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The globalization of football: a study in the glocalization of the 'serious life'

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Abstract

Sport, in particular football, constitutes one of the most dynamic, sociologically illuminating domains of globalization. This paper examines the globalization of football with particular reference to Robertson's theorizations of global processes. We examine football's cultural globalization through the concept of 'glocalization', which highlights the interdependence of local and global processes within the game's identities and institutions. We address economic globalization in football by considering the world's leading clubs as 'glocal' transnational corporations. We assess the political globalization of football with reference to the possible enhancement of democracy within the game's international governance. We conclude by affirming the utility of sport in advancing our empirical and theoretical understanding of globalization processes.

Keywords: Globalization; football; glocalization; transnational corporations; democracy

Introduction

Football has been the world's most popular sport, at least since the late nineteenth century and its international diffusion by the British. The 'global game' spans culturally diverse societies in all continents; an estimated 250 million people are direct participants, around 1.4 billion have an interest,[1] and football's flagship tournament, the World Cup finals, attracts a cumulative global television audience of 33.4 billion.[2] Only relatively recently has the game's unparalleled cross-cultural appeal been realized financially. In 1998, football's world governing body, FIFA,[3] controlled contracts worth some £4 billion; by 2001, world football's turnover was estimated at around £250 billion, equivalent to the Netherlands' GDP (Walvin 2001). Given these figures alone, we

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might propose, to adapt Durkheim, that of all contemporary cultural forms, football is 'the serious life'.

Curiously, while research sub-disciplines such as the sociology of sport have utilized theories of globalization, the major sociological analysts of global change have passed over football as a relevant object of study.[4] Conversely, we argue here that sport generally, and football in particular, constitutes a vital site for the theorization and empirical exploration of the multidimensional and long-term process of globalization. One might say something similar about cuisine, music, health, sexuality, fashion, the cinema, the novel and so on. We are here, however, concerned with 'the global game' – both in its own right *and* how, on the other hand, analysis of it contributes to our sociological understanding of globalization.

We advance a preliminary, sociological analysis of the major themes and problems relating to football and globalization. We utilize our, heretofore mainly separate works that have served respectively to found the sociology of globalization[5] and to develop the sociology of world football.[6] Our relatively 'voluntaristic' theory of globalization highlights the role of empirical developments in reshaping the 'global order', in this case in regard to football (Robertson 1992: 61–2). We understand globalization as being characterized by two distinct but closely connected processes. Social actors possess greater senses of 'globality': that is, globalization is marked by increasing subjective consciousness of the world as a whole; or, in other words, it involves heightened awareness of the world as a 'single place' (Robertson 2002). It is also characterized by a global intensification of social and cultural 'connectivity', such as through telecommunications and international travel (cf. Tomlinson 1999). Moreover, we argue here that globalization is marked culturally by processes of 'glocalization', whereby local cultures adapt and redefine any global cultural product to suit their particular needs, beliefs and customs (Robertson 1992, 1995, 2003; Robertson and White 2003b, 2004).

We examine the broad cultural, social, economic and political questions concerning the globalization of football. First, in discussing the cultural elements of football's globalization, we focus on the interdependencies of the local/particular and the global/universal, and on how these are reflected in processes of glocalization. Second, we interpret the world's major clubs as transnational corporations (TNCs) that serve to drive the game's contemporary globalization (Robertson 1992, 1995; cf. Sklair 2001). Third, we consider issues of social exclusion in regard to the globalization of football, and how these may be challenged through the democratic reform of the game's governance.

Our argument is not that globalization is somehow externally imposed upon the game; rather, we understand football as one representation – indeed, manifestation – of globalization. Certainly, football has possessed some essential components that have advanced its global diffusion: it has a particularly simple set of rules; unlike rugby and cricket, its playing customs are not closely

associated with British imperialism; and its basic equipment costs are very low as balls can be manufactured from bundles of rags or paper. However, we are not advocating an essentialist explanation of football's international accessibility. Rather, we seek to account sociologically for the cultural, social, economic and political contours of the game's globalization. Whilst, in empirical terms, we draw heavily upon the stronger football cultures of Europe and South America, largely for reasons of brevity, the broad thrust of our arguments.

Football culture: universalism-particularism and glocalization

The fulcrum of football's cultural dimensions is the relationship of the universal and the particular, 'the elemental form of global life' *per se* (Robertson 1992: 103; 1995). Otherwise stated, any *particular* experience, identity or social process must be understood through its relationship to *universal* phenomena. Globalization relativizes all particularisms, forcing exponents of specific beliefs or identities to confront and to respond to other, particularistic ideas, identities and social processes across the universal domain. Thus, while universalism and particularism may appear as categorical antinomies, they are interdependent, fused together in a globewide nexus (Robertson 1992: 102).

This interdependence is developed fruitfully through two key notions (Robertson 1990a, 1992). First, the 'universalization of particularism' designates the universal expectation that all 'particular' communities and cleavages will harbour unique identities, at least as 'inventions' of such specificity. For example, modern national-societal identities emerged within and through the international political and economic system (Robertson 1992: 103). Within the context of international football tournaments or other cultural competitions, and no matter how polyethnic a single society may be, its individual members are each expected to identify with a specific national team. At major international tournaments, thousands of different supporter groups commingle, with each nation displaying distinctive kinds of dress, song, music and patterns of behaviour (such as in their relations with local people, other supporter groups, and the various security forces). Thus, cultural relativization turns the global game into the 'glocal game'.

Conversely, the 'particularization of universalism' arose as the world acquired a 'socio-political concreteness'. This establishes extensive political chains of global connectivity, and serves to order nations for example through their specific constitutional frameworks, calendars, and positioning within world time zones (Robertson 1990a: 51–2). Football's pyramid of global governance has the world governing body (FIFA) at the apex, followed by competing continental governing bodies, national associations, regional and

local associations, the various football clubs, and fans at the base who literally 'support' the entire edifice.[7] Notably, the national football associations are the principal political units of representation within football's international governing bodies. All nations are organized into the world football calendar, specific continental associations, and continental qualifying groups for the World Cup finals; each nation has a standard national team and league system, governed by national, FIFA-endorsed associations.

While the universalism-particularism nexus is rooted in interdependent cultural processes, the social consciousness of globalization provokes misguided anxieties that the 'global' is abolishing or subverting the 'local' (Robertson 1992, 1995: 35). During Europe's belle époque, 'wilful nostalgia' arose alongside the 'invention of tradition', to imagine the world in terms of historical decline and loss of particularistic collective identity (Robertson 1990a: 46; 1995: 35).[8] Since the 1960s, a 'somewhat different and diffuse kind of wilful, synthetic nostalgia' has emerged that is characterized globally by postmodernist thought and consumer practices (Robertson 1990a: 53–5). Contemporary British nostalgia is consumption-centred, and decorated by the 'enchanted glass' of 'Ukania' (of monarchy and heritage) and Blair's 'curation' of the British state (Nairn 1988, 2000). Of course, both historical types of nostalgia construct particularistic forms of cultural discourse and identity that sustain forms of relativization vis-à-vis 'other' societies.

In football, nostalgia underlies the transmogrification of old football spaces into 'heritage sites' that house museums. For example, Manchester United's Old Trafford stadium and Hampden Park (Scottish football's national stadium) in Glasgow were both first built before 1914, and now contain football museums. Strong nostalgic themes have been evident, particularly through the idea that football should 'come home', when England hosted the 1996 European Championship finals and then made a strong bid to host the 2006 World Cup finals.[9] The vast market in football literature is strongly nostalgic, notably through recent biographies of long-retired players.[10] Contemporary football media evince a postmodern, 'schizophrenic' nostalgia, notably by conflating past and present football images in football discussion programmes and adverts.

Wilful nostalgia is evident in football's mediated aestheticization, for example, in conjoining classical music to football competitions (the World Cup, the European Champions League[11]). The postmodern dimension is added by 'dedifferentiating' low culture (football) and higher, intellectualizing cultural forms (the performing arts, literature). This trend accords with the taste patterns of new football followers among the growing, service-sector social classes, especially the 'new middle classes' (Giulianotti 1999). Unlike the earlier, more nationalistic nostalgia, contemporary romanticization is also more cosmopolitan. For example, the great postwar Brazilian football players and teams are mythologized in the mass media internationally, and this

can sharpen the disappointment of football spectators when contemporary Brazilian teams appear to display the dogged competitiveness and tactical caution that are otherwise associated with European football's invented traditions.[12]

The term 'glocalization' helps to explain how the symbiosis of the local and the global differs according to particular cultural circumstances (Robertson 1995: 27). Glocalization (the word) seemingly originated in Japanese business practices, but when it is applied to explain broader cultural projects, it can be argued that 'the projects of glocalization [are] the constitutive features of contemporary globalization' (Robertson 1995: 41). For example, within the sports media, glocalization arises through the use of local terms and points of reference, such as constant discussion of national players or issues to frame or interpret global events such as the World Cup finals. More subtly, glocalization is evidenced in the cultural differences that arise in the production techniques, camera angles and commentating conventions in televised football. Mirroring Dayan and Katz's (1992) findings regarding *Dallas* television audiences, glocalization also arises in the ways that particular viewer cultures interpret televised football matches.

Significantly, football's global diffusion has met with different kinds of cultural glocalization. First, at the outset, in more extreme circumstances, some cultures either rejected or radically reformed its rules when football was introduced. The local elites in the Asian sub-continent preferred cricket, then hockey, to high-contact sports like football or rugby; the Australians formulated their own football code (Australian Rules football) to accommodate local conditions and the fitness needs of cricketers in winter; and the American colleges later adapted rugby rather than association football to produce 'gridiron'.

Second, once the game had enjoyed a more favourable cultural reception, football was glocalized according to a 'universalization of particularism' process. Specific local cultures worked inside football's universal rules to establish their own football 'traditions', as illustrated by distinctive corporeal techniques, playing styles, aesthetic codes, administrative structures and interpretative vocabularies. Third, from the 1920s to the 1960s, football's glocalization was marked also by the particularization of universalism, as international tournaments and different tiers of governing body were established.[13]

Fourth, since the late 1960s, glocalization has been shaped by intensified flows; in football, this involves the transnational circulation of labour, information, capital and commodities that can underpin non-national forms of cultural particularity. There are fewer tactical and aesthetic differences between specific football nations or continents, yet nations still struggle to relativize themselves through successful competition. Spectator cultures play a heightened role in 'representing' the locality, or the nation, by actuating

particularistic symbolism in dress, songs, flags before global audiences.[14] Yet football also possesses a cosmopolitan, world community of followers who 'relativize' themselves into specific cross-national preferences for world players, managers, and clubs.[15]

We should underline here the substantial role played by mass media and telecommunications corporations in football's contemporary globalization. World cartels of satellite, cable and free-to-air broadcasters have emerged to distribute football images globally, such that the game is now an important constituent in the 'banal cosmopolitanism' of popular culture (see Billig 1995). To paraphrase Hannerz (1992: 255), just about all football followers are 'a little more cosmopolitan' within a global football 'ecumene', particularly if cosmopolitanism is comprised in part by mastery of, and competence in, cross-cultural football traditions and aesthetic codes. Cosmopolitanism has not in itself dissolved forms of cultural particularity; rather, it engenders greater reflexivity regarding the 'traditions', cultural identities and practices of others, thereby contributing to the intensification of cultural relativization and glocalization.

Contemporary glocalization processes have always been manifested within football's economic realms. In football's business structure, we find long histories of 'glocalization' in the different corporate structures of clubs within specific nations. In the UK, clubs were usually organized as 'limited companies', but leading teams pursued stock market flotation during the 1990s. In South America, parts of Germany and (until recently) Spain, clubs are usually owned by members (often known as *socios*) and controlled by elected governors. In Italy clubs still tend to be owned by rich local industrialists, although since the early 1980s emerging owners may be in new industries (e.g. Berlusconi at the Milan club) or under parent company control (e.g. the heavily indebted Cirio in control at Lazio, and the now bankrupt Parmalat at Parma).

The most dynamic agents in football's contemporary glocalization are various 'transnational corporations' (TNCs): these include merchandise companies such as Nike, media complexes such as BSkyB and its sister companies, or large football clubs (the G-14 clubs,[16] and other top European, Japanese and Latin American clubs). TNCs possess worldwide infrastructures for the production, distribution and marketing of sports-related commodities such as sports DVDs, equipment or kit. In England, a merchandise corporation like Nike obviously sells more football shirts that are endorsed by local clubs than basketball shirts that are worn by American sides. Such facts may be viewed, from the corporation's position, as indices of how the 'glocalization' or 'micro-marketing' of sports commodities functions through the use of local symbols and advertising discourses to appeal to particular cultures of consumer (cf. Robertson 1992: 185–6).[17]

However, TNCs also seek to create their own 'local', deterritorialized communities of global consumers, as symbolized most succinctly by the recent 'NikeNation' advertising campaign. Transnational clubs like Manchester United, Juventus and Bayern Munich have global communities of supporters and merchandise consumers that are similar in size, if not patterns of identification, with the citizenry of nations. Such clubs highlight the deterritorialized kinds of glocality that can arise among international communities of followers of popular culture. We call these football communities 'self-invented virtual diasporas' as they are forged from the global dispersal of club-focused images and products, and from the voluntaristic identification of individuals with club-related symbols and practices. We turn now to explore more fully the relationship of transnational clubs to glocalization processes.

Glocalization and TNC football clubs

The TNC is a profit-centred business that crosses national borders in trade and investment, and has relatively weaker connections to its 'home' location compared to prior corporate models.[18] Many TNCs interconnect the universal and the particular through complex institutional structures and cultural practices, and so they possess less globality than their title implies. Perlmutter (1972) distinguished three kinds of transnational along territorial lines. 'Ethnocentric' corporations are controlled by a home-based HQ; 'polycentric' corporations facilitate local self-determination within centrally-defined margins; 'geocentric' enterprises are controlled by globally mobile managers who are constituents of what Sklair (1995, 61; 2001) has termed a 'transnational capitalist class' that dominates the global economic system. Other analysts suggest 'geocentric' hegemony within TNCs is limited. Wilkins (1998: 95) emphasizes the 'crucial' ties of transnationals and multinationals to 'home' locations. These analyses of TNCs complement Hirst and Thompson's (1999, 2000) broad argument that economic globalization, in the sense of the crystallization of the global economy, has been markedly exaggerated.

Drawing on Bartlett and Ghoshal (1989), Smith (1997) forwards three definitive features of the 'truly transnational corporation' (TTNC): it freely undertakes research and development worldwide; recruits elite employees from anywhere; and is acutely flexible in product development and micro-marketing. Smith (1997: 39) concludes, 'there are actually relatively few such TTNCs'. Alternatively, most corporations are nationally specific for reasons of legality (ownership and taxation), patenting and technology, or cultural identification of corporate products with the nation. Similarly, Chang (1998: 227–30) notes that most foreign direct investment (FDI) involving TNCs is not distributed globally, but regionally confined, especially to developed northern

nations. Moreover, few 'stateless' TNCs manufacture truly 'global' products like the allegedly epochal 'world car'. TNCs, argues Chang (1998: 228–30), are essentially 'international firms' whose assets, production processes and key employees retain a largely 'home' national imprint. In short, these 'global realist' arguments highlight the 'glocality' of TNCs in geographical location, legal regulation and corporate identity *inter alia*.

A corollary concern is the status of nation-states vis-à-vis TNCs. Various analyses foretell the state's emasculation by transnational practices (including criminal ones) within the 'information age' (Strange 1994; Castells 1997: 261; Habermas 1999: 48; Giddens and Hutton 2000: 216). More extremely, Beck's (2000: 161–3) provocative and dystopian vision of 'Brazilianization' forewarns Europe of the dangers of absolute neoliberalism:[19] a stateless, rigidly stratified society witnesses the elite inhabiting luxurious fortresses, travelling in super-limousines, and recruiting private armies to ward off the desperate dispossessed. Conversely, we reiterate Robertson's (1992: 184) earlier judgment that 'there is nothing to suggest that the nationally organized society, more specifically the state, is about to wither away' (see also Meyer 1980). Market-centred globalization is not anathema to the state's survival.[20] Weiss (1997) (and Chang above) emphasizes the nation-state's capacity to manipulate market globalization, sustaining national governance alongside more regional rather than global transborder flows.[21]

A global realist understanding of the glocality of TNCs helps explain the contemporary condition of football's largest clubs. All clubs are 'ethnocentric' (Perlmutter): they retain key symbolic ties to 'home' (Smith, Wilkins), notably through name, headquarters, home stadium, branding, strip colour, and local support. However, as clubs like Manchester United establish marketing outlets in Asia and North America, more 'polycentric' marketing possibilities arise.[22] Deterritorialization would intensify if clubs were to play 'home' fixtures outside their 'home' city, or to obfuscate their geographical origins.[23] Nevertheless, like TNCs generally, major impediments restrict football clubs' transition into fully-fledged geocentric institutions. First, legal restrictions can undermine club capacities to recruit labour from any nation.[24] TNC clubs are still tied closely to nations, for reasons of finance (e.g. most income derives from competition in a national league) or law (e.g. to gain recognition from FIFA). Second, though some have sister clubs in other sports, such as Spanish and Greek clubs linked to basketball, *football* clubs are primarily known for sport-specific products and so cannot reinvent themselves entirely in other sports.

Regional rather than global patterns of player recruitment are still strongly apparent. English clubs have long imported labour 'internationally', from culturally and linguistically similar nations across the British Isles, the Commonwealth, Holland and Scandinavia (McGovern 2002; Lanfranchi and Taylor 2001); other players from France, Italy and Germany have followed, reflecting

the sudden rise in wealth among England's top clubs since 1990. Elsewhere, regional patterns remain: Iberian clubs look to South America for cheap, talented players; southern and central African players migrate towards South Africa; North American clubs look south; Australian clubs look to the UK or the Pacific islands. However, among Europe's top clubs – in the major leagues of Germany, Spain, England and Italy – a growing 'transnational capitalist class' (Sklair) is circulating, comprising players, agents and coaches. On occasion, some TNC clubs have recruited foreign players as a form of extra-football FDI. For example, buying Asian players can boost a club's sale of merchandise in the Far East rather than improve the quality of its football team.[25] Indeed, many football commentators drew direct connections between player celebrity and club global ambitions when explaining David Beckham's transfer to Real Madrid in summer 2003. Such transfers tend not to undermine the coaches' powers within clubs. High merchandise sales may increase transfer budgets for new players. If coaches doubt their new recruits' abilities, the latter may be restricted to less important fixtures or performing simpler functions within the team. No director would jeopardize the club's competitive (and thus financial) status by insisting that highly marketable, weak players must feature in the team.

The truly 'global' team rarely emerges; instead, many players are hewn still from the host nation and accorded the accolade of club captain. In 2002, we had: Bayern Munich (captained by Germany's Stefan Effenberg), Barcelona (Spain's Luis Enrique), Manchester United (Ireland's Roy Keane), Glasgow Celtic (Scotland's Paul Lambert), Glasgow Rangers (Scotland's Barry Ferguson), Arsenal (England's Tony Adams), AC Milan (Italy's Paolo Maldini), Juventus (Italy's Alessandro Del Piero), Roma (Italy's Francesco Totti), Lazio (Italy's Alessandro Nesta), Real Madrid (Spain's Fernando Hierro) and so on. These 'home' players are typically viewed as the 'heart' of the team: renowned worldwide, but personifying the local or national particularities of the club and its fans.[26] Thus, in football's labour markets, TNC clubs still practice cultural 'glocalization': they accord status to symbolic local or national figures and recruit 'foreign' players from culturally similar nations while at the same time seeking to build global recognition.

Football's national governing bodies, like nation-states, appear as agents rather than victims of globalization. Consider the English Football Association which controls football in England. It recruits overseas coaches (notably the Swede Sven-Goran Eriksson, the English national team's current manager since October 2000), borrows foreign playing styles, markets its club tournaments to worldwide audiences through transnational media corporations, strikes regional political deals with other national bodies, and exploits local club 'brands' (like Manchester United) when it bids to host lucrative tournaments. The national association gains popular legitimacy when football clubs compete in its tournaments. Moreover, it effectively 'taxes' clubs when their

players are selected to play free of charge for the national team in fixtures that raise money for the national association.

While the patterns of ownership and control at leading football clubs have entered more complex relations with the wider economic system, they continue to be strongly differentiated along cultural lines. Since the late nineteenth century, British clubs have typically been owned by well-known local business people, often with longstanding family ties (e.g. the Moores family's ownership of Littlewoods and Liverpool). In the past fifteen years, new kinds of ownership and investment source have emerged: from ambitious entrepreneurs committed to profitable investment (e.g. David Dein at Arsenal, David Murray at Rangers); stock market flotation of share-ownership (e.g. Tottenham Hotspur, Manchester United, Newcastle United, Chelsea, Aston Villa, Leeds United, Sunderland, Celtic); strategic investments by media corporations in several clubs (e.g. BSkyB buying shares in Manchester United, Manchester City, Leeds United, Chelsea and Sunderland); and takeovers by exceptionally rich businessmen committed to unprecedented investment in players (e.g. Jack Walker at Blackburn in the early 1990s, Roman Abramovich at Chelsea in 2003).[27] Only in exceptional cases like Chelsea, Fulham and Portsmouth are clubs owned by high-profile business people from outside the British isles.

While leading clubs in Italy (AS Roma, Lazio, Juventus), Germany (Borussia Dortmund, possibly Bayern Munich) and Turkey (Galatasaray, Besiktas) have followed English clubs towards exploring flotation, it is unlikely that this will lead to the dramatic transfer of ownership and control to non-nationals. Capitalization has enabled new institutional investors and funds to gain (usually small) stakes in clubs. The ENIC company, with its holdings in English, Scottish, Italian, Swiss, Greek and Czech clubs, provides an extreme instance of cross-border ownership; more modest examples include the Libyan oil company Lafico's Italian footholds at Juventus (7.5 per cent stake) and Triestina (33 per cent). While clubs in many nations number various television corporations among their shareholders, it is only in distinctive cases such as France or Mexico that national media corporations gain a dominant role in club ownership (Hare 2003: 170–1; Sandvoss 2003: 69).

The market 'branding' of TNC clubs features significant forms of glocalization. Brand-building itself involves a corporation's purposive market relativization vis-à-vis its rivals, with the strongest brands being synonymous with high-profile global consumerism (Sklair 1995: 168–9). In terms of football club support, branding thrives on the universalization of particularism, that is, the assumption that all football followers favour a specific club, and that they wish to display that allegiance through a consumption-dependent display of club products. The crests or nicknames of TNC football clubs cannot match the defining logos and slogans of major brands, such as Nike's 'swoosh' and 'just do it' legend. However, top clubs are otherwise well placed to construct brand

identities, exploiting intense brand 'loyalty' from fans; 'customer bonding' is augmented through product discounts or personal perks such as meet-the-players invitations to season-ticket holders (Kapferer 1992: 164–5). TNC clubs now market a smorgasbord of 'sub-brand' products such as foodstuffs (e.g. biscuits, beer), financial services (e.g. car insurance, credit cards), and household items (e.g. bed linen, kitchen clocks) (Hart 1998: 211). Brand 'equity' – the value added to the product by its brand name – is most obvious in the sale of these sub-brand products, and in the marketing of football-specific merchandise. Replica football shirts, for example, have premium brand equity in that they define the consumer's football identity as a form of market partisanship that is not otherwise apparent in customer relations with other brands such as Coca-Cola or Ford. In football, negative brand equity can arise since particular clubs may alienate other possible consumers who decide to support rival clubs. Yet such oppositions serve to intensify existing brand identification and thereby strengthen football's international matrix of economic relations.

Football's strongest 'brands' have longstanding associations with quality *qua* competitive success (e.g. Real Madrid, nine time European champions); positive emotional associations are delivered through victorious, exciting play (e.g. both Real Madrid and Manchester United). Other contributions to brand equity include recruitment of star players and coaches (e.g. Real Madrid's *galácticos* such as Zidane, Figo, Beckham and Ronaldo), and the promise of spectacle (Manchester United's Old Trafford being repackaged as the 'Theatre of Dreams'). TNC clubs are threatened by brand ageing and the possible end of the product's lifecycle. 'Revitalizing' measures include redesigning kits, and recruiting new coaches and players to safeguard future successes (Kampferer 1992: 321–7).

Product branding is subject to substantial glocalization at both supply and demand sides. In micro-marketing terms, just as soft-drinks manufacturers adapt flavours to suit regional tastes, so TNC clubs may vary regional marketing (see Mooij 1997). For example, on international tours, team players from the nation visited are given greater public relations duties to reach home audiences; in relatively new football nations, such as China or Japan, celebrity players are most prominent, to attract new especially female supporters. Among football consumers, a branded product like Coca-Cola is given different pre-match uses within diverse societies, functioning as a part-potion in *juju* ceremonies in southern Africa, or as an alcohol mixer among Scottish drinkers (see Tomlinson 1999: 84). Similarly, football followers glocalize the merchandise of TNC clubs, for example by wearing replica shirts in the militias of West Africa, in the boardrooms of agribusiness transnationals, or at international youth and rock festivals.

TNC clubs have struggled to glocalize their brands to harmonize with the US cultural habitus. Notwithstanding American soccer's obscured social

history,[28] the USA has played little role in football's global diffusion and cross-cultural flows, such as administrative leadership, tournament successes, coaching techniques or player mobility. Indeed, while some American marketing and media production techniques have penetrated football, *pace* the Americanization thesis, the USA has been relatively marginal to the globalization of football and sport in general. In the late nineteenth century, the Americans consciously rejected outside sporting models in order to invent new national traditions in baseball and American football. For most Americans, 'football' means their own game of 'gridiron' while 'soccer' denotes a decidedly non-American pastime.

In the past two decades, football in the USA has become a mass participation sport with some 18 million players, assisted by American hosting of the 1994 World Cup finals, but soccer's professional club league remains blighted by low spectator and television audiences. Indeed football is most popular among Americans who are traditionally marginal to 'national' sports – for example, women (as players), and ethnic groups with strong affinities to their European or Latin American cultural identity. The latter communities often support their 'home' clubs from afar, as highlighted by the huge crowds attracted when European and South American clubs play fixtures in North American cities. Such processes underline football's significance in the production of diverse community, ethnic and national identities; and spotlight the American 'nation' as a polyethnic 'world space' (Balibar 1991). For TNC clubs, America offers the chance to reglocalize their brand identity by deterritorializing themselves in part from their 'home' with a view to attracting other consumers in richer markets (Giulianotti 2004). For example, US-based followers of Celtic or Manchester United may 'ground' their respective club identities rather differently to 'home-city' supporters in Glasgow or Manchester.

The corporate and international expansion of TNC clubs is one globalization process that inevitably ignites political conflicts over the social exclusion that is wrought by marketization. Elite English football has become highly lucrative,[29] provoking public and academic concerns that the pursuit of new product consumers at global level has shaken the stake-holds of established, less wealthy, local supporters (Conn 1997; Dempsey and Reilly 1998; Walsh and Giulianotti 2001). More categorically, many fans reject their classification as 'consumers' since, unlike purchasers of clothing or foodstuffs, they could never envisage 'switching brands' by supporting other teams. Popular misgivings regarding football's commodification were prevalent in the successful 1999 campaign by supporters to block the proposed takeover of Manchester United by Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB (Brown and Walsh 1999). Rising neo-liberalism does carry potentially serious consequences for football's culture. In terms of the universalization of particularism, the particular identities of

clubs and supporters may be dominated increasingly by elites so that football's international system becomes essentially a universal interplay and relativization of elitist (rather than more inclusive) cultural identities.

Cultural differences arise over the free market's role within football – differences that both relativize nations in cross-cultural comparison, and disclose divergent visions of globalization *per se*. Bourdieu (1998: 19–21), for example, discusses the French state's expansive role in football in relation to its distinctive, collectivist world vision that is diametrically opposed to the American, individualistic, neoliberal model. Most extremely, while Beck's concept of 'Brazilianization' applies in part (but far from fully) to football in Brazil, its European manifestation is much more distant. Brazilian football has been ravaged by degrees of intensified poverty and crime levels, political cronyism and rigid social stratification that are not matched in Western Europe. Fan violence has intensified, stadium attendances have plummeted, and official corruption and media manipulation of clubs and leagues have increased.

Those movements that declare a resistance to neoliberal influences can be trapped by a particularistic set of strategic and ideological dilemmas (Jameson 2000: 66). The apparently more exploitative, economic motors of globalization may be contested at local level through populist yet divisive discourses such as explicit nationalism whereas it might be assumed that a more collective movement should possess more potency. In football, club-level expressions of opposition can contest local instances of commodification, but cross-club or national movements would be better placed to have longer-term influence. Meanwhile, poorly articulated supporter alienation can degenerate into extremist politics, as witnessed by rising racist and neo-fascist spectator subcultures in parts of the continent.[30] Alternatively, as we next argue, we propose that debates regarding commodification and marginalization from the 'glocal game' are underpinned by intensified globality and greater consciousness of humankind. If such consciousness is to be buttressed institutionally, football's governance requires to be radically reformed in accordance with principles of democratic citizenship.

Football governance: humankind, citizenship and democracy

We propose that the contemporary politics of football should be theorized in terms of the interrelations between the four 'reference points' that are elemental to the 'global-human condition': these are individual selves, (national) societies, the world system of societies (international relations), and humankind (Robertson 1992: 104). Each reference point is constrained by the other three. For example, in European football, individuals possess particular

legal rights – players freely enter contractual relations with clubs, and supporters may expect particular standards of safety and comfort within stadiums. The national association exercises particular kinds of authority over these individuals, for example in terms of punishing players who contravene rules or preventing spectators from entering specific parts of football grounds. The world football system – notably the international governing bodies – can adjudicate on player contracts and impose universal penalties on players, while controlling football fans' access to televised games through the contracts that these bodies sign with television corporations. A stronger focus on humankind as a 'species-community' is apparent through the development work of players, coaches, and both national and international governing bodies in the developing world and in war-torn regions.[31]

Football has experienced particularly significant changes within the national and international reference points. Constant struggles among institutional actors highlight diverse 'definitions of the global situation' within the game (see Robertson 1992: 42). Key participants are football's governing bodies from district up to global levels, mass media corporations, merchandise corporations, organized labour at national and world levels, player agents, international political federations such as the EU, the different categories of football club from amateur to TNC-level, and supporters' organizations. Some recent conflicts have arisen over the banning of players who miss drug tests (player unions and clubs against football's governing bodies),[32] the date and time of club fixtures (supporters against media corporations),[33] and the transfer of players (clubs against players and agents).[34] Moreover, each category of institutional actor contains significant internal schisms: for example, the G14 of top European clubs have a different agenda to small professional clubs in Eastern Europe.

In refocusing on the analytical nature of the four-fold framework, we could turn to consider how advanced globalization may witness the rise of the humankind reference point. How may global consciousness be concretized such that the world may become for itself (Robertson 1992: 183)? Trends toward unifying humankind do not, by themselves, guarantee harmony. Yet if globalization encourages us in spatio-cultural terms to see the world as one place, then in socio-cultural terms it facilitates perception of the world as harbouring one people. Rising conceptions of humankind reflect a stronger cultural imagining of a common humanity, opening spaces for constructive inter-cultural dialogue, and introducing the possibility of citizenship principles that may emerge within a global cosmopolis.

Football has contributed greatly to enhanced consciousness of humankind. If football is to contribute more fully to a world for itself, the governing bodies would require to prioritize distributive justice over economic profitability. Besides the World Cup's sheer scale as a global event, there is increasing reflexivity about its 'glocal' features, for example in terms of how the event is

reported differently in particular nations, or in how the fans of specific nations have their own distinctive rituals and styles of support vis-à-vis other supporter groups. Yet, for the 2002 finals, the participation of much of football's community was jeopardized by the doubling of match-ticket prices, and by FIFA's initial sale of television rights to the finals to pay-per-view stations.[35] Such policies can serve to exclude significant sections of football's audience. They can undermine social integration within football's 'family', reducing the global commingling of football cultures and identities, and weakening the game's aesthetic development by discouraging sport participation among marginalized social groups – ironically, the very groups whose contributions dominate football's folklore and official histories.[36] Moreover, football's international governing bodies fail to respond adequately to accusations of corruption and gross mismanagement that are fuelled by the notorious opacity of football governance, the collapse of FIFA's marketing partner ISL with debts of $300 million, and the thwarted financial investigation of FIFA President, Sepp Blatter.[37]

Three kinds of institutional, political and intellectual realignment would be required for world football to become more democratic in prioritizing humankind. First, currently FIFA claims to be 'truly democratic': its Congress meets biennially and accords one vote to each FIFA nation/member.[38] No innately democratic procedures exist for electing congressional members, who are appointed instead by their respective football associations. FIFA's daily business is administered by the General Secretary and a 24-member Executive Committee ('a kind of board of directors')[39] elected by Congress. A more democratic system would begin at national, grass-roots level, to elect congressional members, and to facilitate more regular congressional sittings. Longer term, in light of the deterritorialized transformation of the 'local' through contemporary globalization, FIFA membership and congressional representation might be extended to non-national entities – for example, different women's football groups, supporter associations, grassroots football bodies, and match officials. Football certainly has the institutional potential to secure enhanced democratic global governance. In purely political terms, FIFA *is* the game's world system. TNC clubs, for example, might be equipped economically to found rival, international football systems and tournaments. But any party that contravenes FIFA statutes is liable to suffer the economic catastrophe of temporary or permanent expulsion.

Second, if they prioritize profitability, football's governing bodies may be interpreted as the sporting equivalents of FIFA's Swiss neighbour, the World Trade Organisation (WTO). As such, these football sovereigns would merely guarantee the free market within which football's commercial enterprises (the TNC clubs and their weaker competitors) do business. Conversely, football's governance may be reordered to prioritize democratic, inclusive, humanitarian functions, to warrant comparison with more philanthropic NGOs such as

radically reformed versions of the UN or, more modestly, UNESCO. FIFA's global responsibilities towards developing countries have been recognized through development work, beginning in 1975 and organized through the 'Goal' programme since 1999, and partnerships with NGOs like SOS-Children's Villages. These projects' budgets remain relatively small.[40] Fresh, better-funded projects could focus on wider local needs, such as financing widespread sports participation and health education, rather than jetting European coaches and celebrities into the developing world to give short clinics on football technique. Stronger legal initiatives are required to curb the systematic exploitation of players from developing countries by club directors, international agents and coaches (Broere and van der Drift 1997: 94–7).[41]

Third, we envision the foundation of normative arguments that explore issues of distributive justice, global citizenship, and democratic political structures inside football's public sphere, in contrast to contemporary discourses regarding market-access via consumption of the game's paraphernalia. The work of political theorists of globalization – notably Held (1995), Habermas (1999), Walzer (1998) and Archibugi (2000) – may structure these debates. A reformed sports polis may connect with Held's perhaps over-utopian idea of 'cosmopolitan democracy', a notion that requires much fuller elaboration in order to engage closer inspection. Elsewhere, Morgan's (1993) idea of a 'practice-community' points to a reformed sporting public sphere, wherein its members 'come into the athletic forum armed only with their arguments, leaving behind all titles, goods, and vantage points that derive from their standing in other spheres' (1993: 242). Genuine citizenship must be embedded here, establishing solidarity programmatically and through inclusive dialogue and cultural exchange, rather than through simply 'buying into' football via consumption or links to 'partner' products. This, needless to say, has strong implications for both 'participatory observation' vis-à-vis football and, better yet, quotidian involvement in the game itself. Football is a sport which people, mainly males, simply watch. Women's football is the world's fastest growing sport, providing an intriguing and counter-intuitive manifestation of genderless involvement. There is, of course, much more to say about football, eroticism, sexuality and gender; issues that we cannot address fully here.

Alongside other criticisms of global democratic reform, it might appear 'hopelessly utopian' to envisage FIFA's reinvention when the model cannot guarantee mass participation (Goldblatt 1997: 149). Discursively, the reformed association should reference the normative power of its democratic vision, to discourage others from backing rival, market-orientated football systems. The competitive nature of club competitions inevitably induces self-interest among club supporters, players and directors. But there is need to reassert the proposition that support for any club is dependent upon support for football *per se*. Only a reformed, truly democratic governing body can revitalize that ethos and carry it forward through effective governance.

Sport and the 'serious life'

By this stage, the reader should be aware that we have adhered to our opening claim, *via* Durkheim, that football is the 'serious life', wherein the dynamics of globalization are manifest in the game's long-term changes. Our concluding comments, then, advance two broad arguments. First, we submit that sport, and especially football, is epicentral to contemporary globalization processes. Second, we contend that analysis of football's globalization can advance both the sociology of the game and our theoretical understanding of globalization.

In cultural terms, modern football affords a rich study of glocalization processes. The game gives rise to a compelling relativization of social identities ('universalization of particularism') alongside concrete socio-political frameworks ('particularization of universalism'). The construction of nostalgic discourses within football largely reflects particular glocal responses to social change. Historically, football, as a cultural form, has undergone different kinds of glocalization, such as an initial rejection or transformation in some societies, a more common development of highly particularistic identities among participants, and an institutional organization of the game into distinctive political tiers. The greater cosmopolitanism of supporters and commentators, as assisted by the intensive global mediation of the game's major news and key tournaments, serves to revitalize the relativization of cultural identities in football. The game's business structures also display strong degrees of glocality, as leading clubs in particular show marked cultural variations in their systems of political association.

Our global-realist position views elite football clubs as TNCs with strong glocal dimensions. Leading clubs have retained strong legal, financial and symbolic ties to their home cities and surrounding cultures while building competitive success and supporter markets internationally. While top clubs possess a strong global brand equity that facilitates their marketing of multifarious products, sizeable cultural differences remain in the way that these brand features acquire glocal meaning for particular consumers: for example, while Manchester United's local supporters will prioritize the club's symbolic traditions, its Asian followers may be more attracted to its celebrity players.

One serious concern is that, as the commodification of football intensifies, the cultures of glocalization at the game's top end look likely to become increasingly elitist. Meanwhile, football's contemporary globalization is marked by increasing tensions between different forces that we associate with the elemental reference points of individuals, national societies, international system, and humankind. We argue that world football could only become 'for itself' – otherwise stated, to prioritize 'humankind' – through institutional democratization of its major political structures. Reformed football governance could help to promote social inclusion within the game. To take one

aspect: football is, in most nations, primarily a male sport in which much more could, and should, be stated regarding women's potential participation.

There are at least five particular ways in which this reading of football's globalization might contribute to our sociological understanding of globalization. First, its global seriousness is such that sociological analyses of sport must enhance empirical and theoretical understandings of globalization in general. Second, we locate the cultures of glocalization at the heart of the sociology of football. It would be valuable to explore continuities and differences with the patterns of glocalization experienced by other cultural forms. Third, our global-realist perspective interprets major cultural institutions such as football clubs as TNCs that possess strong degrees of glocality. In doing so, we have worked the idea of glocalization, originating in Japanese micro-marketing, from the cultural domain back into the political and economic domains. Fourth, we argue that commodification processes inevitably impact upon glocalization cultures, threatening some communities with social exclusion from meaningful participation in the constructive relativization of their cultural identities and practices through sport. Fifth, we have addressed contemporary conceptions of humankind and how, within at least one cultural sphere, the world can become 'for itself'. We consider that governance in football represents a useful domain in which the ideas and inherent problematics of a global political community can be elaborated and tested in greater detail.

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Acknowledgements

Notes

1. See http://www.fifa2.com/scripts/runisa.dll?M2:gp:729039:67173+find/display+22747+E

2. The World Cup finals are contested every four years by nations that have emerged successfully from continental qualifying groups. See http://a1801.g.akamai.net/f/1801/2004/3d/www.fifa.com/infoplus/IP-401-E-TV.pdf

3. Acronym of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association. FIFA is the ultimate power within world football. It controls the implementation and interpretation of the laws of football, and it establishes world rules for such matters as player transfers, doping controls, relations with the mass media, football competition procedures, and the administration of football's national associations. FIFA has the power to arbitrate on disputes within national associations, and can expel specific member nations from all football competition. FIFA also

organizes and controls football's World Cup finals and other world competitions differentiated according to age and gender.

4. See for example the readers by Held and McGrew (2000), Beynon and Dunkerly (2000) and Lechner and Boli (2000); also Robertson (1992), Giddens (1990), Wallerstein (1974), Beck (2000) and Scholte (2000) within the intersecting fields of sociology and international relations. The six-volume set on globalization by Robertson and White (2003a) devotes one section to sport.

5. See for example Robertson (1990a, 1990b, 1992, 1995, 2001).

6. See for example Giulianotti (1999), Armstrong and Giulianotti (1999, 2001), and Finn and Giulianotti (2000). However, see also Giulianotti and Robertson (2002).

7. There are six continental confederations in world football – the AFC (for Asia), CAF (Africa), CONCACAF (North and Central America), CONMEBOL (South America), OFC (Oceania), and UEFA (Europe). According to FIFA, 'The Confederations are the umbrella organizations of the national associations on each continent' (http://www.fifa.com/en/organisation/confederations/index.html). The confederations' main functions are to organize continental tournaments for club and national sides, and to represent the collective interests of their national members such as in dealings with FIFA.

8. This follows the broad position of Stauth and Turner (1988).

9. The European Championship finals are the leading tournament involving Europe's top national teams and they are contested every four years.

10. Consider the various biographies and autobiographies of Billy Meredith (who played during the 1900s), Raich Carter (1930s), Tommy Taylor (1940s), Wilf Mannion (1950s), Bobby Moore (1960s), Giorgio Chinaglia (1960s and 1970s) and Alan Hudson (1970s).

11. The Champions League is European club football's most prestigious tournament and is contested annually.

12. Brazil won the World Cup finals in 1958, 1962 and 1970, during which football reached a global television audience. Brazil's leading players – such as Pelé, Garrincha, Didì, and Jairzinho – became international 'household names', and their highly skilful and entertaining style of attacking football gained widespread admiration.

13. Most of football's continental governing bodies were established during this period, as were international tournaments like the World Cup finals (in 1930), and club tournaments like the European Cup (1955) and South America's 'Copa Libertadores' (1960).

14. For example, at international football tournaments since the early 1980s, Scottish supporters' dominant culture has centred on anti-English discourses and rituals, and the display of symbols springing from Scotland's invented traditions (such as the kilt and general tartanry) (Giulianotti 1991).

15. For example, among the millions watching the World Cup we find 'world communities' that identify with, for example, the counter-attacking guile of the 1982 Italians but not the 'pressing' Italians of 1992–4; others that scorn the 'European' Brazilians of 1974, but not the highly expressive 1982 Brazilians; others still admire the flamboyant 1978 Argentinians under Menotti, but not the 1986 or 1990 team under the dour Bilardo (notwithstanding Maradona's brilliance).

16. The G-14 is the legally established body based in Brussels that represents eighteen of Europe's richest and most successful clubs.

17. Goldman and Papson (1998: 170) allude to this in discussing Nike (quoted in Sklair 2001: 110n).

18. Sklair (2001: 2–3) defines TNCs broadly as being 'owned by shareholders and controlled by Boards of Directors who can be citizens of any country.' This may be a long-term tendency of TNCs, but the actual levels of 'global' ownership and control are still debatable. Many TNCs (like Coca-Cola and GM) harbour Boards of Directors that are largely hewn from one

nation, reflecting each corporation's national origins. Some nations possess citizenship rules that restrict ownership and/or control of specific TNCs (hence Rupert Murdoch's attainment of American citizenship to safeguard business expansion in the United States). In football, top clubs resemble contemporary TNCs via share-holdings that have transnational dimensions, although the boards of directors remain primarily national.

19. By 'neoliberalism' we mean a philosophy of political economy that emphasizes the free market, a minimal (and, in historical terms, markedly reduced) economic role for the state, and a belief that wealth can percolate down through the social structure and across nations through free trade and commerce.

20. On state sovereignty, Sassen (1999) observes that globalization is not entirely corrosive. Supranational institutions like the EU or WTO require nation-states to police agreements. Globalization requires the nation-state to redefine itself relative to new flows of money and people.

21. Weiss (1999) discerns analogous arguments in the collections by Michie and Smith (1997) and Baker, Epstein and Pollin (1999).

22. MORI estimate that Manchester United possess 8 million fans in China, and 50 million worldwide (see *http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/business/newsid_2013000/2013112.stm*).

23. For example, in the sport of Australian Rules Football, the former 'North Melbourne Kangaroos' changed their name to 'Kangaroos' and began playing 'home' fixtures in the 'target market' of Sydney.

24. UK clubs must obtain 'work permits' for players from outside the EU. Typically, work permits are only granted if the player has played in 75% of all national team games for the past two years.

25. Consider, for example, the marketing logic allegedly behind the purchase of the Japanese Hidetoshi Nakata by the Italian clubs of Perugia, Roma then Parma (*Guardian*, 24 July 2001). Arsenal purchased

the Japanese Junichi Inamoto for £3.5 million in July 2001, and were assumed to have netted more than that sum in Japanese merchandise sales; Inamoto played in three minor matches and was released by Arsenal within one year.

26. We suggest Irish, Scottish, Welsh and English players are not 'foreign' if they play inside the UK or Ireland, but outside their nation of birth, given the long history of football connections and deeper cultural and structural ties between these nations.

27. The late Jack Walker was a steel magnate who sold his business for £330 million in 1991. Subsequently, he took over Blackburn Rovers and ploughed much of that fortune into buying top players for the club. Blackburn won the English Premiership in 1995. Roman Abramovich is a Siberian billionaire with large shareholdings in privatized Russian oil companies. In summer 2003 he bought the London club Chelsea, and over two seasons has funded the expenditure of over £200 million on new players. Chelsea are currently viewed by many inside football as the richest club in the world.

28. In the late nineteenth century, soccer-style games were played at Yale while American soccer teams contested representative fixtures (Gorn and Goldstein 1993: 130–1). During the inter-war period recent immigrants sustained strong local US football systems while British, Italian, Spanish, Central European and South American clubs regularly toured North America. In the postwar period, national leagues were established, notably the North American Soccer League that was laden with highly-paid world stars in the 1970s, and the more modest Major League Soccer tournament after hosting the 1994 World Cup finals. The USA has competed in all but one of the World Cup finals, defeating England in 1950, only reaching the later rounds in 2002.

29. Between 1995/6 and 1999/2000, the English Premier League clubs' total turnover rose from £346 million to £772 million. By the season 1999/2000, average

club turnover, at £38.6 million, was five times greater than in 1991/2 (Deloitte and Touche 2001).

30. It is important to distinguish spectator hooliganism from racism (Armstrong 1998: 153–5, 279–80; Back, Crabbe and Solomos 1999).

31. For example, FIFA is an official financial supporter of the charity SOS-Children's Villages and of UNICEF.

32. For example, a major controversy arose in England in 2003 when Rio Ferdinand was banned for eight months after failing to attend a drugs test.

33. For example, to suit television stations, club fixtures in England and Scotland are often switched from their traditional 3 pm kick-off on Saturday afternoons to alternative times and days. Many fans oppose these inconvenient changes.

34. Most club officials and managers come into conflict with players and their agents over wage demands and the latter's methods in seeking moves to other clubs.

35. For Europe's governing body, one criticism may centre on how its premier club tournament, the 'Champions League', was organized in the early 1990s to maximize the competitive chances and television revenues of Europe's richest sides.

36. Football cultures produce particular myths of origin that link favourite playing styles to spaces that are either natural or marked by relative social deprivation. In Brazil, we have the *favelas* or the beaches, notably in Rio; in Argentina, it is the *potrero* (urban wasteland); in the UK, it is the working-class street.

37. There are regular allegations that elections to high office in FIFA have been corrupted by secret payments to individual voters (representatives of football's national associations). ISL collapsed in April 2001. A year later, FIFA's General Secretary, Michel Zen-Ruffinen, alleged mismanagement, false accounting and criminal practices were evident at the top of the organization. Blatter was subsequently re-elected FIFA President by the representatives of football's national associations. An internal inquiry into FIFA's finances was wound up, and Zen-Ruffinen was fired.

38. See http://www.fifa.com/fgg/index_E.html.

39. See *http://www.fifa.com/fgg/index_E.html*.

40. The 'Goal' project was founded to enable development programmes in up to 120 countries over a three-year period. Its total budget was around £43 million (http://www.fifa.com/goal/index_E.html). Compare this to FIFA's sale of World Cup television rights (to European stations alone) for around £590 million.

41. European club officials and player agents have been strongly criticized for attracting cheap young African players and abandoning them if they fail to make a serious career in the game.

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