



SPORTS, BODIES, IDENTITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

CONCEPTIONS AND PROBLEMS



SPORTS, BODIES, IDENTITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS: CONCEPTIONS AND PROBLEMS

**WOJCIECH J. CYNARSKI, KAZIMIERZ OBODYŃSKI,
NICOLA PORRO [EDS.]**

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Scientific review by

Prof. Dr. HANNU ITKONEN (Finland)
Prof. Dr. MOJCA DOUPONA-TOPČ (Slovenia)
Prof. dr hab. MARIAN MALIKOWSKI (Poland)

Proofreader

JANINA KORDEK

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Georg Anders, President of eass

The 6th eass conference „Sports, Bodies and Identity: I belong to?“ or „What will be the questions of mankind.

Our bodies are sources of movement and self-improvement and performances. Body exercises

Sport means one of the representations of body. Sport and practices, producers and

It is used as an instrument and collective identities, seen at the top sport level are connected to prestige, flow experience.

But there exists the risk if the sport loses its function athletes resign. We know about ruptions at the end of a career

Not only individuals are affected „Will I be?“ but nations as well

PREFACE



Georg Anders, President of eass

The 6th eass conference in Rome, 27–31 May 2009, brought into focus „Sports, Bodies and Identities“. Questions such as „Who am I?“ or „Where do I belong to?“ or „What will I be?“ or „What should I be?“ are probably eternal questions of mankind.

Our bodies are sources of concern. The body is an object of appearance management and self-improvement. We are judged on the basis of bodily appearances and performances. Body exercising offers a solution to health problems.

Sport means one of the most important, expressive and socially relevant representations of body. Sport as a cultural field is a complex web of sites, products and practices, producers and consumers, focused on the exercising body.

It is used as an instrument and as a strategy for producing both individual and collective identities, sense and belonging. Processes of building personality at the top sport level are connected with success, public attention, appreciation, prestige, flow experience.

But there exists the risk of loss of identity and psychic break down as well if the sport loses its function as a producer of identity, for example, when top athletes resign. We know about the problems of transition and biographical disruptions at the end of a career.

Not only individuals are concerned in the question „Who am I?“ and „Who will I be?“ but nations as well. Nations make use of Football World Champion-

ships to demonstrate and to communicate the image of what they would be, that is: self-confident nations but combined with openness, tolerance, brightness, and hospitality.

Collective identities give the individual a sense of belonging, of orientation, of integration. On the other side, the individual embodies the orientations of the community in its feeling, thinking and acting, thus stabilizing and perpetuating the collective identity. Exactly this kind of collective identity and identity building was reflected in the behaviour and the symbols of the fans of the clubs which took part in the final of the Champions League in Rome that coincided with the start of the conference. The respective codes of collective identity define the persons' inclusion or exclusion. The participants of the conference had insofar the chance to realize the relevance and significance of the conference theme. And perhaps some of those present at the conference were themselves adherents of the code of one of the clubs involved.

Since the eighties of the last century we have discussed the „revival of the body“ and the „revaluation of the body“ in society. This „body-turn“ evoked multi-faceted theoretical and empirical research in the field of the sociology of the body. And the sociology of sport discovered the body as a central category, too.

The conference brought together approaches from historical, cultural, social, socio-psychological and political studies as well as from economic and media studies. It offered an excellent opportunity to be informed about latest scientific results and developments on an international level. The 6th conference in the „Eternal City“ continued the series of successful eass conferences and attracted participants from 28 countries.

On behalf of the eass I thank Prof. Dr. Wojciech J. Cynarski, Prof. Dr. Kazimierz Obodynski and Prof. Dr. Nicola Porro for publishing a selection of papers presented in Rome. The papers mirror a great variety of topics. Composing the book was a huge work. I am sure it was worth while. The publication will contribute to exchange research results and to promote fruitful discussions.

Prof. Dr. Georg Anders

President of the European Association
for Sociology of Sport

ED

We are going to celebrate 10th anniversary of the European Association for Sociology of Sport (eass) which was organized successful scientific conferences in Rome (2002), Rzeszów and Łańcut (2004), Rome (2008), Rome (2009) and Porto (2010). This is the Part 4th, the eass history in photos.

Under the auspices of eass there is the next of the series. A part of papers presented at the conference constitutes the content of the monograph.

The 6th Eass Conference, held in Rome, was titled „Sport, Bodies, Identities“, aimed at interdisciplinary approaches of the *Social Science* to the study of sport as one of the most important representations of body. It means that sport is a means and a strategy for producing body and belonging.

By this point of view, the main face was to support, on one hand, a variety of scientific approaches, and, on the other, enriching and promoting contributions involving all the domains of the body.

Reviewing the contributions of the conference, thanks to the cooperation between the European Association for Sociology of Sport – the University of Rome, Prof. Dr. Cynarski and Professor Kazimierz Obodynski (President of the European Association for Sociology of Sport), we can score the achievement of such a critical, controversial and fruitful project.

The Conference held in Rome, under the leadership of the President, Professor Georg Anders, is the arrival point of a first phase of investigating the domain of body and bodily practices, for a more courageous and systematic approach to the *Sociology of body*.

This statement implies a further effort in fighting the tendency to a narrow and fruitful perspective of hyperspecialized and authoritarian dictatorship of the so called *hyphe-*

riod, identities are continuously formed, transformed and reconstructed in relation to the ways that we are represented or addressed in the cultural system that surrounds us [Donnelly, Young 1988]. Additionally, the influence exercised by one specific socio-cultural environment is not the same as that of individuals or groups. For instance, for some participants sport builds character for other this is not the case [Horne 2007]. This means that the Olympic value system has different effects, results and meanings on all participants in relation to time, place and social location. Whereas the Olympic movement – and Coubertin with his conception of *Olympism* which strove for cosmopolitanism – attempted to create a sense of solidarity that is independent of time, place, social location or national and political boundaries [Patsantaras, Kamberidou 2006, p. 370]. As Coubertin repeatedly pointed out cosmopolitanism was the only effective measure for the peaceful coexistence of the peoples of the world [Coubertin 1903, p.12]. In the Fundamental Principles of the Olympic Charter the official statement concerning the philosophy, goals and rules for the Olympic Games are clear, simple and straightforward. They emphasize that the Olympics should provide equal opportunities for the peoples of the world, for individuals from different nations and diverse cultural backgrounds so that they are able to connect and learn about each other [Olympic Charter, par. 2, 18/07/1996].

Undeniably such ideals, significant for the future of our planet, require that we work together as global citizens [Patsantaras *et al.* 2005, p. 40]. The Olympic movement advocates the empowerment of ethnic self-definition and the peaceful coexistence of diverse ethnic identities in the international scene [Kamberidou 2008]. As an international phenomenon Olympic sports encompass, in their value system, tolerance and respect for cultural diversity and ethnic identities. The institutional framework of Olympic sports includes declarations that are accepted by all nations with regard to respect and the promotion of national identities, as well as conditions of empowerment and ethnic self-definition. Consequently, the Olympic *topos* (social sphere) appears as a space in which a sense of cosmopolitanism could be cultivated, developed and reproduced. In other words, cosmopolitanism means that identity “can no longer be located nationally or locally, but only globally” [Beck 2002, p. 29].

However, in view of the fact that the Olympic Games clearly fall short of meeting these ideals, it is critical today for the Olympic movement to take steps to preserve and safeguard these advocated social values. The IOC is dependent on commercialization and the goal of global understanding and togetherness receives only token attention, since commercialization exerts a greater influence on how the Olympic Games are planned, played, promoted and presented. Moreover, the modern market creates temporary employment that leads to a corrosion of character [Sennet 1988]. Current discussions characterize Olympic sports as a means that serves the globalization processes, namely the western model of cultural-societal globalization [Young 1996].

Nikolaos Patsantaras, Irene Kamberidou

Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Science, University of Athens, Greece
Contact: npatsant@phed.uoa.gr; ikamper@phed.uoa.gr

Chapter 2.3.

IS OLYMPIC COMMUNICATION-ACTIVITY A MEANS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF COSMOPOLITAN IDENTITIES?

Cultural Identity and Olympic Sports

In the last decades accelerated and unrestrained structural changes – on an institutional level – have been shattering significant cultural spheres such as class, gender, nationality, nation, and so forth. Today, due to social transformations, individual/personal identities are changing and “undermining our sense of self as complete subjects. Namely, the social subject is losing his/her autonomy and self-sufficiency. Identity is no longer formulated on the basis of the social subject’s inner nucleus but is constructed in the interrelations of the *self* with the values, meanings and symbols (culture) of the world in which we live and act in [Hall, Held, McGrew 1992]. Social identity is no longer focused on the *self* as the centre but on the social-cultural environment and identities are being transformed due structural and institutional changes. The postmodern social subject, in this framework and as a rule, cannot have a stable, static essential or permanent identity. The social subject, the athletes, the individuals, as well as diverse social groups, are confronted with different representations according to socio-cultural conditions. Olympic sports, as a relatively autonomous socio-cultural system, exercise a dynamic influence on the social subject – who acts and communicates within its structures – in the construction of personal/individual identities and collective identities. For example, since 1981 the changes that came about with the official recognition/acceptance of the commercialization of Olympic activity, for some have meant deviance and for others adaptation to transforming-evolving social processes.

Significant here are the changes regarding Olympic social reality – the material and structural conditions that influence the formation of identity – which affect the active participants as well as the passive ones. In our postmodern pe-

Cosmopolitanization and the Olympics

Globalization is not only an economic phenomenon, namely a product of economic changes and market processes [Kamberidou 2007]. The Olympic phenomenon has always been subject to or influenced by the trends of development on an international level, and today on a global level, in other words that of the globalization processes. As a result, the Olympic sports phenomenon is con- signed a negative dimension. Specifically, the globalization processes encom- pass – as a constituent element, as a condition for integration and inclusion – the elimination or rather the undermining of diverse cultural and ethnic identities. Beck [2002] argues that we cannot even begin to think about globalization- cosmopolitanism without referring to specific locations, places or nations. Globalization changes not only the relation between and beyond national states and societies but this process changes “the inner quality of the social and politi- cal itself” [Beck 2002, p. 23]. Beck calls this mode of change the “cosmopolita- nization of nation-state societies” and argues that there is an interrelation or inter-dependence between globalization and cosmopolitanism [Beck 2002]. Explicitly, globalization seems to be a prerequisite for the appearance of those elements that reflect cosmopolitanism.

International dialogue indicates that globalization, as a process, is primarily a result of power-dominance: dominant economic or political power on a world level and usually beyond/outside international principles (ethics or laws) which disregard cultural diversity. [Grosby 2005; Beck 2002; Bryan 2002], whereas cosmopolitanization/cosmopolitanism as a process could exist only as a result of the respect and acceptance for the cultural diversity (law and ethics). The Olympics, however, as a global event, do not seem to be the result of a dialectic process in which the global and the local can coexist, in other words, exist as combined and mutually implicating principles [Beck 2002, p. 17]. For example, Coubertin’s goal and that of the Olympic movement was cultural uniformity, sameness or homogeneity. Coubertin never attempted to incorporate other kinet- ic cultures into Olympic sports, but instead he imposed the western example, the western model, western sports. Colonialism had played a catalytic role in the internationalization of this goal, a target that was not based on justice or ethics but on force, power and domination. This is what Coubertin called cosmopoli- tanism. Consequently, cosmopolitanism has been associated with the western European elite of the colonial empires. The English model that Coubertin adopt- ed in order to internationalize his ideas includes abstract elements of structural rationalism such as Individualism, Tolerance, Universality, Contract, and Equal- ity – the products of bourgeois capitalism that had come to maturity in the Age of Enlightenment [Goldmann 1973]. If we agree that the cosmopolitanization process means “internal globalization, globalization from within the national societies that transforms everyday consciousness and identities significantly”

[Beck 2002, p. 17], then it seems that the globalization process is a prerequisite- precondition for cosmopolitanism. In other words, modern cosmopolitanism is a result of specific social changes that are associated with globalization and the vision that globalization could lead to a cosmopolitan democracy.

Coubertin’s Cosmopolitan Vision

The central mission of the Olympic movement was the construction of a new ethos, according to which the social subject must consider not only his/her own social progress, but that of the *cosmos* (entire world). The term and concept of cosmopolitanism was repeatedly used by Coubertin, who aspired through Olympic activity-communication to achieve interconnections across boundaries as well as transformations in the quality of social life inside the na- tion-state societies in order to elevate the *moral life* of the peoples of the world. The English perception of sport/athleticism – formulated by *fair play* as a cen- tral moral rule in the public schools of the 19th century and adopted by Couber- tin – stressed that students should be taught through sports «to govern others and to control themselves» [Holt 1989, p. 76]. In this context the exercise of power was perceived as a game. This is evident today in Olympic ceremonies, etiquette and activities that provoke theoretical dialogue of a political, and economic char- acter. Olympic activities, in accordance to prevailing socio-cultural conditions, are used as a means for the revival of political and economic power, thereby exercis- ing great influence in the construction of individual identities and collective iden- tities. One need point out that in the framework of sport *semasiologia*, any form of exercise of power must be connected to ethical/moral sport rules (eg. fair- play), including the obligation of taking into consideration and respecting all participants – active or passive – of Olympic activity and not only the athletes.

Coubertin’s cosmopolitanism was not perceived as a result of a dialectic process between western societies and non-western societies. According to Coubertin, a cosmopolitan was a citizen of the world, however, he meant only the western world! In the 19th century England was witnessing the rise of an Evangelical Muscular Christianity in its public school system and in its universi- ties, including the development of Christian missions, such as the YMCA. Un- deniably this was a form of cultural imperialism, cultural homogenization or as Beck [2002] argues an “internal globalization”. In the 20th century the produc- tion of an institutional framework for international sport events created an inter- national sport culture and identities that replaced regional and sub-national sport-cultures. Was this a process of cultural imperialism or an effort for the formulation of a cosmopolitan culture? During the colonial period, sports in general were a means for the westernization of cultures around the world. When we say that sport was a means for the westernization of societies, we mean that

there was no dialectic method in which the 'global' (western kinetic culture) and the local kinetic cultures (non-western) existed as combined and mutually implicating principles. It was a monologic process and concept which provided the opportunity for the manifestation of national identities in a global reality. This manifestation of the local or the national through international processes such as the Olympics usually leads to a cosmopolitan fallacy (imagination). Thus cosmopolitanism, as it was constructed in the framework of the Olympic movement, seems to be a vague and abstract concept. Coexistence during the Olympics does not necessarily stimulate a feeling of cosmopolitan responsibility. If we argue that cosmopolitanism means a reflexive globalization, a daily global experience then coexistence during the Olympics is something beyond daily life. It is a world sport celebration. This is not a real dialectic between local and international/global but an experience that surpasses daily life, even though it can help all Olympic participants (active and passive) and not only the athletes, to imagine a cosmopolitan society.

Olympic communication-activity is a social experience that assists the social subject to envision or dream of a cosmopolitan society. It is a social experience that is linked to the imaginary/fantasy. It seems that Coubertin strove to achieve a new order that would be applicable to the entire world by creating a symbiotic (a consensus) between the peoples of the world, a symbiotic that could be achieved through mutual acceptance of specific rules, regulations, rights and obligations. In this spirit, at least rhetorically, we can agree that Olympic activities can generate cosmopolitan perceptions as a basis for the construction of a cosmopolitan identity. We can argue that the Olympic *topos* is a special *topos* (social space/sphere) where athletes exercise their imagination since Olympic values are abstract elements. Namely, they exercise their imagination about *in-cosmopolitanism*, a cosmopolitanism within the boundaries of Olympic time and space in its confrontation with the outside world. The notion of "a citizen of the world" has long been part of the western utopian imaginary. It was implicit in Augustine's idea of "the City of God" and in Kant's vision of "perpetual peace" in 1796 during the Age of Enlightenment, namely, the vision of a world free from irrational social prejudice [Bryan 2002] that re-emerges in Coubertin's dialogue.

How can individual and national identities be integrated into the cosmopolitan vision in the Olympic *topos*

Current discussions focus on the deconstruction of national identities due to the globalization processes, emphasizing the need for cultural empowerment. The Olympic *topos* (social space) is recognized as a space for the declaration of national identities and many times as a space for the empowerment of ethnic-

state identities. One need point out that a primary source of cultural identity is ethnicity or the culture into which we are born [Hall, Held, McGrew 1992]. Although in the beginning Olympic sports had been perceived as a means to cultural imperialism, they are now perceived as a means for the empowerment of cultural identities through victory. In order to understand this, one need point out that initially the construction of a national-state framework of membership was required to establish Olympic institutions. Coubertin had structured his ideas on cosmopolitanism and on citizenship, which in order to exist required a *nation-building*. In this spirit Coubertin understood that local identities and national identities were prerequisites for cosmopolitanism and the construction of a cosmopolitan identity. Olympic sports were closely connected to political activities which focused on the creation of a state and its identification with ethnicity. Inevitably Olympic sports were connected to activities that pursued the construction of state-national identities. Access into Olympic sports requires a *state identity* that ignores the national origins of the participants. On the other hand, the Olympic *topos*, as a space of social communication-activity also leaves open room for the development and declaration of national identities, a factor that is compatible with democratic political cultures. It is also well-suited for the development of nationalism which distinguishes faith and dedication to the nation as a superior/moral/ethical source and as a means to political-social prosperity.

As a result, Olympic sports are distinguished as a *topos* for cultural empowerment and the expression of national identities, although they have frequently been associated with a nationalism that embraces negative images of *outsiders* or *the other* with regard to nation or national identity [Grosby 2005; Hastings 1997]. The social Olympic *topos* is susceptible and vulnerable to such forms of differentiation, capable of transgressing or violating the conventional boundaries of democratic civilizations (e.g. nationalism).

The Olympic movement and Coubertin had aspired to promote the concept of patriotism in order to build a framework that would eliminate nationalism and move towards cosmopolitanism. At this point we need to make the distinction between patriotic commitments and nationalist commitments – between identity which is related to homeland (*patris*) and identity which is related to nation (*ethnos*). Patriotism means emotional commitment to a place or patriotic love of country, and not commitment to a nation. A love of ones country does not rule out respect for other cultures and places. Love of ones country is merely a preparation for respect of diversity. «Cosmopolitanism does not mean that one does not have a country or a homeland, but one has to have a certain reflexive distance from that homeland» [Bryan 2002, p. 57]. Consequently, the reflexive distance from the homeland constitutes a cosmopolitan virtue and in this framework patriotism seems to be a precondition for understanding and respecting other cultures. In this context patriotism is compatible with cosmopolitanism. The republican tradition regards patriotism as a training ground for cosmopolitanism

[Bryan 2002, p. 59] and Coubertin, as a republican, attempted to promote his ideas on cosmopolitanism on the basis of the meaning *patrias* (homeland). He believed that there could be no cosmopolitanism without localism (patriotism). In this spirit patriotism seems to be a precondition for understanding and respecting cultural diversity.

Olympic sports, as seen in the historicity of the phenomenon, have been used by all political systems, all ideological currents for specific political goals. Olympic sports have frequently been identified as political tools/means – not only in today's western neo-liberal societies – in the urban societies of the 19th century, in the ideologies of fascism and in those of communism and socialism [Epsy 1981]. Even republicanism and Marxism evolved on the basis of an “enlightened ecumenism” [Hall, Held, McGrew 1992] which aspired to create a global society, a global community in which super-ethnic social ties and catholically accepted views and values on peace, justice and freedom would determine the conditions of human existence, especially the foundations for a global civilization and culture and not those of imperialism. The Olympic Charter has been essentially based on this tradition since the 19th century [Παρισσάντραπας 2007].

Olympic sports – and competitive sports in general – fulfill political functions and operations since they promote national prestige and advocate or assist in the revival and construction of national identity. For example, even though Olympic victory is an individual or group accomplishment, that of the athlete or that of the team, the success/victory is bestowed on the nation. Moreover, universal principles of democracy and personal liberties are included in the Olympic Charter. We can theoretically argue that the Olympic symbols, such as the Olympic flame, are distinguished by societies as a means for the promotion of global rights – that we believe are the basis for the cultivation of cosmopolitan identities. The Olympics as a mean of internationalization, globalization and also *cosmopolitanization* are also used for the internalization of conflicts between states. For instance, these conflicts can be political issues like those in Tibet. The reactions concerning the recent Olympic relay reveal that the Olympic symbols stimulated a feeling of cosmopolitan responsibility. Specifically, during the Olympic relay protesters around the world demanded that the Olympic organizers denounce China's policies against human rights in Tibet as well as the communist government's backing of the Sudanese military regime responsible for the killings in Darfur. However, we need point out that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) is not a global government with the authority or the political power to enforce human rights or punish the violators. The IOC is not a global government that can enforce the rights and obligations of citizens, but it is only a *means* to internationalize national and local social problems.

Undeniably, athletes as role models can promote examples of peaceful co-existence and world peace. The Olympic topos could also be perceived as a cultural space that cultivates patriotic, national or cosmopolitan identities, depending on

the relations between the participating countries in Olympic communication. When national citizens participate in ecumenically accepted events they become “citizens of the world” and this is made possible not because they follow specific national values, but because they have committed themselves to higher-superior values which are ecumenical. The multiple declaration of identities in Olympic sports reflects a complex symbolic reality which not only includes sport components, but political, social and cultural ones as well. For example, active participants in Olympic competitions acquire an identity of the Olympic athlete, however, the social subject who has this sport identity also has other identities, multiple identities: national, racial, gender and so forth [Kamperidou 2007].

Coubertin's goal and that of the Olympic movement – as expressed in the Olympic Charter – was to establish the preconditions for the formation of an international democratic society in which national members would distinguish as a prerequisite for their own viability, respect for the viability of other nations. The international character of the Olympics is perceived as an exceptionally important means and tool for viable experiences of a cosmopolitan character. The Olympic Charter endeavored to combine universal democratic principles and personal liberties in order to create the basis for the construction of a cosmopolitan identity.

Conclusion: Olympic social reality

Olympic social reality, in order to promote social cohesion, incorporates diverse identities according to time and place. The Olympics are a means for the construction of national identities and global-cosmopolitan identities. However, the identities that are constructed and empowered do not exclusively depend on Olympic communication-activity, but on political and social conditions as well.

Olympic identity is a means towards cosmopolitanism. It can function as a unifying force with other identities. The identity of the Olympic athlete, for example, seems to function as a link for the coexistence of diverse identities with the epicentre being the *self* and the social subject. The Olympic athlete in this framework is defined not only nationally or locally but globally or *cosmopolitically*. Unquestionably Olympic sports, the Olympic environment can move toward cosmopolitanism and the construction of a cosmopolitan identity, without eliminating other identities. The Olympic environment can function catalytically in the unification of different identities. Under certain conditions, Olympic identity (the athlete or the audience/spectator) can unite and bring together other identities.

On the other hand, this unification of diverse identities includes elements from the sphere of the imaginary/fantasy/illusion. That is to say, identity remains incomplete and is constantly under reconstruction and transformation in

accordance to cultural representations. Thus Olympic communication is a social experience that can touch on the *imaginary* of cosmopolitanism in a limited space and time. The Olympic system is a social entity that consistently produces meanings. It is a system of evolving cultural representations. Olympic culture is comprised not only of Olympic institutions but also of Olympic symbols, ceremonies and representations that have the power to create a sense of identity. In Olympic sports it seems that the national (or patriotism) can be combined with universalism. When national citizens participate in an ecumenically accepted event they become «citizens of the world» and this is made possible not because they follow specific national values, but because they have committed themselves to higher ecumenically accepted values.

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Prof. Dr. Wojciech J. Cynarski, Head of the Humanistic Sciences Department in the PhE Faculty at the University of Rzeszów, participant of all eass conferences, sociologist and specialist of sports humanistic, president of the IMACSSS – International Martial Arts and Combat Sports Scientific Society.



Prof. Dr. Kazimierz Obodyński, Dean of the PhE Faculty at the University of Rzeszów, vice-president of the Polish Society of the Social Sciences of Sport, specialist of the sports educology and sociology of sport.



Prof. Dr. Nicola Porro, President of the European Association for Sociology of Sport (eass), works in the University of Cassino (Facolta di Scienze Motorie). He is well known Italian sociologist, specialist of the sociology of sport.

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