

**Corina TIFREA,
Raluca Maria COSTACHE**

National University of Physical Education and Sports of Bucharest

GLOBALIZATION AND SPORT

Case
Study

Keywords

*Globalization;
Sport;
Political-economic;
Sociology of sport*

Abstract

Globalization has been researched and explained a lot over the past two decades and the sociology of sport has contributed a lot to it as the sport has been a highly important driver of globalization processes, for example through the mega-events such as the Olympics that have worldwide television audiences. As the sociologist Roland Robertson said, globalization 'refers both to the comprehension of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole'. It was the same sociologist that added that globalization is a multi-faceted process featuring various cultural, social, political and economic dimensions. He emphasized that 'local' and 'global' are not in opposition to each other, but interdependent. Global sport can be discussed from political-economic points of view, as well as from socio-cultural aspects.

Globalization has been researched and explained a lot over the past two decades and the sociology of sport has contributed a lot to it as sport has been a highly important driver of globalization processes, for example through the mega-events such as the Olympics that have worldwide television audiences.

As the sociologist Roland Robertson said, globalization 'refers both to the comprehension of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole' (Robertson, 1992). It was the same sociologist that added that globalization is a multi-faceted process featuring various cultural, social, political and economic dimensions (Robertson, 1992; Giulianotti and Robertson, 2009). He emphasized that 'local' and 'global' are not in opposition to each other, but interdependent (Robertson, 1992).

Global sport can be discussed from political-economic points of view, as well as from socio-cultural aspects.

POLITICAL-ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF GLOBAL SPORT

Over the past century, globalization has been marked by a growing number and diversity of important political actors (NATO, World Health Organization WHO, International Labour Organization ILO). The globalization of sport has been marked by a sharp rise in the volume and variety of political actors and stakeholders, particularly since the commercial expansion of sport from the late 1980s onwards. These political actors and stakeholders tend to have different interests and policies and to exercise different influences over the politics of global sport.

There are four models of political actors:

1. 'individual' or market-based political actors which are associated with neoliberal policies in global sport.
2. 'national' or nation - centred political actors associated with non-mercantile policies, which are intended to maintain the governance of sport at a national level and to represent 'the national interest' within the global sport.
3. international sport governing bodies and associations (such as UEFA, FIFA, IOC, ICC and IRB World Rugby).
4. political actors associated with policies centred on the making of global civil society. Political actors such as NGOs, campaign groups, social movements and critical journalists tend to prioritize 'progressive' social causes such as the use of sport to promote human development, peace-building, human rights, social justice and

the combating of racism, sexism, homophobia and corruption.

THE GLOBAL ECONOMY AND GLOBAL SPORT

In order to understand the contemporary global economy, it is needed to consider the long-term impact of Western imperialism and colonialism. From at least the sixteenth century, Western European nations systematically colonized other continents – the Americas, Africa, Australasia and large parts of Asia; the indigenous populations were subjugated and, in many cases, annihilated, while vast natural resources were plundered. A form of neo-colonialism has taken hold, as many nations came under the hegemony of Western corporations and financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank.

The 'world system theory' pioneered by Wallerstein (2000; 2002) divides the states into three types: rich, semi-peripheral and peripheral. This system can be applied to sport in two ways: first, the best resources are directed from poor countries to the rich ones (for example, African football players join 'core' leagues in Western or Eastern Europe (Dejonghe, 2001)). Second, world system theory helps to explain the global production chains for sport merchandise.

The economic crisis affects sport in uneven ways: on the one hand, in semi-peripheral or peripheral contexts, elite sport events and clubs are liable to lose spectators, sponsorship, advertising, athletes; on the other hand, at least in core nations, leading sport leagues appear to have largely evaded the crisis, notably as television revenues remain strong or have grown in top European football competitions and the major North American sports. Global neoliberalism is broadly associated with hypercommodification in elite global sport, such as 'free markets' in the sale of television rights for elite events and the movement of professional athletes, leading to greater financial and competitive inequalities in sport, as the richest clubs recruit the best athletes and dominate major competitions. Thus, in European football, clubs from the richest leagues (England, Spain, Italy and Germany) have monopolized the most prestigious competition, the Champions League, since the mid-1990s. Neoliberalism also drives the commercial transformation of sport institutions. For example, elite clubs such as Manchester United in England or Corinthians in Brazil have been sold to more commercially focused owners. At the everyday level, neoliberal policies have also led to reductions in state financial support for sport, with particularly negative effects on the provision of sporting facilities and education in developing countries.

SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF GLOBAL SPORT

In discussing about socio-cultural aspects of global sport, we need to examine the problem of *convergence* and *divergence*, or *homogenization* and *heterogenization*. Theories of convergence explain that globalization involves most societies sharing the same cultural values, beliefs, identities and experiences. On the other hand, theories of divergence contend that globalization is marked by forms of cultural creativity, variation, differentiation and divergence across different societies. Many convergence theorists tend to identify forms of cultural *imperialism* as underlying the broad global movements towards cultural homogenization. The basic premise of the cultural imperialism thesis is that the economic and political power of particular societies enables them to define, to shape and to dominate global culture. Some theorists have viewed cultural imperialism as a form of *Americanization* (transnational spread of American sport leagues and merchandise; the copying of American sport culture such as cheerleaders; the global marketing of American sport celebrities such as Michael Jordan; and the rise of American-styled advertising and sponsorship within the sport). There are also theories of *Westernization* (Latouche, 1996) and *Orientalism* (Said, 1995).

There is a variety of theories of divergence. The theory of *indigenization* explains the emergence and increasing importance of indigenous rights and identities. Indigenous people in North America and Australia have used sport to project and to advance their specific national identities. Then, there is the concept of *hybridization* that registers the diverse ways in which cultural blending occurs across different societies in dance, music and sport (Burke, 2009; Nederveen Pieterse, 2007). The concept of hybridization was introduced by Archetti (1998) to explain the cultural history and identity of Argentinian football, in which there are a mix of old and new European migrants who brought different influences with them when playing football.

SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

Since the 1990s, the Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) sector has been one of the fastest-growing aspects of the globalization of sport. It includes a variety of programmes, campaigns and organizations which use sport as a way of intervention in order to promote different kinds of social development and peace-making across the world. It represents a shift from 'the development of sport' to 'the development through sport'.

The main types of organization within the Sport for Development and Peace sector are:

- intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations, European Commission and Commonwealth Secretariat;
- national governments and their ministries of education, international development and sport; government-financed sport agencies such as UK Sport, Canadian Heritage and Norad (Norway's development agency);
- private corporations and individual donors who support sport for Development and Peace work such as Nike, Coca-Cola, McDonald's;
- NGOs which coordinate or implement SDP programmes at international, national and local levels (e.g. streetfootballworld in Germany, the Sport for Development platform in Switzerland and Nowspar in Zambia);
- Campaigning NGOs and social movements which focus on SDP-related issues – e.g. Play the Game, War or Want.

CONCLUSIONS

In political-economic terms, the globalization of sport has been marked by the growing number and diversity of stakeholders, the continuing significance, and partial transformation, of national identity; the development of a substantially stratified, neoliberal global economy. In socio-cultural terms, the global sport has featured a mix of convergence and divergence, notably in the sharing of cultural forms and in the creative differentiation of sport content (such as aesthetics, identities, styles and techniques).

Globalization processes facilitate greater levels of connectivity with different cultures and thus enable in turn greater public experience and understanding of how sport has been organized and interpreted in diverse contexts.

The political structure of global sport systems needs to be significantly reformed. The contribution of national and international governing bodies in shaping the politics of sport requires to be reasserted. Governing bodies need to be entirely open to public scrutiny.

The reform of different areas of global sport should engage fully with these progressive forces. Only through reforms, the global sport may become far more politically democratic, economically balanced, socially inclusive and culturally compelling.

REFERENCES

- [1] Archetti, E. (1998). *Masculinities*, Oxford: Berg

- [2] Burke, P. (2009) *Cultural Hybridity*, Cambridge: Polity
- [3] Dejonghe, T. (2001) 'The place of sub-Saharan Africa in the world sport system', *Afrika Focus*, 17(1): 79-111
- [4] Giulianotti, R, and R. Robertson (2009) *Globalization and Football*, London: Sage
- [5] Latouche, S. (1996) *The Westernization of the World*, Cambridge: Polity
- [6] Nederveen Pieterse, J (1995) 'Globalization as hybridization', in M. Featherstone, S. Lash and R. Robertson (eds), *Global Modernities*, London: Sage
- [7] Nederveen Pieterse, J. (2007) *Ethnicities and Global Multiculture*, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield
- [8] Robertson, R. (1990) 'After nostalgia? Wilful nostalgia and the phases of globalization', in B.S. Turner (ed) *Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity*, London: Sage
- [9] Robertson, R. (1992) *Globalization*, London: Sage
- [10] Said, E. (1995) *Orientalism*, Harmondsworth: Penguin
- [11] Wallerstein, I. (2000) *The Essential Wallerstein*, New York: New Press
- [12] Wallerstein, I. (2002) *The Decline of American Power*, New York: New Press