



Review. Socio-economic impacts of micro-sport events: a systematic literature review.
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Socio-economic impacts of micro-sport events: a systematic literature review

Impactos socioeconómicos de los micro eventos deportivos: una revisión sistemática

Wiame Drissi-El-Bouzaidi; Safae Kaddouri

Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Morocco

* Correspondence Author: Wiame Drissi-El-Bouzaidi, wiamedrissielbouzaidi1@usmba.ac.ma

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Abstract

In recent decades, sport events have increasingly been recognised as tools for economic development, social cohesion, and territorial transformation beyond their competitive dimension. Despite their small scale, micro-sport events have attracted growing attention due to their strong local embeddedness and reliance on existing resources. This study examines their socio-economic impacts within territorial contexts through a systematic literature review. Following PRISMA guidelines, the review synthesises 45 peer-reviewed studies from Web of Science and Scopus. The findings highlight both economic outcomes, including sport tourism and visitor expenditure, alongside social outcomes such as social capital, community cohesion, and residents' perceptions. Governance, sustainability, and territorial attractiveness also emerge as important dimensions. However, gaps persist, including limited use of integrated frameworks, the predominance of cross-sectional quantitative approaches, and the underrepresentation of Global South contexts. The review contributes to a more integrated understanding of micro-sport events by emphasising the links between social and economic dimensions and the role of territorial contexts in shaping event outcomes. Overall, micro-sport events appear as territorially embedded processes whose impacts emerge through interactions between local dynamics, stakeholder coordination, and contextual conditions.

Keywords: micro-sport events; socio-economic impacts; territorial development; systematic literature review; PRISMA

Resumen

En las últimas décadas, los eventos deportivos han sido reconocidos cada vez más como herramientas para el desarrollo económico, la cohesión social y la transformación territorial más allá de su dimensión competitiva. A pesar de su pequeña escala, los microeventos deportivos han despertado un creciente interés debido a su fuerte arraigo local y al uso de recursos existentes. Este estudio examina sus impactos socioeconómicos en contextos territoriales mediante una revisión sistemática de la literatura. Siguiendo las directrices PRISMA, la revisión sintetiza 45 estudios revisados por pares procedentes de Web of Science y Scopus. Los resultados destacan efectos económicos, como el turismo deportivo y el gasto de los visitantes, junto con resultados sociales relacionados con el capital social, la cohesión comunitaria y las percepciones de los residentes. La gobernanza, la sostenibilidad y el atractivo territorial también emergen como dimensiones importantes. Sin embargo, persisten algunas lagunas, entre ellas el uso limitado de marcos integrados, el predominio de enfoques cuantitativos transversales y la escasa representación de contextos del Sur Global. La revisión contribuye a una comprensión más integrada de los microeventos deportivos al enfatizar los vínculos entre las dimensiones sociales y económicas y el papel de los contextos territoriales en la configuración de los resultados de los eventos. En conjunto, los microeventos deportivos aparecen como procesos territorialmente integrados cuyos impactos surgen de las interacciones entre las dinámicas locales, la coordinación de los actores y las condiciones contextuales.



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Palabras clave: microeventos deportivos; impactos socioeconómicos; desarrollo territorial; revisión sistemática; PRISMA

1. Introduction

Sporting events have evolved beyond their competitive function to become instruments of economic development, social dynamics, and territorial transformation. Research highlights their capacity to stimulate local economies, enhance territorial attractiveness, and support destination development when embedded within tourism and community contexts (Agha & Taks, 2015; Gibson et al., 2012), while also raising debates about their costs and long-term value, particularly for large-scale events (Crompton, 1995; Hall, 2006).

In contrast, the role of micro-sport events is still not fully understood. Often presented as more sustainable and locally embedded alternatives, these events have attracted growing scholarly attention in recent years. However, the existing literature is fragmented across economic and social perspectives. Although some studies have attempted to connect these dimensions, integrated theoretical frameworks are still scarce, limiting a systematic understanding of their interactions and their contribution to territorial development (Rossini et al., 2024). As a result, important questions persist regarding the ways in which micro-sport events generate, sustain and distribute socio-economic benefits within local territories.

In this context, a PRISMA-guided systematic literature review was conducted to examine the socio-economic impacts of micro-sport events, with particular attention to their territorial dimensions. The review explores how these impacts have been conceptualised, investigated, and interpreted across different territorial contexts.

This review addresses the following research questions:

- 1-What types of socio-economic impacts are examined in the literature?
- 2-How are economic and social dimensions analysed, separately or jointly?
- 3-What research methodologies are most commonly used?
- 4-What convergences and divergences emerge across territorial contexts?
- 5-What research gaps and future directions can be identified?



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The remainder of the article is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature, Section 3 outlines the methodology, Section 4 presents the findings, Section 5 discusses the results, and Section 6 concludes the study.

Beyond synthesising existing evidence, this review contributes to a more integrated understanding of micro-sport events by examining how social and economic dimensions are addressed across the literature. Adopting a territorial perspective also helps to explain how governance, stakeholder involvement, and territorial embeddedness influence event outcomes.

2. Literature review

Academic research has traditionally focused on large-scale sporting events. More recently, attention has shifted toward small-scale sporting events as concerns have grown over the financial risks, uneven distribution of benefits, and social legitimacy of mega-events. As a result, small-scale sporting events are increasingly viewed as being better aligned with local capacities and territorial contexts (Agha & Taks, 2015; Coleman & Ramchandani, 2010).

Such events, often described as non-mega, minor, or community-based sports, small-scale sporting events are characterised by a limited geographical scope and strong links to local socio-economic systems. Compared with major events, they generally attract fewer spectators and participants, require lower levels of investment, and are often organised on a recurring basis. They smaller scale is associated with lower costs, reduced financial risks, and stronger local acceptance, while maintaining close connections with their host territories (Agha & Taks, 2015; A. Barajas et al., 2016; Coleman & Ramchandani, 2010).

Several classification systems have been developed to distinguish sporting events according to their size, function and economic potential, mainly within event study, management and tourism research (Bowdin et al., 2006; Gratton et al., 2000). However, their ability to capture the characteristics of smaller, recurring, and community-oriented events has been questioned, as these events do not always fit neatly within existing categories (A. Barajas et al., 2016).

Although the economic effects of small sport event are generally less pronounced than those of mega-events, the benefits they generate tend to be more evenly shared across

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host territories and more closely aligned with local economic structures (Agha & Taks, 2015). Their contribution to regional development is increasingly acknowledged through local commerce, visitor spending, niche sport tourism, particularly in rural or peripheral areas (Buning et al., 2016; Duglio & Beltramo, 2017; Gibson et al., 2012; Malchrowicz-Moško & Poczta, 2018).

Alongside their economic benefits, micro-sport events are also associated with a range of social outcomes. Research points to their role in fostering social cohesion, strengthening attachment to place among residents and participants, and encouraging volunteer engagement (Parra-Camacho et al., 2021; Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018). These outcomes are closely linked to residents' and stakeholders' perceptions, which influence social acceptance and longer-term sustainability of events (Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018).

In this review, socio-economic impacts refer to the economic and social changes related to hosting micro-sport events within host territories. These include participant and visitor expenditure, temporary employment, support for locally owned businesses, community engagement, social capital formation, residents' perceptions, and social acceptance. Beyond short-term economic indicators, these impacts are understood as territorial embedded processes shaped over time by governance structures and community dynamics (Agha & Taks, 2015; Brown et al., 2016).

In the literature, economic and social impacts are often considered together. However, only limited number of studies use integrated theoretical frameworks to explain how these dimensions interact across different territorial contexts and over time (Agha & Taks, 2015). Research on micro-sport events also remains fragmented in both its theoretical and methodological approaches.

Most empirical studies rely on quantitative and cross-sectional methods, leaving limited scope for longitudinal or mixed-method approaches that could provide a deeper understanding of sustainable territorial changes (Parra-Camacho et al., 2021). Finally, current research largely focuses on Europe, North America, and Asia, while the Global South is still significantly understudied despite the recognised contribution of micro-sport events to local development in these contexts (Baakil & Ekhhouira, 2020; Zourgani & Ait-Bihi, 2023).



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3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

A literature review is an analytical process aimed at interpreting, structuring, and integrating a corpus of scholarly literature concerning a specific research theme (Cooper et al., 2009). Beyond summarising previous studies, it helps identify research gaps, future directions, and practical implications (Grant & Booth, 2009; Wakefield, 2015).

Systematic literature reviews differ from narrative approaches by relying on transparent reproducible procedures for identifying, selecting and analysing relevant studies, thereby reducing selection bias and enhancing analytical rigor (Pickering & Byrne, 2014).

This study adopts a systematic review to examine how micro-sport events have been conceptualised and investigated in the literature, with particular attention to their socio-economic and territorial impacts. Rather than developing new impact measures, the review brings together existing evidence to better understand how these events operate as territorially embedded forms of organisation and development, in contrast to models commonly associated with mega-events.

The review follows PRISMA guidelines (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses), which provide a transparent framework for study selection and reporting (Moher et al., 2010; Page et al., 2021). Given the fragmented nature of research on micro-sport events across sport management, sociology, tourism, and territorial development, this approach is particularly appropriate for identifying recurring patterns and informing future research.

3.2. Search strategy

The literature search was conducted using Web of Science and Scopus databases. These databases were selected because of their broad coverage of research in sport studies, tourism, social sciences, and territorial development, which are central to the focus of this review.

To capture the diversity of terminology used in the literature, the search strategy combined keywords related to sport events, event scale (e.g., micro, small-scale, and non-mega events), and their social, economic, and territorial impacts. Several keyword combinations were tested and refined to maximise the retrieval of relevant studies. Terms



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referring to mega-events were also included at the search stage in order to retrieve comparative studies and avoid excluding potentially relevant publications. However, studies focusing exclusively on mega-events were excluded during the screening process.

The search initially generated 6964 records across the selected databases. A series of filters related to publication year (2000-2025), document type, subject area, and language were subsequently applied to improve the relevance of the retrieved records. Following the filtering process, the resulting references were merged across databases and imported into Covidence for duplicate removal and screening. The results obtained after each filtering stage are presented in Table A2. The complete search strategy, including the exact search strings used and the filtering procedures applied in each database, is provided in Appendix A to ensure transparency and reproducibility.

3.3. Eligibility criteria

Eligibility criteria were defined prior to screening to ensure consistency with the review objectives. Studies were included when they focused on micro-sport events and related categories (e.g., small-scale, medium-scale, or non-mega sport events) and examined at least one socio-economic, territorial, organisationnal, or contextual dimension of event impacts. Only peer-reviewed journal articles or equivalent academic contributions were considered. Eligible studies were published between 2000 and 2025, written in English, French, or Spanish, and indexed in either Web of Science or Scopus.

Studies were excluded if they focused exclusively on mega-sport events without analytical distinction from smaller-scale events, addressed non-event sport participation or non-sporting events, or lacked sufficiently detailed empirical or analytical results on socio-economic or territorial impacts.

3.4. Study selection process (PRISMA / Covidence)

The study selection process was carried out using Covidence, a platform specifically designed to support the management of systematic reviews (Babineau, 2014). The software was used to manage references, remove duplicates, support title and abstract screening, facilitate full-text assessment, and document inclusion and exclusion decisions throughout the review process

Following the search and filtering procedures presented in Section 3.2, records collected from Web of Science and Scopus were merged before being imported to



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Covidence (n = 3599). Of these, 1334 duplicate records were identified and removed before the screening stage. The remaining 2265 studies were screened based on their titles and abstracts using the eligibility criteria established for the review. Studies that did not meet the predefined inclusion criteria were excluded at this stage, while potentially relevant articles proceeded to full-text assessment.

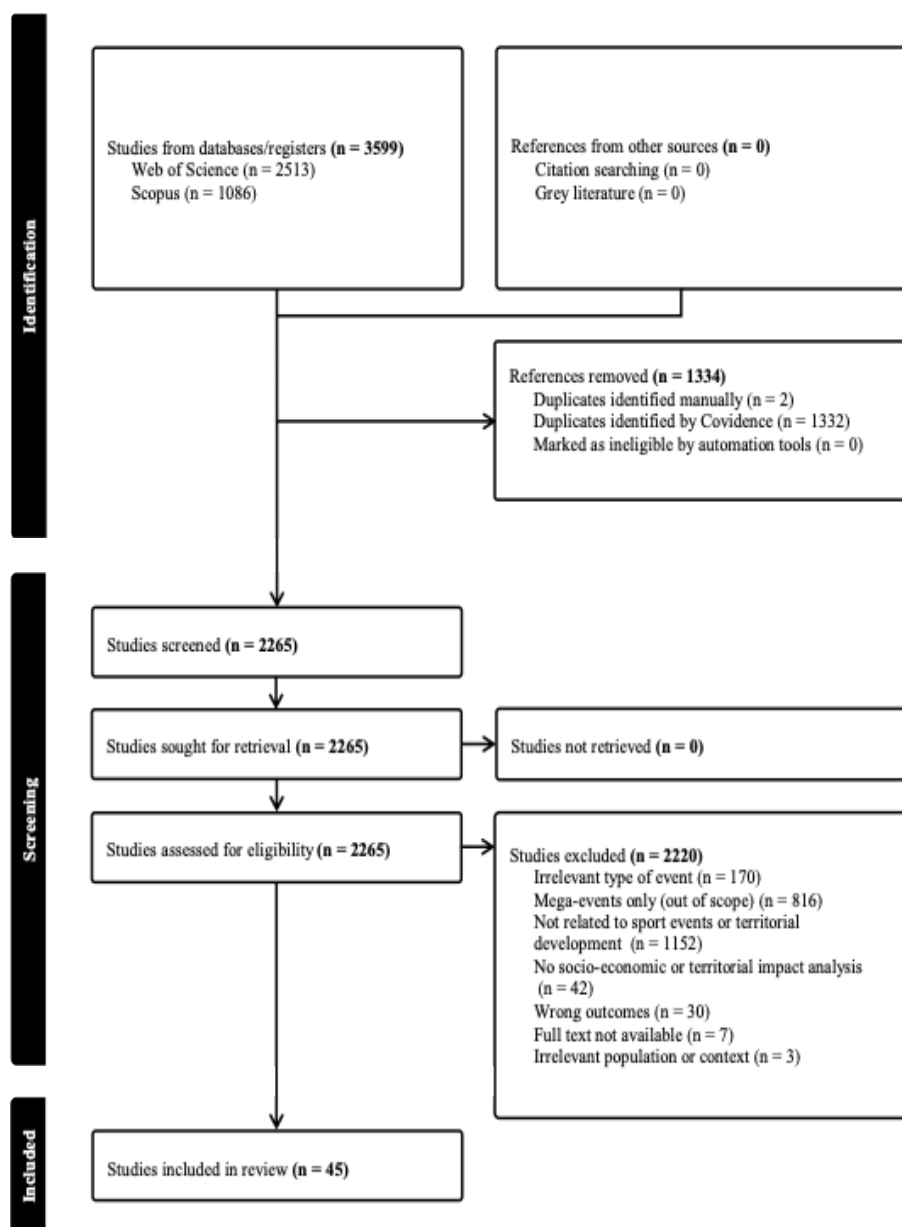
Articles considered potentially relevant were subsequently examined in full text. This stage made it possible to assess their alignment with the objectives of the study and determine whether they met all inclusion criteria. After the full-text review, 45 studies were retained for the final qualitative synthesis.

The main reasons for exclusion included an exclusive focus on mega-events, limited relevance to territorial development, inappropriate event types, the absence of socio-economic impacts analysis, inaccessible full texts, or populations that did not correspond to the scope of the review. A detailed presentation of the study selection process and exclusion categories is provided in the PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1).



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Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram of the study selection process.





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AltText: Flow diagram illustrating the study selection process from database identification to the inclusion of 45 studies in the final review.

3.5. Data extraction

To structure the analysis, particular attention was paid to the main findings of each study and to the impact dimensions examined, including economic, social, territorial, sustainability, and governance aspects. These dimensions provide an overview of how micro-sport events are addressed in the literature.

A predefined extraction grid was used to organise the data from 45 included studies. The grid captured key analytical and descriptive information such as author, year of publication, study objectives, geographical context, event type, and methodological approach.

3.6. Quality assessment

The methodological quality of included studies was assessed to evaluate the robustness of the available evidence and to identify potential methodological limitations within the literature on micro-sport events.

Given the diversity of study designs, different appraisal procedures were adopted according to the nature of each contribution. Quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods studies ($n = 39$) were assessed using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT, 2018), which allows the evaluation of methodological coherence across different empirical approaches. Special attention was given to research design, sampling procedures, data collection methods, measurement quality, and analytical techniques.

The two systematic reviews included in the corpus were assessed using the AMSTAR 2 framework, which evaluates the methodological quality and confidence of systematic reviews through multiple appraisal domains, including search transparency, eligibility criteria, and risk-of-bias considerations.

Conceptual and theoretical contributions ($n = 4$) were examined using qualitative criteria focusing on conceptual clarity, internal consistency, analytical coherence, and relevance to the objectives of the review.

A predefined evaluation grid was used to assess each study according to criteria adapted to its methodological approach. The aim was not to exclude studies on the basis



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of quality, but to support the interpretation of findings and identify methodological patterns across the literature.

Table 1. Methodological quality assessment according to study design and appraisal procedure

Study design	Assessment tool	Number of studies
Quantitative studies	MMAT (2018)	24
Qualitative studies	MMAT (2018)	10
Mixed-methods studies	MMAT (2018)	5
Systematic reviews	AMSTAR 2	2
Conceptual/Theoretical studies	Qualitative appraisal criteria	4
Total		45

To provide a more detailed overview of the robustness of the evidence base, the methodological appraisal results were grouped into four quality levels : high, good, moderate, and low. Table 2 summarises the distribution of methodological quality across the included studies.

Table 2. Distribution of methodological quality levels across the included studies

Quality level	Number of studies	Percentage
High	23	51.1%
Good	17	37.8%
Moderate	4	8.9%
Low	1	2.2%
Total	45	100%

Overall, the methodological quality of the included studies was predominantly good to high. More than half (51.1%) were assessed as high quality and 37.8% as good quality. Only a small number of studies presented moderate methodological limitations (8.9%), and one systematic review (2.2%) was assessed as low quality according to the appraisal criteria applied.

The appraisal identified several recurring strengths, including clearly defined research objectives, appropriate research designs, validated measurement instruments, transparent analytical procedures, and consistency between methods and findings. Common limitations included the predominance of cross-sectional designs, reliance on self-reported data, non-probability sampling strategies, and the limited use of longitudinal approaches capable of capturing long-term socio-economic and territorial effects.



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Collectively, the evidence base was considered sufficiently robust to support the synthesis of socio-economic impacts and identification of recurring patterns across the literature.

4. Findings

4.1 Overview of the characteristics of the included studies

This section outlines the key characteristics of the included studies to provide context for the thematic analysis. Figures 2-5 summarise the temporal, geographical, methodological, and thematic characteristics of the reviewed studies

4.1.1 Temporal trends in the literature

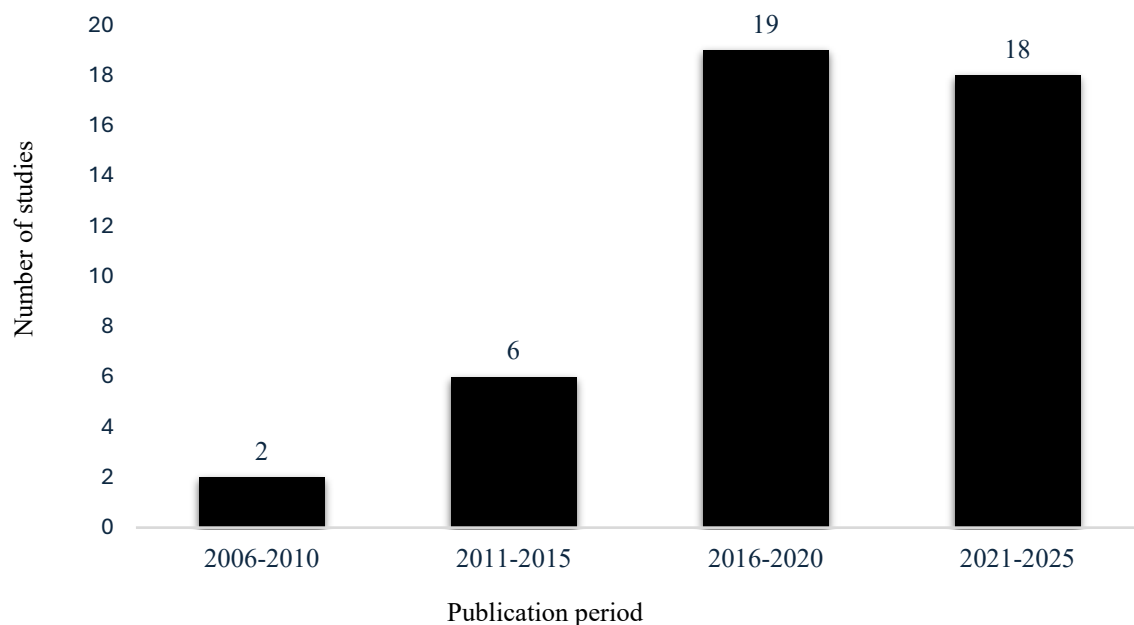


Figure 2. Distribution of included studies over time (n=45).

AltText: Bar chart showing the temporal distribution of the 45 studies, with a noticeable increase in publications after 2015.



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4.1.2 Geographical distribution of studies

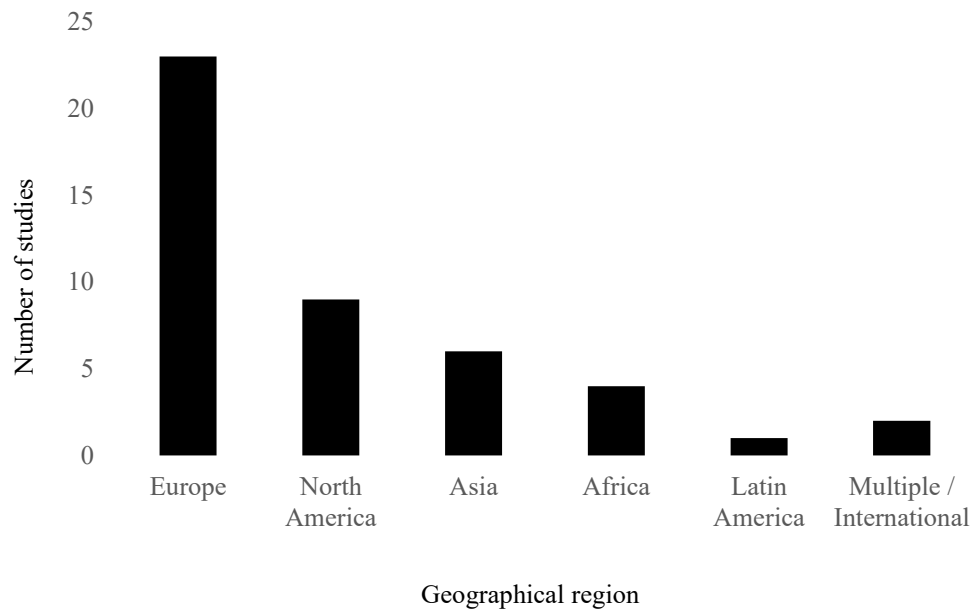


Figure 3. Geographical distribution of included studies (n = 45).

AltText: Chart showing the geographical distribution of 45 included studies, with a strong concentration in Europe, followed by North America and Asia.



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4.1.3 Methodological approaches

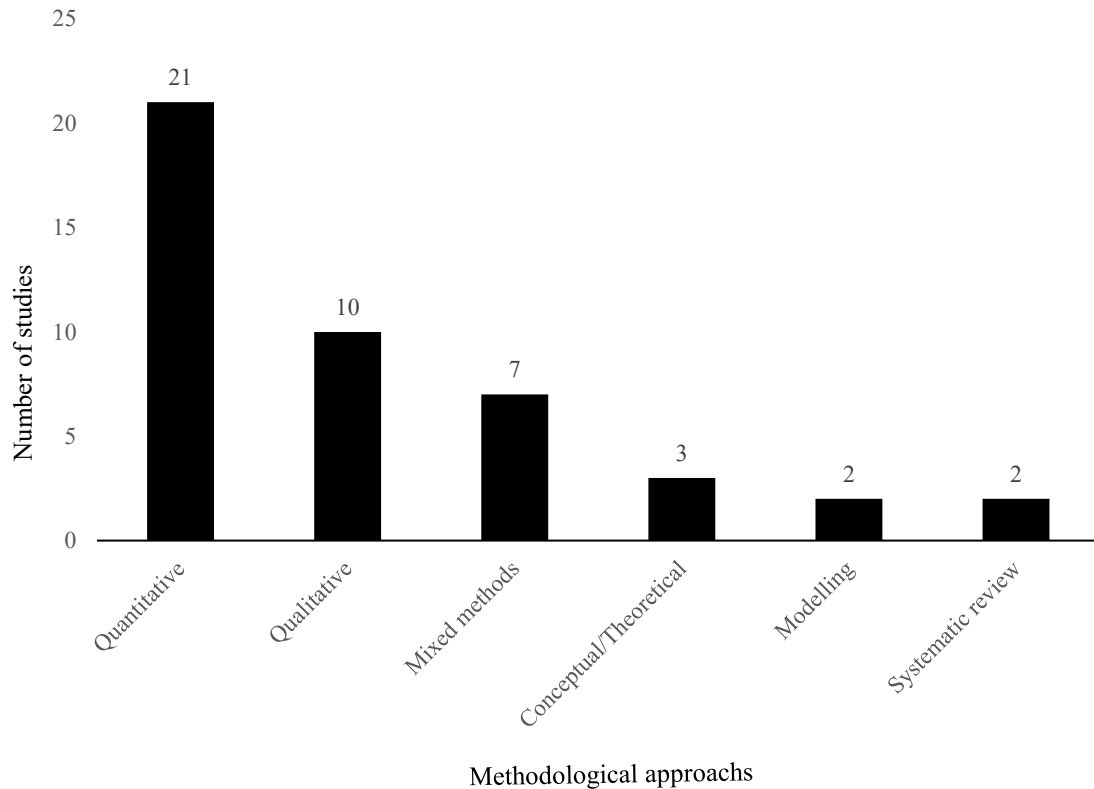


Figure 4. Methodological distribution of included studies (n = 45).

AltText: Chart showing the distribution methodological approaches among the 45 included studies, with quantitative designs being the most common, followed by qualitative and mixed-method approaches.



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4.1.4 Socio-economic impact dimensions

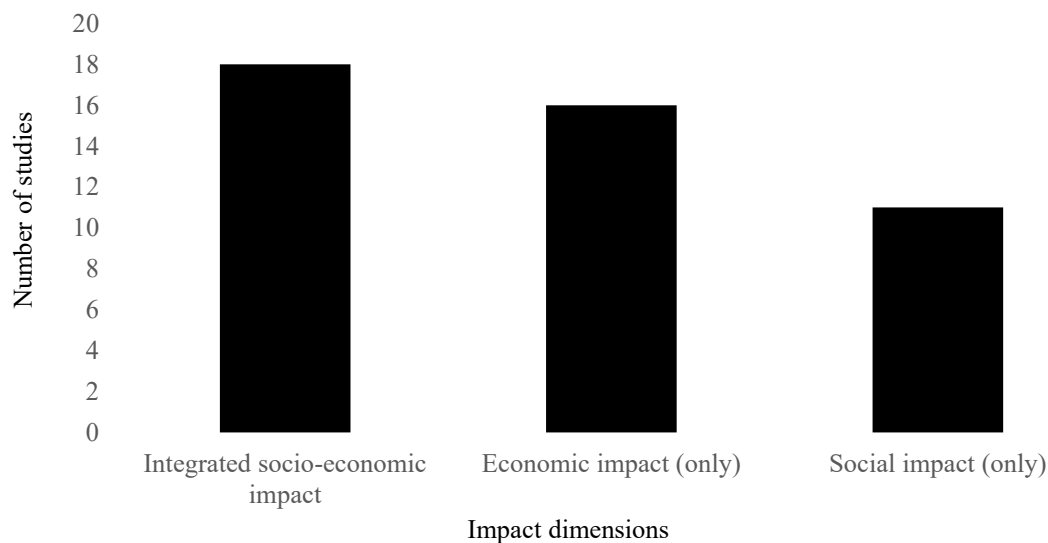


Figure 5. Distribution of impact dimensions across reviewed studies (n = 45).

AltText: Chart showing the distribution of impact dimensions across the 45 included studies, including those focusing on economic impacts, social impacts, and studies examining both dimensions jointly

4.2. Socio-economic impacts of micro-sport events

From an economic perspective, micro-sport events are associated with more modest and locally embedded effects than mega-events, which are often criticised for their high costs and uneven distribution of benefits (Agha & Taks, 2015; Amador et al., 2017; Carvalho et al., 2018; Coleman & Ramchandani, 2010; Duglio & Beltramo, 2017; Mur Sangrá et al., 2020; Rowley & Smith, 2022). They contribute to visitor expenditures in accommodation, food, transport, and leisure (Buning et al., 2016; Cela et al., 2006; Gibson et al., 2012; González García et al., 2021; Mur Sangrá et al., 2020), generating

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short-term increases in local demand, especially in rural or peripheral territories (Carvalho et al., 2018; Goulas, 2025).

Beyond visitor expenditure, micro-sport events generate temporary employment in event organisation, tourism services, and local retail (Hritz & Cecil, 2019). Although short-term, these effects support economic diversification and the involvement of local actors. Favorable cost–benefit ratios are frequently reported due to the use of existing infrastructure and limited public investment (Agha & Taks, 2015; Coleman & Ramchandani, 2010).

Economic assessment models, including social accounting matrices and expenditure-driven approaches, show that impacts extend beyond direct effects by generating indirect and induced benefits within local supply chains (Amador et al., 2017; Cela et al., 2006). Multiplier effects also appear stronger when sport tourism is integrated into broader development strategies (Carvalho et al., 2018).

Despite these positive effects, economic impacts differ across contexts and remain unevenly distributed geographically, influenced by visitor characteristics, length of stay, and spending patterns (Buning et al., 2016; Mur Sangrá et al., 2020). In developing countries, micro-sport events are presented as opportunities to support economic development and strengthen regional cohesion, although empirical evidence remains limited (Chutipongdech et al., 2025). Quantitative approaches dominate the literature, using indicators such as media coverage, participant spending, event quality, and territorial attractiveness (Li, 2022).

Social impacts are widely discussed in the literature on micro-sport events. These events encourage social interaction and collective engagement, while strengthening local networks through interactions among residents, participants, volunteers, and visitors (Gibson et al., 2012; Kerwin et al., 2015; McKay et al., 2019). Their contribution to social capital, sense of belonging, and community cohesion is reported across a variety of contexts (González García et al., 2021; Parra-Camacho et al., 2021; Ramos-Ruiz & Salgado-Barandela, 2025; Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018).

Micro-sport events also foster territorial pride and local identity by showcasing the cultural, sporting and environmental characteristics of host territories and reinforcing residents' emotional attachment (Gibson et al., 2012; Perić et al., 2016). Participation

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strengthens community support, especially in rural and peripheral areas, while volunteering promotes civic engagement, skill development, and a sense of ownership (Parra-Camacho et al., 2021; Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018).

The reviewed studies report diverse socio-economic outcomes, including visitor expenditure, short-term employment, community involvement, and social interaction (Crespo Sogas et al., 2021). Improvements in perceived quality of life are also observed, particularly in social conviviality, and leisure opportunities (Parra-Camacho et al., 2021; Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018). However, these impacts are unevenly distributed and depend on the level of inclusiveness within the host community, as insufficient participation may constrain social cohesion (Coleman & Ramchandani, 2010; Parra-Camacho et al., 2014). Participant profiles also influence socio-economic outcomes (Kwiatkowski, 2016). Where long-term support and territorial integration are lacking, the benefits generated by micro-sport events tend to be short-lived.

4.3. Residents' perceptions and social acceptance

According to the literature, social acceptance depends on how local populations evaluate the balance between perceived benefits and costs of event organisation (Duan et al., 2021; Ramos-Ruiz & Salgado-Barandela, 2025). Residents' perceptions thus emerge as a key dimension in understanding the impacts of micro-sport events. When economic benefits are yielded, territorial image is reinforced, and social cohesion is strengthened, leading to greater support for event continuation and contributing to local vibrancy, commercial activity, and territorial pride (Olsen et al., 2025).

Perceptions of quality of life play also a central role. More favourable assessments are reported when event enhance social interaction, local atmosphere, and recreational opportunities (Duan et al., 2021; Parra-Camacho et al., 2014). Even so, negative externalities such as noise, traffic congestion, and temporary overcrowding may still occur despite recognised economic benefits.

Perceptions vary among resident groups, particularly by gender, age, participation level, and socio-economic status (Bazzanella et al., 2019; Parra-Camacho et al., 2014). Higher levels of support are typically expressed by those directly involved in event

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organisation, volunteering, or those who benefit economically from the event, whereas less favorable views emerge when benefits are limited or indirect.

Community acceptance is also shaped by the quality of governance and community strategies. Transparent communication, participatory decision-making, and responsiveness to residents' concerns foster trust and long-term support (Bazzanella et al., 2019; Olsen et al., 2025). Where these conditions are lacking, perceptions become more divided, especially when economic impacts are limited or social benefits unevenly distributed (Ramos-Ruiz & Salgado-Barandela, 2025).

Overall, social acceptance is a crucial condition for the sustainability and legitimacy of micro-sport event (Duan et al., 2021), driven by the tangible benefits, improved quality of life, and active community engagement, while also influencing territorial image and destination attractiveness.

4.4. Territorial attractiveness and destination image

Unlike mega-events focused of global visibility, micro-sport events operate at local and regional scales, highlighting the natural, cultural, and sporting assets of host territories (Baakil & Ekhouira, 2020; Malchrowicz-Moško & Poczta, 2018). Their role in shaping territorial image and destination attractiveness is widely explored, particularly through visitor engagement and interaction with host destinations (Duignan et al., 2023; Vargáné Csobán & Serra, 2014).

Positive place perceptions are enhanced through event experiences and linked to revisit intentions. Micro-sport events contribute to building a positive destination image by associating host territories with conviviality, authenticity, and proximity (Yusof et al., 2012; Ziakas & Boukas, 2016).

Beyond image effects, micro-sport events progressively viewed as tools of territorial marketing, promoting niche tourism segments such as cycling, trail running, and outdoor sports. They also facilitate the valorisation of local resources, landscapes, and cultural heritage, specifically in peripheral or rural areas with limited visibility (Baakil & Ekhouira, 2020; McKay et al., 2019).

Event participation is tied to visitor loyalty, including satisfaction, revisit intentions, and positive word-of-mouth (Yusof et al., 2012; Ziakas & Boukas, 2016).

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Limited coordination among organisers, tourism stakeholders, and local authorities leads to fragmented or short-term image effects (Baakil & Ekhouri, 2020; Ziakas & Boukas, 2016). Territorial visibility, destination image, repeat visitation, and visitor satisfaction are regularly recognised as major outcomes (Malchrowicz-Moško & Poczta, 2018; McKay et al., 2019).

4.5. Governance, organisation, and stakeholder coordination

The importance of stakeholder coordination, local partnerships, and citizen participation in planning and implementation is underlined within the literature (A. Barajas et al., 2016; Bourbillères, 2017). Governance is also explored in relation to event performance and impact sustainability.

Territorial interaction is supported by the involvement of local authorities, tourism actors, sport organisations, businesses, and volunteers (Anderson & Taks, 2019; Ben Mahmoud et al., 2020), promoting stronger alignment between event organisation, community needs, and territorial development. Unlike centralised mega-event, micro-sport events are marked by decentralised and collaborative governance.

Participatory governance is related to outcomes such as trust-building, transparency, and stronger stakeholder relationships. Residents' and volunteers' involvement plays an important role in both event organisation and perceived legitimacy (Parra-Camacho et al., 2021; Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018).

Organisational outcomes depend on the ability of public actors to mobilise stakeholders, align objectives, and maintain effective communication, with public-private partnerships supporting financial viability and continuity (A. Barajas et al., 2016; Bourbillères, 2017). Local leadership and institutional coordination are also key to governance processes.

Nevertheless, governance challenges persist, covering limited resources, coordination difficulties, and insufficient citizen engagement, which are associated with weaker territorial appropriation and shorted-lived effects (Anderson & Taks, 2019; Ben Mahmoud et al., 2020).

Overall, governance of micro-sport events is shaped by collaboration, participation, coordination, leadership, and resource constraints.



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4.6. Socio-economic sustainability and long-term territorial effects

Micro-sport events are associated with more modest economic models aligned with local capacities, and territorial needs, unlike mega-events often linked to short-term impacts and higher financial risks (Agha & Taks, 2015; Coleman & Ramchandani, 2010). The literature emphasises their role in socio-economic sustainability and long-term regional development.

Increasing attention has been given to the long-term territorial effects of micro-sport events. Evidence suggests that outcomes depend less on event scale than on continuity, territorial embeddedness, and integration into local development strategies (Gkarane et al., 2024, 2025; Malchrowicz-Moško & Poczta, 2018; Oshimi & Yamaguchi, 2023; Perić et al., 2016; Valarde-Menary, 2019). Through repeated editions and stakeholder involvement, these events can support more durable territorial outcomes and contribute to destination resilience and sustainable forms of the sport tourism, particularly in rural and peripheral contexts (Đurkin Badurina et al., 2021; Goulas, 2025).

Socio-economic sustainability is also linked to cost control and event continuity. Recurring returns together, the use of existing infrastructure are reported to help limit public expenditure while supporting local businesses, especially in accommodation, food service, and sport tourism (Agha & Taks, 2015; Coleman & Ramchandani, 2010).

Beyond direct economic effects, repeated event organisation can strengthen community engagement, local networks, and social capital over time, reinforcing territorial embeddedness and social legitimacy. (Mckay et al., 2019; Perić et al., 2016),

The literature indicated that sustainability appears to depend less on scale than on regularity and strategic integration. When micro-sport events are incorporated into tourism or development strategies, cumulative benefits may emerge through repeat participation, stable visitor flows, and gradual improvements in territorial attractiveness (Malchrowicz-Moško & Poczta, 2018; Ziakas & Boukas, 2016).

At the same time, the absence of a long-term strategic vision restricts the transition from short-term gains to sustained development, notably when events remain isolated or weakly embedded in local economic and institutional contexts (A. Barajas et al., 2016; Hritz & Cecil, 2019). Overall, lasting outcomes depend on continuity, stakeholder involvement, and the mobilisation of local resources.



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5. Discussion

5.1. Key findings of the systematic review

The review synthesises evidence from previous studies to better understand how micro-sport events contribute to local socio-economic and territorial development. Examining the literature as a whole makes it possible to identify common patterns and clarify the role these events play within their host communities and territories.

One of the clearest findings is that micro-sport events should not simply be viewed as smaller versions of mega-events. Across the 45 studies included in this review, they are regarded as events with their own economic, social, and territorial dynamics. Despite differences in concepts and analytical approaches, the evidence increasingly demonstrates their contribution to locally embedded development processes. The studies reviewed examine a wide range of economic, social, and multidimensional outcomes, often in combination (Agha & Taks, 2015; Buning et al., 2016; Cela et al., 2006), although differences in terminology and conceptualisation continue to shape the field.

The review also confirms that micro-sport events generally generate more modest economic impacts than mega-events (Agha & Taks, 2015). Their contribution, however, appears to be more regular and embedded in the local community, notably when events are recurrent and connected to existing local structures (Buning et al., 2016; Gibson et al., 2012). Stronger significance is often attributed to their capacity to support local economic activity over time than to the magnitude of immediate economic returns. Across studies reviewed, value is frequently associated with the interactions developed among local businesses, community organisations, residents, and visitors. These interactions help strengthen local economic networks and maintain connections between territorial actors, indicating that benefits generated by micro-sport events depend more on continuity, local engagement, and territorial integration, rather than on event size alone.

Another important finding concerns social outcomes. Across the studies reviewed, higher levels of social capital, stronger community cohesion, greater volunteer engagement, and a stronger sense of belonging are more often reported when local participation is substantial and community actors are closely engaged in the event process (Gibson et al., 2012; Parra-Camacho et al., 2021). By contrast, studies performed in contexts characterised by weaker governance structures or more limited stakeholder

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involvement tend to report fewer social benefits (Coleman & Ramchandani, 2010; Perić et al., 2016).

Important variations in social impacts are evident across the literature. Some studies describe meaningful improvements in community participation, volunteer engagement, and social cohesion, others report more modest outcomes or unevenly distributed benefits. These differences appear to be closely linked to governance quality, stakeholder participation, and territorial context.

Residents' perceptions and social acceptance play an important role in shaping the outcomes of micro-sport events. Community support tends to be stronger when local populations perceive that the benefits generated by an event outweigh its costs. Conversely, support may weaken when benefits are seen as unevenly distributed or when disruptions outweigh perceived advantages (Duan et al., 2021; Parra-Camacho et al., 2014). The long-term effects of an event therefore depend not only on the benefits generated but also on how those benefits are perceived and experienced by local communities.

Although economic and social impacts are frequently examined within the same studies, their interactions receive far less attention, leaving the relationship between socio-economic impacts and broader territorial development only partially understood and still in need of further investigation.

5.2. An integrative perspective on the socio-economic impacts of micro-sport events

The studies included in this review consistently show that the impact of micro-sport events are closely tied to the territories in which they take place (see Figure 5). Unlike mega-events, whose success is often assessed through large-scale economic indicators, micro-sport events tend to generate more modest but recurring benefits (Agha & Taks, 2015; Hritz & Cecil, 2019). These benefits are most commonly reflected in visitor expenditure, support for local businesses, and niche forms of sport tourism (Buning et al., 2016; Cela et al., 2006; Mur Sangrá et al., 2020). In rural and peripheral areas, they may also contribute to territorial visibility and short-term economic activity (Carvalho et al., 2018; Gibson et al., 2012).

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The importance of these events is often linked to the scale of the economic benefits generated than to the local processes they help stimulate. By mobilising local resources, strengthening existing networks, and encouraging repeated interactions between territorial actors, micro-sport events can contribute to broader development processes despite their limited scale.

The social dimension receives considerable attention across the studies reviewed, although reported outcomes are not always consistent. While some studies describe micro-sport events as effective tools for strengthening community development through social capital, community cohesion, volunteer engagement, territorial pride, and a stronger sense of belonging (Mckay et al., 2019; Parra-Camacho et al., 2021), others report more limited or uneven benefits, particularly in contexts defined by weaker governance arrangements and lower levels of community engagement (Coleman & Ramchandani, 2010; Perić et al., 2016). These contrasting findings suggest that social outcomes of micro-sport events are not uniformly distributed across territories and may depend on a range of contextual factors.

The variation suggested across studies is more often associated with differences in governance arrangements, stakeholder participation, and community involvement than with the event itself. Social benefits are not automatically generated by the organisation of a micro-sport event. Their emergence is strongly influenced by the way events are managed and by the extent to which connections are established with local actors and territorial dynamics. This helps explain the variability of outcomes observed across territorial contexts.

A consistent finding across studies is the close relationship between economic and social dimensions. Economic benefits can shape residents' attitudes toward events, while community support often contributes to the continuity and sustainability of event initiatives (Agha & Taks, 2015; Olsen et al., 2025). Whereas these dimensions are frequently examined within the same studies, they are often analysed as separate outcomes rather than interconnected processes. This tendency limits understanding of the interactions between economic activity, community engagement, and territorial development.

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The studies reviewed also point to the importance of context in shaping the outcomes of micro-sport events. More durable benefits are generally observed when events are supported by coordinated governance arrangements, long-term planning, and strong territorial connections (Baakil & Ekhouira, 2020; Tomino & Perić, 2025; Ziakas & Boukas, 2016). In contrast, events that remain weakly integrated into local development strategies often produce more modest or short-lived effects (A. Barajas et al., 2016; Hritz & Cecil, 2019). Under these conditions, event outcomes appear to depend less on event size than on the relationship developed between organisers, local stakeholders, community actors and territorial institutions. This enables explain why events with similar characteristics do not necessarily generate the same outcomes across territories. Despite these advances, the literature still provides only limited insight into how governance arrangements, community engagement, and socio-economic impacts interact in shaping territorial development over time.

5.3. Methodological limitations and emerging research gaps

Several limitations continue to shape research on micro-sport events. Most studies examine events as a single point in time and focus mainly on their immediate effects (Cela et al., 2006), leaving relatively little attention devoted to what happens after the event itself. In turn, the persistence of economic benefits, the evolution of social relationships, and the longer-term contribution of micro-sport events to territorial development remain insufficiently explored (Mckay et al., 2019; Ziakas & Boukas, 2016). This is a notable gap, as many of these effects emerge gradually and may only become visible over time.

Another limitation stems from the way economic and social dimensions are conceptualised in the existing literature. While links between these dimensions are frequently acknowledged, research continues to examine them largely in isolation. This separation limits understanding of how community support, social cohesion, economic activity, and territorial development evolve together and shape longer-term outcomes (Agha & Taks, 2015; Olsen et al., 2025), leaving important questions about the role of micro-sport events in territorial development unanswered.

Methodological diversity presents another challenge for research on micro-sport events (Figure 4). A wide range of approaches has been used, from comparatively simple

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expenditure analyses to more complex techniques such as social accounting matrices (Amador et al., 2017; Á. Barajas et al., 2020; Cela et al., 2006). While this diversity has enriched the field, it has also produced findings that are not always easy to compare. Under these conditions, drawing consistent conclusions across studies becomes more difficult.

The geographical concentration of research represents a major gap in the extant literature, as evidence on micro-sport events has been generated predominantly in European settings, while many Global South contexts remain underrepresented (Figure 3). This imbalance is particularly noteworthy given the growing interest in micro-sport events as tools for local and territorial development in emerging contexts (Baakil & Ekhouira, 2020; Benreghai, 2024). The limited geographical diversity of existing research makes it difficult to assess whether findings reported in well-studies setting can be generalised to other territorial contexts.

An significant gap in the literature relates to the conditions under which the positive impacts of micro-sport events can be sustained over time. Links between territorial strategies, governance mechanisms, and development trajectories are often mentioned (Baakil & Ekhouira, 2020; Ziakas & Boukas, 2016), but seldom explored through integrated analytical frameworks, leaving important questions about how these elements interact and contribute to territorial development over time unanswered

Taken as a whole, these observations point to the need for research that is more longitudinal, geographically diverse, and theoretically integrated. Broader consideration of the interactions between economic, social, governance, and territorial dimensions would provide further insight into how the impacts of micro-sport events evolve across different spatial and temporal scales. Addressing these gaps may also provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role played by micro-sport events in territorial development.

Beyond these methodological and empirical limitations, the review also offers several theoretical contributions that help advance current understanding of micro-sport events and their role in territorial development.



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5.4. Theoretical implications and contributions to research

Beyond synthesising evidence on economic and social impacts, this review advances a more integrated theoretical perspective on micro-sport events as territorially embedded processes. The findings suggest that these events cannot be fully explained through frameworks traditionally developed for mega-events. Their recurrent nature, close relationships with local communities, reliance on existing resources, and strong local connections point to organisational and developmental dynamics that differ substantially from those commonly associated with large-scale events (Agha & Taks, 2015; Getz, 2007; Kaplanidou & Gibson, 2012). By bringing together evidence from diverse contexts, the review demonstrates that territorial embeddedness, community involvement, and local governance are not merely contextual conditions but central mechanisms through which impacts are generated and sustained over time (Baakil & Ekhouira, 2020; Ziakas & Boukas, 2016). This contribution advances current understanding of micro-sport events by showing how territorial and relational dynamics shape and sustain event outcomes. In doing so, it responds to recent calls for broader community and territorial development perspectives in sport recent research (Kaplanidou & Potwarka, 2024).

The findings underscore the limitations of approaches that treat economic and social impacts as separate outcomes. While some studies focus on social dimensions such as social capital, community participation, and sense of belonging (Parra-Camacho et al., 2021; Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018), others examine economic outcomes including visitor expenditure, local business activity, and employment effects (Buning et al., 2016; Cela et al., 2006). Considered together, however, the evidence suggests strong interdependencies between these dimensions. Economic benefits may strengthen community support and local engagement, while social cohesion, volunteer participation, and local networks help sustain economic benefits over time (Agha & Taks, 2015; Olsen et al., 2025). This review therefore supports a more integrated understanding of socio-economic impacts, in which social and economic processes reinforce one another within the same territorial dynamic.

The findings further indicate that the sustainability of micro-sport events impacts depends on the context in which they occur, particularly their integration into broader territorial strategies and sustained collaboration among local stakeholders (Baakil &



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Ekhouira, 2020; Ziakas & Boukas, 2016). This review highlights the importance of looking beyond immediate event outcomes and considering the territorial and governance conditions that shape their sustainability.

The review also reveals a persistent conceptual ambiguity within the field. Terms such as micro-sport events, small-scale sport events, non-mega events, and community-based events are often used interchangeably, although they do not necessarily refer to the same organisational realities (Buning et al., 2016; Coleman & Ramchandani, 2010). This limits comparability across studies and contributes to fragmentation within the literature. By synthesising evidence across these terminologies, the review clarifies the conceptual scope of micro-sport events and identifies common characteristics, including territorial embeddedness, recurrent organisation, reliance on existing infrastructures, and strong community involvement. These insights contribute to a more integrated understanding of micro-sport events and their role in territorial development, as illustrated in Figure 6.

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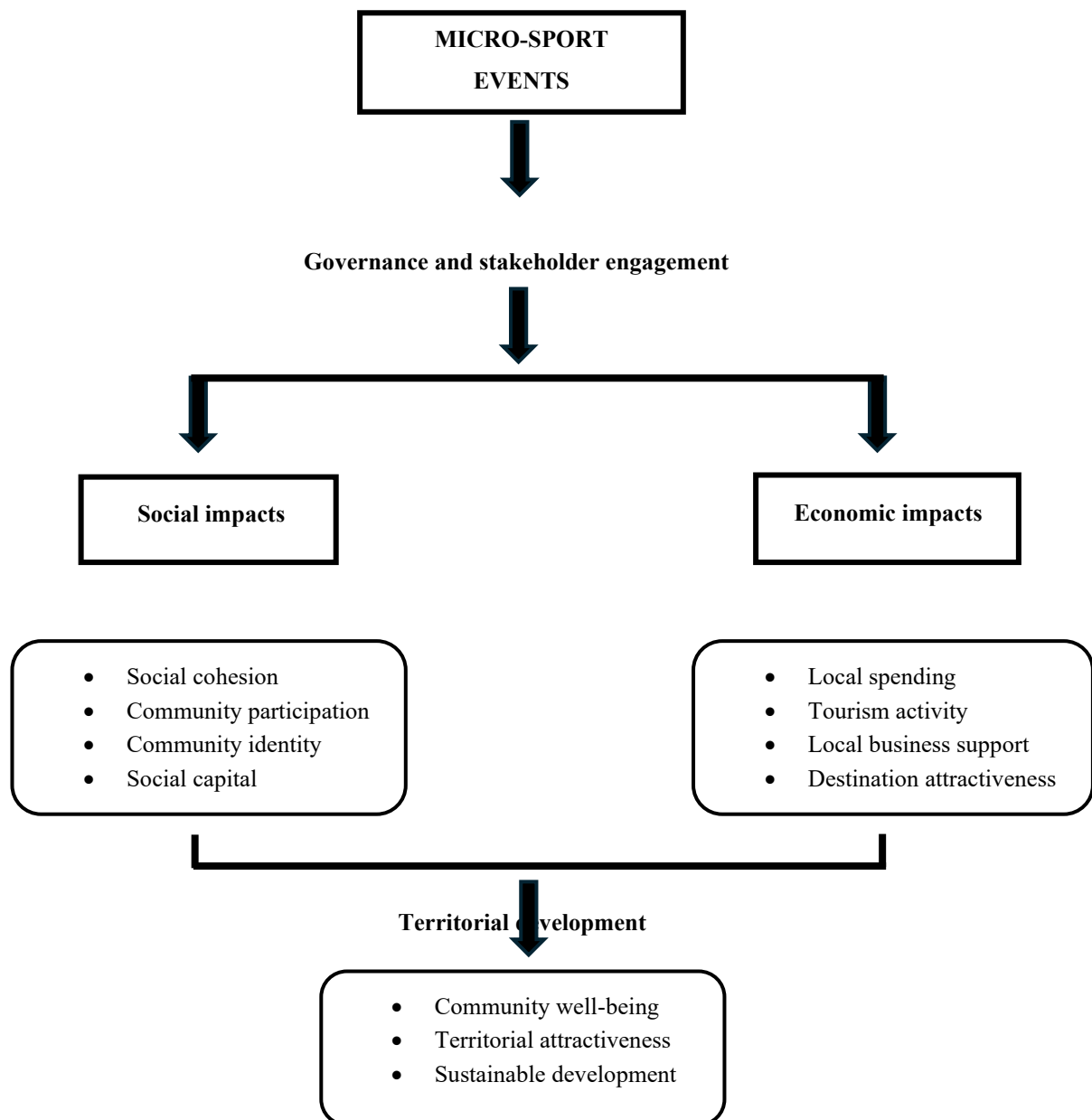


Figure 6. Conceptual synthesis of the relationships between governance, stakeholder engagement, socio-economic impacts, and territorial development in micro-sport events.

Overall, this review moves beyond scale-centred interpretations of sport events and advances a more integrated understanding of micro-sport events. By bringing together social, economic, territorial, and governance dimensions within a single analytical framework, it offers a stronger foundation for explaining how these events contribute to territorial development.



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5.5. Implications for research and territorial practice

The review identifies several priorities for future research and territorial practice. Although economic and social impacts are frequently discussed within the same body of literature, they are often analysed independently. This limits understanding of the relationships between economic activity, community engagement, governance processes, and territorial development. Future research would therefore benefit from more integrated approaches that explain how these dimensions interact and shape territorial outcomes.

A noticeable pattern across the reviewed studies is their focus on short-term outcomes. While these studies provide valuable evidence of immediate economic and social effects, they offer less insight into how impacts evolve. Future research would therefore benefit from greater use of longitudinal, qualitative, and mixed-methods approaches to examine local networks emerge, stakeholder relationships develop, and event-related benefits are sustained, transformed, or gradually decline.

The geographical concentration of existing research also highlights the need for further research in underrepresented regions. The predominance of studies conducted in Europe, North of America, and selected parts of Asia means that current knowledge reflects a relatively narrow range of territorial contexts. Expanding research in less-studied regions, particularly in Global South, would improve geographical balance and deepen understanding of how different institutional, social, and economic conditions shape the outcomes of micro-sports events.

The sustainability of micro-sport events outcomes appears to depend less on event size than on their territorial embeddedness and governance processes. Lasting social and economic benefits are typically observed when local resources are mobilised, community participation is encouraged, and collaboration among stakeholders is supported. For local authorities and event organisers, this emphasises the importance of embedding sport events within overarching territorial development strategies and strengthening governance mechanisms that support coordination among local actors. From a practical perspective, event success should be assessed not only through short-term economic indicators, but also through its contribution to local networks, community engagement, and territorial development.



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5.6. Limitations of the review and directions for future research

Despite the rigorous methodology adopted in this review, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings.

The review was restricted to peer-reviewed articles indexed in Web of Science and Scopus. While this ensured a consistent selection process, it may have excluded relevant evidence from other databases or in the form of grey literature, including institutional reports, policy documents, and practitioner publications. This limitation is particularly important in contexts where research on micro-sport events is less represented in international academic databases.

The findings should also be interpreted in light of the diversity of the included studies. Variations in research designs, event characteristics, analytical approaches and outcome measures reflect the complexity of the field and limit direct comparisons across studies. Consequently, the review relied on a qualitative synthesis, as the heterogeneity of the evidence did not support a quantitative synthesis or meta-analysis.

A further consideration relates to the geographical distribution of the literature, as the reviewed studies are largely concentrated in Europe, North America, and parts of Asia, whereas evidence from other regions is more limited. This means that the findings may not fully reflect the diversity of territorial, institutional, and socio-economic contexts in which micro-sport events take place.

These limitations point to several directions for future research. Expanding the evidence base beyond the databases and publication types included in this review could provide a more comprehensive understanding of micro-sport events, especially in underrepresented contexts. Broader geographical coverage and greater methodological diversity, including longitudinal and mixed-methods approaches, would help address current gaps in the evidence and improve understanding of how event impacts evolve across different territorial settings.

6. Conclusion

The systematic review explored the socio-economic impacts of the micro-sport events within territorial contexts based on 45 studies identified in the Web of Science and Scopus databases. Drawing on evidence from a fragmented field, the review clarifies how



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micro-sport events contribute to local development and how their outcomes are shaped across different territorial settings.

The findings indicate that micro-sport events cannot be understood simply as smaller versions of mega-events. Their economic effects are generally more modest, however, they are often more deeply embedded within local communities. Their contribution extends beyond visitor spending and local economic activity to include social cohesion, community participation, volunteer engagement, and territorial visibility. These benefits are shaped by local conditions, especially governance arrangements, stakeholder involvement, and the integration of events within wider territorial dynamics.

The review brings together social, economic, territorial, and governance dimensions to provide a more integrated understanding of micro-sport events and their contribution to territorial development. It also helps clarify a field characterised by overlapping concepts and fragmented approaches, highlighting common characteristics that distinguish micro-sport events from large-scale sporting events.

In conclusion, the findings reveal that the value of micro-sport events depends less on their size than on the relationships they foster, the local resources they mobilise, and their alignment with long-term territorial objectives. Viewed from this perspective, micro-sport events appear not as isolated sporting initiatives, but as territorially embedded processes capable of generating lasting social and economic value within local communities.

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Appendix A. Search strategy and selection process

This appendix presents the search strategies applied across the databases and the number of records retrieved at each stage of the selection process.

Table A1. Search, screening, and study selection process

Initial records	Records imported into Covidence	Duplicate records removed	Records screened	Records excluded after screening	Studies included in the review
6964	3599	1334	2265	2220	45

A total of 3599 records were imported into Covidence from Web of Science (n = 2513) and Scopus (n = 1086)



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Table A2. Search queries and database filtering results

The following table presents the sequential filtering process applied to each search query across the selected databases

Search query	Records retrieved	After date filter (2000-2025)	After document-type filter	After subject-area filter	After language filter
(sport event OR sporting event OR mega-sport event) AND (economic impacts AND social impacts)	401	399	287	178	164
(mega-events) AND (urban development OR social impacts)	213	212	160	120	113
(sport event) AND (social impacts) AND (economic impacts)	401	399	287	178	164
(mega-sport event) AND (social impacts)	261	261	208	137	131
(mega-sport event) AND (economic impacts)	241	238	183	132	130
(local sport event) AND (social impacts)	250	249	196	108	101
(local sport event) AND (economic impacts)	240	237	182	123	114
(sport) AND (urban development)	2011	1910	1361	737	655
(sport event) AND (urban development)	430	421	300	198	179
(sport event) AND (social inclusion)	190	190	151	79	73
(small-scale event) AND (urban development)	235	232	180	52	49
(small-scale sport event)	299	294	231	62	58
(small sport event)	1264	1190	926	214	199
(sport) AND (urban growth)	507	472	314	146	133
(micro-scale sport event)	21	20	16	4	4