and improve simply to avoid falling behind, while bodies, training, and performance are increasingly made measurable, manageable, and optimizable. Røsten (2026), in the context of elite cycling, further showed how datafication turned athletes' training, recovery, and performance into visible and measurable data that could be used to monitor progress, inform selection, gain recognition, and advance career opportunities. Taken together, these studies have not shown that community youth sport events are inevitably transformed in this way, but they have suggested that sport is increasingly shaped by pressures to accelerate, professionalize, optimize, and make sporting practices and experiences more available, accessible, and controllable.

Neoliberal rationalities can further intensify these pressures by embedding sporting practices, institutions, and experiences within free-market logics, individual responsibility, competitiveness, commodification, and the privatization of social provision (Silk & Andrews, 2012). In youth sport specifically, these pressures have been discussed in relation to developmental discourses that frame sport as a vehicle for personal success, individual responsibility, and improved life chances (Coakley, 2011), the increasingly competitive, decentralized, market-driven, and often privatized organization of out-of-school youth sport (Hartmann et al., 2024), and the shift from youth sport models often described as more low-cost, local, and inclusive toward more exclusive, privatized, and professionalized forms (Stemhagen & Hytten, 2025). In community youth sport events, this can appear through the growing emphasis on talent development, rankings, elite pathways, visibility, scholarships, and future opportunities. Young athletes may come to be understood less as participants in a shared community experience and more as future performers responsible for maximizing their potential. Parents, coaches, sport organizations, and athletes themselves may then view community youth sport events as stepping

stones within a broader performance pathway. Under these conditions, the value of participation may shift from the experience itself toward what the experience can produce: selection, recognition, medals, scholarships. This shift is important because it can subtly transform the meaning of community youth sport events. Rather than being valued primarily as spaces of encounter, cultural exchange, and collective experience, such events may become increasingly evaluated according to their usefulness for individual advancement and institutional performance. The young athlete is then positioned within a logic of investment: time, effort, travel, training, and competition are justified by their possible future returns. This does not mean that ambition, excellence, or athlete development are inherently opposed to social values. Rather, the concern is that when these become the dominant measures of value, participation may be instrumentalized. The event may still present itself as community-oriented, but its practical meaning may increasingly be shaped by competitive and performance-oriented expectations.

Taken together, this fragility is important for understanding community youth sport events. Their community ethos should not be treated as a permanent feature but as something that must be continually sustained through organizational choices, sociocultural practices, events' environment and design, and the meanings attached to participation. The conditions that make such events favorable for relationality can be weakened when community values are gradually subordinated to expansion, visibility, efficiency, competition, measurable outcomes, or future-oriented performance goals. Therefore, the significance of community youth events lies not only in the relational possibilities they offer but also in the way they illustrate the ongoing challenge of preserving a community ethos within a late-modern sport context.

5. Contributions of the thesis

This section identifies the main contributions of the thesis, focusing on how it advances the literature, develops theoretical understanding, offers methodological insights, and provides practical implications.

5.1 Scholarly Contributions

This thesis began from the recognition that community sport events are often valued for their social, educational, cultural, developmental, and community-building possibilities. Building on this impetus, this work situates the Arctic Winter Games within the broader field of community sport events to examine how such events provide a favorable stage for relational encounters. This orientation towards relationality allows the thesis to examine how social, cultural, emotional, and post-event connections are made possible, experienced, threatened, and sustained in and through a community youth sport event. The contributions outlined below develop this argument by demonstrating how this doctoral research focused on the AWG expands upon current scholarship.

First, this thesis contributes to scholarship concerned with what kinds of sport events are more likely to generate social impact and sustainability (e.g., Taks, 2013, 2015; Taks et al., 2015; Zawadzki, 2024). It suggests that the social significance of sport events cannot be understood only through their scale, economic outcomes, or formal event category. Rather, the thesis highlights the importance of community ethos, festive features, organizational values, mission, programming, and everyday event design in shaping the relational capabilities of sport events. In this sense, it contributes to social impact scholarship by showing that the capacity of sport events to foster

connection, belonging, cultural exchange, and meaningful participation depends partly on how they are imagined, organized, and experienced as community-oriented spaces.

Second, this thesis contributes to scholarship concerned with the sustainability of community-based sport events (e.g., Lim, 2025; Setiawan et al., 2025). It examines the conditions and pressures that may shape the community ethos of such events, particularly their relational qualities. In doing so, the thesis broadens discussions of sustainability by emphasizing relational sustainability: the capacity of community-based sport events to preserve spaces for connection, belonging, cultural exchange, and meaningful participation. Thus, it suggests that sustaining community sport events is not only a matter of organizational survival, but also of maintaining the relational qualities that give these events their social significance.

Third, this thesis contributes to scholarship on the relational potential of sport events (e.g., Chalip, 2006; Misener & Mason, 2006; Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018). It adds to this literature by showing how community youth sport events may create conditions for relational encounters that extend beyond sociability, friendship, networks, and community ties. By examining resonance, emotional and cultural connection, and communitas, the thesis broadens understanding of what relationality at sport events can involve. It also highlights how community ethos, organizational structure, event atmosphere, and programming can shape these possibilities. Finally, it adds a temporal dimension by showing that the relational significance of a liminoid sport event may extend beyond the event itself, responding to calls for further research on temporary communitas and its possible afterlives in sport-event contexts (e.g., Lockstone-Binney et al., 2022).

Fourth, this thesis contributes to scholarship that has highlighted the relational significance of the Arctic Winter Games, including its role in fostering friendships, community ties, cultural

connection, and identity formation (e.g., Bertet et al., 2024; Fuchs, 2023; Mahadevan & Ren, 2019; Thomsen et al., 2018). It adds to this literature by examining not only whether the AWG generates relational experiences, but also what kinds of relational encounters may emerge and under what conditions. By using resonance as an analytical lens, the thesis explores forms of deep relationality that go beyond social contact or network formation, while also identifying conditions that may support or inhibit such experiences. In addition, by showing how the relational significance of the AWG may extend beyond the event itself through lasting memories, sustained social ties, and enduring attachments, the thesis also adds to discussions of sport-event social legacy (e.g., Knott & Tinaz, 2022; Thomson et al., 2013).

Fifth, this thesis contributes to sport event leveraging scholarship (e.g., Chalip, 2006; Chalip & Heere, 2013). While leveraging scholarship has shown that social outcomes do not automatically emerge from sport events but need to be intentionally supported, this thesis adds a specifically relational dimension to this discussion. By identifying conditions that may facilitate or inhibit deeper forms of relationality, the thesis highlights potential elements that organizers can leverage to make sport events more relationally conducive. At the same time, it draws attention to pressures that may undermine such possibilities and therefore need to be mitigated or carefully managed. In this sense, the thesis extends event leveraging scholarship by positioning relationality not only as a possible outcome of sport events, but also as something that can be supported through cultivating enabling conditions, such as social and temporal conditions, and managing pressures such as instrumental rationality.

Sixth, this thesis contributes more broadly to scholarship concerned with the wider youth sport landscape. Contemporary youth sport settings are increasingly shaped by instrumentalization

(Martínková et al., 2025), commercialization (Karlsson et al., 2022; Karlsson et al., 2023; Wagnsson et al., 2024), and professionalization (Gould, 2009). This shift drives early specialization (Jayanthi et al., 2013), sport-specific development (Vella et al., 2025), and highly structured, performance-oriented pathways (Gennings et al., 2025; Gould, 2009; Jayanthi et al., 2013). Consequently, scholars have called for reimagining youth sport beyond these accelerated, outcome-driven logics. Scholars have argued for alternative paradigms such as a sustainable sport approach centered on inclusivity, ethical engagement, personal growth, intrinsic enjoyment, and long-term well-being (Lim, 2025), alongside a human development approach grounded in dignity, children's rights, and play (Matthews et al., 2026). Quality programming must attend to organizational, pedagogical, relational, and developmental dimensions—such as safe climates, equity, accessibility, and holistic development (see, e.g., Goddard et al., 2025; Vella et al., 2025)—while emphasizing trust, belonging, proactive protection, and shared organizational responsibility (e.g., Hedges, 2015; MacIntosh et al., 2025). From a resonance-informed perspective, Bjørndal and Espedalen (2026) similarly argued that youth sport should move past optimization, standardization, and control, orienting instead toward relational, affective, and embodied engagement. Because most AWG participants are young people, this thesis directly advances these broad conversations in youth sport scholarship. By analyzing community youth sport events, this study demonstrates that youth sport spaces should not be treated merely as sites of competition and measurable achievement, but as vital settings for relational encounters. Ultimately, this thesis contributes a novel relational perspective to the wider field of youth sport by showing how sport environments can be intentionally designed and understood to make deep relationality possible for young participants.

5.2 Theoretical Contributions

This thesis contributes to Rosa's resonance theory by extending it to the context of community youth sport events, particularly those that combine sport, festivity, and youth development. Resonance-informed sport scholarship has grown in areas such as youth sport (Bjørndal & Espedalen, 2026), sport coaching (Reinold, 2026), physical education (e.g., Dania & Ovens, 2026; Frydendal & Thing, 2024), running and embodied relations with landscapes (e.g., Plard, 2023), resistance to alienating urban modernity (e.g., Larsen, 2021; van Kaldenkerken, 2017), and broader discussions of play and deceleration (e.g., Eichberg, 2016; Paintendre et al., 2023). This thesis adds to this literature by bringing resonance theory into the empirical study of community sport events as specific settings in which resonant relations may be enabled, constrained, or blocked. While Rosa (2016/2019) identified sport as a possible sphere of resonance through relations among athletes, teammates, spectators, equipment, and environments, this thesis shows how some of relations can be examined in a concrete sport event setting. Furthermore, the thesis empirically develops Rosa's (2020) idea of spaces of resonance. Rosa suggested that resonance depends on particular conditions such as spatial, temporal, social, psychic, etc. This thesis adds to this concept by showing how a community youth sport event such as the AWG can provide specific spaces and conditions that may facilitate resonance. In addition, the thesis extends Rosa's (2018b) concept of resonance killers or resonance blocker into the context of community youth sport events. Rather than only identifying sportification, hyper-competition, and instrumental rationality as potential blockers of resonance, the case of the AWG illustrates how a community youth sport event can respond to these pressures.

This thesis also contributes to Turner-informed sport scholarship by using the concepts of liminoid experience and communitas to theorize the relational significance of community youth

sport events. Its contribution is not simply to describe the AWG as a liminoid event but to show how a liminoid sport event time-space can function as a relational condition that makes particular forms of encounter more possible. The thesis also refines the use of communitas by situating it within a broader spectrum of relationality. Rather than treating communitas as the main or only relational experience of liminoid events, the thesis shows that collective togetherness is only one part of a wider relational field that may include social, emotional, cultural, symbolic, and resonant forms of connection. Finally, the thesis contributes to discussions of liminoid sport events by showing that their relational significance should not be understood only within the bounded time-space of the event itself. Although liminoid experiences and communitas may be temporary, they can leave enduring relational traces through memory, attachment, belonging, and continued connection to the event or community.

5.3 Methodological Contributions

The methodological contributions of this thesis are closely connected to its use of theoretically informed secondary data analysis. In this thesis, secondary analysis involved returning to existing AWG datasets with which I already had substantial contextual familiarity due to my involvement in both primary studies. Moreover, although topics such as relationships, sense of belonging, cultural exchange, and community had already been addressed in both parent studies, resonance theory and the complementary concepts of liminoid experience and communitas were not central to their original conceptual frameworks. The contribution of the secondary analysis therefore lies in approaching existing relational material through a different theoretical and analytical lens, allowing dimensions of the AWG to become visible that had not been the central focus of the original analyses. This approach made it possible to ask new questions of existing

material and to develop a distinct interpretation of the AWG as a community youth sport event. A second contribution is that the thesis shows how secondary analysis can extend the analytical life of qualitative data. Rather than simply reproducing the aims of the parent studies, the thesis re-engages with the data to examine dimensions of the AWG that became visible through a different conceptual focus. In doing so, it illustrates how qualitative datasets can support new interpretations when they are approached with research questions that are both theoretically informed and grounded in the available material. A further methodological contribution lies in combining multiple forms of existing qualitative material, including interviews, open-ended survey responses, observations, and documents. This multi-source approach made it possible to examine relationality not only as a reported experience, but also as something shaped by the event's spaces, symbols, programs, ceremonies, and organizational values. In this sense, the thesis contributes methodologically by showing how relational experiences in sport events can be studied through the interaction of participant accounts, organizational materials, observed practices, and event atmospheres.

5.4 Practical Contributions

The practical contribution of this thesis is to extend the event-leveraging perspectives (e.g., Chalip, 2006; O'Brien & Chalip, 2008) by identifying relationality as a central social outcome that community youth sport events can seek to facilitate. The AWG suggests that relationality is more likely when competition is embedded within a broader community-oriented philosophy rather than treated as the event's sole purpose. In practical terms, this means that organizers can make social, cultural, relational, educational, and developmental values visible in the mission, programming, symbols, and everyday organization of the event. Competition does not need to be removed, but it

can be situated alongside other values such as community, friendship, cultural exchange, learning, belonging, and youth development. This contribution is especially relevant for the governance and design of the Arctic Winter Games. While previous AWG scholarship has examined areas such as identity, tourism, volunteering, and community impact (e.g., Fuchs, 2023; Hinch & de la Barre, 2007; Hinch & Ramshaw, 2014; Mahadevan, 2020; Mahadevan & Ren, 2017, 2019; Szabo, 2003; Thomsen et al., 2018), this thesis offers more specific practical insight into what kinds of meaningful connection are made possible and under what conditions. These insights may help the AWGIC and future host societies protect and strengthen the event's relational qualities.

The recommendations advanced here should be situated within the broader sport systems in which the AWG operates. The Games do not constitute a self-contained sport system. Rather, they bring together contingents whose athletes and coaches are developed and selected through different provincial, territorial, state, and sport-specific arrangements. For example, the Government of Yukon is the principal funder and organizer of Team Yukon, working with sport governing bodies and Sport Yukon, while Alberta Sport works with provincial sport organization partners to select Team Alberta North athletes and coaches. Team Alaska follows a different contingent-based model, in which athletes are selected by Team Alaska coaches in collaboration with mission staff and the Chef de Mission. At the event level, the AWGIC establishes the Games' philosophy and policies, selects the sports, and develops technical packages that specify such matters as rules, age categories, events, team composition, and competition formats without necessarily offering sanctioned tournaments through official agreement with sport federations. The AWG therefore sits at the intersection of multiple sport systems: it draws on their athlete-development and selection pathways and on the established rules of particular sports, while retaining some capacity to adapt the event through AWG-specific policies and technical

requirements consistent with its northern, cultural, youth-development, and community-oriented purposes.

Accordingly, the recommendations offered in this thesis are directed primarily to the AWGIC and future host societies and, where relevant, to contingent leadership and sport technical organizers. They concern dimensions within these actors' influence, including event values, scheduling, cultural and social programming, shared spaces, ceremonies, recognition practices, and AWG-specific competition arrangements. They are not intended as recommendations for restructuring broader provincial, territorial, state, national, or sport-specific systems. Although AWG organizers cannot eliminate performance and professionalization pressures originating in these broader systems, they can seek to buffer or temper their effects within the Games.

Within this institutional scope, the findings can be translated into several implementation priorities for future Arctic Winter Games. First, the AWGIC could require each future Host Society to explicitly reflect on strategies to foster both tangible and intangible features of the Games that achieve their social, cultural, and relational aspirations. This plan would include specific values and objectives, responsible organizers or committees, required resources, scheduling considerations, accessibility measures, and procedures for gathering participant feedback. Establishing clear responsibilities would help ensure that relational objectives are incorporated into operational decisions rather than remaining general statements in the event's mission. However, such planning should focus on creating enabling conditions rather than promising or attempting to quantify resonance, which remains inherently uncontrollable.

Second, Host Societies and sport technical organizers should protect participants' opportunities to engage beyond competition. Where feasible, competition and transportation

schedules could include shared periods with few or no competitions during which participants can attend ceremonies, cultural programs, cross-delegation activities, and informal gatherings. Sufficient time between competitions, transportation, meals, and other responsibilities could also reduce schedule conflicts. Cultural pop-up activities, pin-trading areas, informal games, and other low-barrier programs could be offered at sport venues and in the Athletes' Village so that participants whose schedules prevent them from attending major programs still have opportunities for social and cultural engagement.

Third, organizers should deliberately activate shared spaces while allowing participation to remain voluntary. Dining halls, village common areas, waiting spaces, and competition venues could be arranged and programmed to encourage interaction across sports and delegations through shared meals, informal activities, storytelling, music, cultural demonstrations, and youth-led programming. Where programming involves Indigenous games, knowledge, or cultural practices, its development and delivery should involve relevant Indigenous and northern communities, cultural leaders, Knowledge Keepers, and youth.

Importantly, these initiatives should not be treated as self-activating. Their effectiveness depends partly on whether the adults whose decisions and messages shape young participants' schedules and experiences actively value and reinforce the AWG's social, cultural, and relational purposes. The AWGIC and Host Society should therefore include these purposes in pre-Games orientation for Chefs de Mission, mission staff, coaches, volunteers, and other personnel. Coaches and contingent leaders should incorporate selected cultural and social activities into delegation plans, protect time for participation, encourage youth to engage without making participation coercive, and model respectful interaction across delegations. Event communications, ceremonies,

and recognition practices should reinforce these priorities by giving visibility to cultural participation, fair play, inclusion, volunteering, and community contribution alongside competitive achievement.

Finally, the AWGIC and Host Societies could evaluate whether these opportunities were implemented and accessible. Short post-event surveys, youth discussions, and debriefing sessions with athletes, cultural performers, coaches, mission staff, and organizers could identify scheduling conflicts, barriers to participation, experiences of inclusion or exclusion, and programs or spaces that participants found particularly meaningful. Evaluation should not attempt to count friendships or treat resonance as a predictable outcome. Instead, it should assess whether participants had realistic and inclusive opportunities to socialize, engage with cultural programming, explore the host community, and spend time beyond competition. Lessons from each edition could then be documented and transferred through the AWGIC to subsequent Host Societies.

Together, these strategies show how organizers can operationalize the thesis's broader recommendations. Protected time can temper acceleration and schedule optimization; broader recognition practices and adult messaging can reduce the dominance of hyper-competition; and informal, participatory spaces can preserve openness and spontaneity against excessive control and sportification. These measures cannot produce relationality on demand, but they can create more favourable conditions for relational encounters and help prevent the AWG's social and cultural initiatives from being displaced by performance priorities.

These insights may be useful for youth sport events more broadly, but they are especially relevant for community youth sport events that seek to preserve relationality as a core part of their purpose. For such events, the AWG offers a useful reference point for considering how youth sport

can be organized around competition without allowing competition, performance, or measurement to become the only values that matter.

6. Future directions

One important direction for future research is to examine the limits, failures, and negative sides of relationality in community youth sport events. This thesis focused mainly on positive relational experiences and the conditions that may make them more possible. However, such experiences cannot be assumed. For instance, resonance is subjective (Rosa, 2020) and cannot be planned or guaranteed (Rosa, 2016/2019); future studies should attend more closely to participants who do not experience strong relational connections. This could include examining moments of alienation, exclusion, disconnection, loneliness, psychological pressures, cultural misunderstanding, or emotional distance during community youth sport events. Such research would provide a more balanced understanding of relationality by showing not only when and how these events become conducive to connection, but also when and why they fail to do so.

Another important direction for future research concerns the empirical study of resonance itself. Since this thesis was based on secondary data, it was able to identify traces or preconditions of resonance and examine the factors that may support or inhibit these experiences. However, the data were not originally collected to investigate resonance in detail. Future research could therefore use primary data collection to examine participants' resonant experiences more directly. This is especially important given ongoing questions about how resonance can be identified, evaluated, or measured empirically (e.g., Haugaard, 2020). Rosa (2020) responded to such concerns by outlining key elements of resonance, including being affected, responding, transformation, and

uncontrollability. These elements provide useful conceptual guidance for future studies. Scholars could build on them through qualitative approaches, such as interviews, as well as quantitative or mixed-method designs that seek to examine the presence, intensity, or conditions of resonance in sport event contexts.

A further limitation concerns the cultural, northern, and generational specificity of the AWG. Although this thesis recognizes the event's circumpolar orientation, northern and Indigenous cultural programming, and role in expressing northern identities, these dimensions were examined primarily in relation to relationality. The analysis did not systematically situate participants' experiences within the diverse contemporary youth cultures and everyday realities of the North. It therefore leaves underexplored how northern histories, languages, relationships to land, colonial experiences, mobility, digital communication, changing forms of sport and leisure, and contemporary social and environmental transformations may shape young people's experiences of the Games. This is important because, as Emmerson (2010) suggested, the Arctic is not a single or culturally homogeneous setting but a diverse and rapidly changing region. Similarly, northern youth should not be treated as a homogeneous generational group. The conditions and relational possibilities identified in this thesis may therefore be connected not only to the organization of the AWG but also to the particular cultural, geographical, and generational contexts in which the event takes place.

Relatedly, future research should investigate whether, how, why, and for whom the frequently invoked "AWG spirit" resonates with northern youth today. Rather than treating this spirit as a fixed characteristic of the event, researchers could examine how young people themselves define and experience it, which dimensions of the Games they find meaningful, and

how these experiences relate to their identities, relationships, aspirations, and everyday lives. Possible sources of meaning may include athletic participation, social exchange, cultural programming, Indigenous games, travel, encounters with other northern youth, circumpolar belonging, and temporary distance from everyday routines; however, these possibilities should be investigated rather than assumed. Research should also attend to differences among delegations, regions, languages, genders, sporting backgrounds, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, as well as to young people who feel disconnected from the event or its stated spirit. Youth-centered and participatory research would be particularly valuable.

A related methodological and interpretive limitation concerns the use of Rosa's resonance theory to examine Indigenous games and cultural practices. Although resonance provided a useful lens for exploring relationships with people, cultures, places, and objects, it originates in a European sociological tradition and may not fully capture the meanings, responsibilities, and forms of relationality embedded in particular Indigenous knowledge systems. Applying this framework also risks translating culturally grounded meanings into an external conceptual language. Because this thesis was based on secondary data and was not guided by Indigenous methodologies or community-led analysis, its interpretations of Arctic Sports, Dene Games, and other Indigenous cultural practices should be understood as theoretically situated interpretations rather than Indigenous accounts of their meanings. Nevertheless, the parent studies included knowledge-sharing activities. Their reports were shared with AWG organizers (Dallaire et al., 2024; MacKay & Dallaire, 2024), and preliminary analyses from both projects—including findings concerning relationality—were presented and discussed on September 25, 2023, with members of the Arctic Winter Games International Committee and representatives of the delegations. These activities created opportunities for exchange, but they did not constitute community governance,

community-led analysis, or co-ownership of the interpretations developed in this thesis. Future research should therefore examine resonance and relationality in partnership with Indigenous communities and with the involvement of Indigenous researchers, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and youth. Indigenous and community-led methodologies could allow research questions, concepts, interpretations, and knowledge-sharing practices to be guided by community priorities, including determining whether resonance is useful, requires adaptation, or should be complemented or replaced by Indigenous relational frameworks.

Comparative research is also needed to distinguish among characteristics that are specific to the AWG, those connected to its northern and circumpolar context, and those shared more broadly by community youth sport events. This could involve comparisons across different AWG editions, host communities, and delegations; between the AWG and other northern sport and cultural gatherings; and between the AWG and community youth sport events outside the North. Such research could clarify whether relational experiences arise primarily from AWG-specific features—such as its three-part emphasis on sport, culture, and social exchange—or from broader characteristics such as community orientation, volunteer involvement, developmental objectives, cultural programming, informal interaction, and temporal openness. These influences may not be fully separable, but comparative research could provide a clearer understanding of how they interact and which lessons from the AWG may be transferable to other contexts.

7. Conclusion

This thesis set out to examine the Arctic Winter Games as a community youth sport event conducive to relationality. Rather than approaching the AWG only as a competitive event or as a

vehicle for measurable impacts, the thesis has examined how the Games may enable, shape, and sometimes constrain meaningful connections among participants. In doing so, it has brought together concepts such as resonance, liminoid, communitas, and sport event scholarship to better understand how relational encounters emerge in and through a community-oriented youth sport event.

Overall, this thesis has argued that community youth sport events such as the AWG should not be understood only as sites of competition, performance, or achievement, but also as possible spaces of relational encounters. Across the three papers, this argument was developed in different ways. The first paper examined the AWG as a possible space of resonance by exploring social resonance experiences and identifying conditions that may facilitate meaningful relations. The second paper showed how resonance can be threatened, while also examining how the AWG resists or softens some of these pressures. The third paper examined the AWG as a liminoid configuration in which different forms of relationality may emerge, including friendship, networks, resonance, enchantment, communitas, and enduring post-event attachments. Taken together, the three papers show that the relational significance of community youth sport events lies not simply in the fact that people gather, but in how the event is organized, imagined, experienced, and remembered. They also show that relationality cannot be assumed or guaranteed; it depends on organizational, social, temporal, and psychological conditions and remains vulnerable to pressures such as sportification, hyper-competition, and instrumental rationality.

The broader contribution of this thesis is to show that community youth sport events can offer an alternative way of thinking about youth sport event social impacts. In a context where youth sport events are usually shaped by acceleration, performance, specialization, and measurable

outcomes, the AWG demonstrates the importance of preserving some sports events for encounters, spaces in which participants can be moved, transformed, and feel a sense of belonging. This does not mean that competition should be removed from community youth sport events. Rather, it suggests that competition can be situated within a wider community-oriented framework in which relational, cultural, educational, and developmental values also matter.

Ultimately, this thesis invites scholars and practitioners to think more carefully about what community youth sport events are for. If they are organized only around medals, rankings, and performance, their relational possibilities may be narrowed. But when they are shaped by community ethos, cultural grounding, temporal openness, shared spaces, and values beyond achievement, they may become important spaces where individuals encounter others, exchange culture, learn about different ways of life, feel part of something larger, and carry these experiences beyond the event itself. In this sense, the Arctic Winter Games offers a valuable example of how community youth sport events can be imagined not only as competitions to be won, but as relational spaces in which meaningful participation becomes more possible.

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List of appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval Letter for Primary Study 1

22/06/2022

Université d'Ottawa
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa
Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE I CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL

Numéro du dossier / Ethics File Number	H-06-22-8134
Titre du projet / Project Title	Arctic Winter Games 2023 - Arctic Youth, Culture and Environment.
Type de projet / Project Type	Recherche de professeur / Professor's research project
Statut du projet / Project Status	Approuvé / Approved
Date d'approbation (jj/mm/aaaa) / Approval Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	22/06/2022
Date d'expiration (jj/mm/aaaa) / Expiry Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	21/06/2023

Équipe de recherche / Research Team

Chercheur / Researcher	Affiliation	Role
Christine DALLAIRE	École des sciences de l'activité physique / School of Human Kinetics	Chercheur Principal / Principal Investigator
Julien FUCHS	École des sciences de l'activité physique / School of Human Kinetics	Co-chercheur principal / Co-principal investigator
Robert Christian THOMSEN	Aalborg University	Co-chercheur / Co-investigator

Conditions spéciales ou commentaires / Special conditions or comments

550, rue Cumberland, pièce 154 Ottawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5 Canada
550 Cumberland Street, Room 154 Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 Canada

613-562-5387 • 613-562-5338 • ethique@uOttawa.ca / ethics@uOttawa.ca
www.recherche.uottawa.ca/deontologie I www.recherche.uottawa.ca/ethics

22/06/2022

Université d'Ottawa

Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Le Comité d'éthique de la recherche (CÉR) de l'Université d'Ottawa, opérant conformément à l'*Énoncé de politique des Trois conseils* (2014) et toutes autres lois et tous règlements applicables, a examiné et approuvé la demande d'éthique du projet de recherche ci-nommé.

L'approbation est valide pour la durée indiquée plus haut et est sujette aux conditions énumérées dans la section intitulée "Conditions Spéciales ou Commentaires". Le formulaire « Renouvellement ou Fermeture de Projet » doit être complété quatre semaines avant la date d'échéance indiquée ci-haut afin de demander un renouvellement de cette approbation éthique ou afin de fermer le dossier.

Toutes modifications apportées au projet doivent être approuvées par le CÉR avant leur mise en place, sauf si le participant doit être retiré en raison d'un danger immédiat ou s'il s'agit d'un changement ayant trait à des éléments administratifs ou logistiques du projet. Les chercheurs doivent aviser le CÉR dans les plus brefs délais de tout changement pouvant augmenter le niveau de risque aux participants ou pouvant affecter considérablement le déroulement du projet, rapporter tout évènement imprévu ou indésirable et soumettre toute nouvelle information pouvant nuire à la conduite du projet ou à la sécurité des participants.

The University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board, which operates in accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (2014) and other applicable laws and regulations, has examined and approved the ethics application for the above-named research project.

Ethics approval is valid for the period indicated above and is subject to the conditions listed in the section entitled "Special Conditions or Comments". The "Renewal/Project Closure" form must be completedfour weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to request a renewal of this ethics approval or closure of the file.

Any changes made to the project must be approved by the REB before being implemented, except when necessary to remove participants from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) only pertain to administrative or logistical components of the project. Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes that increase the risk to participant(s), any changes that considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project or the safety of the participant(s).

Riana MARCOTTE
Responsable d'éthique en recherche / Protocol Officer
Pour/For **Daniel LAGAREC** Président(e) du/ Chair of the **Comité d'éthique de la recherche en sciences de la santé et sciences / Health Sciences and Sciences Research Ethics Board**

550, rue Cumberland, pièce 154 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154
Ottawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5 Canada Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 Canada

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www.recherche.uottawa.ca/deontologie I www.recherche.uottawa.ca/ethics

Appendix B: Ethics Approval Letter for Primary Study 2

Numéro de dossier: H06-17-04 **Date (mm/jj/aaaa):** 08/17/2022

Université d'Ottawa University of Ottawa
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Certificat d'approbation déontologique

CÉR Sciences et science de la santé

Chercheur principal / Superviseur / Co-chercheur(s) / Étudiant(s)

Prénom	Nom de famille	Affiliation	Rôle
Christine	Dallaire	Sciences de la santé / Activité physique	Chercheure principale

Numéro du dossier: H06-17-04

Type du projet: Professeur

Titre: "Redonner à la communauté": l'engagement communautaire des jeunes en tant que leaders dans des initiatives sportives

Date de renouvellement (mm/jj/aaaa)	Date d'expiration (mm/jj/aaaa)	Approbation
08/17/2022	08/16/2023	Renouvellement

Conditions Spéciales / Commentaires:

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Ottawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5 Canada Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 Canada
(613) 562-5387 • Téléc./Fax (613) 562-5338
www.recherche.uottawa.ca/deontologie/ www.research.uottawa.ca/ethics/

Numéro de dossier: H06-17-04 **Date (mm/jj/aaaa):** 08/17/2022

Université d'Ottawa University of Ottawa
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

La présente confirme que le Comité d'éthique de la recherche (CER) de l'Université d'Ottawa identifié ci-dessus, opérant conformément à l'Énoncé de politique des Trois conseils et toutes autres lois et tous règlements applicables de l'Ontario, a examiné et approuvé la demande d'approbation éthique du projet de recherche ci-nommé. L'approbation est valide pour la durée indiquée plus haut et est sujette aux conditions énumérées dans la section intitulée "Conditions Spéciales / Commentaires".

Lors de l'étude, le protocole ne peut être modifié sans approbation préalable écrite du CER sauf si le participant doit être retiré en raison d'un danger immédiat ou s'il s'agit d'un changement ayant trait à des éléments administratifs ou logistiques de l'étude comme par exemple un changement de numéro de téléphone. Les chercheurs doivent aviser le CER dans les plus brefs délais de tout changement pouvant augmenter le niveau de risque aux participants ou affecter considérablement le déroulement du projet. Ils devront aussi rapporter tout évènement imprévu et / ou dommageable et devront soumettre toutes les nouvelles informations pouvant nuire à la conduite du projet et/ou à la sécurité des participants. Toutes modifications apportées au projet, aux lettres d'information / formulaires de consentement ainsi qu'aux documents de recrutement doivent être soumises pour approbation en utilisant le document intitulé "Modification au projet de recherche" au: https://recherche.uottawa.ca/deontologie/formulaires.

Veuillez soumettre un rapport annuel au Bureau d'éthique quatre semaines avant la date d'échéance indiquée afin de renouveler de l'approbation éthique. Afin de fermer le dossier, un rapport final doit être soumis. Ces documents sont disponibles en ligne au: https://recherche.uottawa.ca/deontologie/formulaires.

Pour toutes questions, vous pouvez communiquer avec le Bureau d'éthique en composant le poste 5387 ou par écrit à: ethique@uOttawa.ca.

Appendix C: Consent Form for Primary Study 1

www.uOttawa.ca

Consent Form
AWG Youth Participants

Title of the study: ***Arctic Winter Games 2023 - Arctic Youth, Culture and Environment***

Researchers:

- Julien Fuchs, Professor, Université de Bretagne Occidentale, France, julien.fuchs@univ-brest.fr
- Christine Dallaire, Professor, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa, Canada, Christine.Dallaire@uottawa.ca
- Robert Thomson, Aalborg University, Denmark

Funding: The research has received money from the French Polar Institute Paul-Émile Victor and the France Canada Research Fund.

Invitation to Participate: Julien Fuchs and his colleages invite me to participate in the study. The AWG International Committee and 2023 Host Society have approved this study at the 2023 Games.

Purpose of the Study: This study wants to understand what participants think of Arctic peoples and their cultures at the Games. And also how the Games respect the Arctic environment. What do I think about the Arctic and its peoples? What expectations do I have regarding protection of the Arctic cultures and environment?

Participation: I am invited to participate in a 30 to 40-minute recorded interview. We will talk about why I wanted to take part in the Games. We will also talk about what I like about the Games and about what I don't like as much. And we will talk about Arctic peoples and their culture and about Arctic nature. I will also be asked to complete a drawing about Arctic peoples and culture or about Arctic nature.

Risks: My participation in this study entails no risks.

Benefits: This study will help organizers improve how the Games promote Arctic cultures and nature.

Confidentiality: Only the researchers will have access to what I say. The interview will be used only for research reports and academic conferences or publications. My confidentiality will be protected since only the researchers will have access to the content of my interview.

Anonymity: The information collected through my interview will be completely anonymous. My name will not be associated to the recording of the interview. It will not be on drawing either.

Conservation of data: The recording of the interview will be saved on a server at the university accessible only through a password. Research assistants will only have access to the electronic data through the password protected university server. The drawing will be kept in a locked cabinet in the locked office of Christine Dallaire at the uOttawa. All data will be kept for 5 years after the publication of last results.

Voluntary Participation: I don't have to participate. If I choose participate I can stop the interview at any time. I can also decide not to answer any questions, without any negative consequences. Because my name will not be associated to my interview, my answers to the interview cannot be deleted.

Acceptance (verbally for the audio recording): I agree to participate in the research study.

Appendix D: Consent Forms for Primary Study 2

uOttawa

Université d'Ottawa
Faculté des sciences de la santé

École des sciences de l'activité physique

University of Ottawa
Faculty of Health Sciences

School of Human Kinetics

+1 613 562 5800
+1 613 562-5149

125 Université/University (222)
Ottawa ON K1N 6N5 Canada

www.uOttawa.ca

Consent Form
Administrators of Organization

Title of the study: « Giving Back to the Community »: Youth Community Engagement as Sport Leaders

Researcher: Christine Dallaire, Professor, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa
Christine.Dallaire@uottawa.ca
613-562-5800, ext. 4279

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in the above-mentioned research study conducted by Christine Dallaire with the support of my organization.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to undertake a comparative analysis of the experiences of young adults (18-25 years old) that invest themselves in sports leadership roles as a form of community engagement. The case studies will focus on community partners that run sports programs for youths attracting former participants as volunteers or employees. The different case studies will explore how the young adults involved as leaders of these programs conceive of the 'community' they wish to contribute to and how it motivates their engagement, whether it be the cultural, immigrant, local/neighborhood, organizational (i.e. Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa, Arctic Winter Games, Jeux de l'Acadie) or other 'community.' The analysis will also pay attention to how they make sense of their responsibilities and actions in their leadership role, beyond a dedication to sport, as an expression of their commitment to youths, to the community and/or the community partner.

Participation: My participation will consist essentially of a 1-interview during which we will discuss the mandate of the organization, its sports initiatives and the recruitment of volunteers and employees. A few weeks following the interview, I may also be asked to participate in a 30 minute follow up interview to clarify or expand on emerging themes of analysis.

Risks: My participation in this study entails no risks.

Benefits: My participation in this study will help us increase our knowledge of volunteer and employee experiences allowing us to improve our recruitment practices and enhance our actions to support them.

Confidentiality: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for reports submitted to the organizations and scholarly presentations and publications and that my confidentiality will be protected since only the researcher and her research team will have access to the data.

Anonymity: I acknowledge that the information collected through interviews will not be anonymous. In fact, the study aims to analyze contextual specificities that impact young adult (18-25 years old) experiences in leadership roles in sport as a form of community engagement from one organization to the other. Furthermore, in light of the comparative nature of the study and the fact that the administrators are the public representatives of the organizations studied, the anonymity of the information collected through interviews is not relevant. Indeed, interview data must be identified with relationship to the organization and to the position of the individual within the organization to better distinguish each case study. It would thus be impossible to guarantee the anonymity of interviewed individuals. Only my position within the organization will be identified with quotes drawn from my interview transcript. My name will not appear in research reports or publications. Since the information collected through the interviews will not be anonymous, I can verify the interview transcript. If, after reviewing the transcript, I indicate that specific comments cannot be cited, those interview excerpts will not qui quoted in reports or publications.

Conservation of data: The data collected (digital recordings and interview transcripts) will be kept in a secure manner in electronic version in password protected computer in the locked office of the researcher. Individuals that might join the research team (postdoctoral fellow or Masters' students) will only have access to the electronic data through a password protected university server. The data will be kept for 5 years after the publication of last results.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed.

Acceptance: I, _____, agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Christine Dallaire of the School of Human Kinetics.

I would like to receive a copy of the interview transcript for review: Yes No

If so, the transcript should be sent to the following email or postal address: _____

_____

_____

(I acknowledge that the interview transcript will be protected only through the security measures protecting my email account, for instance whether it is password protected.)

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or his supervisor.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5
Tel.: (613) 562-5387
Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

uOttawa

Université d'Ottawa
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Consent Form
Former AWG Participants Returning as Volunteers or Employees

Title of the study: « Giving Back to the Community »: Youth Community Engagement as Sport Leaders

Researcher: Christine Dallaire, Professor, School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa, Christine.Dallaire@uottawa.ca, 613-562-5800, ext. 4279

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in the above-mentioned research study conducted by Christine Dallaire with the support of my organization.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to undertake a comparative analysis of the experiences of adults and young adults (18-25 years old) that invest themselves in sports leadership roles as a form of community engagement. The case studies will focus on community partners that run sports programs for youths attracting former participants as volunteers or employees. The different case studies will explore how the young adults involved as leaders of these programs conceive of the 'community' they wish to contribute to and how it motivates their engagement, whether it be the cultural, immigrant, local/neighborhood, organizational (i.e. Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa, Arctic Winter Games, *Jeux de l'Acadie*) or other 'community.' The analysis will also pay attention to how they make sense of their responsibilities and actions in their leadership role, beyond a dedication to sport, as an expression of their commitment to youths, to the community and/or the community partner.

Participation: My participation will consist essentially of a 1-interview preceded by an observation period of your work 'in action'. Both the observation period and the interview would be determined based on my preference and availability. The period of observation will allow a better understanding of the context of my work as a volunteer or employee and to identify the differences and similarities from one case study to another with regards to community development practices. The period of observation will allow the researcher to see me 'in action' and will guide the development of interview questions to explore the meaning I give to my work as a young leader in sport initiatives and the links I establish between this work, community engagement and community development. A few weeks following the interview, I may also be asked to participate in a 30 minute follow up interview to clarify or expand on emerging themes of analysis.

Risks: My participation in this study entails no risks.

Benefits: My participation in this study will help the organization increase its knowledge of volunteer and employee experiences allowing it to improve recruitment practices and enhance its actions to support them.

Confidentiality: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for reports submitted to the organizations and scholarly presentations and publications and that my confidentiality will be protected since only the researcher and her research team will have access to the data.

Anonymity: I acknowledge that the information collected through interviews will not be anonymous. In fact, the study aims to analyze contextual specificities that impact young adult (18-25 years old) experiences in leadership roles in sport as a form of community engagement from one organization to the other. Furthermore, in light of the comparative nature of the study and the fact that the volunteers and employees are representatives of the organizations studied, the anonymity of the information collected through interviews is not relevant. Indeed, interview data must be identified with relationship to the organization and to the position of the individual within the organization to better distinguish each case study. It would thus be impossible to guarantee the anonymity of interviewed individuals. Only my position within the organization will be identified with quotes drawn from my interview transcript. My name will not appear in research reports or publications. Since the information collected through the interviews will not be anonymous, I can verify the interview transcript. If, after reviewing the transcript, I indicate that specific comments cannot be cited, those interview excerpts will not qui quoted in reports or publications.

Conservation of data: The data collected (digital recordings and interview transcripts) will be kept in a secure manner in electronic version in password protected computer in the locked office of the researcher. Individuals that might join the research team (postdoctoral fellow or Masters' students) will only have access to the electronic data through a password protected university server. The data will be kept for 5 years after the publication of last results.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed.

Acceptance: I, _____, agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Christine Dallaire of the School of Human Kinetics.

I would like to receive a copy of the interview transcript for review: Yes No

If so, the transcript should be sent to the following email or postal address: _____

_____

_____

(I acknowledge that the interview transcript will be protected only through the security measures protecting my email account, for instance whether it is password protected.)

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or his supervisor.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5, Tel.: (613) 562-5387 Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix E: Interview Guide for Primary Study 1

SCRIPT FOR RECRUITING YOUTH AT THE GAMES FOR INTERVIEWS

Hello,

My name is Christine Dallaire and I am a professor at the University of Ottawa, (in Canada – for youths from Alaska, Greenland or Sápmi regions).

OR
My name is [name of researcher or research assistant, university, and country] and I am part of an international team of researchers conducting a study of the Arctic Winter Games.

Are you interested in trading pins? I have some pins from the uOttawa that represent our sport logo. It's a racing horse, the first horse out of the gate in a race.

What are your pins like?

OR
Start a conversation about what is happening at that particular moment (they are watching a basketball game – you talk about the game; they just entered the venue - you greet them and ask them where they were before? Did they have a game today?)

The best conversation starter will be about pin trading or their sport.

I am here at the Games as part of an international team of researchers conducting a study of the Arctic Winter Games about how participants view the Games, their sport, social and cultural impact as well as their role with regards to environmental sustainability.

I am looking for participants for an interview in which we'll for instance talk about what you like the most about the Games; about your competitions and how your sense of belonging to the North or to your Team/contingent or other is reinforced at the Games. We'll also talk about the importance, or not, of the northern landscape and environment in understanding the Games.

Would you be willing to participate in an interview, either alone or with one or two other participants? If you agree, the interview will last about 30 minutes and will be audio-recorded.

Do you have enough time before your next scheduled activity?

You do not have to participate in this research, and if you decline to be interviewed, it will have no impact on your participation in the Games.

Would you like to participate in an interview now or later?

If yes: Let's find a quiet spot to sit down and talk.
Or let's make plans to meet later (where and when)

If no: Good luck in your competitions!

START OF INTERVIEW

- **Go thought the consent form and answer their questions.**
- **Give them a copy of the consent form if they want one.**

Interview guide youth participants

How have you liked the Games so far?

- Why?

What do you like the most about the AWG?

- Why?

What should change at the AWG to make them better?

- Why?

Why did you want to participate in the AWG this year?

- Was it your idea? Why?
- Or, if you were encouraged or recruited, by whom?
  - And why did you accept?

Are you an athlete or an artistic/cultural performer?

- What sport/art are you participating in at the Games?
- How long have you been practising this sport/art?
- Would you like to continue in this sport/art?
  - Why?
- How would you describe yourself as an athlete/artistic performer?
- What is the place of this sport/art in your life?
- Would you define yourself as an athlete/artistic performer?
  - How? Why?

How old are you?

Is this your first time at the AWG?

Describe the AWG in your own words…

- What are the goals of the AWG?
- What are their values ?

Who comes to the AWG?

- Who they are?
- How would you describe them organisers and volunteers?
- How would you describe the participants?

How would you describe the people that are involved in one way or another with the AWG? (as a collective or as a community…)?

Excepts from the International Committee's website:
The Games provide an opportunity to strengthen sport development in the participants' jurisdictions, to promote the benefits of sport, to build partnerships, and to promote culture and values. The Games celebrate sport, social exchange and cultures. The Games provide an opportunity for the developing athlete to compete in friendly competition while sharing cultural values from northern regions around the world.
Arctic Winter Games brings our Circumpolar World closer together. Strengthening and showcasing our Communities and providing our young people an International Games opportunity to participate, showcase their talent and share in the joy of Sport.

From your experience and/or knowledge of the AWG so far, in what ways are the Games promoting the cultures from northern regions around the world?

- Have you experienced this at the Games?
- How was it?
- Do you think it is relevant and important to foster exchange and shared cultural values among northern people at the AWG?
- What are these shared cultural values of northern people?
- Do you find that the Games contribute to strengthening northern communities?
    - How?
- Do you think that the Games should do more to strengthen northern communities?
    - Why?

From your experience and/or knowledge of the AWG so far, in what ways are the Games promoting environmental sustainability?

- Have you experienced this at the Games?
    - When?
    - How?
- Do you think it is relevant and important to adopt sustainable practices at the Games?
    - Why?

How would you describe yourself in terms of 'sense of belonging'?

- What community do you feel the most attached to? (cultural group, town/city, indigenous people/nation)
  - Why?

Would you say that the AWG create a sense of belonging to the Arctic or to the North?

- How?
- Why?

How would you say it plays a role in how you identify yourself?

- Why?
- Do you see yourself as a Northerner or someone from the Arctic?

Should the Games play a role in the preservation of Arctic nature/landscape?

Would you say that the AWG create a sense of belonging to the Arctic or to the northern nature/land?

- How?
- Why?

- Do you think that environmental sustainability has a different or particular relevance for northern regions and communities?
  - Why?
- Do you think that the Games should do more to protect the northern environment?
  - Why?

Here is some paper, a pencil and a clip board – could you draw:

- how you see yourself as someone from the Arctic or the North
  or
- how you view the Arctic or the North ((cultures/communities and/or nature/environment))
  or
- how you view the AWG as an event specific to the Arctic or the North (cultures/communities and/or nature/environment)

Appendix F: Interview Guide for Primary Study 2

- Description of Arctic Winter Games
    - as a whole
        - Host Society members – description of upcoming edition
        - Mission Team – description of your contingent
    - Your perception of
        - Aims of AWG
        - Values of AWG
        - Who are the AWG for?
    - Your perception of staff and volunteers (Who they are - How would you describe them?)
    - How would you describe the people that are involved in one way or another with the AWG? (as a collective or as a community…)
- Experiences as a participant/member
    - When did you first get involved with the AWG?
        - How old were you?
        - Who introduced you to AWG – whose idea was it for you to take part in the Games?
        - Why did you participate in the AWG the first time?
            - And subsequent times, if any (as a participant)?
    - What sports / activities did you participate in?
            - And subsequent times, if any (as a participant)?
    - Why did you participate in these sports / activities?
        - What did you like the most at the time?
        - What did you not enjoy so much at the time?
- Recruitment experience as a volunteer or employee
    - Who recruited you? Why? How? When?
    - Why become involved in the AWG as a volunteer or employee? What is your motivation?
    - What have been your different roles with the Games since you've turned 18 years old
    - What time of training/mentoring did you receive or are you getting to guide your involvement in the AWG (if any)
        - About the values/purpose of the AWG or of the Host Society or of the Contingent Team
        - About specific skills/competencies
        - What do you recall the most – what is the message you retained from this mentoring/training?

- Description of the role you are in now as a volunteer or employee (for the International Committee, Host Society or Contingent Team)
    - Specific position and tasks?
    - What are you trying to achieve?
    - What do you like the most about your involvement with the Games?
    - What do you not enjoy so much about your involvement with the Games?
    - What kind of person are you trying to be through your involvement with the AWG?
        - Why?
        - What do you do or focus on to become that type of person?
            - How?
            - With whom?
- Contribution to community development
    - Many young adults that return to community organizations like the AWG as volunteers, employees, board members… or other positions do so, in some ways, to 'give back to the community'. Does this describe your aims (if not discussed already above)
        - How?
        - Why?
        - Who is this community you wish to 'give back to'?
- Community belonging (What community? Why? How?)
    - How would you describe yourself in terms of 'sense of belonging'?
    - What community do you feel the most attached to? (the north, contingent/team/province/territory/country, indigenous group, other …?)
        - Why?
        - What does it mean?

- Description of Arctic Winter Games
    - as a whole
        - Host Society members – description of upcoming edition
        - Chefs de mission – description of your contingent

    - Your perception of
        - Aims of AWG
        - Values of AWG
        - Of the history of the Games
        - Who are the AWG for?

    - Your perception of staff and volunteers (Who they are - How would you describe them?)
    - How would you describe the people that are involved in one way or another with the AWG? (as a collective or as a community…)

- Experiences as a participant/member (if relevant)

    - When did you first get involved with the AWG?
        - How old were you?
        - Who introduced you to AWG – whose idea was it for you to take part in the Games?
        - Why did you participate in the AWG the first time?
            - And subsequent times, if any (as a participant)?

    - What sports / activities did you participate in?

    - Why did you participate in these sports / activities?
        - What did you like the most at the time?
        - What did you not enjoy so much at the time?

- Recruitment experience as a volunteer or employee

    - Who recruited you? Why? How? When?
    - Why become involved in the AWG as a volunteer or employee? What is your motivation?
    - What have been your different roles with the Games since you've turned 18 years old

- Description of the role you are in now as a committee member, host society member, chef de mission

    - Specific position and tasks?
    - What are you trying to achieve?

  - What do you like the most about your involvement with the Games?
  - What do you not enjoy so much about your involvement with the Games?

- Recruitment of volunteers, employees, board members or other leaders for the Games (if you are involved in this process)
  - How do you do it?
  - Who/what are you looking for?
  - How do you convince them?
  - How do you train them?
    - So that they foster the values important to AWG
    - So that they develop the required competencies

- Contribution to community development
  - Many individuals involved in community organizations like the AWG as volunteers, employees, board members… or other leaders do so, in some ways, to 'give back to the community'. Does this describe your aims (if not discussed already above)
    - How?
    - Why?
    - Who is this community you wish to 'give back to'?

- Community belonging (What community? Why? How?)
  - How would you describe yourself in terms of 'sense of belonging'?
  - What community do you feel the most attached to? (the north, contingent/team/province/territory/country, indigenous group, other …?)
    - Why?
    - What does it mean?

Appendix G: Survey Questions for Primary Study 1

This study is about what participants think of Arctic peoples, cultures and environment at the AWG. We will share the results with the Games' organizers.

The survey takes about 15 to 20 minutes. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. However, we cannot remove your answers once they have been submitted online.

Your name will not be associated to your answers and only the researchers will have access to your answers. Only overall results will be shared with the AWG organizers. Please close your browser and lock your smart phone when you have finished the survey.

Your answers will be used only for this study and saved for 5 years at the University of Ottawa on a server accessible only through a password.

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You can contact us if you have any questions:
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You can contact the Protocol Officer if you have questions about the ethical conduct of the study.
Protocol Officer, University of Ottawa, Ottawa Tel.: (613) 562-5387, Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

* 1. First, we need a bit of information about you as a participant or mission team member in the AWG 2023.
Which team/contingent do you represent?

- ◯ Alaska
- ◯ Alberta North
- ◯ Greenland
- ◯ Northwest Territories
- ◯ Nunavik
- ◯ Nunavut
- ◯ Yukon
- ◯ Sápmi

2. If you entered Sápmi (SA), please specify

- ◯ Finland
- ◯ Norway
- ◯ Sweden

3. Gender: how do you identify?

- ◯ Man
- ◯ Woman
- ◯ Two-spirit
- ◯ Non-binary

Prefer to self-describe (please specify):

4. Are you a participant (athlete or artistic/cultural performer) or a mission team member (i.e. assistant chef de mission, mission staff, coach, chaperone)?

- ◯ Participant: Athlete or Artistic/Cultural Performer
- ◯ Mission Team Member: i.e. Assistant chef de mission, Coach, Mission Staff, Chaperone

* 5. How old are you?

- ◯ 12
- ◯ 13
- ◯ 14
- ◯ 15
- ◯ 16
- ◯ 17
- ◯ 18
- ◯ 19
- ◯ 20-25
- ◯ 26-30
- ◯ 31 years old and over

* 6. How old are you?

- ◯ 18-19
- ◯ 20-25
- ◯ 26-30
- ◯ 31-35
- ◯ 36-45
- ◯ 46-60
- ◯ 61 and over

* 7. In what capacity are you participating in the AWG 2023

- ◯ As an athlete : participating in the sport competitions
- ◯ As an artistic/cultural performer: performing in the Cultural Gala

8. Which sports are you competing in?

9. What is your artistic discipline?

- ◯ Theatre
- ◯ Dance
- ◯ Music

Other (please specify)

* 10. Why did you want to participate in the AWG 2023?

Please **choose** among the possible answers below **only those that had the most impact on your decision to participate**.

- [ ] To have fun
- [ ] To have fun « in the North/Arctic »
- [ ] To develop as an athlete/ as artistic/cultural performer
- [ ] Because I was recruited/encouraged (by my coach, friends, family…)
- [ ] To meet new friends
- [ ] To meet new friends from the North/Arctic

* 11. In what capacity are you participating in the AWG 2023

- ◯ As chef de mission or assistant chef de mission
- ◯ As coach
- ◯ As mission staff or chaperone
- ◯ Other (please specify)

12. As coach, mission staff, chaperone or other role assigned to one or two specific activities (sport or artistic/cultural performance), which are you mostly working with:

13. Why did you want to participate in the AWG 2023?

Please **choose** among the possible answers below **only those that had the most impact on your decision to participate.**

- [ ] To have fun
- [ ] To have fun « in the North/Arctic »
- [ ] To support young athletes
- [ ] To support young artistic/cultural performers
- [ ] To support youth
- [ ] To support the Arctic Winter Games
- [ ] To meet new people from the North/Arctic or to see the people I met at previous AWG
- [ ] To support my Team
- [ ] To support my sport or artistic/cultural discipline
- [ ] Because I was recruited/encouraged (by the chef de mission, friends, family…)

14. Other reasons you wanted to participate in the AWG 2023 ? (Please specify):

15. Was 2023 in Wood Buffalo your first time at the Arctic Winter Games?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

16. If it is not your first time at the AWG, how many times have you been at the Arctic Winter Games , **including** the 2023 AWG in Wood Buffallo?

- ◯ Twice (2)
- ◯ Three (3) times
- ◯ Four (4) times or more

17. The organisation behind the Arctic Winter Games wants to "promote northern unity and cultural understanding". We are interested to know your experience with this.

How strongly do you agree with the following statement: 'Participating in the AWG makes me feel that there is a unique Arctic/Northern identity'?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

18. How strongly do you agree with the following statement: 'Participating in the AWG makes me feel that my home is the Arctic/North'?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

19. How strongly do you agree with the following statement: 'Participating in the AWG makes me understand how similar Arctic/Northern cultures are'?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

20. How strongly do you agree with the following statement: 'Participating in the AWG makes me understand how different Arctic/Northern cultures are'?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

21. Which one of these statements do you **mostly** agree with?

- ◯ I am here to represent Northerners/Arctic people
- ◯ I am here to represent my country
- ◯ I am here to represent my state/province/territory
- ◯ I am here to represent my sport or my artistic/cultural discipline
- ◯ I am here to represent myself
- ◯ I am here to represent my community (please specify)

  [ ]
- ◯ None of the above

22. Which one of these statements do you **mostly** agree with?

- ◯ To be an Arctic/Northern people means having a Northern spirit
- ◯ To be an Arctic/Northern people means sharing the same culture
- ◯ To be an Arctic/Northern people means living in the Circumpolar North
- ◯ To be an Arctic/Northern people means living in a natural environment or in extreme conditions (snowy, cold, windy, etc.)
- ◯ None of the above

23. Which one of these statements **best** represents who you spend **most** of your time with at the AWG?

- ◯ At the AWG 2023 I mostly hang out with people from my own team/contingent
- ◯ At the AWG 2023 I mostly hang out with people from my own state/country
- ◯ At the AWG 2023 I mostly hang out with people from my own community
- ◯ At the AWG 2023 I mostly hang out with people from my own sport or artistic/cultural discipline
- ◯ At the AWG 2023 I mostly hang out with people who share my language

24. At the AWG 2023, are you hanging out with people from other

teams/contingents at least some of the time?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

25. If yes, what do you like about being with people from other teams/contingents?

26. If you are not hanging out with people from other teams/contingents, is that because

- ☐ I'm not interested and would prefer not to
- ☐ I'm interested but have not had the opportunity
- ☐ I'm interested but the lack of a common language is a challenge
- ☐ Please add any other reasons you might have

27. At the games, what sense of belonging is stronger for you?

- ◯ You feel like a Northerner/someone from the Arctic
- ◯ You feel a strong sense of nationality (Canada, USA, Greenland/Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway)
- ◯ You feel a strong sense of belonging to your team/contingent/province/territory/state

You feel a strong sense of belonging to your community (local village/town, indigenous, sport or artistic community, etc.) (please specify):_

28. The AWG include a number of different sports, some traditionally and uniquely 'Northern' (e.g. Dene games, Arctic games), others dominant in the 'South' or globally popular (like hockey or futsal).

Which one of these statements do you **mostly** agree with?

- ◯ I think there should be more traditionally 'Northern' sports at the AWG
- ◯ I think there should be more globally popular sports at the AWG
- ◯ The current balance between 'Northern' sports and globally popular sports is just perfect.
- ◯ I don't really mind, as long as they're sports

29. Any additional comments on the mix of sports at the AWG?

30. Did you attend the Arctic Sports or Dene Games during the AWG?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ Yes, because I was competing in Arctic Sports or Dene Games
- ◯ No

31. If yes,

What did you like about the Arctic Sports or Dene Games?

Anything you did not like so much?

32. If no,

- ◯ I would have liked to, but I didn't have enough time or did not have the opportunity to get to the venue
- ◯ I'm not interested in the Arctic Sports or Dene Games
- ◯ Other (please specify)

33. Did you attend the artistic/cultural performances during the AWG, either the rehearsals or the actual Cultural Gala?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ Yes, because I participate in the artistic/cultural performances
- ◯ No

34. If yes,

What did you like about the artistic/cultural performances?

Anything you did not like so much about it?

35. If not,

- ◯ I would have liked to, but I did not have enough time or did not have the opportunity
- ◯ I'm not interested in the artistic/cultural performances
- ◯ Other (please specify)

36. What do you think about the AWG 2023 mix of sports events and artistic performances?

37. It is common now for many major sports events to consider their environmental sustainability (carbon 'footprint', waste separation, energy use, recycling, etc.).

Do you think it is relevant for the AWG to focus on the protection of the environment?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

38. Is it more relevant for the AWG than for other major sports events (like the Alberta Games, the Canada Games, the Pan-American Games, the Olympic Games)?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

39. If yes, please explain why

40. Do you think that Arctic/Northern peoples are more vulnerable to climate change and other environmental issues than other people in the world?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

41. Which one of these statements do you **mostly** agree with?

- ◯ People living in the Arctic/North have a better understanding than others of what it means to be living on the land and protecting the environment
- ◯ People living in the Arctic/North have a worse understanding than others of what it means to be living on the land and protecting the environment
- ◯ There isn't really a difference in Arctic/Northerner and non-Arctic/Northern people's understanding of what it means to be living on the land and protecting the environment

42. How strongly do you agree with the following statement: 'The AWG have a special responsibility to promote environmental protection of the Arctic/ North'?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

43. How strongly do you agree with the following statement: 'The AWG have a special responsibility to promote environmental protection to the world outside of the Arctic/ North'?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

44. Do you consider AWG 2023 as a sustainable event in terms of protection of the environment/climate change?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

45. In what ways have you experienced a particular concern for environmental protection AWG 2023 (such as recycling, minimising emissions, etc.)?

46. Do you have any suggestions as to how the AWG might be more focused on environmental issues, etc.?

47. The organisers are trying to make every AWG event the best possible one. Similarly, we are interested in knowing how you experience the games, and if you think there are areas in which the games may be improved.

Do you think the AWG differ from other sports events you have participated in?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ I've never participated in other sport events

48. Please explain why

49. What do you like the most about the AWG?

50. Describe in your own words, for you the AWG are...

51. How would you rate your overall satisfaction as a participant in the AWG 2023?

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

52. What, if anything would you like the AWG organizers to change for the AWG 2024?

53. Which one of these statements do you **mostly** agree with?

- ◯ Wood Buffalo was a perfect place for the AWG
- ◯ Wood Buffalo was an ok place for the AWG
- ◯ Wood Buffalo was not a good place for the AWG

54. Why?

Appendix H: Observation Grid for Primary Study 1

Organisation and general atmosphere of the event			
	Obs. 1	**Obs. 2**	**Obs. 3**
Organisation of the sites: identification of the sites, configuration of the sites, reception and information of the participants and the public.			
Logistics: accommodation, transport, catering			
Identification of AWGs on the territory: signage, banners, flags, displays, signposting, events, mediation, media coverage, etc. Which activities (sports and cultural) are the most visible ? Are truth and reconciliation policies highlighted?			
Appropriation of the AWGs by local actors (shops, offices, inhabitants, etc.): posters, signs, flyers, communication supports in shops, homes, personal vehicles, related activities, etc.			
Visibility and identification of organisers, hosts, audiences, participants: group traffic, identifying clothes, extrovert/introvert behaviour, interactions/exchanges with the local population?			
Additional observations, remarks and comments:			
Opening and closing ceremonies and other official events			
	Obs. 1	**Obs. 2**	**Obs. 3**
General process: place and duration of the ceremony, level of scripting and formalisation, main content, elements of ritualisation of the event.			
Composition of the audience: number of people, typology of the audience (age, origin, gender), inhabitants, guests, media, delegations, officials, personalities, private partners participating in the AWG, etc.?			
Scenography: general conception of the ceremonies, place and role of the delegations, main cultural and symbolic elements, institutional and cultural messages conveyed.			
Protocol for speeches: institutions represented, persons invited, order of speeches.			
Content of the discourses: languages, relationship to AWG values, mobilised rhetoric, relationship to Arctic identity, relationship to sport, relationship to environmental and societal issues?			
Flags, costumes, decorations: graphic charter (?), compositions, colours, level of homogeneity, costumes/clothing of hosts and hostesses, participants and organisers.			
Music and song: the place of music and song, live or recorded music, type(s) of music, languages, status and identity of musicians.			
Behaviour of the people present: formal, serious, happy, indifferent atmosphere... Scenario/formalization/encouragement of audience reaction, spontaneous engagement, nature of emotions expressed, interactions between participants, organizers and the audience? Which moments of the ceremony provoke the most reaction from the audience? Do these moments differ according to the people present, their status and their identity?			
Additional observations, remarks and comments:			
Activities, competitions, sports meetings			
	Obs. 1	**Obs. 2**	**Obs. 3**
Activities observed: type and context of the activity (training, warm-up, demonstration, competition...), place and duration, weather conditions, etc.			
Environment and configuration of the site: indoor/outdoor, open-air/urban, open-air/equipped, facilities and infrastructures already existing or developed for AWGs, reception of participants, reception of the public?			
Audiences present: attendance levels, typology, distribution, placements. Identification of participants/officials/coaches/accompanying persons. Interactions between participants, between audiences and participants. Proximity of participants/audience, rules, conditions of circulation/accessibility within the sites (formalised, informal, absent).			
Information available on the site: signage, programmes, posters, flyers, audio/video material. Objects, contents and themes of the information ?			

Site activities: speaker, music, para-sport activities (initiations, demonstrations). What target audience, content, languages, etc.?			
General atmosphere: formal/informal organisation, importance of competition/sportivisation, expression of emotions/feelings, type of prevailing atmosphere (indifferent, peaceful, confrontational, committed, supportive, good-natured/complicit, etc.)			
Identification of the participants: do they wear clothes that show belonging to a sport/nation? Are they the same every time? Are they different for athletes on the same team? Special sports accessories/equipment? Presence of banners or flags according to a particular affiliation? Are they the same each time?			
Participants' behaviour (1). Environmental choices: do participants stay alone/group (athletes, family, community, coaches, others), do they place themselves in the practice areas or outside? Organisation/planning: how do athletes organise themselves in their sports practices? Do they warm up a lot? Do they practice a lot outside of competition time? Are they guided by coaches or not?			
Behaviours (2). Atmosphere: performance/competitive behaviours? Importance of medals/results/rankings? Importance of interactions? Stakeholders and objects of interactions? Encouragement/support: do parents, family, teammates, coaches, other adults encourage or send words of confidence about the sport or exercise? Attention and comments related to the athlete's performance? In general, is the behaviour of athletes and the environment different for different activities (mainstream, Arctic and indigenous sports)?			
Behaviours (3). Are we proud of the athlete? Are there any interventions by coaches or athletes towards other delegations? Are these interventions prepared or spontaneous? Visibility: do participants take photos? Do they share their achievements on the networks?			
Additional observations, remarks and comments:			
Participants' emotions. Negative: negative affect in response to undesirable outcomes in a sport role and space? Does the participant appear upset if something prevents planned sports/exercises? Do they appear depressed when they perform poorly in sports? Positive: positive affect in response to favourable results in a sport role and space? Does the participant show joy? Does he or she appear rather enthusiastic or at least satisfied? Does the expression of emotions differ between activities (mainstream sports, arctic sports and indigenous sports)?			
Emotions of the audience. Does the audience participate in the general atmosphere and show their presence and support? Does the audience interact with the sports performance, positively or negatively? Does the audience encourage all participants equally? Does the audience give expert opinions? Does the audience use the 'classic' registers of sports support? If not, what modes of expression are used? Do the expressions of emotions differ according to the activities (classic sports, arctic sports and indigenous sports)?			
Additional observations, remarks and comments:			
Cultural activities and offers			
	Obs. 1	**Obs. 2**	**Obs. 3**
Organisation of cultural activities. Type of activity observed: exhibitions, galas, performances, meetings, conferences, ceremonies, awards/distinctions, etc.? General context of the activity: venues, duration, accessibility, target audience. Resources mobilised: staff, equipment and infrastructure, technical resources (sound, lighting, stage management, etc.). Do the cultural activities require specific means and equipment?			
Identification/enhancement/mediation and mediatisation of the programme. What place for cultural activities in the programme of the Games? What visibility: communication by the organisation, institutional discourse and visibility, media coverage, mobilisation of local players? Is there as much talk of cultural activities as of sports activities within the delegations, the organisation, the public, the inhabitants and local players?			
Information available on the site: signage, programmes, posters, flyers, audio/video material. Objects, contents and themes of the information ?			
Composition of the audience, actors, participants. Composition and distribution of the public (general public, participating artists, officials, members of			

delegations, partners, etc.). Conditions of access for the public (free/paid, free/invitation, reserved for delegations, etc.). Levels of attendance and frequentation, socio-cultural typology of the public (age, gender, status, nationality).			
Cultural productions and practices (theatre, music, dance, crafts, plastic arts, etc.), arguments and imaginaries mobilised (relationship to indigenous cultures, relationship to memory, relationship to transmission, etc.), values expressed, possible political objectives? Is the activity in line with the values expressed by the organisation of the games? Does the activity refer to calls to action?			
General atmosphere: formal/informal organisation, level of scripting, types of animation, etc. Expression of emotions/feelings, type of dominant atmosphere (indifferent, calm, committed, passionate, good-natured/complicity, etc.).			
Participant behaviours (1). Environmental choices: do participants stay alone/group (artists, family, community, supervisors, others), do they stay at practice sites or outside? Organisation/planning: are there rehearsal times, do artists participate in the preparation of galas, exhibitions, concerts, etc.? Are they autonomous, are they guided by supervisors? Are there spontaneous practice times and shared practices (intra and/or inter-community)?			
Behaviour (2) Importance of interactions? Stakeholders and objects of interactions? Encouragement/support: do parents/families/other adults and other practitioners intervene during cultural performances? What are the attentions and comments related to cultural activities? Does the behaviour of the participants and the environment generally differ between activities? Visibility: do participants take pictures? Do they share their performances or productions on networks?			
Additional observations, remarks and comments:			
Social and environmental sustainability			
	Obs. 1	**Obs. 2**	**Obs. 3**
Advocacy and mediation (1). Institutional communication: documentation, speeches, press releases, etc. Content, axes, themes, rhetoric and semantic field mobilised in the institutional discourse (climate change, carbon impacts, waste, environmental impacts, resources, transport, etc.) Are the values claimed by the AWGs and the Arctic identity mobilised in the communication of sustainability issues: notions of respect, interculturality, solidarity, courage, humility, wisdom, etc.?			
Arguments and mediation (2). Visibility and accessibility of sustainability objectives to the public and participants: booklets, guides, infographics, audio/video supports, conferences, speakers and mediators on the sites, displays and incentives? Distinction, certification/sustainable labelling systems for participants, partners, service providers of the Games (sponsors, local institutions, suppliers)?			
Implementation of environmental sustainability (1). Depending on the sites, events and activities, what are the observable elements of sustainability: waste management and sorting, resource management, energy saving, use of "clean" energy, facilities to protect biodiversity, limiting the impact of the public on the environment, optimising transport and logical flows, origin of supplies, reducing non-degradable materials (bottles, bags, goodies, etc.), etc.?			
Environmental sustainability and behaviour: Concrete and visible commitments of delegations (i.e. waste limitation, rational equipment, environmental referents, etc.)? Individual behaviour of the public: commitment, interest, indifference, hostility towards environmental issues? Different behaviours according to status, gender, age, nation, etc.? Relationships with the organisation's proposed measures (if they exist): spontaneous commitment, response to officials' and the organisation's incentives, indifference?			
Social sustainability: Initiatives and systems that promote the logic of transmission and support, links and interactions between young participants and with volunteers and supervisors? Specific and observable position of former athletes? Systems guaranteeing the recognition and cultural security of communities (languages spoken, identified interlocutors, reserved spaces).			

Institutional recognition: encouragement and formal distinctions (prizes, pins, medals, speeches, etc.) by the organisers to volunteers, supervisors, some participants?			
During sports and cultural activities: Euphemisation of competition and ranking logics to preserve logics of participation and cooperation? Specific strategies and devices for valuing cultural and sporting activities (Hogdson Trophy, indigenous sports gallery, etc.)?			
Additional observations, remarks and comments:			