

Paralympic performances and new technologies; issues of classifications and representation

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Central question (work in progress):

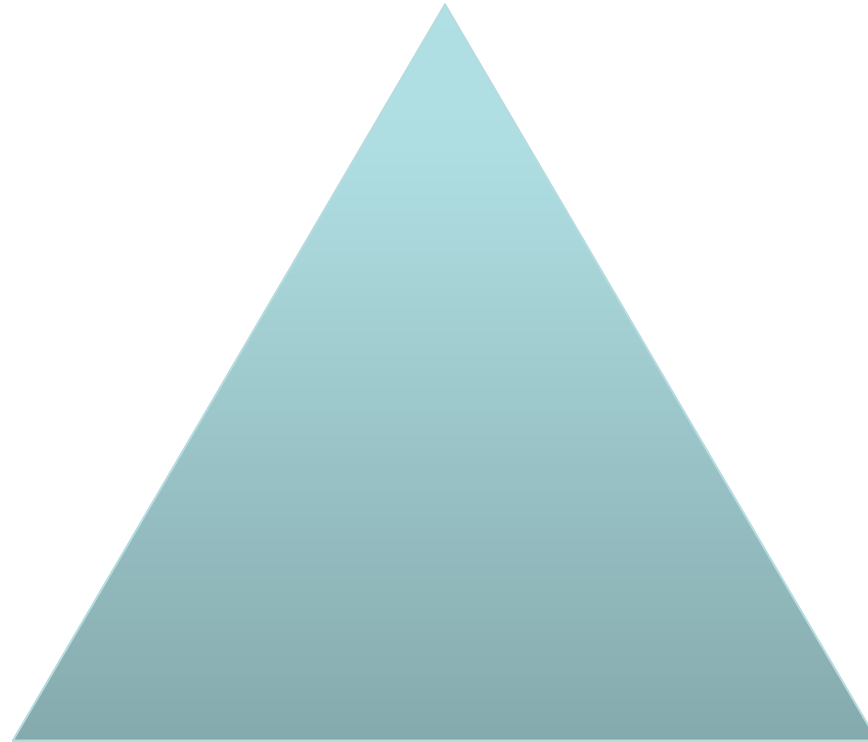
→ How does technological innovation influence issues of classification the perception of Paralympic performances?

Methodology

- Review literature
- Conceptual analysis
- (Focus) interviews

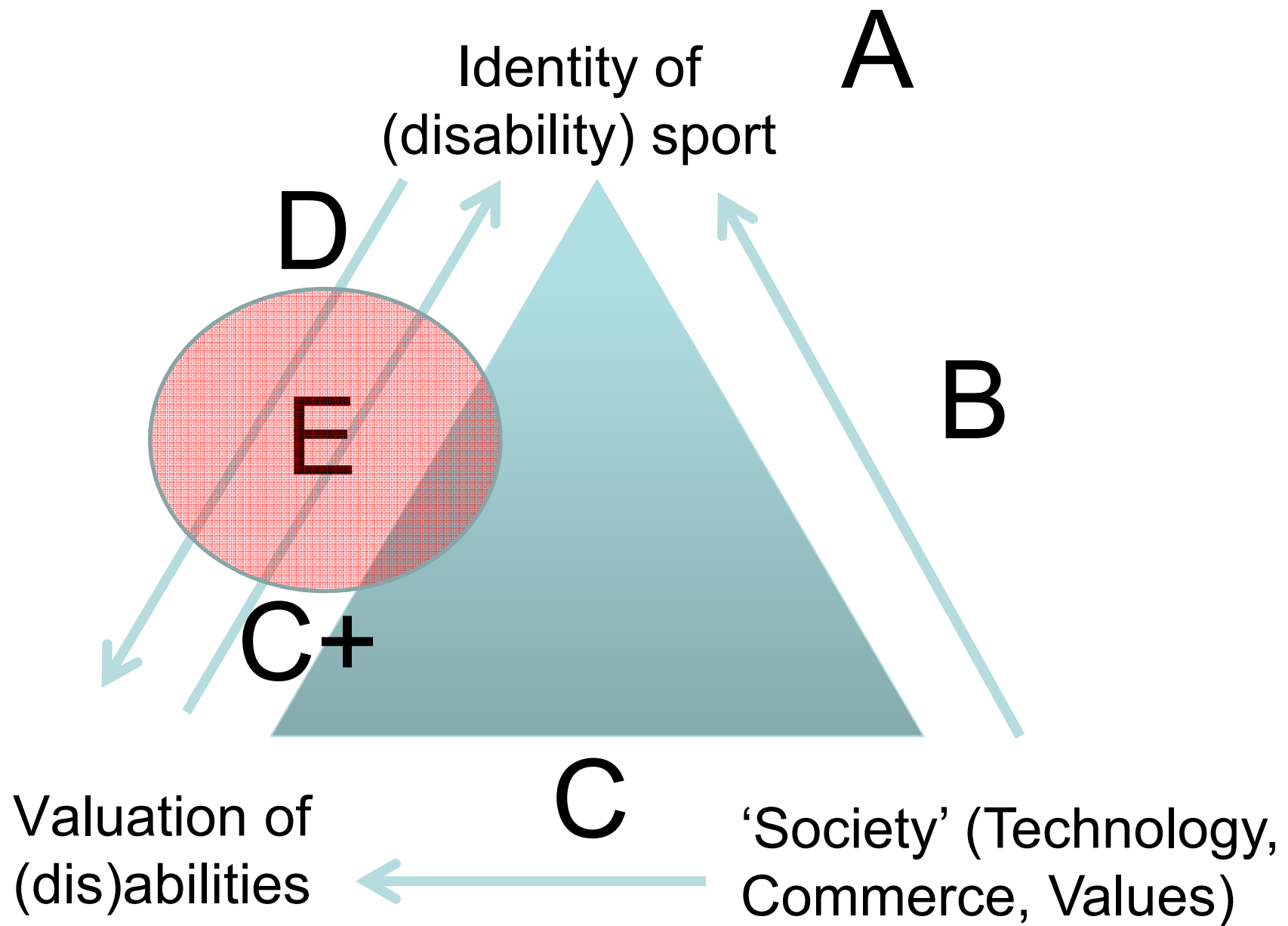
The IPC has committed itself to “increase the **integration of sports** for athletes with disabilities into the international sports movement for able-bodied athletes, whilst safeguarding and preserving the **identity of sports** for disabled athletes.” (IPC 2003).

Sport



Body

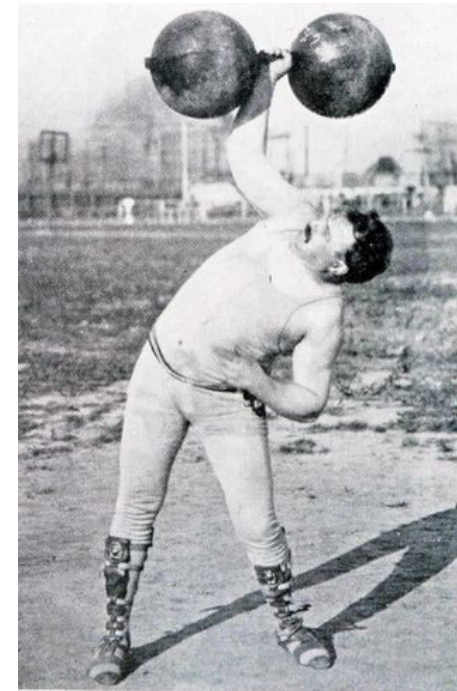
Technology



A. Identity of Sport

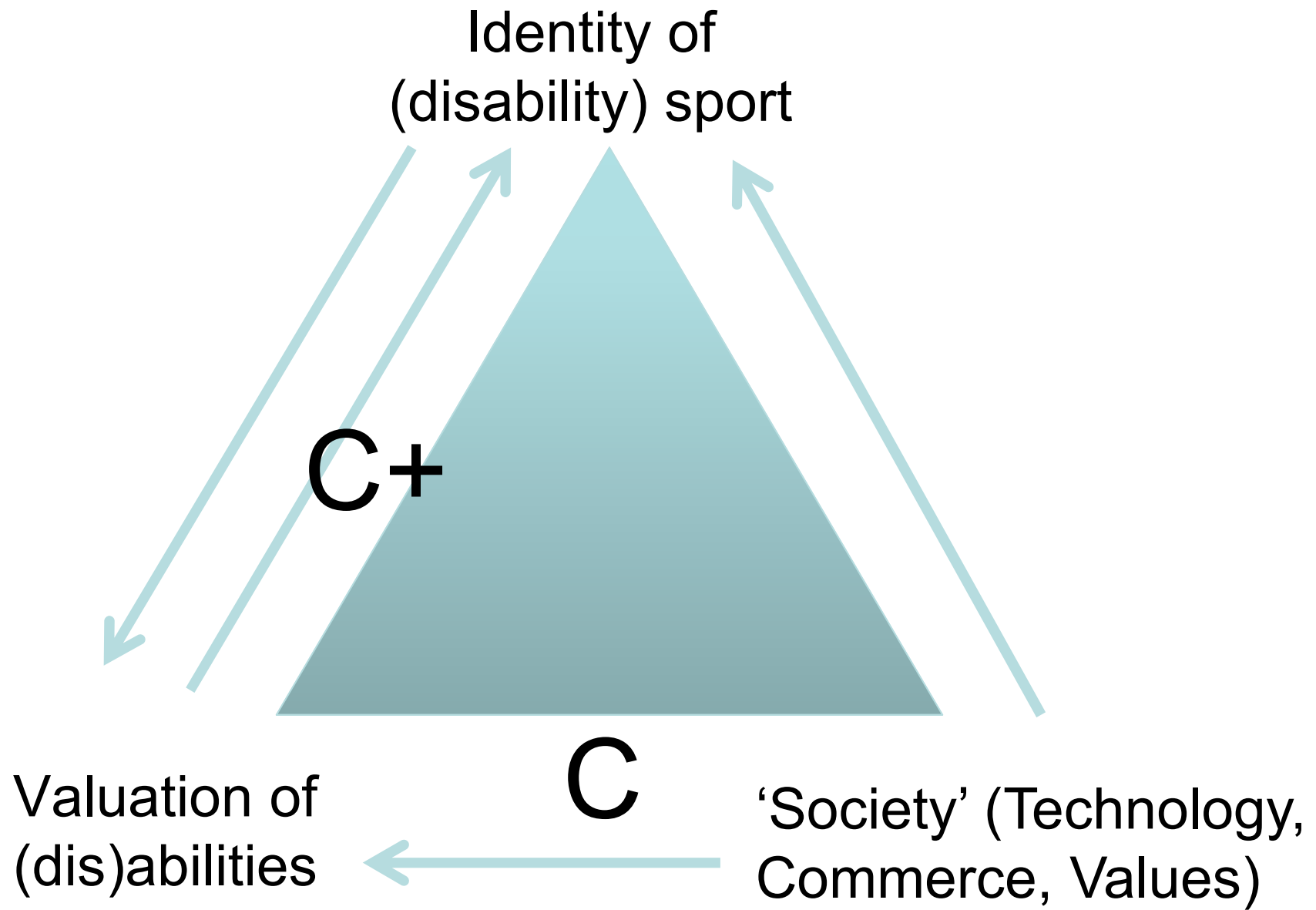
- Measure performances with the aim of comparing differences in talent, skill and dedication
- A rule-governed social practice in which the organization of equal opportunities and ***artificial inefficiencies*** (Gelberg, 2002) makes it possible to express ***relevant differences in abilities*** (cf. Breivik, 2000; Loland, 2002).
- Sport can be described as a voluntary attempt to overcome ***unnecessary obstacles*** (Suits, 1988).

B. Society → Identity of Sport



Sport needs a balance between:

- The rigidity of the obstacle and the urge for records and efficiency
- Tradition and technology
- Regulation and maximizing potential
- Equal opportunities and *relevant inequalities*.



C. Society → definition of (dis)abilities

1. Morality of inclusion
2. Technocentric ideology (cf. transhumanism, cyborgification)

1. Morality of inclusion

distributive justice (Rawls 1971)

→ Those who are at the same level of talent and ability, and have the same willingness to use them, should have the same prospects of success regardless of their initial place in the social system.

→ Social class, gender or any other contingency should have no influence on the liberty individuals are to enjoy in the pursuance of his or her goals in life.

1. Morality of inclusion

Being disabled is not something one is by definition ('by its nature'), but something one becomes in relation to specific environments (Moser 2006).

'Since everyone has disabilities and abilities, there is no need to make a rigid distinction between abled and dis-abled bodies. Being disabled is the norm for humanity' (Ustun 2004).

→ **ICF** (2001)

- Shifted the focus from disabilities to abilities and capacities
- Ability-centred theory of health, where abilities and health are related to the realization of the person's *vital goals*

C. Society → definition of (dis)abilities

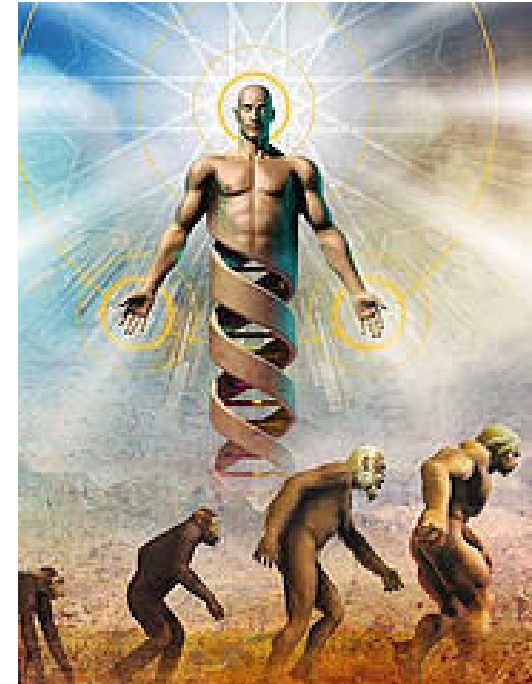
2. Technocentric ideology (cf. transhumanism, cyborgification, Shogun 1998, Howe 2011, Wolbring 2012)

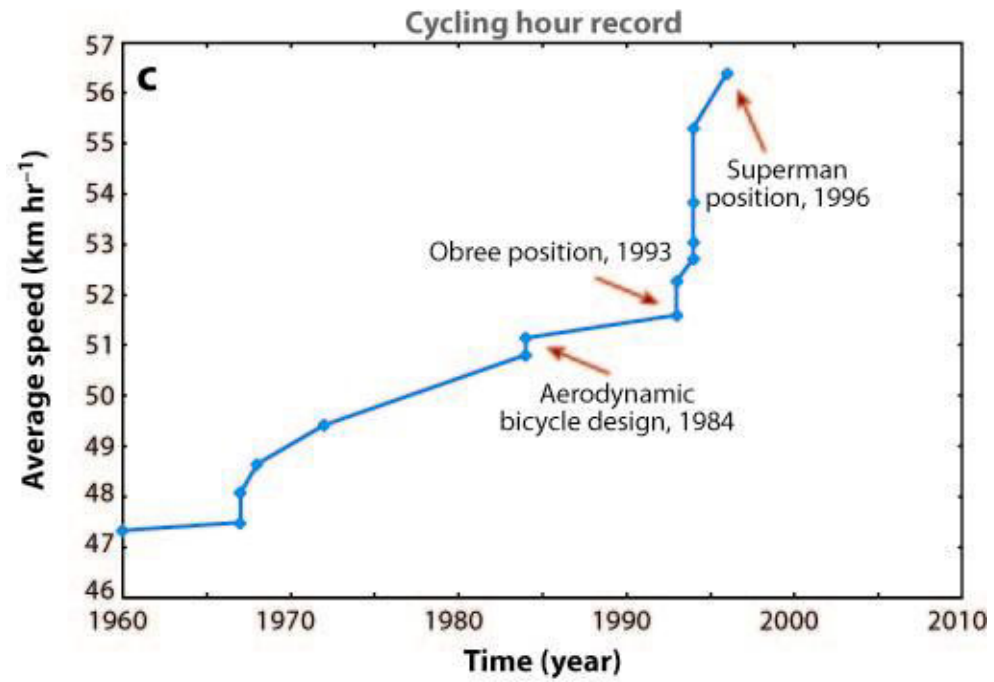


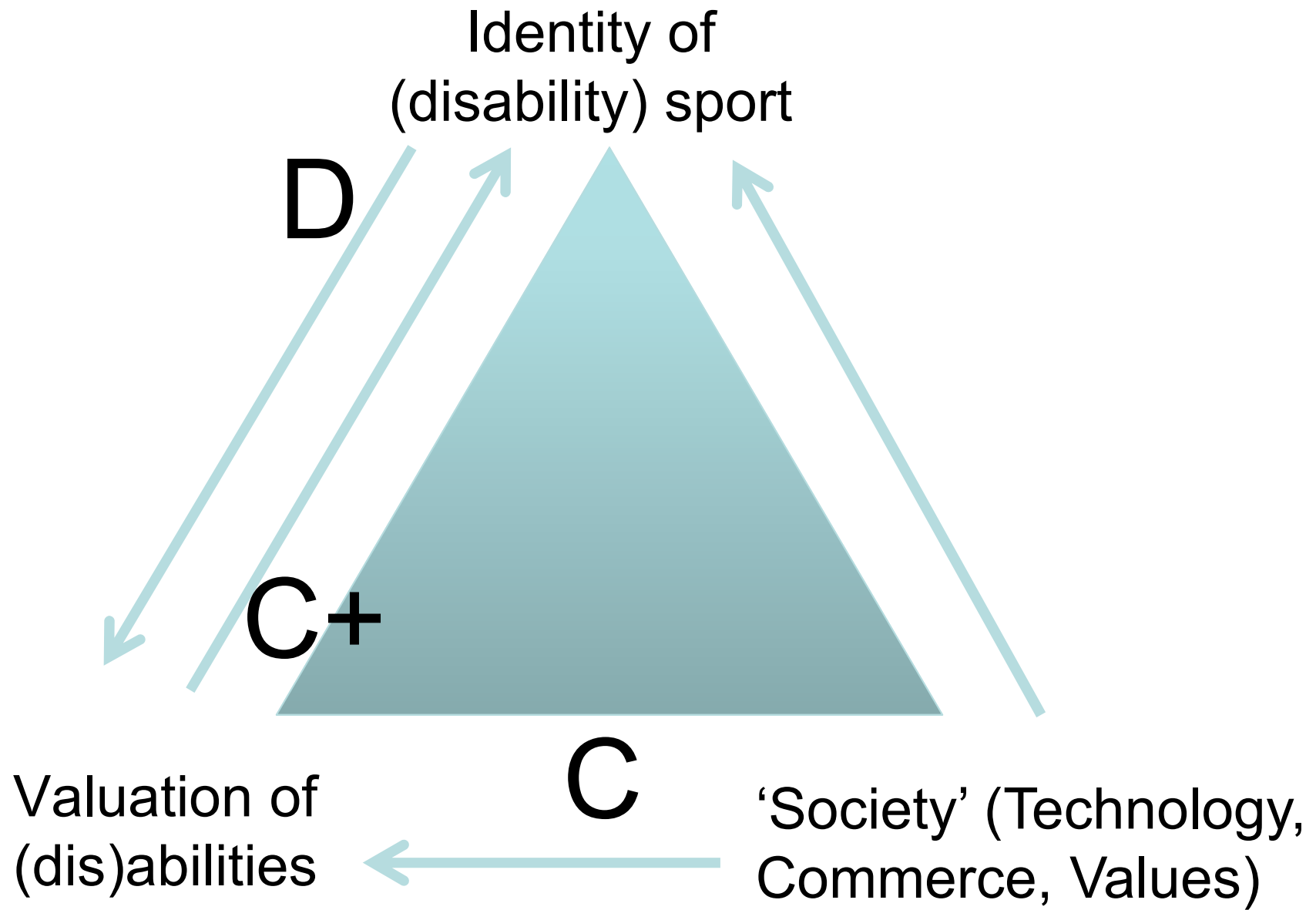
2. Technocentric ideology

- Alliance between an ideology of radical enhancement and disability rights (David 2012)
- “The ever-increasing speed of generating human bodily enhancements and the culture of transhumanism pave the way for a transhumanised form of ableism where people perceive the improvement of human body abilities beyond species-typical boundaries not only as desirable but as essential.” (Wolbring 2008; 2012)

Transhumanism: 'based on the premise that the human species in its current form does not represent the end of our development but rather a comparatively early phase'

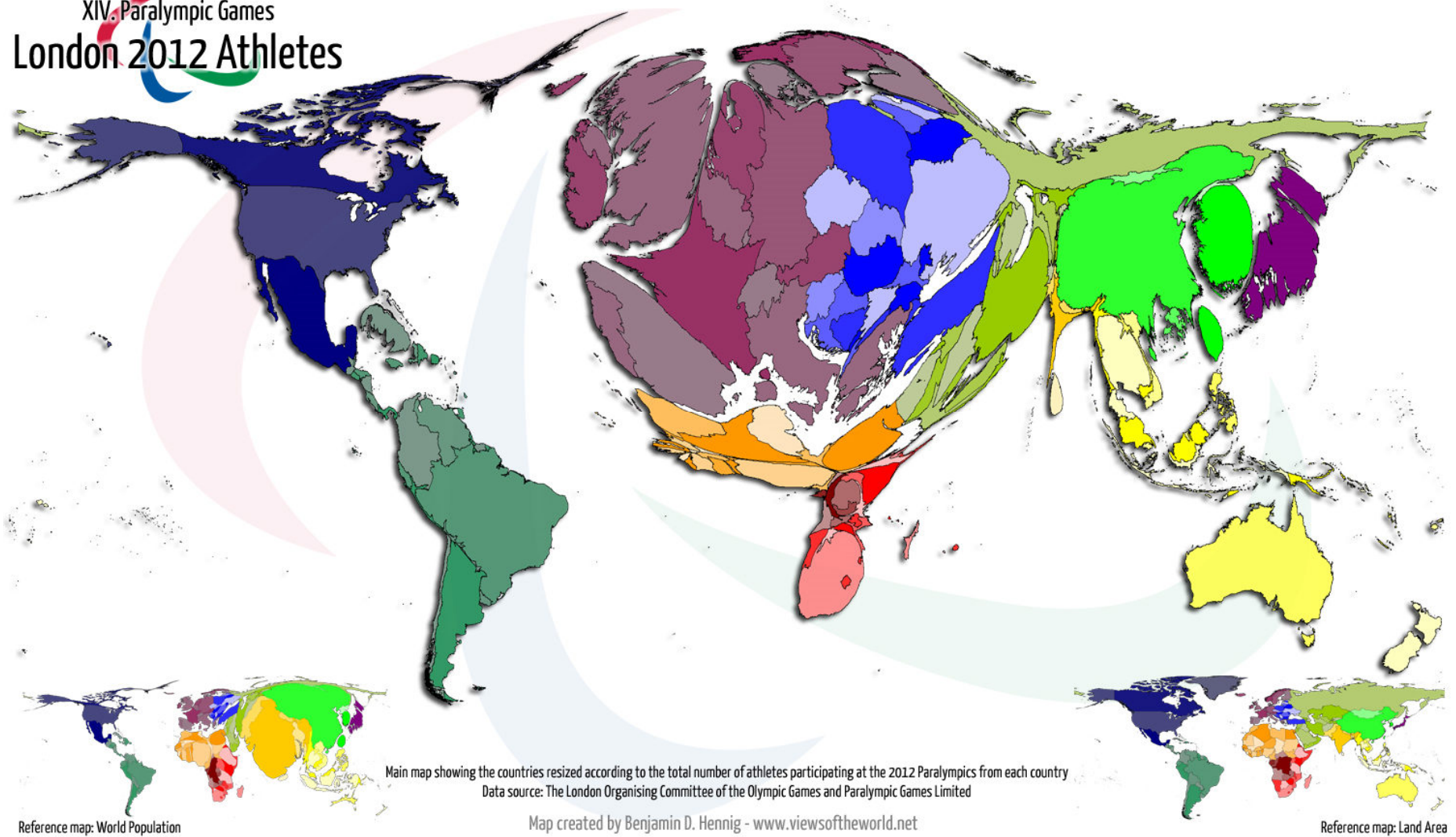


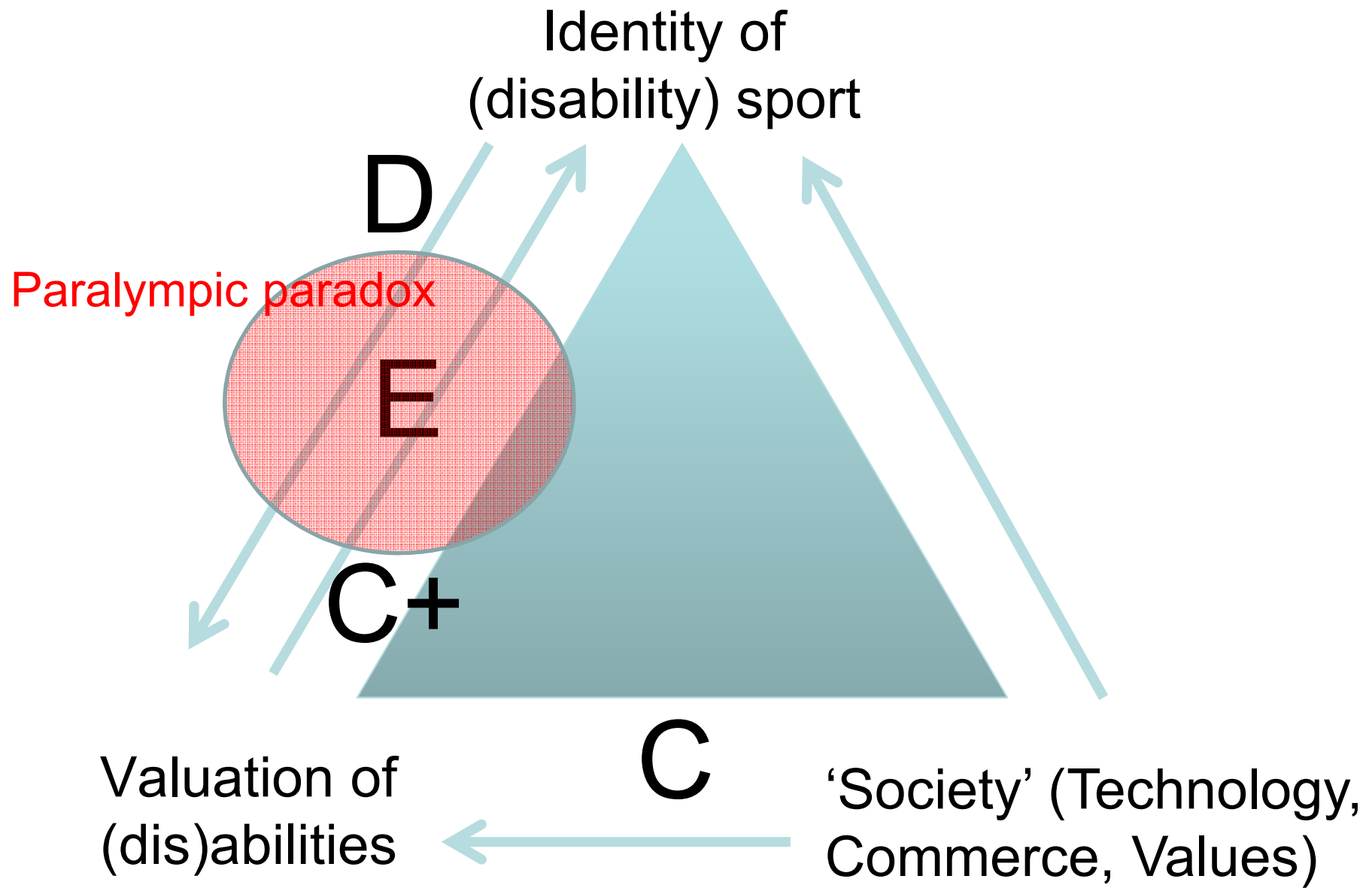






XIV. Paralympic Games
London 2012 Athletes





Paralympic paradox?

1. Sport immanent discussion about classification (process, function, effect)
2. More transcendental discussion about the relation between ability and disability sport, between OG and PG



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Paralympic paradox?

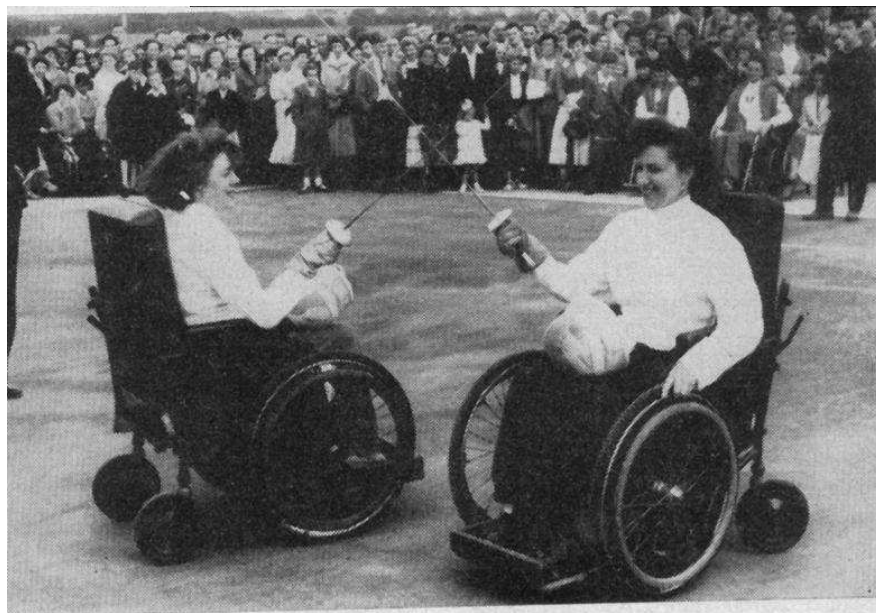
- 1. Sport immanent discussion about classification (process, function, effect)**
2. More transcendental discussion about the relation between ability and disability sport, between OG and PG

1. Long term vision about Paralympic disciplines.
2. Transparency of the criteria and processes of classification
3. (Minimum of) trust between athletes and between organization and athletes
4. Involvement of athletes (in processes of decision making)
5. Safeguarding credibility of the sport (cf. how to deal with boosting, misrepresentation?)
6. Clarity about the most essential relevant inequalities that the sport is supposed to measure
7. Competitive resistance to show the best abilities
8. Education about classification, skills, techniques



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The first wheelchair foil-fencing contest for ladies (Stoke Mandeville)



- “Recent changes in Paralympic governance have resulted in the further disempowerment of disabled athletes”
- “Classification systems serve to further marginalize certain athletes, fail to provide for fair competitions, and diminish the control that disabled athletes have over their own sporting opportunities”. (Peers 2012; Howe & Jones 2006)
- “To what extent is adapted physical activity part of a social context that sustains disability?” (Shogan 1998; Peers 2012)

Paralympic paradox?

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reification

- Olympic Games 'define' what it means to be a 'superhuman'
- Paralympic Games 'define' what it means to be 'disabled'.

Scenario's

- Stressing the difference between PG and OG
- merging together and/or combined medal count
- separate 'Technolympics'
- Slow adaptation/'promotion'

