

ERDÉLYI TÁRSADALOM  
TRANSYLVANIAN SOCIETY

A Social Sciences Journal

Volume 17, Issue 1

Cluj Napoca – Kolozsvár

2019

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*Erdélyi Társadalom / Transylvanian Society*

A peer-reviewed journal of the Department of Sociology and Social Work in Hungarian of Babeş-Bolyai University and the Max Weber Foundation for Social Research, Cluj Napoca, Romania.  
Published twice a year.

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The journal are indexed in: ProQuest, GESIS, DataCite, CEEOL and Index Copernicus  
The articles published in the journal can be downloaded from the CEEOL ([www.ceeol.com](http://www.ceeol.com))  
and GESIS data catalogs. Submission guidelines and archived issues are available at:  
[www.erdelyitarsadalom.ro](http://www.erdelyitarsadalom.ro).

The decision on the publication of manuscripts is taken by the editorial committee based on  
double-blind peer reviews of two external reviewers.

*Publisher:* Presa Universitară Clujeană

*Printed by:* Incitato

ISSN: 1583-6347

*The editing of the journal is financially supported by:*



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Proiect realizat cu sprijinul Primăriei și Consiliului Local Cluj-Napoca

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TS ————— 1 ———  
SPORTS AND IDENTITY



Markus Stauff<sup>1</sup>

## 'History in the Making': Sports and the Serialized Production of Collective Memory

### Abstract

*Sport is a rich source for memory culture. Conspicuously, sport regularly declares an event to be historical while it is still ongoing. This includes transforming the sport event into one of broader cultural, especially national significance. Using a number of examples from different sports, this article discusses how and why sport, for already more than a hundred years, continuously contributes to national memories. It will argue, that it is first of all the serial organization of standardized (and thus comparable) competitive events that enables sport to continuously declare and remember historical moments. Sport produces an endless series of events that can possibly become historic; simultaneously, all sports organize ('their') memory in such a systematic manner that the claim for historicity can be made with good reasons. On the one hand, it is the comparison with hundreds of past events that allows an ongoing or even an upcoming event to be marked as 'historic'. On the other hand, retrospectively, this ongoing comparison guarantees that the historic moments of the past will be referenced repetitively and thus remembered. Analyzing these foundational mechanisms which represent sport to a global audience allows for a better understanding of the otherwise seemingly irrational and excessive role of sports in national memory cultures.*

**Keywords:** Media sport, memory culture, sport history, seriality, competition

### How to cite this article:

Markus Stauff (2019). 'History in the Making': Sports and the Serialized Production of Collective Memory. *Erdélyi Társadalom/Transylvanian Society*, 17(1), 9–20. <https://doi.org/10.17177/77171.221>

The article can be downloaded from the CEEOL ([www.ceeol.com](http://www.ceeol.com)) and GESIS data catalogs: <http://www.da-ra.de/dara/search?lang=en&mdlang=en>.

Submission guidelines and archived issues are available at: [www.erdelyitarsadalom.ro](http://www.erdelyitarsadalom.ro).

## INTRODUCTION

Sport, especially its professionally organized and highly mediatised forms, is a rich source for memory culture. Bars displaying black and white photographs of sport heroes from the past seem to exist in every country – if with a focus on different sports. Fictional films or TV documentaries remind us of remarkable (or too easily forgotten) events. Additionally, as one of the

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key contributors to memory studies observes, “[t]rophies, certificates, and medals adorn the cabinets of clubhouses as well as the shelves of individual sportsmen” and thereby entangle individual and collective memory (or ‘tradition’) (J. Assmann, 2011: 33). Most conspicuously, sport – at least according to its own terms – has the potential of turning an event into a *historical* event on the spot. Often this includes transforming the sport event into one of broader cultural, especially national significance.

Of the countless possible examples, I want to mention only three here: (1) According to sports, history was made on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013. After 77 years of foreigners winning on British soil, it was a British athlete, Andy Murray, who won the men’s tennis tournament in Wimbledon. It was a fierce match, but it would have been declared historical independent of the quality of the game. The audience, the media and the player himself had already framed the match in these terms in advance. A woman in the audience was even waving around a handwritten sign ‘Lets (sic!) make History’. Of course, the woman was included in the television coverage of the game (at least the one presented by the German public service broadcaster ARD but probably many more), and the slogan was picked up in newspaper headlines. (2) When the national women’s football team progressed to the 2019 World Cup final, the Dutch newspaper *Het Parool* had a headline: “The women of orange write history with their victory”<sup>2</sup> (3) The main sponsor of the European football’s Champions League – a credit card company – has a short trailer before each televised game displaying the slogan: “History in the Making”.

These are, of course, hyperbolic statements as they are characteristic for a commercialized, attention-seeking media culture. At the same time, though, it might be worth considering how and why sport, for more than a hundred years already, is continuously able to declare historical moments and grant its athletes “on-the-spot immortality” (Rader, 1984: 20). How is it possible that in many countries sport became one of the pillars of national memory culture?

To a certain extent, the historical significance of an event (and the immortality of an athlete) may result from the heightened visibility of outstanding performances, which characterizes sports. A last minute twist of fate, incredible stamina or technical skill, an underdog victory – there are many aspects that make a performance remarkable and memorable and even more so since everybody watching knows that thousands of others (ideally the ‘whole world’ or at least the ‘entire nation’) are watching.

I want to argue that it is first of all the serial organization of standardized (and thus comparable) competitive events that enables sport to continuously declare *and* remember historical moments. Sport produces an endless series of events that can possibly become historic; simultaneously, all sports organize (‘their’) memory in such a systematic manner that the claim for historicity can be made with good reasons. On the one hand, it is the comparison with hundreds of past events that allows an ongoing or even an upcoming event to be marked as ‘historical’. On the other hand, retrospectively, this ongoing comparison guarantees that the historic moments of the past will be referenced repetitively and thus remembered. This combi-

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2 Original: “Oranjevrouwen schrijven historie met hun overwinning” my translation (*Het Parool*, 4 July 2019). The national teams often wear orange jerseys (Dutch royalty being called *Oranje/Orange*) and are regularly nicknamed ‘Orange’.

nation makes sport into an especially reliable and attractive element of national history and national memory.<sup>3</sup>

While historiographical debates of the past two decades critically discussed the modes, genres, and stereotypes shaping the writing of sports history (by historians and the popular media) they didn't comment much on the procedures through which sports create and update their own memory and thereby contribute to national histories (e.g.: Phillips, 2006; Booth, 2005).

In what follows, I will focus less on what types of (national) histories and memories sport produces and rather detail the procedures and techniques that allow sport to declare and remember so many events as historical. Analyzing these foundational mechanisms allows for a better understanding of the otherwise seemingly irrational and excessive role of sports in (national) memory culture. After a short discussion of the emergence of sport's memory culture and its basic techniques (like rankings, tables or records), I will compare the memory culture of cycling and baseball to discuss similarities and differences across different sports. Then, I will discuss seriality (or rather two overlapping forms of seriality) as, probably, the most important characteristic of all sports considering their potential to produce historical, memorable events. Eventually, I will conclude with remarks on the complementarity between universally organized sport competitions and national memory.

## BEFORE COMPETITIVE SPECTATOR SPORTS: REPRESENTING HISTORY

To indicate sports' specific contributions to (national) memory culture, it is helpful to compare its organization of temporality to German gymnastics, which, similar to the competitive ('English') sports, became established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and were thought to be beneficial to strengthen the nations' youths. When Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, the so-called 'Turnvater' (father of gymnastics), founded an open-air gymnasium close to Berlin in 1811, the place itself as well as the activities he organized there were supposed to contribute to German identity. The physical training was intended to create male bodies free from aristocratic drilling and yet fit enough to liberate from Napoleon what was considered German territory. Additionally, the activities were organized as display and re-enactment of German identity: the training ground was surrounded by oaks and also included traditional Germanic meeting places; exercising included the singing of traditional songs, and hiking to places of historical relevance (Alkemeyer, 2003: 38). So far, there are many similarities to physical practices in other countries at the time: Invoking national identity added legitimacy and motivation to the different sports and, at the same time, ensured the recurring representation and embodiment of a "foundational memory" (J. Assmann, 2011: 37). The physical activities of gymnastics themselves, however, were not considered memorable. Jahn was critical of competition and of records. Gymnastics, therefore, did not develop a proper historiography – it was supposed to memorize and revive the national past but not to produce its own cultural memory.

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3 As will become clearer below, the long lasting seriality of sport and its institutional manners of accounting partly undermine the established distinction between history and memory.

In contrast to that, as my introductory examples already showed, the organized competitive sports that developed in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (first in England but quickly spreading around the world) are only possible because they memorize their own past and thereby develop a drive to produce historic events. Sports only became successful and such an attractive content for the media because they established particular procedures to guarantee both, a regular stream of events and a competitive continuity between them. Through constant references to their own pasts, sports frame each present competition as one element in a long series – compared to which it can be declared a *historical* event.

## COMPETITIVE SPORTS: ACCOUNTABILITY AND MEMORY

The contribution of competitive sports to history and memory already becomes obvious in the case of the ancient Olympics, which were the most important and longest lasting of hundreds of similar contests across the Mediterranean. Most of these events were organized to give a city (or a sanctuary) public visibility and they followed a regular and harmonized schedule. The winners' performances were memorized in statues and poems. Even more, the Olympics, which for more than a thousand years were taking place every four years, were used as shared reference points for Hellenistic and Byzantine historians long after the games finally had come to an end around 400 CE (Fisher, 2009: 527; Remijsen, 2015: 68).

Such a combination of regularly organized events with similar and thus comparable (and possibly remarkable) performances becomes highly intensified with the emergence and global spread of competitive sports in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As Tobias Werron has convincingly shown, one of its decisive features is that it embeds each individual contest in a series of similar, inter-related and comparable ones (Werron, 2010; 2008).

Adding to the ancient Olympics, sport now standardizes the rules and especially the spatial and temporal framework of a growing number of sub-disciplines; it does not only record the winner, but the quantified performance of each participant and therefore allows for the comparability of performances across spatial and temporal distances. For example it has become possible to declare an individual performance a 'world record' – that means a performance that is better than all previous performances anywhere. Multi-tiered competitions were organized in a systematic, continuous and interrelated manner. The league system is the most prominent form but World Cups, Olympic Games and other events which combine multiple contests and take place at regular intervals also contribute to a multiplication of a cyclical seriality of comparable events – so that, next to world records, we have Olympic records as well. Most significantly, the regularly organized and standardized events became object of (and were incited by) an ongoing public observation and discussion. Media forms like league tables, rankings, highlight collections and heroic narratives all contribute to a condensed "public memory" of events which allows for the evaluation and comparison of performances (Werron, 2015).

## SPECIFIC MEDIA/SPECIFIC SPORTS

The introductory examples have shown how the commercialization of sports in relation to their immense coverage in the mass media creates a somewhat hyperbolic declaration of historical significance for nearly any event. While this is certainly the case, the previous section aimed to show, that there is a more systematic reason for sport's 'making of history', too: The mediated observation of sports triggers the standardization and serial organization of events; simultaneously, sport activates a number of media forms to record, compare, and evaluate individual contests in relation to all the others. Social history – especially after its 'material turn' (e.g.: Osmond, 2008; 2012) – is interested in statues, medals, trophies, and more banal paraphernalia as contributions to sports' memory culture. In comparison, the media of sports day-by-day memory production, the rankings, tables and narrative summaries got much less attention.

The numeric result of each competition condenses an entire event into a numerical value: the time it took to run a certain distance or the number of goals each of the competing teams scored. These quantified results can easily be used in rankings, tables, and statistical calculations, thus becoming the most basic building blocks for sports' particular memory. In some cases, the numerical result achieves a broader symbolic meaning that articulates and memorizes the emotional experience and broader cultural impact. This was the case with the Brazilian 1:7 defeat in the Men's World Cup 2014 half final against Germany. In Brazil the 'sete a um' (seven to one) "has become a metaphor for a devastating and crushing defeat in Brazilian use of language" far beyond sport.<sup>4</sup>

While all sports use images and narratives next to numbers to record and evaluate performances, it is interesting to see that different sports, due to their temporal and spatial features, trigger a specific use of media for articulating their memory. I will focus on baseball and road cycling as two examples.

Already in the 1860s, baseball was defined as *the* national game of the United States, and it is still considered to be the most traditional of American sports. Re-staging a "pastoral spatiality and temporality" (Bill Brown quoted in Sobchack, 1993: 6), its rules and traditions are supposed to be handed over from father to son. In a slight contrast to that pastorality, baseball is the "most statistically analyzed American sport" (Cassuto & Grant, 2011: 34) and its memory culture, accordingly, is very much shaped by numbers. Since a baseball game consists of a series of distinct actions which are constantly repeated (pitches, hits, runs etc.), it lends itself well to numerical notation. Already in the 1860s, the journalist Henry Chadwick introduced the so-called box score, a standardized manner to record the decisive moves of a baseball game. Even if this box score was modified and complemented with more detailed data throughout the decades, this allows for an easy and 'objective' comparison of performances from the entire history of baseball. The conspicuous nostalgia that permeates baseball is fostered by the seamless continuity of quantified data and the resulting memory of past baseball heroes.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brazil\\_v\\_Germany\\_\(2014\\_FIFA\\_World\\_Cup\)#Aftermath](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brazil_v_Germany_(2014_FIFA_World_Cup)#Aftermath). Accessed 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2019.

In many respects cycling presents a contrasting example: When it took off, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was considered to be a quintessentially modern sport. The bicycle was an advanced technology and the man-machine assemblage made it into an apt metaphor for contemporary developments (Vigarello, 1996). Additionally, cycling was the sport of the working class in many countries and was professionalized quite early on (in contrast to the more bourgeois tradition of European football).

In terms of its media constellation, however, cycling was – and partly still remains today – a much more old-fashioned sport than baseball. To focus on the most famous example: the Tour de France, an annual race of three weeks (by now: around 20 stages and two rest days), follows a somewhat different route each year. Additionally, the stages often consist of about five hours of continuous racing and thus offer few distinct, pre-defined actions. Therefore, statistics only play a minor role and the annual installments are rather connected with each other through storytelling. Roland Barthes famously described the Tour de France as an “Epic” consisting of a sequence of ordeals in which men(!) battle against the mountains, the weather and their own weaknesses (Barthes, 2012). For many years, there was no chance that any audience could oversee the evolution of a race in its entirety. The final description of the race ending up in newspapers – as well as the accountability of the race – remained dependent on the accounts of the competitors themselves. Even when journalists started to accompany the race on motorbikes, they still weren’t able to observe the front group of a race and the riders left behind. Television only slowly changed that. Not until the introduction of mobile and wireless television cameras in the 1970s – first on motorbikes and later also on helicopters – did a more or less seamless coverage become possible. But even today, narrative accounts dominate the evaluation and comparison of past and present performances in cycling. In contrast to the numerically guaranteed historical continuity of baseball, cycling creates historical continuity and marks memorable events mainly through the repetitive use of analogies, metaphors, and narrative tropes: the toughness of a climb, for example, is underlined and evaluated through stories of past editions with even worse weather conditions or even more dramatic setbacks for one of the leading riders. Often these stories (somewhat similar to early German gymnastics) combine the physical activity with the history of the national geography that it traverses and maps (Vigarello, 1996). While historical achievements in baseball are very often represented by numbers (i.e.: records), in cycling the remarkability of a competition is made plausible through narrative tension and context.

However, while the differences between baseball and cycling are of interest, and while cycling still shows an old-fashioned connection with the national landscape, memory culture in both cases is mainly shaped by the common cyclical seriality of events, as it is for all sports. This guarantees that each year another event takes place that gives reasons to memorize the past events and simultaneously uses this comparative memory for the identification of new historical moments.

## THE MEMORY OF SPORTS: PROGRESSING AND REPETITIVE SERIALITY

Baseball and cycling's production of memory evince noticeable similarities in the way they combine each individual contest with the memory of past ones: While the quality of a competition might partly still be determined by the present performance – its force, tenseness, or its “epiphany of form” (Gumbrecht, 1999) – its evaluation arguably depends more on the comparison with other similar performances (Werron, 2015). Each single contest is unpredictable but ends with a clear result, thereby supporting an interest and emotional involvement in each individual event. At the same time, each contest follows the same rules as previous ones. Most sport events even participate in two different forms of seriality which support each other while each contributing with a specific dynamic to sport's memory culture:

On the one hand, most single contests are part of a longer and more comprehensive competition often structured as a ‘season’, a ‘tournament’, or qualifying rounds. Such a competition constitutes continuity through a *progressing form of seriality*: the result of one event defines the options of the next event; the entire series is defined by increasing tension, often (but not necessarily) culminating in one final decisive competition - the World Series in baseball, the Super Bowl in American Football, the final of a tennis tournament.<sup>5</sup> Especially in the case of leagues, the contrast between present performance and overall achievement can be significant: a loss can turn out to bring a team to the top of the table if the main competitor for the title suffered a more severe defeat. On the other hand, each single contest (and the entire season) is also part of a *repetitive form of seriality*: not only does each contest repeat the same situation with the same rules; each year the entire competition also gets repeated, and the same or similar kinds of fixtures as in the past year will take place again.

Long before the so-called seasons of radio or television series, sports established a seasonal cycle that more or less annually repeats the same kind of competition, a similar series of fixtures yet with different pre-conditions, different personnel, and different weather conditions.<sup>6</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the serial publication of newspapers supported (and often promoted) sports' seriality while sports also shaped the publication schedule of the daily or weekly press by offering reliable weekly content (Mason, 1986). Despite the fact that, recently, the delivery of television shows, first through DVD and now through on-demand streaming platforms like Netflix, tends to de-couple both the production and reception of drama series from the seasonal structure, sport's cyclical structure will, quite probably, survive this technological and economic re-organization of delivery schedules. Sport thus may be the cultural content that is most intensely interwoven with national and global schedules, signaling winter, summer and special holidays. The seriality of sports such as baseball or cycling extends much further back than the

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5 Adding to the productivity, different kinds of sports organize the progressive continuity in different ways. Some sports have even established complementary forms - as European football did with the League and the Cup systems. Basically, these different forms of organization, while of course also resulting from commercial incentives, can be conceived of as alternative balances between individual event and overall competition.

6 On the two different forms of seriality characterising television, see Engell 2019.

longest-running soap operas and guarantees for cultural and historical continuity that in many cases outlasts fundamental political and technological transformations.<sup>7</sup>

Beyond creating a relatively stable and annually repeating temporal pattern that often is entangled with other national or global schedules (holidays, seasons etc.) this combination of two forms of seriality embedding the individual contest is key to sports' memory production. More than any other serial form, sport references its own past consistently in its accounts of the present events and uses this to identify and remember historical moments.

Already before the start of each contest, the prior development of the progressing seriality has to be recalled in a condensed form to know what is at stake and to frame the possible – and most probable – outcomes. Before each baseball game, the rankings of the contenders in the league are displayed to visualize the consequences of all the possible outcomes of the upcoming contest. In the Tour de France, meanwhile, the contenders' standings and the time they lag behind the overall leader gets listed in advance of each stage.

During an unfolding contest, the development of the contest itself has to be 'memorized' to make clear what the options and probabilities are for the remaining time: Scoreboards fulfill this function, and in tennis the umpire additionally announces the current standing after each rally. It is helpful to compare such references to past events with fictional narratives: The soap opera is considered to be a genre that is watched in a distracted mode while doing other things. Because of that, the narrative information is quite redundant; relevant information about changes in a character's life are often repeated in several conversations (Allen, 1985). The redundancy of sports reporting is much higher, though. With each new event the most relevant prior events in the same competition are summarized, often both in graphic and oral mode.

Additionally, the fact that each individual competition is part of a progressive seriality extends these condensed references to past events far beyond the ongoing competition. Often, specific actions of the ongoing contest trigger spontaneous (but often well prepared) references to prior moments of the progressive seriality: In one stage of the Tour de France, the disappointing performance of an athlete can be framed by saying that he is now 'paying the price' for his enormous efforts on the day before. In a BBC Match of the Day episode, commentators frame an upcoming penalty by informing the audience that the player has already shot seven goals from penalties this season, 'but none as important as this'. The progressive seriality serves to underline significance.

Andrew Tudor (whilst referring to the football World Cup) has shown in detail that reporters actually need frameworks from prior games to organize the events of the ongoing competition in a narrative way; they keep an established framework stable as long as possible (e.g. the alleged characteristics and qualities of a player or a team). Only if the unfolding events drastically contradict the accumulated memory, it gets revised and re-organized. For lesser known athletes and especially athletes from lesser-known countries, for which sport-related memory is not available in the database of the observer, resilient stereotypes fill in (Tudor, 1992).

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7 On the German Wikipedia page, the list of German football champions spans the period from 1902 to 2019, thus including at least six politically and geographically different entities [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste\\_der\\_deutschen\\_Fußballmeister](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_der_deutschen_Fußballmeister)

Sport does not limit its memory work to the progressing seriality with its causal connection to the present contest, though. It also compares the present action to causally disconnected events from past seasons. As a result, each competition activates multiple narratives with multiple temporal layers. While there is no causal connection between the games of different seasons (or the 100m sprint of two consecutive Olympic games), references to events across the repetitive seriality of all past seasons allow to frame the meaning and significance of an event – and especially serve to mark it as historical. A typical example would be a comment from BBC's Match of the Day after a goalkeeper deflected a penalty shot in the English Cup final of 1988: "the first penalty safe in a Cup final."

This example also indicates another characteristic dynamic of sport's memory culture: With its contingent actions, sport not only offers an incentive to compare the current match or race with prior events, it also allows for an endless extension of possibly relevant elements that can be compared; it is not the current event alone that is put into a historical continuity, each identifiable element of the contest can be compared with an independent series of comparable events: Shots and missed shots, weather conditions, athletes' ages or nationalities – as we saw in my example above, in which the fact that the winner of the Wimbledon tournament was British made it into a historical event.

Maybe most importantly for sports' contributions to wider memory culture and national history, the cyclical structure of sports itself acts as a reliable trigger to regularly activate and update the memory of *historical* events – even without some special current action that would act as a catalyst. Age old and 'legendary' rivalries between teams are a typical example, as are the TV highlight reels of past triumphs and dramatic losses of a national team framing the coverage of World Cups or the Olympics. This happens in the less result-oriented and more narrative memory culture of cycling, too. In the Tour de France, the route is not the same every year but each time the race crosses the Tourmalet mountain, the story of Eugene Christophe will be repeated – a rider who in 1913 lost the Tour de France because his forks broke descending the Tourmalet and he had to walk to a blacksmith in the next village to fix it; similarly, each time the route includes the ascent to Mont Ventoux, the 1967 death of British rider Tom Simpsons during a time trial stage to the top of the mountain is memorized. There is a monument, too, at the spot where he fell from his bike and amateur riders climbing the mountain have developed a ritual of stopping and leaving behind one of their water bottles there. But this monument is not needed to trigger the mentioning of the event on TV or on social media when in yet another year the professional cyclists ride by the spot without paying attention to the special place.

These are examples in which the repetitive seriality of sports figures less as a flexible resource that is accessed dependent on contingent events, but rather as a nearly mindless ritual, ensuring a shared knowledge that comes close to being cliché. While some of sports' memories are dependent on contingent occasions, others are consistently repeated every competition. This also raises the question whether sports memories that are allegedly shared across a nation, the men's football team's World Cup win of 1954 in Germany for instance, would in fact be part of cultural memory if football and its cyclical structure would stop mentioning that event.

The argument would be, that the more subtle, unremarkable but highly flexible and ubiquitous mechanisms that connect past and present events are the unmistakable basis for the

declaration and memorization of historical events. These references take advantage of the interplay between progressing seriality with its causal connections on the one hand and repetitive seriality with it causally disconnected but symbolically rich similarities on the other. This offers two dynamics to the broader cultural memory: It uses a condensed and reductive form of the past to evaluate the quality of the ongoing event and thus to potentially transform it into a ‘historical event’ – sometimes even before it started. Yet, the repetitive seriality also allows to repeat, recall and praise the event of the past that already has become considered ‘historical’. In this context, history is constantly transformed into memory again: In established terminology, history distinguishes (and disconnects) the past from present experience, while memory keeps the past connected to the present (A. Assmann, 2011; Engell, 2019 – both referring to Maurice Halbwachs’ work). In sports, a baseball season or a Tour de France event from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is both: historically archived and closed but also flexibly accessible to fans and media to find new aspects that can be compared to ongoing developments.

## CONCLUSION: UNIVERSAL COMPETITION AND NATIONAL MEMORY

So far I have argued that organized, competitive sport is structurally dependent on creating its own memory. In this context sports developed procedures and media forms (like rankings, tables, and narratives) that organize the memory of their own past in a highly efficient and flexible manner. It is the combination between such media forms and the twofold serial structure of sports’ organization of events (repetitive/cyclical and progressive) that creates a dynamic and flexible machinery that keeps the memory of past events alive and uses the past to frame the present – to possibly mark it as a *historical* event. While this machinery is an essential building block for sport as we know it, its solidity for the organization of memory clearly makes it attractive beyond sport. A World Cup Win of a national team is remembered as not only an athletic achievement but a significant moment of a nation. The cyclical repetition of the Tour de France does not only memorize the heroic achievements of riders from the past but also significant places and events of wider French history (its cloisters, its wars etc.).

In principal, sports’ efficient and sustainable organization of memory can be (and actually has been) connected to individual biographies and to collectives of different size and different character. The fact that it is most often harnessed by national perspectives and thus contributes to national (and nationalistic) memory is mostly due to the fact that sports – at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – developed into a universal competition that is organized according to nation states. Barbara Keys traced this development in detail and argued that it is exactly the decidedly international character of sport competitions that made them an ideal stage for the articulation of national identities and histories. The uniformity and universalism of sport “appear to offer a uniquely objective and quantifiable means to compare national strength” (Keys, 2006: 4).

German gymnastics did not only lack a competitive spirit, but because of that it also missed to develop “an internationalist ideology” and an international institutional framework (Keys, 2006: 23). Thus, it could represent elements of German history but it could not contribute to any updating of German memory in relation to and in competition with other countries.

Sport's memory production became so relevant as a resource for national identity because it embeds each significant event not only in a series of past events but also in a series of comparable international events.

There are remarkable sport events that are clearly entangled with national memory culture. The 'miracle on ice' in the US or the Football World Cup of 1954 in Germany did contribute to national history and identity; and the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games is still the most globally visible moment for displaying one's national histories and traditions. In a way, these examples still continue in the manner in which Friedrich Ludwig Jahn wanted to use gymnastics to display and embody national tradition and essence.

Some people have argued that sport history is so attractive because in contrast to the mish-mash of schoolbook history "the history of sports revealed crystal-clear, cyclical patterns" (Rader, 1984: 12). According to sociologist Gregory Stone (1971, 50) "[...] the sports pages in the daily newspaper [...] provide some confirmation that there is a continuity in the events and affairs of the larger society."

I don't think that the procedures discussed here do, in fact, present a clear continuity; and sport's history is as controversial a mishmash as any. If we don't focus only on the biggest events – and especially not only on the nationally memorized historical achievements which are only one highly specific aspect of sport's memory culture – but also on the basic procedures of sports' organization of memory, we can understand better how and why sports gets entangled with historical and national significance. Sports offer instruments to always re-order and thus re-stabilize continuity. Their production of memory is characterized by procedures which allow for a highly dynamic play between past and present and for a constant signaling of possibly historical moments – most of which will quickly be forgotten, some of them will be repeated every year. Only by understanding the entire well-oiled machine of sports' production of the past we can understand how special historical events are marked, enabled, and memorized by sport. In the end the mechanisms discussed here may carry more weight in relation with the contemporary sense of the past and the shaping of cultural memories and identities than the big, memorable events.

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László Marác<sup>1</sup>

## Saber Fencing and the Remaking of the Hungarian State

### Abstract

*In Hungary, fencing, especially saber fencing is considered a national sport and an inherent part of Hungarian national identity. Although Hungary, following France and Italy, was one of the pioneers in developing the fencing sport in the second half of the nineteenth century, only in the course of the first half of the twentieth century did Hungary take the lead in developing new techniques, tactics and training methods for saber fencing. As a result, between 1908 and 1964 Hungarian saber fencers dominated the international individual and team competitions. Almost all the gold medals at the Olympic Games in saber fencing in that period were won by Hungarian athletes. In this paper, it will be argued that saber fencing was of major importance in the remaking of the Hungarian State which collapsed at the end of the First World War as part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (K. und k.) and had to be rebuilt as an independent, sovereign nation. The conditions for peace concluding the First World War for Hungary were laid down in the Treaty of Trianon (1920) that was perceived as a 'dictate' by the Hungarians. The state institutionalization of fencing, at that time in the form of sport fencing growing out of war and duel fencing, took place in the framework of the Hungarian Army, was supported by the highest Hungarian authorities and succeeded to counterbalance the impact of the Treaty of Trianon. Major driving forces for the remaking of the Hungarian state and the reconstruction of Hungarian identity were influenced by internal and external factors. The internal factors include on the one hand, the establishment of institutes for military fencing and gymnastics education by the Hungarian authorities in the second and the third decade of the twentieth century and, on the other hand, the efforts of outstanding fencing masters educated in the K. und k. Army, like László Borsody in the supervision of these institutes. One of the external factors was the active sports diplomacy of the Netherlands, a neutral country during the First World War, aimed at bringing back the Hungarian fencing federation into the international fencing networks after Hungary was excluded from international sports competitions after the First World War because it sided with the Central Powers.*

**Keywords:** Hungary, saber fencing, Treaty of Trianon, László Borsody, sports diplomacy

### How to cite this article:

László Marác (2019). Saber Fencing and the Remaking of the Hungarian State. *Erdélyi Társadalom/Transylvanian Society*, 17(1), 21–37. <https://doi.org/10.17177/77171.222>

The article can be downloaded from the CEEOL ([www.ceeol.com](http://www.ceeol.com)) and GESIS data catalogs: <http://www.da-ra.de/dara/search?lang=en&mdlang=en>.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This paper will pursue the following line of argumentation. First, we will discuss the Hungarian archetype. It will be argued that an important feature of the Hungarian self-image is the saber as a 'Hungarian' weapon. This is associated with the tradition of the Hungarian cavalry and its mounted soldiers, the so-called 'hussars'. The hussars, who feature prominently in Hungarian culture were instrumental in war fencing with sabers. Basically, the development of Hungarian sport fencing followed a pattern similar to that in other European countries, like France and Italy. It grew out of war fencing and duel fencing. War fencing was practiced by Hungarian officers who were mostly educated in the Military Fencing and Gymnastics Instructors' Course of the Austro-Hungarian Army, the so-called Theresianum in Wiener Neustadt. Civilians, however, were prepared for duel fencing at the fencing schools that opened their doors in the first half of the nineteenth century all over historical Hungary. In the beginning these civilian fencing schools were supervised by foreign, i.e. French and Italian fencing masters. Sport fencing was established in the course of the second half of the nineteenth century in the framework of the first Hungarian sports clubs initiated by prominent members of the Hungarian aristocracy and modeled after English examples.

Next to the introduction of sport fencing in the early sports clubs Hungarian saber fencing was guaranteed in the framework of the Royal Hungarian Army that provided positions for the fencing masters educated in the Military Fencing and Gymnastics Instructors' Course in Wiener Neustadt. In the beginning of the twentieth century fencing in Hungary was characterized by a double rivalry. There was the hegemonic struggle between the fencing masters and officers of Austria and Hungary competing for the title of best military fencer in different categories of the K. und k. Army every year. In Budapest, especially after the Hungarian millennium, there was rivalry between the civilian fencing clubs led by Italian masters and the military fencing clubs led by the fencing masters educated in Wiener Neustadt.

The motivation for sport fencing under military guidance came as a reaction to the Treaty of Trianon which was concluded between Hungary and the Allied or Entente Powers on June 4, 1920. The Treaty of Trianon which was perceived by the Hungarians as a 'dictate' dismantled the Austro-Hungarian Empire and marked the new borders of the Hungarian state reducing its territory by more than two thirds of its pre-war size and leaving one-third of ethnic Hungarians as 'minorities' in the neighboring successor states. The post-World War I national leadership of Hungary based on the National Army led by Admiral Miklós Horthy came to power in Hungary after a turbulent period. In the second and third decade of the twentieth century, this leadership facilitated the development of modern military fencing and gymnastics instructors' institutes. The objective was to improve the physical condition of the Hungarian Army but also to raise the level of sports in order to compete in the international arena. The directors of the educational fencing institutes were Hungarian officers from the former K. und k. Army and the instructors were fencing masters and sport instructors educated at the Theresianum. The most talented Hungarian fencing master, László Borsody, a graduate of the Theresianum was appointed head fencing master of the newly established, post-War institute. In relative anonymity, Borsody and his staff developed new techniques, tactics and training methods which resulted in a Hungarian fencing style or school that spread over to the civilian fencing clubs as

well. This constellation formed the basis of the world-class Hungarian saber fencing hegemony which contributed to the remaking of the Hungarian state and the reconstruction of Hungarian identity as a fencing nation around what was perceived as the Hungarian weapon par excellence, the saber. The saber fencing hegemony served to strengthen national and/or collective identity after 1920. External factors, like international sports diplomacy also facilitated this process.

The first delegation of saber fencers that attended Budapest were from the Netherlands. The Dutch fencers visited Hungary as early as 1922, when Hungary was still excluded from participating in international sports competitions by the international sports federations as a result of its role in the First World War on the side of the Central Powers. The Dutch delegation was led by one of the most outstanding Dutch fencers of that time, the Dutch army officer Captain Arie de Jong. The Netherlands had remained neutral during the First World War and was considered a friendly nation by the Hungarians. Hence, the Dutch fencers were allowed to train in the Hungarian military institutes and Dutch sports diplomacy became instrumental in bringing back the Hungarian fencing federation into the international sports networks and competitions.

## 2. SABER FENCING AND THE HUNGARIAN ARCHETYPE

Elsewhere I have argued that the archetype of the Hungarian is a ‘fighter’ (Marác, 1996; Marác, 2007a; 2007b). This archetype has determined the self-images, images and stereotypes of the Hungarians throughout the ages. The Western stereotypes and images of the Hungarians accommodate the Hungarian archetype and fit into two categories. The Hungarian is either a freedom fighter, if he is on the side of the West; or a rebel, if he is in conflict with the West. I have studied the political stereotypes and images of the Hungarians in earlier work (Marác, 1996) and I have found that the archetype of the fighter extends to other domains as well, like the cultural one (Marác, 2007a; 2007b). In this paper, I will argue that the Hungarian self-image of saber fencing as a national sport clearly belongs to the Hungarian archetype of the ‘fighter’. If we search for the historical roots of saber sport fencing in Hungary we have to discuss the historical roots of the ‘saber’ and its references first.

The ‘saber’ is a weapon used by the military, more precisely by the light cavalry regiments in war fencing. The standard outfit of a historical Hungarian mounted soldier called ‘*huszár*’ “hussar” included a ‘saber’, in Hungarian called ‘*szablya*’.<sup>2</sup> A military saber was usually a curved, single-edge blade sword made of iron, typical for horse cavalry or horsemen warriors. These soldiers used to fight with sabers mounted on horseback (Marác, 2017: 336-337). The etymology of the Hungarian word for saber ‘*szablya*’ contains the root word ‘*szab*’ ‘to cut’ that expresses its function as a ‘cutting’ weapon. According to the etymological studies of the origin

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2 See the prominent position of the Hungarian soldiers and the saber in Hungarian literature Szalay (1932). Hungarian literature and poetry is a rich domain to study the Hungarian archetype, self-images and self-stereotypes.

of equivalents of the Hungarian 'szablya' in other European languages, i.e. 'sabre' in English and French, 'sciabola' in Italian, 'sabel' in Dutch, 'szabla' in Polish, and 'sablya' in Russian, all have a Hungarian origin and relate to the earliest times when Hungarians settled in Europe from their Central Asian 'Urheimat' and brought with them the 'saber' (Marácz, 2017: 336-337). The role the Hungarian light cavalry with its elegantly dressed hussars was reinforced in the process of maintaining Hungarian sovereignty in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century, when threatened either by the Osman or the Habsburg armies (Kun, 1969: 52-55; Földes, Kun, & Kutassi, 1977). The format of the Hungarian hussar regiments spread over Europe and was integrated into a number of European armies (Ádám, 2019). As I will argue below in more detail, the military tradition of war fencing largely contributed to the development of saber fencing as a national sport in Hungary. To distinguish the military saber from the sport saber the Hungarian language uses nowadays a different word for the saber of sport fencing, i.e. 'kard'. This word contains the root 'kar' which means arm. The sport saber is seen as an extension of the arm that needs manipulation in order to fence the opponent. Hence, 'kard' refers to the lighter saber used in sport fencing, while 'szablya' refers to the heavier saber used in military fencing.

Another form of fencing that contributed to the development of Hungarian sport fencing is the tradition of dueling with swords. Duel fencing to settle issues of grievances and conflicts had a long tradition in Europe as well as Hungary and was closely related to the expression of a masculine dominated society with the preference not to settle these in court but in an arranged one-to-one fight.<sup>3</sup> In Hungary, duel fencing for the purpose of defending one's honor was fought with sabers. Duel fencing appeared late into the first half of the twentieth century (Clair, 1930).<sup>4</sup> In the late nineteenth century rules were devised to diminish the risks of death.

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3 See Hadas (2003: 85-103) for a detailed discussion of the relation between duel fencing guided by masculine honor and sport fencing in the course of nineteenth century Hungary.

4 Although duel fencing was illegal in Hungary before World War I it was widely practiced, even in the circles of sport fencers and athletes. In an interview with Géza Horváth (2014, interview July 11, 1976, Utrecht) the Hungarian-Jewish Second World War resistance fighter Sándor Baracs who settled in the Netherlands in 1927 refers to a duel in 1913 between twofold Olympic champion Jenő Fuchs (1908 London, Stockholm 1912) and his own uncle Marcell Baracs, a lawyer in Budapest, and a talented saber fencer who trained under Italo Santelli. Fuchs challenged Baracs for a duel on saber to settle a case in court, where they both worked as lawyers. The duel took place and ended with a face scratch harming the twofold Olympic champion Fuchs.

A duel for preserving the code of honor between the Italian top ranking fencer Oreste Puliti and the Hungarian referee György Kovács was the result of a series of incidents concerning the Italian top ranking fencer at the 1924 Paris Olympic Games. This is referred to in the literature as the Puliti Affair (Terret et al., 2007). The Italian delegation got furious about the fact that the threatening remarks of Puliti against Kovács were mediated by the Italian national coach of the Hungarian saber team, Italo Santelli who was viewed as a traitor by the Italian fencing delegation. It came to a duel in November 1924 at the Yugoslav-Hungarian border on the Hungarian side in Nagykanizsa. Both men injured each other and Puliti apologized to Kovács for his behavior. According to the Dutch saber fencer Adriaan Egbertus Willem "Arie" de Jong who participated as a fencer and referee in the Paris 1924 Games he was invited as a referee for this duel. He refused because he did not want to get involved in a "hornet's nest". According to him, the Austrian fencing master Dr. Otto Herschmann became the referee in this duel and Puliti lost the duel because he was hit by Kovács with the back of

A popular set of conventions for dueling was compiled by Vilmos Clair, a lawyer by profession. The first edition of his duel codex appeared in 1897 and was reprinted 29 times (Clair, 1897; Felső-Eőri Cseresznyés, 1901). The 29<sup>th</sup> version was published at the end of the Second World War in 1944. The existence of a codex in order to regulate dueling with saber can be seen as a blueprint for the elaboration of conventional rules regulating sport fencing. The first version of the internationally accepted rules for sport fencing, the so-called ‘green book’ was compiled by the Hungarian fencer and sport diplomat Dr. Béla Nagy in 1902. After it was translated into French it was accepted by the fencing authorities of ten countries as the basis for fencing conventions first applied at the intercalated Olympic Games of 1906 in Greece (Földes et al., 1977: 205). Hence, war fencing and duel fencing offered the basis for sport fencing in Hungary (Barta, 2016).<sup>5</sup>

### 3. THE EARLY PERIOD OF SPORT FENCING IN HUNGARY

Sport fencing started in Hungary in the course of the second decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century at the beginning of the modernization drives under the guidance of Count István Szechenyi. It was his aristocrat friend and liberal Transylvanian statesman, Baron Miklós Wesselényi who founded in 1824 the first fencing school in the Transylvanian town of Kolozsvár (today’s Cluj-Napoca in Romania) as the *Kolozsvári Viadal Iskola* (Fencing school of Kolozsvár). A few years earlier, in 1818, in Kolozsvár fencing was taught by an Italian fencing master Gaetano Biasini (Kilyéni, 2009). A year after the fencing school in Kolozsvár opened its doors a fencing school initiated

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the saber that is flat into the abdomen (See the interview with Arie de Jong Leeuwarder Courant, October 26, 1956, p. 13). Terret et al. (2007: 1282) rightly point out that the number of incidents provoked by Puliti in the overheated atmosphere of the fencing tournament of the Paris Summer Olympic Games should be analyzed in a political and cultural context. They argue that the tensions had to do with a quest for national prestige of the three nations with chances to win Olympic medals in the fencing events at the 1924 Paris Summer Games. France was the organizer of the 1924 Summer Games and had the interest to win medals at home. The aggressive attitude of the Italian team had to do with the fact that the Italian fencing delegation came under the spell of Mussolini’s Fascism. Finally, Hungary could participate in the Olympic Games again after it was excluded from the Antwerpen 1920 Summer Games, because of fighting on the side of the Central Powers in the First World War. On top of the quest for national prestige there was the strive for the hegemony of the fencing schools concerned, i.e. the Italian, French and Hungarian ones. All this was embedded in the conflict between the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the International Fencing Federation about the mandate of the IOC to interfere in the appeal belonging originally to the authority of the international sports federations. The honorary jury of the IOC decided to rehabilitate Puliti in 1925 inadvertently taking the side of Italian Fascism. Next to the national and the international institutional aspects of the Puliti Affair there was the issue of masculine honor that went beyond the traditional concept of aristocratic masculinity. By the end of the nineteenth century it was an essential feature of middle class male behavior across Europe.

- 5 This is true for other European countries as well. See Garry (2019) for France. A comparative study has to make clear what the exact relation between the three types of fencing is and what weapon or weapons were favored in the different countries involved.

by Count Szechenyi was established in Pest, i.e. *Nemzeti Vivó Intézet* (National Fencing Institute). The status of the association was set in the atmosphere of the National Renewal, the so-called Reform Period, that pushed forward the modernization of Hungary led by liberal aristocrats, like Szechenyi and Wesselényi (Boskovics, 1983: 6-7; Marác, 1996: 37). Only Hungarians could be members of the National Fencing School and even youngsters of poor civilian families that could not afford to pay the association fees could attend the fencing lessons (Földes et al., 1977: 127). The National Fencing School also served a latent recruiting function for the army. In this way young civilians could be brought into contact with the military profession. Fencing was important to make young civilians available for the military struggle at the front in order to defend the homeland (Földes et al., 1977: 129). In the following quote from one of the most ardent supporters of the fencing sports among the liberal aristocrats of the Reform Period, Baron Miklós Wesselényi, the echo of the Hungarian archetype is resonating:

“It is for no nation more common and necessary to handle its saber well like the Hungarian because it has to thank the saber for everything there is and what he has.”<sup>6</sup>

(translated by the author)

The first fencing masters of the National Fencing Institute were Frenchmen, i.e. Ferenc Friedrich and Lajos Chappon but, in the thirties, teaching in the institute was delivered in Hungarian. Chappon points out in his fencing textbook published in 1839 in German that fencing has a lot of benefits for everyday life. It makes the body more mobile, provides tactics for self-defense to counter the dangers in life and argues that even military officers should improve their fencing knowledge. It is not enough what they have learned in military schools. Both French fencing masters were joined by a young Hungarian assistant fencing master József Keresztessy who would develop the classical Hungarian saber fencing style which relied heavily on military saber fencing.

The Hungarian gymnastics school was banned for a few years from functioning and could only open its doors again in 1830s. This was due to an order by the Austrian Chancellor Clemens Metternich who had banned the gymnastics association in Germany from functioning in the 1820s – the so-called ‘Turnsperre’ - because they were suspected of secretly attempting to overthrow the existing order by introducing revolutionary ideas and the idea of a German nation state. Metternich ordered a similar ban for the rest of the Habsburg Empire as well. Since 1830 the number of fencing schools quickly increased throughout Hungary. The French gymnastic instructor Ignác Clair founded the Pester Gymnastische Schule where alongside gymnastics fencing was being taught to the youngsters of Pest. Because of the Hungarian defeat in the 1848/1849 anti-Habsburg Revolution and War of Independence the fencing clubs were

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6 In Hungarian: “Egy nemzetnek sem lenne illőbb és szükségesebb a kardját jól forgatni tudni, mint a magyarnak, mert ami és amije van, azt ennek köszönheti!”. Quoted in the documentary film about László Borsody by Simonyi Magyarszablya (2018).

closed down until the second half of the fifth decade (Földes et al., 1977: 483; Kilyéni, 2009: 8). After they reopened, their main function apart from improving the physical fitness of their members was to prepare them for dueling and to present fencing demonstrations in front of a large audience.

Apart from the civilian fencing clubs that were spreading all over Hungary and Transylvania the education of war fencing remained the responsibility of the army. The education of military fencing instructors took place in the Austrian Theresian Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt.<sup>7</sup> After the 'Ausgleich' between Austria and Hungary in 1867, in fact a compromise between the Emperor Franz Joseph and the Hungarian aristocrats, the Habsburg Empire gained a dual structure. The head of state was Franz Joseph, Emperor of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy and King of Hungary (K. und k.). The Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defense and Finance were incorporated but apart from that Hungary's status remained equal to Austria's. In the framework of the K. und k. Hungarian officers could receive fencing education at the Military Fencing and Gymnastics Teacher's course. In the Theresianum there was a typical Central European atmosphere with first rank fencing masters, like the Croat Milan Neralić and the Italian Luigi Barbasetti. The Hungarian fencing style was also represented due to the fact that Rittmeister Gusztáv Igalffy descendant of a Hungarian military family and the commander of the Military Fencing and Gymnastics Teacher's Course from 1885-1887 was himself a war saber fencer as a cavalry-man. Barbasetti who represented the Italian fencing style was extremely influential in Europe because of his widely-distributed textbook on saber fencing in German 'Säbelfechten'.<sup>8</sup> The Theresianum was the starting point for many of the Hungarian fencing masters that played an important role in the establishment of saber fencing in post World War I Hungary.

#### 4. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SPORT FENCING IN HUNGARY

The introduction of sport fencing started with the establishment of the first Hungarian sports club, i.e. Magyar Athletikai Club (MAC) initiated by Count Miksa Esterházy and Lajos Molnár in 1875. The athletics sports club was modelled after English examples due to the fact that Count Esterházy had been a counselor at the Austro-Hungarian Embassy in London and had studied the establishment of the English sports clubs in London. MAC received a fencing department as well. The model set by MAC spread over the country and in Kolozsvár the Kolozsvári Athletikai Club (Kolozsvár Athletics Club, KAC) was founded in 1885 with its own fencing department (Kilyéni, 2010: 73-75). The first fencing master of MAC became József Keresztessy who elaborated the Hungarian saber fencing style which was close to war fencing. It was this Hungarian style of fencing that would be challenged by Italian fencing masters that

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7 See K. und k. Militär-Fecht- und Turnlehrer-Curs in Wiener-Neustadt. 1892. *Der K. und k. Militär-Fecht- und Turnlehrer-Curs in Wiener-Neustadt*. Wien: K. und k. Reichs-Kriegs-Ministerium; and Bartunek (1904) for more details.

8 The German version appeared in 1898 in Vienna; the English version in the United States in 1936.

brought with them a lighter weapon more suitable for sport fencing. As a result, around the millennium, the techniques and tactics of sport fencing in Hungary changed decisively.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 1894, MAC organized the first national fencing demonstration in Budapest and in 1895 the first international fencing competition. Sport fencing in Hungary received an enormous boost due to the fact that fencing events were part of the official program of the Hungarian National Millennium Exhibition to commemorate the Hungarian Conquest of 896 AD and the foundation of the Hungarian state in 1000 AD under the first Hungarian king acknowledged by the Vatican, St. Stephen (Marác, 1996: 33-37). Between May 14-20 in 1896 a big international fencing competition took place in the big hall of the 'Vigadó', a large concert hall on the eastern bank of the Danube built in 1859. 140 fencers participated in the millennium fencing competition including the best fencers of Europe at the time (Földes et al., 1977: 205). The category of masters was won by an Italian fencing master from Florence, Italo Santelli, who was educated in the 'Scuola magistrale militare di scherma di Roma'. Due to his victory in the millennium fencing competition he was offered a contract as a fencing master by MAC which he accepted. Later he established his Salle Santelli in Budapest and was influential in Hungarian fencing three decades following his appointment at MAC. With the millennium fencing competition Hungary became integrated into the international fencing circuit. From 1900 onwards Hungarian fencers participated in the Olympic Games and in 1902 Dr. Béla Nagy wrote his first proposal for universal conventional fencing rules. A year before the International Fencing Federation (Fédération Internationale d'Éscrime, abbreviated FIE), in 1912, the Hungarian Fencing Federation (Magyar Vívószövetség, abbreviated MVSz) was established with Dr. Béla Nagy as its first elected chairman. Nagy became a sport diplomat of international reputation as the first vice-president of the FIE where he continued to work on unifying the rules for sport fencing.

The first great success in Hungarian sport fencing was the winning of the gold medal both in the individual and team saber competition at the London Summer Olympics of 1908. The individual competition was won by the Jewish-Hungarian lawyer Jenő Fuchs (Onyestyák, 2013: 762). The successful performance in London in saber fencing was the starting point of the Golden Age of Hungarian saber fencing which lasted until the Summer Olympic Games of 1964 in Tokyo, when Hungarian athletes won the individual and team saber fencing competitions, with just two exceptions: that of the 1920 Antwerpen Summer Games where the Hungarian Olympic team was not allowed to participate due to Hungary losing the First World War as a member of the Central Powers; and the 1924 Paris Summer Olympic Games where the team final against Italy was lost (Kun, 1969: 111; Keresztényi, 1976: 281).

## 5. MILITARY FENCING AND LÁSZLÓ BORSODY

Next to the civilian fencing clubs, such as the MAC and Salle Santelli, sport fencing also benefited from the military fencing tradition. Most of the fencing masters who were educated at the Military Fencing and Gymnastics Teacher's Course at the Theresianum in Wiener Neustadt stayed in the army teaching fencing to the cadets. An exception was Captain Gusztáv Arlow the offspring of a military dynasty who attended the course of military fencing master at the Ther-

esianum but decided to leave the military profession in 1894 and established his own fencing schools (Miklauzič, 2015: 10-11). After having established his own fencing club he kept in contact with his former teacher at the Theresianum, Luigi Barbasetti. During his Wiener Neustadt years he already wrote a textbook on saber fencing.<sup>9</sup> Arlow is the author of one of the most important textbooks on saber fencing in the Hungarian language that gives an overview of the innovations of the Italian style but also summarizes the characteristics of the Hungarian style to be integrated into the new style.<sup>10</sup> One of the students at the Military Fencing and Gymnastics Teacher's Course was the warrant officer László Borsody who would become the most important Hungarian fencing master of the twentieth century.

Borsody was born into a poor Jewish family in a small village called Farnos in Pest County on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September 1878.<sup>11</sup> In Royal Hungary, nationalism and national consciousness was growing by the fin-de-siècle. The Borsody family converted to Catholicism and 'magyarized' (translated into Hungarian) its German last name 'Pfeffer' into Borsody. The 'magyarization' of last names was a rather common practice among those who wanted to climb up the social ladder in the multi-ethnic Hungarian part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. During Borsody's student years at the University of Law in Budapest he improved his fencing skills under the supervision of fencing masters, like Béla Kodesch, Gyula Rákossy, and Virgilio Giroidini. Borsody joined the Royal Hungarian Army after he was expelled from the university due to illegal duel fencing in 1899. A year later he was sent to the Theresianum in Wiener Neustadt to complete the Military Fencing and Gymnastics Teacher's Course. Very soon Borsody became the assistant fencing master of the head fencing master at the Theresianum, Milan Neralić. Between 1902 and 1914 the two capitals of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Vienna and Budapest alternately offered the venue for the annual fencing competitions for the officers and fencing masters of the Common Army of Austria-Hungary. László Borsody was very successful in these competitions and won nearly all of them both on saber and foil.

The competition of 1906 was attended by the Emperor of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy and King of Hungary, Franz Joseph. Franz Joseph was so impressed by the fencing style of Borsody that the Hungarian King appointed him by decree to fencing master second class. From 1902 until 1925, László Borsody taught fencing at the Royal Hungarian Ludovica Defense Academy in Budapest, i.e. Hungary's officer cadets training institute prior to 1945. In 1916 he was designated head fencing master and promoted to the rank of captain. In the Aus-

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9 See Arlow, Gusztáv, Frans Litomyský. 1894. *Systematisches Lehrbuch für den Unterricht im Säbelfechten aus der Hoch-Tierce-Auslage*. Wien und Leipzig: Wilhelm Braumüller.

10 See Miskolczi (2018) for an excellent overview of the early Hungarian textbooks on saber fencing. The books on sport fencing appeared at the end of the 19th century and around the millennium and are written mainly by military fencing masters educated at the Theresianum, like Arlow, Bartunek, Chappon, and Leszák.

11 For the biographical data on László Borsody I heavily rely on the detailed research work of Norbert Máday, a Hungarian grandmaster in the martial arts. See Máday (2017a; 2017b) and the documentary film about Borsody by Simonyi Magyarzablya. Norbert Máday should be given credit for making lots of information accessible to the wider public about the fencing work of Borsody.

tro-Hungarian Army ranks mattered a great deal. Only high ranking officers could be head fencing masters.

The tensions between Austria and Hungary in the framework of the Dual Monarchy that became stronger by the end of the nineteenth century could also be felt in the domain of fencing. A decree by Emperor Franz Joseph ordered the military staff of the Austro-Hungarian Army to fence for the Austrian Olympic delegation and not for the Hungarian team at the Summer Olympic Games of St. Louis in 1904. Hence, two candidates for an Olympic medal in fencing, the hussar officer Captain Béla Békessy and Captain Ervin Mészáros chose not to participate (Szikora, 2013: 9; Máday, 2017a: 431; Máday 2017b: 202). The Hungarian military fencers were banned for the same reason from participation in the Hungarian fencing team in the 1908 London Summer Olympic Games (Földes et al., 1977: 205). The split between Austria and Hungary became definite as a consequence of the outcome of the First World War in which the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy collapsed at the end of the war.<sup>12</sup>

## 6. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE TREATY OF TRIANON

Hungary was severely punished by the victorious Entente and their Associated Powers for her membership in the Germany led coalition of the Central Powers. For Hungary the First World War formally came to an end with the Treaty of Trianon concluded on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June 1920. Hungary's territory was diminished by more than two-thirds of the size it used to have as a member of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy and one-third of its ethnic Hungarians ended up as 'minorities' in the enlarged or newly established neighboring successor states (Marác, 1996: 130). The British, who did not want the French to have absolute power in Central Europe, gave their approval for the regrouping of a National Hungarian Army to be formed in Szeged. It was to be commanded by Admiral Miklós Horthy, commander-in-chief of the Austro-Hungarian Navy and a close confidant of Emperor and King Franz Joseph. Admiral Horthy became Regent of the Hungarian kingdom after the conclusion of the Treaty of Trianon in 1920.

Although the Hungarian state was severely reduced after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy, it regained its sovereignty. The Hungarian state had to rebuild its own institutions and regarding the Military Fencing and Gymnastics Teacher's Course the Hungarian Army could no longer rely on the facilities provided by the Theresianum. On May 1, 1920 the Hungarian Ministry of Defense launched its own fencing and gymnastics teacher's course, i.e. the Hungarian Royal Military Fencing and Physical Education Course at the Ludovica. The course that lasted for eight months served to educate certificated military sports teachers. The teaching staff consisted of military officers who were educated in the Theresianum, like Bor-sody who was appointed fencing master.

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<sup>12</sup> See Marác, 1996: 113-213 for the First World War and the Trianon Treaty and its consequences for Hungary.

Although the Treaty of Trianon restored Hungarian sovereignty, it excluded the rearmament of the Hungarian Army. Any activities connected to the creation of a new army were strictly forbidden. Hence, the Military Fencing and Physical Education Course had to close down on July 1, 1922 due to Article 111. of the Treaty of Trianon stating:

“The number of students admitted to attend the courses in military schools shall be strictly in proportion to the vacancies to be filled in the cadres of officers. The students and the cadres shall be included in the effectives fixed by Article 104. Consequently all military schools not required for this purpose shall be abolished”  
(Martin, 1924: 500).<sup>13</sup>

Only in 1925 was the fencing teacher’s course allowed to restart in the framework of the Hungarian Army but now embedded in a broader sports instructors’ course. The course moved from the Ludovica Academy to another venue in a Budapest military camp. On May 1, 1925 Borsody, then in the rank of major, was appointed head fencing master of the fencing department of the Royal Hungarian Military Sport Instructors Course. Here Borsody started to develop his own methods for saber fencing and continued to train his future champions with much energy. He became responsible for the training program and received support from Regent Horthy and his government. This meant that the dynamics of the development of the fencing sports in Hungary definitely shifted from the civilian clubs dominated by fencing masters, like Italo Santelli to the military institutes, even if Borsody was also active as the head fencing master of MAC from 1922 to 1938 and a number of military fencers were also members of civilian clubs, like MAC. Borsody was the maker of a number of champions. Under his guidance, Hungary won in saber fencing 18 gold and silver medals by nine different Olympic athletes; 18 gold and 45 silver medals at saber fencing world championships; Borsody supervised 15 European champions and 24 European military champions and his pupils won 124 Hungarian national titles (Máday, 2017a: 578-579).

After the First World War the former Central Powers, including Hungary were excluded from participation in international sports life. In 1919, all sports diplomatic relations with Hungary were broken off, apart from the ones with the former Central Powers i.e. countries like Austria, Germany and neutral Switzerland and Sweden. Hungary suffered a so-called ‘sports blockade’ which lasted until 1923, when a few of the national Hungarian sports federations were allowed to join again their international federation (Szikora, 2012: 541). The IOC discussed the exclusion of the sports federations of the former Central Powers at its meetings in Lausanne and Antwerpen in 1919 and could not arrive at a decision on the issue. Instead, the IOC decided that Belgium, i.e. the organizing country of the 1920 Antwerpen Games should take a decision and the Belgian organizers decided to exclude the former Central Powers

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13 See under Chapter 3, recruiting and military in Martin (1924). Article 104 of the Treaty of Trianon under chapter II effectives and cadres of the Hungarian Army states: “The total number of military forces in the Hungarian Army shall not exceed 35,000 men, including officers and depot troops. The Hungarian Army shall be devoted exclusively to the maintenance of order within the territory of Hungary, and to the control of her frontiers (Martin 1924: 498).

and the Soviet-Union from participating in the Antwerpen Games. Hence, the Hungarian Olympic delegation was banned from the 1920 Antwerpen Summer Olympic Games (Kun, 1969: 111). The sports blockade against Hungary was lifted just before the 1924 Paris Summer Games. This to award Hungary for joining the IOC concept of 'sports without politics' and for not supporting the counter sports blockade initiated by Germany.

## 7. THE DUTCH SABER FENCING CONNECTION

Concerning the FIE, Hungary was excluded as a member since 1918 (Szikora, 2013: 11-12). The French who dominated the FIE in the post-war years successfully lobbied for a ban on the participation of the athletes from the former Central Powers, including the Hungarian ones (Terret et al., 2007: 1287). As early as 1922 a Dutch fencing delegation visited Budapest for fencing training.<sup>14</sup> These visits would be intensified in the course of the decade. The Dutch fencing delegations were led by Captain Arie de Jong, one of the most talented Dutch fencers of his time.<sup>15</sup> The first 'international' fencing competition the Hungarian saber fencers participated in was the Hungarian national championship of 1923 because the Hungarian organizers had allowed the Dutch saber team to participate. Only Arie de Jong made it to the final with nine other Hungarians.

The Netherlands had been neutral in the First World War and had managed a delicate balance of power politics with respect to the continental European powers before the War.<sup>16</sup> After the First World War the Netherlands wanted to stay neutral and maintain its sovereignty by serving the cause of international order and peace. It wanted to prevent a unilaterally dominated Europe by the Entente and their Associated Powers. In the League of Nations, which it joined in 1920, the Netherlands was afraid that without Germany, or the former Central Powers the League would be an instrument of power in the hands of the Allied or Entente Powers (Van Diepen, 1999: 59). Hence, the Netherlands was willing to support Hungary to return into the international diplomatic networks, including the ones of sports. Apart from the political interest and the fact that the Netherlands offered a diplomatic channel to break out of the isolated position caused by the sports blockade, the Hungarian fencing community was enthusiastic about the participation of the Dutch fencers in Hungarian training sessions and competitions because they were at an acceptable level and were hard working during their Budapest visits. Dutch fencers like Arie de Jong, Henri Wijnoldy-Daniëls, Jan van der Wiel and others visited Budapest to train with the Hungarians on a regular basis. Gradually the relationship between these Dutch fencers and fencing master Borsody strengthened and the Dutch fencers benefitted from the innovations Borsody was making in the techniques and

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14 See Marácz and Máday (2019) for data on the historical fencing relations between Hungary and the Netherlands.

15 This is also referred to in the textbook on saber fencing by László Gerentsér, one of the most important Hungarian fencing masters in the first half of the twentieth century Gerentsér (1944: 327).

16 See Hellema, 2009, chapter 2.

tactics of saber fencing. The Dutch initiatives to bring back Hungarian fencing into the international circuits were sustained on the highest political and diplomatic level. In line with the Dutch foreign policy concept of balance between the countries of the continental political blocks in the League of Nations we may speak of a 'fencing diplomacy'.

George van Rossem, a fencer himself, participant in the Olympic Games, sports diplomat chairman of the International Fencing Federation (FIE) from 1925 to 1928, and chairman of the organizing committee of the successful Amsterdam Summer Olympic Games visited Budapest on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 1925. The Dutch sports diplomat had been elected president of the FIE at its 1925 congress due to the fact that the French president André Maginot did not always respect fair play and favored his French athletes too outspokenly (Kun, 1969: 104). The Dutch Minister of Defense Johan Lambooy officially accredited the Dutch and Hungarian fencing exchanges. As a result, László Borsody was invited to the Netherlands for the European Military Fencing Championship organized in The Hague in May, and June 1927 to give demonstrations and lessons to his Dutch saber fencing students, like Arie de Jong. The demonstrations of the fencing professor, as Borsody was called in the Dutch press, were enthusiastically supported by the Dutch Royal House, both Queen Wilhelmina and Prince-Consort Hendrik attended the demonstrations of Borsody in The Hague.

The 1928 Summer Games of Amsterdam were a reference point for Borsody. Borsody visited the Netherlands a year before the Amsterdam Games and this visit to the Netherlands served also as a Hungarian preparation for the Amsterdam Games. The objective of Borsody was to win the two saber disciplines in Amsterdam, both the individual and the team competition. It turned out to be a successful endeavor. A Hungarian officer, Ödön Terstyánszky, one of Borsody's most dedicated students became Olympic champion saber individually in a legendary Hungarian-Hungarian final against Attila Petschauer.<sup>17</sup> In the team final saber, archrival Italy was defeated, making up for the defeat against Italy in the 1924 Olympic final of Paris.<sup>18</sup>

After his victory on August 12, Ödön Terstyánszky went to London to meet Lord Harold Rothermere, a conservative aristocrat, member of the House of Lords and owner of the British newspaper the Daily Mail. Lord Rothermere was the only Western politician who openly supported the Hungarian efforts to revise the Treaty of Trianon (Marác, 1996: 49). In the article published on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June 1927 in the Daily Mail Lord Rothermere called for the Treaty of Trianon to be revised. He pointed out how unfair the treaty was and the British conservative supported the view that areas along the Hungarian border that were chiefly populated by Hungarians should be given back to Hungary. Lord Rothermere launched a campaign which he called 'Justice for Hungary'. The article published in The Daily Mail was attacked by a furious barrage of counterpropaganda generated by France and the Little Entente countries (Marác, 1996: 169). The whole issue blew up into a media war and did not subside until 1929. The

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17 There were several Hungarian fencers of Jewish origin among the Olympic winners in the first half of the twentieth century who suffered a tragic fate in the Second World War after being persecuted by the Nazis or their Hungarian collaborators. Attila Petschauer was one of them and died in a forced labor battalion (Onyestyák, 2013: 763).

18 See George van Rossem (1928: 561-643) for the report of the fencing competition at the Amsterdam Olympic Games in 1928.

French and British government also put pressure on the Hungarian Prime Minister István Bethlen to moderate the tone of the articles published by the British Lord (Romsics, 1989: 181-183).

As a sign of respect for his pro-Hungarian stance, the fresh Olympic champion presented Lord Rothermere his saber as a gift with which Terstyánszky fenced the final in Amsterdam (Máday, 2017a: 30). When Terstyánszky returned to Hungary to meet his fencing master, Borsody qualified Terstyánszky's deed to give his saber to Lord Rothermere, the only Western European politician who criticized the Treaty of Trianon as follows:

“Your deed is worthy of a Hungarian army officer, worthy of Hungarian saber fencing.”<sup>19</sup>

(translated by the author).

On March 1, 1932 the Royal Hungarian Military Sport Instructors Course was replaced by the Toldi Miklós Royal Hungarian Military Academy for the Education of Hungarian Sports Instructors and Fencing Masters (abbreviated as SPOTI). Until his retirement in 1936, Borsody remained the head fencing master of SPOTI and continued to generate saber fencing successes. László Borsody completed his mission, namely to counterbalance the humiliations of the First World War and the Treaty of Trianon and to restore national prestige on the piste with the Hungarian weapon, the saber. His heritage would be continued by his students, such as the military officer György Piller (Jekelfalussy), who was educated by him at SPOTI between 1925-1927 and became Olympic champion saber individually and with the Hungarian team in Los Angeles in 1932 (Polgár, 2017).

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, I have argued that saber fencing was instrumental in the remaking of the Hungarian state after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy at the end of the First World War and the establishment of the new Hungarian state after the conclusion of the Treaty of Trianon containing the conditions for peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Hungary. Saber fencing is connected to the Hungarian archetype, i.e. the Hungarian as a ‘fighter’. The Hungarian cavalry with its so-called hussars and the tradition of their weapon, the saber, perceived as the ‘Hungarian’ weapon perfectly fits into this scheme. As a consequence, the sport version of the saber became the suitable tool to strengthen national and/or collective identity in the interwar period. The educational facilities of military fencing and gymnastics institutes of the Hungarian Army were also established to develop successes in sport fencing. These facilities were sponsored by the Hungarian state and received support from the highest political level. Instrumental in the quest for the restoration of national prestige and the

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<sup>19</sup> In Hungarian: “Az Ön tette méltó egy magyar honvédtiszthez, méltó a magyar kardvíváshoz.” Quoted in the documentary film about László Borsody by Simonyi Magyarszablya (2018).

escape from political and sports isolation were the outstanding Hungarian fencing masters, like László Borsody who were educated at the Theresianum. In these strives, Hungary also received external support from the Netherlands. This country had remained neutral in the First World War and initiated sport diplomacy, i.e. 'saber fencing diplomacy' to bring Hungary back into the international fencing networks and competitions during the period of sports blockade from 1918-1924. Hungary was excluded from the international sports community because it sided with the Central Powers in the First World War. This 'saber fencing diplomacy' was in line with the Dutch foreign policy to include the former Central Powers into the international political organizations, like the League of Nations, to counterbalance the political influence of the Entente and their Associated Powers in postwar Europe. Hungary welcomed the Dutch 'saber fencing diplomacy' because the Netherlands was considered a friendly nation and they had an excellent generation of military fencers in the Netherlands that were eager to learn from the Hungarian fencing masters, like László Borsody. Apart from the Hungarian interest to break out of international isolation the Dutch connection was relevant in the preparation of the Hungarian successes at the 1928 Amsterdam Summer Games which Borsody targeted as the first real challenge for his newly developed Hungarian saber fencing style.

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# Nikolas Kockelmann<sup>1</sup>

## Football Star Mesut Özil in the Crossfire of German Media

### Abstract

*The photo of football star Mesut Özil together with Turkish President Erdogan sparked a controversy in German media with a political backlash in 2018. Criticism was manifold and linked to the athlete's representative function and the authoritarian style of Erdogan. However, the reasons for such strong reactions are much less superficial. Deep cultural reasons lay the ground for criticism on Özil. German identity has assumed a patriotic representation of athletes before the founding of the state itself and is deeply integrated in today's identity. How does this cultural-historical aspect matter today? The early 21<sup>st</sup> century has been a partial break with this tradition and a shift towards a more inclusive identity. However, since the European refugee crisis the far-right party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) demands a revival of traditional German identity. Insecurity in public opinion went beyond the AfD. Other parties have recognized the need to defend German identity and values vis-à-vis authoritarian ones. The general clash of identity, culture and politics heavily influence the backlash on an apparently unpolitical photo by Mesut Özil, who has been used as a political scapegoat.*

**Keywords:** Özil, Erdogan, migrant crisis, integration in Germany, German identity

### How to cite this article:

Nikolas Kockelmann (2019). Football Star Mesut Özil in the Crossfire of German Media. *Erdélyi Társadalom/Transylvanian Society*, 17(1), 39–53. <https://doi.org/10.17177/77171.223>

The article can be downloaded from the CEEOL ([www.ceeol.com](http://www.ceeol.com)) and GESIS data catalogs: <http://www.da-ra.de/dara/search?lang=en&mclang=en>.

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## INTRODUCTION

In May 2018, German football star Mesut Özil started a nation-wide controversy with his photo on social media with Turkish President Erdogan, accompanied by team player Ilkay-Gündogan. As Özil not only has large fan groups in Germany and Turkey, the country of origin of his grandparents, but also in the international football scene, his media upload had a broad reach. However, the harshest criticism came from his country of birth. The immediate and heavy criticism from German politicians and the German Football Association (DFB) put

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pressure on Özil, who was about to kick off for the World Cup with the national team in spring 2018. After the tournament, Özil announced that he was going to quit playing for the national team due to discrimination and lack of support from the DFB. Many German politicians blame Özil's lack of diplomacy and insensitivity to contemporary political developments under authoritarian President Erdogan in Turkey. The publication of the photo with the Turkish President was originally of personal value and not politically motivated, yet critics doubt whether the player's relationship to Erdogan, who is suspected to have used the popularity of Özil for his own publicity in elections, was only formal in the end. Unfortunately, few have been genuinely interested in the star's reasons as he was grilled and at times deeply insulted for his photo by many public figures. The photo aroused discussions about whether integration of foreigners in Germany and their loyalty to liberal values has worked out so far or not. Especially after the recent migrant crisis in Germany this is a sensitive topic. Ensuing Özil's boldness to upload the controversial photo, the opponents of Özil revealed their tendency to discriminate in modern Germany.

This clash between Özil's intentions and his critics led to the question of why Mesut Özil as a seemingly apolitical athlete and football superstar became the center of attention of the German media, given the fact that numerous officials and leaders frequently meet authoritarian Presidents. Why is it important to tackle this issue? In times of political tensions, apolitical individuals often make political statements. In the case of footballers, that already begins with anti-racism campaigns. Yet, it is not easy for athletes to make personal statements. Although the result of Özil's photo was his regrettable withdrawal from the national team, there is a lot that athletes can learn about making public statements in the future, without losing face or disregarding their family identity.

I will answer the question in three segments. First, a historical-cultural background of German identity and the link to sports will expose the more subtle conditions for the debate, indicating how sports and athletes have been very closely linked to German identity in the past and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As an aging society, some people may still struggle with the new generation of football stars. Second, I will show why the photo was critical in recent political context and how politicians reacted to it. The tense political situation in Turkey, the Mediterranean migrant crisis and the debate about integration in Germany created a fertile ground for attacks on a photo with Erdogan. Third, the case of Özil will be compared to other athletes' struggles to put his case into a wider context and show why it is a special one. My goal is to point out that many different factors led to the situation in which Özil ended up in a media crossfire, more than the mere isolated facts of Özil's Turkish roots, Erdogan's person, or that the team disappointed German fans in the World Cup. Rather, it was the particular timing of several events and actors that came together simultaneously, building upon deeper societal problems. The insults and xenophobia in the reactions to Özil were certainly unacceptable and unjustified and this article aims explain why and how they came about.

## I. HOW DOES THE HISTORICAL-CULTURAL LINK BETWEEN SPORTS AND GERMAN IDENTITY SET THE STAGE FOR THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING FOOTBALL STAR MESUT ÖZIL IN 2018?

Not only does Özil have a large following on social media, but Germany has a special representative relationship with sports and football, in particular. Athletic culture in Germany is preconditioned by past political events. These cultural conditions imply that as a player of the national team he has an unofficial representative function, which is not necessarily consciously acknowledged but rather subtly assumed in Germany. This representative and organic function will be demonstrated in three parts. First, different historical sport events show how sport is of key importance in German identity. Second, the most popular athletes in German history have predominantly been white men, which increases pressure on Özil to justify himself for his Turkish family roots and the photo with Erdogan. Third, since Angela Merkel took up chancellery in 2005, football, as well as German society have become more inclusive. That came hand in hand with an alteration of German identity from an exclusively ethnic understanding toward a more inclusively cultural one. Yet, these mainstream developments do not appear in the whole society, so that, especially in football, athletes have to still actively advocate tolerance.

### *How have historical sport events shaped and represented German identity?*

With three examples I will give a brief overview of the special link between sports, the state and German identity. The first example of German national sports goes back to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when in 1811 Friedrich Ludwig Jahn established the concept of German “*Turnen*”, literally meaning “to exercise” and “to do gymnastics”. (Pfister, 2019) This gymnastics movement grew to 6000 participants in the first 7 years. Politically it was primarily motivated to liberate German Prussia from the French occupation under Napoleon, the still enduring feudal revolution and to set a milestone for a German state beyond Prussia (Pfister, 2019, Eichberg, 2001). In this context participation also meant the support and promotion of a certain political view, regardless of whether one participated for personal reasons. The second important example of a sport-state linkage occurred in 1936, when Hitler organized the 11<sup>th</sup> Olympic Games in Berlin. This is in fact a counterexample, as Hitler’s wish to demonstrate a superior Aryan race failed with the Gold medal going to an Afro-American athlete Jesse Owens. (Muratovski, 2012) The Nazi leadership was annoyed and embarrassed when German star athlete Luz Long befriended Jesse Owens and helped him win the Gold medal. Although Hitler’s intention to link German identity to physical superiority and to justify his racist politics failed, it nevertheless marked another major event in global sport history. After the war, the myth of German physical power was still somewhere in the minds of people. All in all, the 1936 Olympics showed once again how sport was intended to be instrumentalized by the state as a model of a certain identity and ‘German’ behaviour. Athletes were supposed to behave in line with Nazi ideology and had been criticized for not following that line. The third case to illustrate this link between sport and state is the *Wunder von Bern*. In 1954, post-war Germany was still suffering from the consequences of World War II and pessimism about the future was widespread. (Seitz, 2004) After winning the FIFA World Cup in 1954 in Bern, called literally “the Miracle of Bern”, DFB President Peco Bauwens spoke of a rival-like patriotism in the form

of “we [Germans] are back again” and the German state would be sovereign from the allied occupational forces. (Seitz, 2004) Throughout Germany, patriotism was thriving and the idea that “we”, the people, are there again, strongly linked the national football team to German identity and would set the milestone for the team-people-state bond in the following century, a period in which Germany would transform into a more diverse society. On the whole all three examples imply that German athletes today are faced with their audience’s high expectations. Not only have German athletes in 1811 and 1954 fought for liberation and sovereignty in the Germans’ mind, but they were also favored and instrumentalized by the state in 1936 and 1954. Back then, a dual citizenship like that of Özil and others today was not possible. Athletes were considered ‘German’ without a doubt. Finally, athletes were further used to represent the entire German nation, as physically strong and committing their success to the whole country. That, however, changed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### ***German star athletes and how we look at them***

While the previous historical examples go deep into Germany’s history of national identity, there is another category comprising the greatest, individually remembered athletes who were predominantly male and white. To name a few football stars from the past is to count Franz Beckenbauer, Lothar Matthäus, Gerd Müller and many more. The last generation has started to gain attention with Miroslav Klose, the top scorer with Polish roots who holds the world record of goals in FIFA World Cups, and the Ghana-born player of the national team, Gerald Asamoah. Mesut Özil thus not only fights with scepticism in comparison to previous idols, but also with performance pressure to keep up with Klose’s legacy in the national team. Surely, many of Özil’s opponents hide their disgust behind the argument that his skills would have to keep up to stay on the team and have called for his dismissal. Famous athletes in other sports are Dirk Nowitzki (basketball), Boris Becker (tennis), Steffi Graf (tennis) the only female in this list, Max Schmeling (boxing), Michael Schumacher and Sebastian Vettel (Formula 1). Most of them are the German “*Spitzengruppe*” (“top group”)<sup>2</sup> of best remembered athletes, and the recent winners of the 2014 FIFA World Cup must convince a hard-hearted audience that they are worthy of joining the “*Spitzengruppe*”. Apparently, it is mainly football as a sport that enjoys attention with the success of stars with a minority background. The combination of football’s popularity and the fact that athletic legends from other sports seem to reflect a ‘typical’ Germanness in the mainstream media might create an even more vulnerable condition for the far-right’s ideology. Klose and other superstars have mostly refrained from political debates and stayed rather neutral. From the far-right’s perspective, the controversy is a double scandal, since Özil as national player not only meets a disliked foreign President, but, in an unusual manner, takes a stand on it publicly.

Özil’s controversy might just as well be read to mean that it is no longer an unspoken secret that citizens can have multiple roots of identity besides the German one. Just like in the story of *the king’s new clothes*, far-right members are disguised only to discover something obvious

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2 Süddeutsche Zeitung. *Mehr als das Herz eines Boxers*. 19 05 2010 <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/sport/max-schmeling-mehr-als-das-herz-eines-boxers-1.927650>

like citizens who feel home in several countries instead of feeling home in either Germany or Turkey. Some radical political parties, such as the AfD, might instrumentalize this 'shock' and try to persuade everyone that Özil is a traitor.

***How does the link between nation, state and football work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?***

Since Chancellor Angela Merkel took office in Germany, the country gradually became more and more diverse and inclusive by shifting more towards the centre. (Green, 2013, Schmidtke, 2016) Under her leadership, while Germans with a background in migration have been becoming more 'mainstream', football did so, too. In 2006, Germany hosted the FIFA World Cup and received massive positive feedback from international celebrities, like Kofi Annan or Tony Blair, which was described as "the most enjoyable festival since the fall of the Berlin Wall", full of national pride (Merkel, 2014). From Benedict Anderson's theory on the nation state as an "imagined community", the World Cup fits into the permanent experience and memory of the nation. It was "imagined" because only a few Germans played in the team for the Cup, while most just watched but felt an inclusive connection. Therefore, it is implied that the country created once again a strong bond between football and its national identity that year. This "imagined community", which got reinforced in 2006, shows considerable vulnerability in 2018 when one of its 'representatives' speaks out for another "imagined community". What happened in the years between 2006 and 2018 was that the German national team became more and more diverse. (Merkel, 2014. 246). On the contrary, other sports like handball enjoy less popularity compared to football and the national handball team still doesn't have a single player with a background in migration. Football seems to be not only a mainstream sport that already replaced the gymnastics movement in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but also a platform for the representation of mainstream politics and social life in the form of ethnic diversity (Pfister 2011). German identity became increasingly based on a cultural understanding rather than on an ethnic one and, therefore, the expectation of cultural 'Germaness' from national players has increased (Pautz, 2005) to the extent that ultra-conservative Germans became suspicious about the cultural integration of non-ethnic German players and many have come to see players like Özil as of use for Germany, but not as real Germans:

"They are not a generalized example of a democratic immigration society but stay – to use a popular way to frame it by politicians – German on paper, purchased foreigners which benefit us, and thus are subordinated to a special logic of functioning and exploitation." (Gebhardt, 2011).

While many eyes are fixed on the cultural integration of many football stars, another important factor between sport and the nation state is often overlooked. Despite its large instrumentalization for the promotion of peace between states, football is also used as a subtle zone of conflict between teams. (Ehrhart, 2006). It is not uncommon to use terms like "killer instinct", "bombing" and "overcoming the enemy" during games and football quickly becomes a matter of national honour in the absence of real war. (Ehrhart, 2006). In such primitive black and white frames, I make the hypothesis that complex social structures like a tolerant German society are easier to discard than to understand from a perspective where nationalism and war-

like thinking in black and white is still influential. The ongoing discrimination shows that in sports, especially in football, blind hate finds a target. Yet, this claim would have to be supported by further research.

What role does Özil have as an individual in this context? In 2010, Germany played Turkey and won with a score of 3-0. The ‘man of the match’ was Mesut Özil himself, who once decided to play for the German national team and not for Turkey like many other Turkish-Germans. (Merkel, 2014). By scoring against Turkey, he showed that nationality is not an issue for him, that the sport itself is of higher priority. Considering his effort for the German team, any criticism from the far-right against Özil loses ground. In the same year, the documentary movie *Transnationalmannschaft*, literally “(Trans-) national team” started to be screened in the cinemas. It shows how in the German city of Mannheim, Baden-Württemberg, many migrants celebrate the German national team at the Euro Cup 2010. (Kohl & Badakhshan, *ed.* 2010) Especially the Turkish migrants surprise by supporting Germany equally to Turkey and seem to have no problem with their dual support. In that sense, the ‘transnational’ team also has ‘transnational’ fans. Contrary to the use of war-like terms as mentioned in this paragraph, the movie shows that the national team can also peacefully unite fan groups beyond their nationality. For Mesut Özil, from that perspective, it is not an extraordinary act in 2018 to publish a photo with the President of Turkey. The Turkish-Germans in Germany (a term which Özil himself despises, since that would imply that they are not real Germans) don’t live in only one “imagined community”, which became more problematic when they expressed their support for President Erdogan after he gained even more authoritarian power after the 2016 coup d’état.

To sum up this section, since 2005 there has been a more diverse Germany and, at the same time, a more diverse national team than ever before. Descendants of migrants became mainstream in the country and in the national team as well. Yet, greater diversity and acceptance based on cultural values came with the disadvantage that some players have been watched too critically by sceptics, who accused them of not behaving German enough. Nevertheless, Germany has become known both for its diverse team and for the World Cup it hosted in 2006. While the language used on the pitch is still indicative of war-like circumstances in matches and makes it easier to propagate hate in the stadium, the sport in general peacefully unites people of German and Turkish ethnicities. However, as the next chapter will briefly show, the concept of “imagined community” is still critical.

## II. RECENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND COMMENTS

Now that we roughly understand the sport-identity link in Germany and the more diverse society, we will look at recent political developments that frame xenophobic and critically reserved reactions but also Özil’s photo.

There is a clash of ideas between general life in Germany and the Presidency of Erdogan in particular. Germany has a close relationship with the Turkish minority since the 1960s and had to face many debates about the integration of Muslim and Turkish migrants. The fear of parallel societies in Germany has worried those who believe that migrants would not stay loyal to

the German constitution and its values but despise it instead. The question of how Muslims live in Germany is not a new one but has been taken up again in the last years. For one, the migrant crisis increased concerns on the far-right that a Muslim invasion would undermine German sovereignty. Additionally, they fear that Erdogan himself would orchestrate such an event by financing mosques in Germany through the DITIB organization. Özil, a devout Muslim and proud member of the national team, is thus easily portrayed by the far-right as betraying the German society in a conspiracy with Erdogan. More reserved criticism and distance from Erdogan comes also from mainstream politicians. The detainment of German journalists in Turkish prisons, the foggy story of the 2016 Turkish failed coup d'état and the still unacknowledged Armenian genocide are only few of the reasons to hold back any euphoria among Germans upon seeing a photo with Erdogan. The fact that Turks and their German descendants are the largest minority in Germany easily puts Özil into an (involuntary) representative and diplomatic role.

However, there is more. In the deeply intertwined relationship with the European Union, German politicians juxtapose general Western values of democracy, liberalism and freedom of speech with Erdogan's authoritarianism. Erdogan is a key ally in the EU geostrategic migration policy and the far-right opposition party AfD in Germany takes every chance to bash migration policies linked to Merkel's government.

The migration crisis also revived the AfD from political extinction and is an important factor in recent political developments. As the European far-right parties gained more popularity in the last 5 years due to migration issues, more citizens became tempted to insult German minorities, refugees, Erdogan himself and of course Özil, the involuntary representative of the Turkish minority in this case. For the media and the members of the far-right, Özil's photo is a selling story for the former and a scapegoat for the latter, disregarding all efforts and successes Özil brought for German society. In fact, most critics forgot that it is quite customary to meet with even contested national leaders for formal reasons and de-contextualized the photo with Erdogan.

### ***How does the rise of the far-right Alternative for Germany influence Özil's controversial photo?***

While the comparatively small Neo-Nazi party NPD demanded a "white" national team not only on passport but also based on skin colour, the new AfD is less extreme but comes in greater numbers and does not refrain from xenophobic comments. (Gebhardt, 2011). Contrary to previous arguments, AfD chairman Alexander Gauland does not think that the diverse national team represents German society, or to say it in his own words, the team is "not German anymore in the classical sense".<sup>3</sup>

The growing xenophobia from the right, with AfD gaining 91/709 seats in the 2017 German federal election, set critical circumstances for Mesut Özil's photo with Erdogan. While

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3 Zeit Online. Gauland – „Die Nationalmannschaft ist schon lange nicht mehr deutsch“. 03 06 2016. <https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2016-06/afd-fussball-nationalmannschaft-deutsch-populismus-alexander-gauland>

xenophobia in football “belongs to the history of the Bundesliga just as bet scandals” until recently, it did not overtake the whole state media and was widely met with rejection in politics. (Gebhardt, 2011: 98) Nevertheless, the rise of the AfD provided another point of friction for Mesut Özil to post a photo with President Erdogan. The far-right party comments on the photo called the player a “traitor” and declared that he was “not in the right place” in the national team.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, the far-right ‘imagines’ a different ‘community’ than mainstream society. Yet, even the German head of state President Frank Walter Steinmeier invited Mesut Özil and Ilkay Gündogan to discuss why the two players have an important representative function in the national team. Gökay Akbulut member of Turkish descent in the Leftist party in the *Bundestag*, said that Özil should have abstained from the photo as he has a public responsibility. (Akbulut & Özils, 2018) According to her, the debate is too influenced by the AfD and reopens wounds related to the integration debate of German-Turks.<sup>5</sup> The rise of the xenophobic AfD exercised a lot of political pressure on other politicians to distance themselves from the photo. Were other parties afraid to just see what happened in relative terms or play it down and lose critical voters to the AfD? While even the left ist Die Linke lost many voters to the far-right AfD in the last elections, it comes as no surprise that parties try to take a critical position against Özil in order not to lose voters.

What Erdogan himself says in this situation, however, is merely a response to the AfD camp rather than to Germany as a whole. As absurd as it sounds, he simply accused Germany in general of racism and discrimination based on Özil’s religion, which of course was not completely fair nor accurate for most reserved criticism that came from the center of society, as the situation was much more complex.<sup>6</sup> The hate campaign of the AfD finally incited the media, other political parties and even President Erdogan himself to make inaccurate statements about the whole situation that Özil was in.<sup>7</sup> Despite not being the point of this article, it becomes clear how much power the AfD has gained with its hate speech against Özil.

### ***Lack of support from the DFB and the government***

Another factor which heated the debate was the lack of support and clearance from people around Özil and from government positions. Most prominently, Özil criticizes former DFB-chief Reinhard Grindel of discrimination against him as a Muslim Turk.<sup>8</sup> The idea of Grindel to focus on the World Cup and not discuss the photo during the press conference increased the suspicion in certain people that Özil had something to hide. Grindel’s reluctance heightened the impression that the player did something outrageous that could not be fixed anymore. However, Grindel in fact admitted that he was mistaken not to defend the superstar during

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4 Alternative für Deutschland. Seid Ihr noch richtig in der deutschen Nationalmannschaft? 21 05 2018. <https://www.afd-maier.de/2018/05/709/>.

5 Ibid.

6 Süddeutsche Zeitung, (2018). *Erdogan lobt Özil für Rücktritt*

7 Twitter. *Twitter post by Alice Weidel*, (2018). “Erdogan ist für Gündogan und Özil ihr Präsident”

8 Eurosport, (23-07-2018). The complete declaration of Özil about the photo can be found at [https://www.eurosport.de/fussball/mesut-ozil-seine-zusammengefasste-erklarung\\_sto6859289/story.shtml](https://www.eurosport.de/fussball/mesut-ozil-seine-zusammengefasste-erklarung_sto6859289/story.shtml) German language with photos linked to the official version in English on Twitter.

waves of insults in the media.<sup>9</sup> The criticism of Grindel himself reached a peak when, months later, he was involved in a scandal related to a wristwatch he received as a present from a functionary from Ukraine, confirming Özil's early prediction that Grindel was reckless for his position.

After the disastrous World Cup results, the manager of the national team Oliver Bierhoff, who later changed his mind, argued that they should have considered not letting Özil play due to his declining performance. (Gartenschläger 2018). Lack of support registered not only from the DFB functionaries, but also within the national team itself, argued Jerome Boateng:

“Where were the team colleagues, who thanked Mesut? Apparently, many did not dare to express themselves because they feared that it would not resonate well with German fans”. (Knopp & Hoffmann, 2018).

With his statement Boateng made clear a widespread phenomenon in the whole issue around Özil. Not only politicians but even DFB colleagues were afraid to lose popularity among fans, citizens and, according to Özil, even sponsors. However, it takes time for many to properly engage in the discussion, time which many do not have due to busy schedules. In this sense, the lack of support does not necessarily mean opposition to Özil, yet it makes him an easy target for hate speech.

In a similar vein Chancellor Angela Merkel abstractly responded that Özil's decision is to be respected despite different possible interpretations of the photo. Merkel also personally congratulated the topless Özil after the 3-0 victory against Turkey in 2010<sup>10</sup>, yet her decision not to express a more nuanced opinion on the Erdogan affair could also rely on the lack of information about the case. Finally, in a meeting with Özil and Gündogan, German President Steinmeier explained that he was initially “perplexed” about the photo but thinks that the two players understood the importance of “correcting” the public first impression.<sup>11</sup> While Merkel and Steinmeier considered the controversy to be cleared and closed, criticism of Özil did not cease as the national team dramatically failed in the World Cup. On the one hand, the Chancellor and the President showed tolerance towards the personality of Gündogan and Özil but stressed that the backlash in the media is out of their hands. On the other hand, those who fiercely attacked the players for the photos could interpret that as a lack of professionalism within the government. Certainly, ‘soft’ criticism from the government opened the door for more reckless accusations among the population which evolved into a vicious circle for Özil.

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9 Zeit, *DFB-Präsident räumt Fehler im Umgang mit Özil ein*, 19 08 2018.

10 Spiegel Online, *Merkel lobt Özil als “tollen Fußballspieler”*, 23 07 2018.

11 Spiegel Online, *“Bisschen ratlos gemacht”*, 06 06 2018.

### III. COMPARISON TO OTHER CASES IN THE WORLD OF SPORTS

The case of Mesut Özil is unique and unfortunate. However, others have similar struggles, even if they develop in a different way. Foremost, İlkay Gündogan, who was also on the photo and wrote “For my President” on the jersey for Erdogan, handled the situation differently.<sup>12</sup> He was in the same position as his team player but distanced himself quickly from the photo and even from later claims of racism by Özil. He expressed his explicit will to continue playing for Germany but also stressed his German identity by singing the national anthem.<sup>13</sup> Thus, he managed to place himself on the margins of the debate and mainly avoided further critique. Özil, on the contrary, was still taxed by his declining performance and by his postponed statement regarding the photo. Consequently, the team’s poor results in the World Cup affected Gündogan much less than it affected Özil. What if Özil had reacted faster, and if the DFB had permanently resolved this issue before the tournament began?

Beyond the case of Özil, others had similar struggles. During the same World Cup, former football star and still famously remembered celebrity, Lothar Matthäus met Russian President Vladimir Putin in the context of a FIFA delegation. Matthäus didn’t only compliment Putin for organizing a successful tournament but presented him a jersey and posed for pictures with the heavily criticized, authoritarian Putin. In his own words, Matthäus called himself “half Russian” because his wife, his fifth by the way, grew up in Moscow.<sup>14</sup> Although he was also criticized for his appeal to Putin, he didn’t get as much attention as Özil and was quickly forgotten. Would he be a traitor, if he himself had been of Russian descent? For the far-right in Germany that hypothetical case would still be less interesting since Matthäus would not fit into the role of the perfect scapegoat. The far-right is rather interested in blaming Muslims and Turks who failed integration. Yet, would Özil’s case have been forgotten also, if he had resisted the scandal and not quit the national team?

To the defence of Özil, it is never easy to meet a controversial president for anything but raw politics. The next example is a case in point about Marco van Basten. Like Matthäus, Van Basten was sent by FIFA as a functionary and had to meet Putin during the World Cup 2018. In his case, the criticism came from family members of the victims of flight MH17, which the Netherlands claim was shot down by Russia. Since Van Basten only fulfilled his minimal duty for FIFA, he did not feel responsible to represent the Dutch in the case of MH17.<sup>15</sup> Again, the critique of Van Basten faded away soon after. However, it makes two relevant points in connection with Özil’s case. One, hate comments in Germany did not take into consideration that Özil was invited to a formal charity event in London where he met Erdogan. Like Matthäus and Van Basten, Özil refrained from addressing political issues. In fact, Özil just did what was necessary to behave in a respectful way and to focus on the real reason of the event. Why then

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12 Sportbuzzer, *Ilkay Gündogan über den Rücktritt von Mesut Özil: “Ich hätte es anders gemacht”*, 28 08 2018.

13 Witt, Christian. *Neue Fakten zu İlkay Gündogan in Erdogan-Affäre*. 01 06 2018.

14 Welt. *Lothar Matthäus spricht im Kreml mit Wladimir Putin*. 06 07 2018

15 Süddeutsche Zeitung. *Van Basten über Putin-Besuch: Nur über Fußball gesprochen*. 12 07 2018

was Özil attacked so much harder than the other two? From a Western European perspective, there is no ground on which to criticize a visit to Erdogan harder than one to Putin. In fact, the real reason why Özil became the victim of the media doesn't seem to be completely exhausted by the personality of Erdogan. <sup>6</sup>

The controversy around the German handball star Stefan Kretzschmar brings back the focus from foreign authoritarian leaders to the domestic problem. At a time when the political climate around German identity is very tense Kretzschmar finds support in certain groups and claims that freedom of speech is limited at home.<sup>16</sup> His statement clearly provokes the “taboo topic” of criticism towards Merkel's open migrant policy. What is in fact interesting for our case study is that famous superstar Kretzschmar, whose family is of German descent, complains about the media and the public not giving him safe space to express himself. Whether he supports anti-establishment claims like the AfD is not primarily important here. What matters is the dichotomy of Kretzschmar and Özil who both blame the media and the public for their antithetical position.<sup>17</sup> Eventually, neither of them were prepared for such harsh reactions to their opinions. Still, Özil was hit harder by his opponents who claim that he is an *outsider* of society, while those who criticize the lack of freedom of speech in Germany are rather viewed as *backward*. In the end, both Kretzschmar and Özil left too much room for criticism in their posts and should not be surprised to receive heavy criticism from both sides in the current state of German affairs.

Should active athletes in general refrain from public engagement? It is nothing new that statements with a political impact have always had consequences. In 1968, John Carlos and Tommie Smith raised their fists against black oppression while standing on the winner podium of the Olympic Games in Mexico. In 2016, Colin Kaepernick raised awareness for police violence and discrimination against black people in the U.S. by kneeling during the play of the national anthem.<sup>18</sup> Both examples show how athletes made conscious use of their status and popularity and broke the norms of leaving politics off the pitch. In North American society, right-wing defendants can perceive that as an insult against North American (tolerant) society, but xenophobia in Özil's case is rather concerned that Turkish minorities represent the long arm of an authoritarian foreign force. The real difference, however, is that Özil did not act to make a political statement yet was severely attacked for lack of loyalty by prominent AfD members.

After all his successes, be it in sports, integration or charity work, there were and still are many doubts among the far-right about Özil's loyalty. Other athletes may also be confronted with such provocations in the future but may deal differently with it. In the Netherlands, the 17-year old Mohammed Ihattaren faces the decision whether to play for the Dutch or the Moroccan national team once turning 18. Although football clubs and leagues are quite commercial and liberal in terms of diversity, national teams are still pivotal for identity questions because they cannot be changed. What if Geert Wilders' far-right PVV gains more power in

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16 Welt. “*Ich muss das aushalten*”. 19 01 2019

17 This does not mean, however, that Kretzschmar and Özil necessarily oppose each other personally.

18 Niemeyer, Jörg. *Sportler diskutieren über Trennung von Spiel und politischer Meinung*. 29 10 2018

the future, would that also increase pressure on Ihattaren as the AfD does in Germany? And would it matter if Ihattaren met with the Moroccan King Mohammed VI? It seems obvious that in this case it does in fact make a difference who is holding the office. In the Western media, Erdogan and Putin receive so much attention and criticism that a visit to the Moroccan King may not result in any provocation. Yet, the choice that Ihattaren is faced with shows how difficult it is to unite Moroccan and Dutch identity in his decisions without disrespecting either one. Still, Ihattaren certainly has more time to ponder about his choice of team, while Özil decided for Germany a decade ago and had little time to think about the consequences of the photo with Erdogan prior to it being made public.

That athletes in general have a strong representative function is obvious due to the popularity of sports. Contrary to Özil, others have made explicit use of their media position. So did Tommie Smith and John Carlos in the 1968 Olympics, when they drew public attention to racial discrimination in the USA. Contrary to Özil, they made intentional use of their media power albeit violating the IOC rules of staying apolitical. The outreach of the Black Power Salute seems to be greater because the message was clear. It is ironic that Özil's unintentional political implication seen as support for Erdogan evolved into such heated debates in Germany. Özil posted his photo on his own social media account and did not violate any rule, one could directly assume. The context in Germany is a more subtle one compared to the debate on racial discrimination on the other side of the Atlantic.

Finally, an interesting development is the fact that Özil invited Erdogan as best man to his wedding in 2019. Although the President did not stay long, critics in Germany used that event again as a story to feed their theories of betrayal. This time it was indeed Özil's voluntary decision to invite him so close, and many are afraid that he may be hiding something after all. Reasonably, most people in Germany think it would be absurd to invite Erdogan to their wedding, yet they wouldn't think of inviting Chancellor Merkel either. Despite Özil's popularity and responsibility in Germany, he also has the chance to build bridges, as he did not earn prizes for integration for no reason. One should keep in mind that, unlike in Western Europe and North America, people keep quite formal relationships with holders of high offices and that is what Western politicians themselves do.

## CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, the foundation stones of the controversy surrounding Özil have already been laying within the deeper culture of Germany. Three examples from history show how athletes were meant to represent the German people and state physically and morally against Napoleon, under Hitler's NS-regime and in the post-war period. A more modern development and a shift in culture goes back to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Since 2005, German society became more and more diverse, as did the national team. That opened the question of dual citizenship and whether it is possible to be a fan of two countries or personally represent two countries at the same time like Özil. German identity is becoming transnational in a positive sense, yet this tolerant "imagined community" becomes non-German and intolerable for the far-right. This strong bond between Germans and their love of football and loyal athletes built a slippery slope

for Mesut Özil to publish the photo with President Erdogan, easily portrayed as a betrayal of Germany. So far, most German legends of the “*Spitzengruppe*” are classical ‘native’ Germans and raise the barrier for Özil in gaining popularity among far-right and conservative citizens who doubt Özil’s German identity.

In the second part, the recent political developments in Turkey, the migrant crisis and integration issues in Germany paved the way for easy criticism of Özil. First, anyone affiliated with Erdogan could fall into the trap of being a friend of an autocrat. Second, the hot debate about the integration of Muslims during the migrant and refugee crisis in Germany casts suspicion among some people whether Muslims generally acknowledge German values. The combination of the two aspects put Özil and Gündogan into the center of attention. Thus the far-right party AfD could almost effortlessly attack Özil for betrayal and claim that the national team, as far as it is supposed to reflect German society, would not be classically German anymore. Politicians, among them Chancellor Merkel and President Steinmeier, distanced themselves from the photo with Erdogan and thus legitimized harsher criticism in the eyes of more extreme critics. The lack of support among DFB colleagues further left Özil alone in the media, after Gündogan quickly distanced himself from the photo and expressed his loyalty to German values. DFB functionaries failed to help their team member who fell into a vicious circle of critique and hate speech. His colleague Boateng aired the hypothesis that many were afraid to lose popularity by publicly defending Özil. Third, other cases involving athletes show that Özil is struggling with a situation that is much more common than it seems. However, others have found their way out more quickly by letting the criticism fade away or by distancing themselves from it. The examples show that reserved criticism of Özil is clearly not based on him being Muslim and Turk, but his religion and cultural roots were certainly instrumentalized and exaggerated by the far-right. For athletes it seems impossible not to generate strong disagreements in their own country, whether they try to debate politics, or meet Putin or Erdogan. This applies for the rather unintended consequences like the cases of Özil, Matthäus or Van Basten show, but also for the planned statements of Carlos, Smith and Kaepernick.

In general, this case study demonstrates how athletes cannot ignore the cultural and historical conditions of their environment and that they eventually must engage with these conditions and the consequences of their media presence. Even if discriminatory statements and fear to lose one’s popularity are in the wrong place in Özil’s story, he still carries the responsibility for publishing the photo and dealing with its consequences. Could Özil have anticipated the strong criticism in the form it took place? According to his declaration, he assumed there would be criticism. He also shows that he was aware of tensions with Grindel, so was he naïve not to expect a strong backlash? A question for further research would be: how much legitimacy do celebrities have to engage in (cultural) diplomacy?

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# Physical Recreation or Elite Sport? A Challenge to Meet Physical Culture Purposes in Iran

### Abstract

*Over the past years, physical culture has been considered for its role in promoting health and constructing identity in Iran. Physical education, recreation, and elite sports are identified as the main examples of physical culture by which these objectives could be achieved. Most studies on physical recreation are aimed at public health issues. After presenting a review of the relevant literature, a wide and diverse range of driving forces are categorized in social, technological, economic, environmental, political, value/cultural, and 'sport/sport sciences' domains, which may all influence Iranians' participation in leisure-time physical activities. Following these findings in another study, the economic and technological drivers are specified as the most important uncertainties contributing to developing possible scenarios of participation in health-oriented activities. In addition to public health promotion, however, there is also evidence indicating that physical recreation (leisure-time physical activities) and indigenous sports can also result in identity construction purposes.*

*Further the capacity of elite sports to contribute to participation in leisure-time physical activities in Iran is examined. Since the relevant literature did not strongly support this finding, it was scrutinized in a separate research on Iran's national soccer team in the 2018 FIFA World and the 2019 Asian Cups. The results indicated that elite sport successes can, indeed, lead to identity construction, which might have temporarily influenced Iranians' participation. In this paper, we question if elite sport can also propel people to engage in leisure-time physical activity (physical recreation) programs. Since the same and even more consistent benefits of physical culture could be obtained from participation compared to competition, it is suggested to relevant decision-makers to also consider the role of physical recreation and indigenous sports for the promotion of health and identity construction.*

**Keywords:** physical culture, Iran, physical recreation, elite sport, identity, health

### *How to cite this article:*

Ali Ziaee – Ivo van Hilvoorde (2019). Physical Recreation or Elite Sport? A Challenge to Meet Physical Culture Purposes in Iran. *Erdélyi Társadalom/Transylvanian Society*, 17(1), 55–65. <https://doi.org/10.17177/77171.224>

The article can be downloaded from the CEEOL ([www.ceeol.com](http://www.ceeol.com)) and GESIS data catalogs: <http://www.da-ra.de/dara/search?lang=en&mdlang=en>.

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## INTRODUCTION

Both public health promotion and identity construction are identified as the main purposes of physical culture (Grant, 2012). The focus on physical culture specifically aimed at developing health (via physical education and recreation programs) has gradually shifted towards an understanding of elite sport to meet commercial and political goals (i.e. nation-building, national unity, etc.) (Lubysheva, 1996; Orwell, 1945; Stout, 2016).

A broad range of studies have been conducted to date in order to investigate how elite sport achievements can shape national identity (Bairner & Dong-Jhy, 2011; Bishop & Jaworski, 2003; Cho, 2009; Dóczy, 2012; Elling, van Hilvoorde, & van den Dool, 2012, 2014; Foot, 2016; Georgalou, 2009; Meier & Mutz, 2016; van Hilvoorde & Elling, 2014; van Hilvoorde, Elling, & Stokvis, 2010). However, it is indicated that physical education and recreation can also provide opportunities within which different identities are constructed (Walseth, Aartun, & Engelsrud, 2017). Haggard and Williams (1992) for example stated that people would be more willing to take part in the physical activities that can better represent their identity. In this regard, Kirk and Tinning (1994) studied the impact of physical education lessons on self-identity in Australia. They concluded that bodies can be considered normative symbols that define identities in society. It was further explained that physical recreation programs can also result in better interaction with others (*ibid.*). Moreover, Groff and Kleiber (2001) described in their research that participation in sport and physical recreation can form the identity of youth with physical disabilities, since they can have more opportunities to express their ‘true’ selves and feel more competent. Also, Jun and Kyle (2012) studied the role of identity in leisure behavior and the influence of gender on participation in recreational golf. They argued that participants who wanted to be identified with masculine characteristics such as ‘independent’, ‘competitive’, and ‘superior’, were more inclined to engage in golf-related identities as well (*ibid.*). The role of physical recreation/education in shaping ‘individual’ identities and improving social integration is emphasized in such a manner.

It is, however, argued that physical recreation can also result in constructing ‘national’ identity (Moser, 2010; Stout, 2016). More importantly, this contribution of physical recreation to construct and shape national identity can happen in a less aggressive way compared to elite sport, and it may include more social benefits for a nation as well (*ibid.*).

In this paper, we will clarify which of the elite sport and physical recreation activities could better meet physical culture goals (public health and identity construction) in Iranian society. In other words, which one of them should be prioritized in order to meet physical culture purposes? To answer this question, we will first describe the concept of physical culture, and then review the recent studies on physical recreation and elite sports in Iran.

## PHYSICAL CULTURE IN IRAN

Historically speaking, “Zourkhaneh” (literally translated as the “House of Strength”) is identified as an indigenous sport in Iranian physical culture (Kiani & Faraji, 2011). It is rooted in ancient Iran’s rich culture. In fact, the history of “Zourkhaneh” can be elaborated by dividing

its heritage into four main intervals: the Mystical Era (1065 BC), the Parthian Era, the Islamic Era, and the Contemporary Era (Daneshforouz, 2018). It is also documented that when partial peace ruled over Iran, warriors transformed the war equipment including maces, bows, and shields into exercise equipment to prepare their body for the future (Brockhaus, 1986). This is considered a starting point for a new form of “Zourkhaneh” in Iran. It consists of both physical and mental (psychological) characteristics. Physical aspects include elements such as muscular ability, muscular endurance, respiratory and heart endurance, flexibility, and body composition along with physical skills (speed, alacrity, strength, action speed, equilibrium, and coordination) (Kiani & Faraji, 2011). To prepare warriors for battle and protect their life and land against invaders, it was highly important for Iranians to develop these skills (Rouhi, 2008). In addition to fostering bodies, this exercise was valued because of its combination with ancient Iranian and later Islamic culture (Amirtash, 2008; Heidari & Dowlatshah, 2012). Indeed, the architecture, epic poetry and similar type of poems read during this physical activity could have an impact on the identity of the people participating in it (Aminizadeh & Boustani, 2014).

People engaging in these exercises are identified, first and foremost, with characteristics such as humility, chivalry, truthfulness, and kindness (Boostani & Zadeh, 2013). Moreover, because of its contribution to promoting the sense of patriotism, Islamism, wisdom and human rights principles, it is argued that “Zourkhaneh” helped Iranians find their identity. This was considered important, since Iran is situated at the crossroads of Iranian, Islamic, and Western identities (Mahabbati, 2003).

In addition to its contribution to public health, this is how physical culture has impacted identity formation, even in the early roots and origin of Iranian culture. It should also be noted that the role of “Zourkhaneh” as a traditional sport in protecting Iranians’ identity has been currently manifested in elite sports, such as weightlifting and wrestling (Fisher, 2012). This is because of training sessions in which a form of submission-grappling called “Koshti Pahlavāni” (literally translated as “heroic wrestling”) is included. Moreover, the main portion of Zourkhaneh is dedicated to weight training and calisthenics, notably using a pair of wooden clubs (mil), metal shields (sang), and bow-shaped iron weights (kabbādeh or kamān) (Fisher, 2012; Karimi, 2018). Nowadays, weightlifting and wrestling is playing an important role in representing Iranians in mega sporting events such as the Olympic Games.

Identity construction purposes have been examined in the literature of Iranian studies on physical culture as well. Most of these studies have investigated the concept of identity in the context of elite sport and the way that elite sport can influence Iranian national identity and pride (Ahmadi, Firouzi, & Navabi, 2016; Fadaei Deh Cheshmeh, Eidi, & Abbasi, 2014; Ghiasian & Labesh, 2015; Hashemi & Yeganeh, 2008). As for physical recreation, only a few studies have been conducted regarding the objectives of identity construction. For instance, Saroukhani and Malakian (2011) reported that the way in which leisure time is spent in Tehran province plays an important role in shaping individuals’ identity. Leisure activities (i.e. sport and physical recreation) can also remarkably influence Iranians’ social identity (Moharamzadeh & Nouri, 2016; Yousefi & Moghaddam, 2015). This is because participation in these activities is capable of bringing together people from different cultural, demographic and social backgrounds (ibid.).

## RECENT STUDIES ON PHYSICAL CULTURE IN IRAN

As mentioned earlier, prior to identity construction purposes, sport and physical culture have been contributing to public health promotion over the past years (Stout, 2016). Many researchers have investigated the health effects of physical culture, due to the growing trends of physical inactivity worldwide (da Silva et al., 2014; Eurobarometer, 2017; Juneau & Potvin, 2010; Monda, Adair, Zhai, & Popkin, 2008; Stamatakis, Ekelund, & Wareham, 2007). The level of physical inactivity is also increasing among the Iranian population (Statistical Center of Iran, 2015). Moreover, it was recently argued that 65% of Iranians do not meet the standard level of PA (Ostovar, 2017). It is, therefore, required to develop new public health policies. In fact, developing leisure-time physical activity programs is one of the ways through which public health can be considerably improved.

It is argued that various factors determine regular participation in health-oriented physical activities (including sports). For instance, Torkildsen (2012) divided the influential factors of partaking in leisure activities into political, social, and personal ones. Additionally, van Bottenburg, Rijnen, and van Sterkenburg (2005) introduced a quadruple taxonomy of environmental, personal, interpersonal, and social indicators to explain conditions in which people would be more likely to participate in sport activities.

To identify the influential forces from broader domains, a comprehensive framework has been used, called the STEEPV framework (Loveridge, 2002; Nazarko & Kuźmicz, 2017; Schwartz, 1991). Interviews and literature review are used as methods through which so-called drivers can be collected from social, technological, environmental, economic, political, and cultural dimensions (*ibid.*). These drivers are macro factors, conditions, trends or events which can influence behavior in a constantly-changing environment (Schwartz, 1991).

In line with this framework, Ziaee and Hilvoorde (2018) explored driving forces that could manage and influence physical inactivity in Iran. Since some of the detected factors could not be classified by the STEEPV, the ‘Sport/Sports Sciences’ domain was added as an additional domain. Results revealed forces from social, environmental, economic, technological, and ‘sport/sport sciences’ domains as the most important drivers (*ibid.*).

Based upon these findings, scenarios of Iranians’ participation in LTPA were developed in a follow-up study. After the data analysis process, driving forces from technological (changes in technology and the amount of free time, development of the entertainment industry) and economic (purchasing power and change in the living standards, economic infrastructure) domains were specified as the most important drivers, on which scenarios were constructed (Ziaee, Aghaei, Saffari, Zenouz, & Hilvoorde, 2019). With regard to the generated scenarios, it was suggested to relevant decision-makers to formulate resilient strategies such as developing the indigenous sports and exercises, increasing the quality as well as the duration of physical education lessons, using technological advancements such as virtual reality to develop PA, encouraging participation in LTPA through the media, etc. for the efficient promotion of health-related physical activities (Ziaee, 2019). To this end, it was advised to improve the collaboration at a macro level between media, municipalities, sport, health, and education organizations (*ibid.*).

As mentioned, a wide and diverse range of driving forces are determining Iranians' participation in LTPA programs (Ziaee & Hilvoorde, 2018). Elite sport achievement was also considered as one of those drivers (ibid.). This is in line with the so-called 'virtuous cycle of sport' whereby elite sport successes in international tournaments are supposed to result in boosting mass sport participation, creating a healthier society, and shaping national identity (Grix & Carmichael, 2012; Pawlowski, Downward, & Rasciute, 2014). Elite sports are considered an instrument to facilitate social integration, promote health, facilitate social development, and foster national identity in Iran's sport structure as well (Dousti, Goodarzi, Asadi, & Khabiri, 2013).

The claim that elite sport success contributes to the (lasting) experience of national pride was investigated in a separate research project. The 2018 FIFA World Cup and the 2019 AFC Asian Cup were considered as examples of major sporting events. This is because soccer is a popular sport amongst Iranian people and these mega events are important and influential opportunities for representing them worldwide (Ziaee, Adib-Moghaddam, Sterkenburg, Elling, & Hilvoorde, 2019). The performance of Iran's national soccer team is broadly covered by the media during these events. So, the question was how mediated soccer can result in constructing Iranian national identity during major sporting events (i.e. the World and Asian Cup).

To answer this question, the media coverage of the national team during these sporting events in both Persian and English languages, through online and print newspapers, was inspected. In addition to selecting relevant material from newspapers, a Google alert with the title of "Iran men's national soccer Team" was applied one month before the first match (Iran against Morocco) until two weeks after the last match in the World Cup (15<sup>th</sup> of May-14<sup>th</sup> of July 2018). A similar data collection process was undertaken for the Asian Cup as well (5<sup>th</sup> Dec-11<sup>th</sup> of Feb 2018/2019). Additional investigation of relevant posts on the most popular social networks (Twitter, Facebook, etc.) was conducted during the research periods by using keywords such as "we", "Iran", and "Iranian identity". After reviewing all relevant articles, the extracted texts were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis (TA). This analysis resulted in the following four main themes around Iranian national identity:

### ***1. Sympathetic/united***

Being represented as "sympathetic/united" appeared in various ways in the domestic media. Both the national players and Iranian people tried to show the national bonding in their arguments during these events. For instance, before the World Cup, Mehdi Taremi, the national team's striker said: "if we win the game it can be great. And if not, we will fight for the country and people. If we only think of the national flag aside from clubs' color, together we can do everything" (Iran-e-Varzeshi: 19.6.2018). In another argument during the Asian Cup, an Iranian Arab leader stated that "it does not matter which ethnic group we belong to or which language we speak, we are all Iranian, and therefore, must support the national team wherever we are" (Iran-e-Varzeshi: 15.1.2019). These statements obviously manifested a mutual connectedness between Iran's soccer fans and the national team's players.

## ***2. Ambitious/conscientious***

Apparently the difficult group that the national team had been drawn in with Spain (the former World and European champion), Portugal (the former European champion), and Morocco (the former African champion), played an important role in developing discourses around Iranians' ambition and conscientiousness. It was also related to challenges such as wars in which Iranians have been involved many times in their history. For example, Iran's sport minister argued that "Iranians have always proven that they can obtain valuable achievements in difficult conditions with their strong determination" (Iran-e-Varzeshi: 12.6.2018). Moreover, some media sources indicated Iranians' ambitions as such "a typical example of Iranians identity making the impossible possible with their diligence and strong determination" (Iran-e-Varzeshi: 12.6.2018). This implies that facing difficult situations in history contributed to the image and construction of Iranians' determination over the past years. Thus, the national team was also presumed capable of facing strong teams in the World Cup.

## ***3. Oppressed but great and appreciative***

Iranians were framed as a nation that despite having made valuable contributions to the world's history, are now being marginalized in the international media. It seems that political conflicts have resulted in this isolation. Iran's president stated in a meeting with the national team before the World Cup that "Billions around the world will be watching you as the representatives of a country with a rich culture and proud history. So, your good performance can amplify our national pride as well as the name of Iran as it has been great for a long time". (Abrar-e-Varzeshi: 21.5.2018). The performance of the national team appeared even in the statements of some foreign politicians that do not have diplomatic ties with Iran. For instance, in reaction to Iranians' celebration after the victory against Morocco in the World Cup, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu argued that "you showed courage on the playing field and today you showed the same courage on the streets" (The Jerusalem Post: 27.6.2018). Moreover, when the World Cup was finished, the selected quotes illuminated mutual respect between people and the national team: "Iranians played with the sense of patriotism and thought of winning the games to maintain their people's respect", Iran's former player, Hosein Kalani said (Abrar-e-Varzeshi: 24.6.2018). In a similar way, the national team's midfielder, Omid Ebrahimi pointed out: "We wanted people to know that we put in all effort and played to the best of our abilities to make them happy and satisfied" (Iran-e-Varzeshi: 28.6.2018). Political tensions and the history of Iran contributed to the emerging discourses on Iranians' identity during these major sporting events.

## ***4. Emotion-ridden***

The 3-0 defeat against Japan in the semi-final stage in the Asian Cup was criticized immensely. This failure was attributed to emotional factors. "We become super happy when we win and super upset when we lose. We have not been taught how to confront problems in order to come back to the game again after receiving a goal" (Tabnak: 29.1.2019). Furthermore, some domestic soccer experts accused the media of adding to the emotional tension as well. For example, Ali Parvin, the former Iranian soccer player argued that the media emphasized the

critical nature of the match so much that the players were faced with a psychological collapse and could not focus and perform as usual.

In sum, the contribution of elite sport achievements to Iranians participation in LTPA programs should be, regarded as a two-edged sword and an unreliable indicator for public health promotion. The performance of the national soccer team showed a positive image of Iranian national identity in the World Cup but turned into feelings of disappointment after a failure in the Asian Cup (Ziaee, Adib-Moghaddam, et al., 2019). Elite sport successes might indirectly lead to participation because of positive perceptions arising from achievements. But still, evidence of this correlation is weak.

## CONCLUSION

The importance of physical culture in developing health and identity construction has been indicated in the context of physical recreation and elite sport. In regard to physical recreation, previous Iranian studies have mainly considered public health as the main issue. A wide and diverse range of drivers from social, economic, environmental, technological, cultural, political, and 'sport/sport sciences' domains could prompt Iranians to participate in health-related physical activities. The economic and technological dimensions were specified as the most important uncertainties, on which possible scenarios of participation could be based.

Moreover, it was found that also elite sport successes can drive Iranians towards participation in sport and PA. The contribution of this driver was further examined in a separate research on Iran's national soccer team in the 2018 FIFA World Cup and later in the 2019 AFC Asian Cup. The results showed that elite sport achievements can, indeed, play an important role in expressing Iranian national identity. In other words, even though elite sport successes can help construct a more robust image of national identity, they cannot contribute to regular participation and public health promotion, not in the least because of their inconsistency.

Nevertheless, it seems that political and prestige-oriented goals such as social integration and national pride and identity protection have resulted in high attention for elite sports in Iran's sport system, resulting in less attention for recreational sports. For instance, "Zourkhaneh" as an Iranian indigenous sport, which is capable of both identity construction and health promotion throughout society, has been replaced by elite sports such as "wrestling" and "weightlifting" in order to meet nation-building goals.

This political focus on elite sports and Olympic medals is a worldwide phenomenon. Indeed, elite sports have contributed to a strong focus on "soft power" after the cold war, for obtaining political goals (Nye, 1990). In other words, states use elite sport achievements as a "soft power instrument" to showcase their nations, culture, and ideology (Grix, 2019; Grix & Houlihan, 2014). Furthermore, Grix and Lee (2013) argue that hosting major sporting events is currently playing an important role in global communication and diplomatic strategies. In the same way, soccer and Olympic sports have been highly regarded over the past 10 years in Iran's sport policy as well (Dousti et al., 2013). It becomes more important for Iranian people to be mentioned and represented in 'soft atmospheres', including mega sporting events, as the

keyword “Iran” usually shows up in a harsh environment on the international media sources with issues such as “nuclear agreement” “war”, and “sanctions”.

## FUTURE DIRECTION

Nowadays, elite sports are particularly favored over physical recreation in Iran’s sport policy. National identity and pride protection are mentioned as the main reasons for this exclusive focus on elite sports. In fact, it is used as a “soft power” to gain political goals. However, it should be noted that elite sports are unlikely to result in more participation in health-related physical activities (including sports). Even though the development of elite sports can facilitate the achievement of political purposes, it may result in unpleasant consequences as well, such as growing trends of physical inactivity along with feelings of disappointment after poor results obtained by Iranian national athletes. Therefore physical recreation development is a vital necessity because physical recreation programs are also able to lead to identity construction even in a more consistent and less political way.

Despite the contribution of elite sports to nation-building purposes, a suggestion for the relevant Iranian decision-makers is to develop physical recreation programs as well. This is because more consistent benefits of physical culture could result from broad participation as opposed to simply watching elite sports competitions.

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## Caster Semenya's Battle: Too Fast to be a Woman? A Story of 'Unfair Advantages' and 'Genetic Gifts'

### Abstract

*South-African Olympic Gold medalist Caster Semenya has been questioned for her sexual identity since the World Championships in 2009. She was subjected to gender verification testing ever since and has recently been excluded from international competition. The female athlete is only allowed to keep competing if she agrees to take medication to lower her naturally high testosterone levels. The treatment of Semenya's case was justified on the basis that sport governing bodies are trying to ensure a level playing field. To what extent can the decision to discriminate and exclude an individual promote fair play? Should human rights not come before segregating categories in competition? This article will demonstrate how the female athlete's discrimination was shaped by the "fair-play-ensuring" categorization of sports, by the sexist differentiation between 'genetic gifts' and 'unfair performance advantages', and by the white notion of femininity.*

**Keywords:** genetic gifts, fair play, human biological diversity, ethics, natural advantages, differences of sexual development, sports gene

### How to cite this article:

Leona Kolberg (2019). Caster Semenya's Battle: Too Fast to be a Woman? A Story of 'Unfair Advantages' and 'Genetic Gifts'. *Erdélyi Társadalom/Transylvanian Society*, 17(1), 67–81. <https://doi.org/10.17177/77171.225>

The article can be downloaded from the CEEOL ([www.ceeol.com](http://www.ceeol.com)) and GESIS data catalogs: <http://www.da-ra.de/dara/search?lang=en&mdlang=en>.

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“A body's sex is too complex. There is no either/or. Rather, there are shades of difference”<sup>2</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

“Sports is a complex cultural practice with its own values, beliefs, and logic. (Cooky&Dworkin, 2013) Sports is a rather independent sector of society, which defines itself as separate from

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  - 2 Cooky, C.&Dworkin, Sh.L,(2013) “Policing the Boundaries of Sex: A Critical Examination of Gender Verification and the Caster Semenya Controversy,” *Journal of Sex Research* 50, no. 2, 106

politics and develops its own laws. By not being subject to any legally binding human rights instruments, the leading institutions get to organize sports after their own principles and priorities<sup>3</sup>. While the governing sports bodies do declare a policy of non-discrimination, it seems to be violated in a number of cases—the latest and most current one being the gender verification process of the South-African middle-distance runner and Olympic gold medalist Caster Semenya<sup>4</sup>.

International sport institutions, such as the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) and the Court of Arbitration (CAS), have the power to ban athletes from international competition based on attempts to improve their athletic performance by unnatural means. However, the power to exclude athletes from competition has been increasingly questioned through Semenya's case, as she was subjected to gender verification testing for years, resulting in her no longer being allowed to participate in international competitions unless she reduces her natural testosterone levels.

Maintaining 'fair play' is supposed to legitimize the undertaking of such proceedings. This objective, however, becomes less honest upon the realization that the mentioned international sporting institutions only seem to investigate natural advantageous body developments when women are excelling at athletic performances. In the case of female athletes, natural advantages are considered to be unfair because of jeopardizing a level playing field. For male athletes, these are defined as 'genetic gifts.' This gendered distinction is highly discriminatory and puts the concept of fair play in sports under scrutiny. To what extent can the treatment of female athlete Caster Semenya thus be justified on the basis that sport-governing bodies are trying to ensure a level playing field? And what is the difference between Semenya's natural 'unfair performance advantage' and other athletes' natural 'genetic gifts'?

This article will argue that Semenya's exclusion from international competition is discriminatory based on the differentiation between the kinds of natural performance advantages. The differentiation between 'genetic gifts' and 'unfair advantages' attests to the absence of a level playing field in sports and demonstrates that the sport sector is shaped by sexist and racist characteristics. Further, the sport sector is in urgent need of being restructured and its categories need to be reconsidered.

This article will first introduce Caster Semenya's legal battle, the IAAF's perspective and the violations of her human rights. Then, it will be analyzed to what extent sports really is a level playing field—considering the criteria defining 'genetic gifts' and 'unfair' performance advantages. Afterwards, the association between excellent athletic performances and the male gender will be examined. Finally, it will be evaluated how the dominant white notion of beauty has affected the South-African runner and some final conclusions on the importance of the press in her case will be drawn.

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3 "IAAF introduces new eligibility regulations for female classification," IAAF, accessed May 12, 2019, <https://www.iaaf.org/news/press-release/eligibility-regulations-for-female-classifica>

4 Semenya's case is subject to constant change and new circumstances.

## CASTER SEMENYA: BACKGROUND AND GENDER VERIFICATION TESTING

Semenya was born in Ga-Masehlong, South Africa, on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1991<sup>5</sup>. Her sporting career started early through her active participation in track racing and football at her school<sup>6</sup>. She continued with studying Sports Science at the University of North West<sup>7</sup>. That Semenya's life has thus circled around sports is obvious. After she had just turned 18, her athletic success broke senior and junior South African records in the 2009 African Junior Championships<sup>8</sup>. In the same year, Semenya received the gold medal in the 800 meter race at the World Championships (Schultz, 2011:228) ". Since then, the female athlete began to receive public recognition for her success while at the same time becoming the center of the controversial debate about her sexual identity. Her continuous athletic success was interrupted by an investigation process that still has not come to an end. Nevertheless, she acts as an important inspiration to aspiring athletes from similar disadvantaged backgrounds<sup>9</sup>.

Gender verification in sports has been used since the 1950s in order to decide whether the athlete was really eligible to participate in an international sport competition that was limited to one sex (Schultz, 2011:229). Therefore female athletes had to subject themselves to physical examinations, such as the inspection of their genitalia, and further medical testing of their chromosome and testosterone levels until the early 1990s to ensure that they fulfilled the criteria to compete. The annual examinations stopped but the IAAF reserved the right to investigate the athletes' gender whenever suspicion arises<sup>10</sup>.

This seemed to be the case with Caster Semenya, as she was subjected to gender verification testing in August 2009, just after she had won the 800-meter race in the world championships. They investigated her because of her excelling athletic performances and an apparent masculine appearance, questioning if she had an intersex condition giving her unfair advantages. She was then withdrawn from competition for an entire year<sup>11</sup>. After allowing her to compete again, the year of 2018 marked the institution's decision to issue a ruling on female eligibility for international track competition events from 400meter to the mile—requiring all female athletes with testosterone levels higher than those of the average female to lower these by taking medication<sup>12</sup>. If they would not comply with the new rule, they would no longer be allowed to participate in these kinds of competitions. The decision was justified by the need to ensure a level playing field because higher testosterone levels would provide female athletes with 'unfair' advantages<sup>13</sup>. Semenya legally objected to this ruling based on its discriminatory char-

5 "Mokgadi Caster Semenya," South African History Online, accessed June 20, 2019, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/mokgadi-caster-semenya>

6 South African History Online, "Mokgadi Caster Semenya."

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 South African History Online, "Mokgadi Caster Semenya."

10 Ibid, 230-233.

11 South African History Online, "Mokgadi Caster Semenya."

12 IAAF, "IAAF introduces new eligibility regulations for female classification."

13 Ibid.

acter but the CAS allowed the ruling to come into effect on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The CAS dismissed the requests for arbitration by justifying its decision on the basis of maintaining fair play<sup>14</sup>.

Semenya took her case to the next highest court in order—the Swiss Federal Supreme Court, which resulted in further disappointment for the South-African Olympic gold medalist. Even though the IAAF ruling was suspended while her appeal was being processed, the court ruled in favor of the sporting institution and thus upheld the official implementation<sup>15</sup>. Consequently, if Semenya will not agree to take the ordered testosterone-reducing medication, she will no longer be allowed to compete in international track events from the 400 meter to the mile. She will thus miss the chance to defend her title in the upcoming world championships in Doha, Qatar, and many more competitions that she could succeed in.

## HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN SEMENYA'S GENDER VERIFICATION CASE

All legal international disputes in sports are normally settled by the CAS but the institution's authority and validity have been increasingly questioned (Wollman, 2016). Firstly, the distrust developed because of insufficient insights into the working of the federations and their decision-making processes (Wollman, 2016: 325). Secondly, there is increasing doubt whether these sport authorities should have the right to control naturally occurring human variation as the matter is a sensitive issue closely intertwined with human rights (Schultz, 2011: 239). The current IAAF policy on gender verification is based on an 'I-know-it-when-I see-it' concept (Camporesi & Maugeri, 2010: 378) as there is no indication on what grounds the institution decides to investigate someone's sex, resulting in very little transparency. But what about the rights to human dignity, privacy, non-discrimination and equal treatment of the athletes?

As previously mentioned, neither the IAAF nor the CAS are obliged to protect the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the European Convention on Human Rights. This problematic independence is clearly represented in Semenya's case as her human rights are not being respected in the way they should be. The following examples of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will underline the accuracy of the violations of the female athlete's human rights:

Article 1: All human beings are born free and **equal in dignity and rights**. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.<sup>16</sup>

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14 "CAS Arbitration: Caster Semenya, Athletics South Africa (ASA) and International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF): Decision," CAS, accessed May 12, 2019, [https://www.tas-cas.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Media\\_Release\\_Semenya\\_ASA\\_IAAF\\_decision.pdf](https://www.tas-cas.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Media_Release_Semenya_ASA_IAAF_decision.pdf)

15 "Press Release of the Swiss Federal Supreme Court," Swiss Federal Supreme Court, accessed July 30, 2019, [https://www.bger.ch/files/live/sites/bger/files/pdf/en/4A\\_248\\_2019\\_yyyy\\_mm\\_dd\\_T\\_e\\_09\\_54\\_21.pdf](https://www.bger.ch/files/live/sites/bger/files/pdf/en/4A_248_2019_yyyy_mm_dd_T_e_09_54_21.pdf)

16 United Nations General Assembly, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," 217 (III) A (Paris, 1948), art. 1, [https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR\\_Translations/eng.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf)

Article 2: Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, **without distinction of any kind**, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.<sup>17</sup>

Article 7: **All are equal** before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.<sup>18</sup>

Article 12: No one shall be subjected to **arbitrary interference with his privacy**, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his **honor and reputation**. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.<sup>19</sup>

The European Convention on Human Rights promotes similar articles, such as:

Article 1: Human dignity

**Human dignity is inviolable.** It must be respected and protected.<sup>20</sup>

Article 3: Right to integrity of the person

1. Everyone has the right to respect for his or her **physical and mental integrity**.

2. In the fields of medicine and biology, the following must be respected in particular:

– the free and informed **consent of the person concerned**, according to the procedures laid down by law, (...) <sup>21</sup>

Article 8: Protection of personal data

1. Everyone has the right to the **protection of personal data** concerning him or her.

2. Such data must be processed fairly for specified purposes and **on the basis of the consent of the person concerned** or some other legitimate basis laid down by law<sup>22</sup>

Article 23: Equality between women and men

**Equality between women and men** must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay<sup>23</sup>.

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17 UN Assembly, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," art. 2.

18 Ibid, art. 7.

19 Ibid, art. 12.

20 Council of Europe. "Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights) as Amended by Protocol No. 11." *Council of Europe Treaty Series 155*. Strasbourg, 1988: art. 1. [https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf)

21 Council of Europe, "European Convention on Human Rights," art. 2.

22 Ibid, art. 8.

23 Ibid, art. 23.

These two charters demonstrate how Caster Semenya's human rights have been violated. Against the promoted general prohibition of discrimination, her human dignity and especially her privacy have been invaded by the sporting institutions. This interference with her human rights turns the female athlete's case into a highly political issue that is no longer limited to the world of sport. By forcing her to take medication to lower her testosterone levels if she wishes to keep competing, her right to integrity is violated as this would not be based on her consent. Further, through asking her to change her physical identity to better conform to the body expectations for female athletes, her mental integrity is affected just as much. The CAS also mentions that the ruling on testosterone levels might be subject to change because of possible future side effects. The hormonal treatment could be potentially harmful and should only be applied if there was enough evidence to prevent the possible negative effects on the athlete's health<sup>24</sup>. This interference shows no respect for Semenya's dignity and integrity.

Semenya's privacy was invaded and her personal data was not protected since her entire gender verification testing was made public by institutions such as the IAAF. The South-African was therefore placed in the middle of an open discussion about her sexual identity after she had just turned 18 years old. Her reputation for athletic excellence became questioned and she has had to defend herself ever since. She was not entitled to equal treatment by the sporting institutions, especially in regards to her skin color and sex. Naturally occurring performance advantages have only been considered problematic and unfair when the concerned athlete was female. Natural, explosive athletic performances by male athletes are rarely questioned because of an institutionalized linkage between athleticism and masculinity—women, however, tend to be quickly investigated afterwards. This violates the principle of non-discrimination as Semenya is not enjoying equal treatment through the differentiation being made between naturally occurring performance advantages. Most are solely based on characteristic traits of the sex.

The African National Congress has accused the IAAF not only of sexism, but also racism, and filed complaints with the United Nations Commission on Human Rights—which the IAAF is, however independent from (Dworkin, Swarr&Cooky, 2013:40). Scholars, activists and organizations increasingly call for Semenya's case to be investigated for a violation of her human rights by a higher authority, arguing that it is unethical to force an athlete to change their physical identity. The principle of fairness is supposed to be ensured by excluding an athlete based on her natural human body variation. How can a level playing field be provided if it comes at the cost of having to discriminate against athletes? As the ruling violates basic human rights, the final option would be to appeal to a Human Rights Court. Semenya's case demonstrates how the sports sector is closely intertwined with political as well as legal issues—even if it declares itself to be separate from that.

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24 CAS, "Decision."

## SPORTS AS A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD: 'GENETIC GIFTS' VERSUS 'UNFAIR PERFORMANCE' ADVANTAGES

*"Elite sports is a contest among athletes with an uneven set of genetic endowments and natural advantages."<sup>25</sup>*

For sports to remain a level playing field it means that competition should be determined through "talent and hard work and thus athletes' superior performances are the result of individual talents and not any advantages other athletes may not have the ability to possess." (Cooky&Dworkin, 2013) Therefore 'unfair advantages' need to be examined to ensure a level playing field, which is why the IAAF feels the need to control natural body developments. However, the way in which the IAAF differentiates between 'unfair performance advantages' and 'genetic gifts' remains a mystery that is yet to be solved. It claims that:

"The IAAF is convinced there are some contexts, sport being one of them, where biology has to trump identity."<sup>26</sup>

"The IAAF considers that the DSD Regulations are a necessary, reasonable and proportionate means of protecting fair and meaningful competition in elite female athletics, and the CAS agreed."<sup>27</sup>

The ruling on female eligibility concerning high testosterone levels was based on the decision to maintain 'fair' play in sports and to prevent any performance advantages that would be unfair to the other athletes. But can discriminatory means really be justified by ensuring supposedly equal chances? And what criteria are these performance advantages actually based on? Taking a closer look at the proclaimed level playing field, sports rather becomes "a site where broader forms of social inequality are accepted, tolerated, and ignored" (Cooky&Dworkin, 2013: 107). If sport organizations really aim to monitor genetically obtained advantages, athletes would not be tested only for sex. There are multiple performance enhancing genes that can easily result in an athlete's superior abilities.

Athletes carrying naturally occurring performance advantages are often considered "freaks of nature"<sup>28</sup>. They are not always appreciated, as we have had to learn in Semenya's case. Various male athletes such as Michael Phelps, Usain Bolt, Eero Mäntyranta, and Donald Thomas have, however, been celebrated extensively for carrying genetic gifts. Swimmer Michael Phelps was praised for his genetic advantages because of his long torso for swimming speed, his big hands and feet, his long arms and short legs, his double-jointed ankles for a powerful kick, and in

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25 Malcom Gladwell, "Man and Superman," *The New Yorker*, September 2, 2013, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/09/09/man-and-superman>

26 IAAF, "IAAF Response to Swiss Federal Tribunal order regarding DSD Regulations," accessed June 15, 2019, <https://www.iaaf.org/news/press-release/iaaf-response-swiss-federal-tribunal-dsd-regu>

27 IAAF, "IAAF Response to Swiss Federal Tribunal."

28 A'Court, M.&Elwood, J. (2019) "We love a natural advantage, unless you're Caster Semenya," *Stuff*, May 11, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/sport/opinion/112513626/we-love-a-natural-advantage-unless-youre-caster-semenya>

addition to that, his body only produced half the lactic acid of average humans—providing him with more energy<sup>29</sup>. He was never questioned for his advantages and instead he was celebrated for being “built to swim” (Schultz, 2011: 293). No one got suspicious and suggested he eventually had to boost his lactic acid levels to re-establish fair play in international swimming competitions. The appreciation for these genetic gifts seems to be different when it comes to female athletes. Semenya was treated as a “mutant”<sup>30</sup>, not once was she celebrated for her natural advantages.

In his book *The Sports Gene*, author David Epstein revolutionarily declared that every Olympic athlete has natural advantages and is genetically superior to the normal human being<sup>31</sup>. He coined the term “sports gene” to describe the natural difference of Olympic athletes in particular, as he believes that “elite sports is a contest among athletes with an uneven set of genetic endowments and natural advantages”<sup>32</sup>. Male endurance skier Eero Mäntyranta for example carried a rare genetic mutation that made his bone marrow overproduce red blood cells<sup>33</sup>. He therefore had around 65 percent more red blood cells than the normal adult male<sup>34</sup>. That provided him with an immense natural advantage in comparison with his competing athletes as he profited from increased oxygen capability. Nevertheless, the successful male athlete was not made subject to medication that could reduce the production of his red blood cells, unlike in Semenya’s case.

Donald Thomas started training eight months before winning the world championships in high jumping<sup>35</sup>. He won because of his individual biological variation: unusually long legs and a strikingly long Achilles tendon, which “acted as a kind of spring”<sup>36</sup> and was able to catapult him high into the air<sup>37</sup>. The IAAF still did not issue any rulings on possible means that could reduce his natural performance advantages.

The situation is similar in basketball. Not only the height is important, but also the wingspan provides athletes with an immense natural advantage<sup>38</sup>. Human biological diversity should be celebrated, not condemned. Epstein argued that athletic greatness is genetic and “the only real rule is tremendous individual variation”<sup>39</sup>. Many athletes competing at an Olympic level carry performance enhancing genes and do not fit the category of the average human being.

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29 A’Court, M.&Elwood, J., “We love a natural advantage.”

30 A’Court, M.&Elwood, J., “We love a natural advantage.”

31 Thomas, J. (2016) “Every Olympic athlete has natural advantages – so why the witch-hunt against Caster Semenya?” *Nation Cymru*, May 5, <https://nation.cymru/opinion/every-olympic-athlete-has-natural-advantages-so-why-the-witch-hunt-against-caster-semenya/>

32 Gladwell, M. “Man and Superman.”

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 “Are elite athletes born or made?” CBS News, April 6, 2014, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/are-elite-athletes-born-or-made/>

Natural giftedness in combination with extensive training can then result in the maximizing of talent potential.

In the case of male athletes, natural performance advantages seem to be considered 'genetic gifts' (Schultz 2011: 293), but when it comes to Semenya, these are labelled as unfair. The monitoring of the 'unfair' natural advantages by the sport organizations thus seems to solely be focused on examining the sex of athletes in female competitions while other physical advantages are not monitored, policed or deemed unfair.

Fairness in sports would have to tolerate all kinds of naturally obtained advantages and not only a few—why is Semenya's then not accepted? Instead of only focusing on whether an athlete can be considered a woman, the examination of 'unfair advantages' should be expanded to a much wider range of natural conditions that can lead to an athlete's superiority. It is urgent to consider other ways to categorize competition than focusing solely on sex segregation as it is clearly not maintaining a level playing field and seems to result in discrimination instead. Moreover, if fairness in competition is the main objective, biological diversity should be embraced instead of being defined as a threat. The only concern should be that this success has not been achieved by cheating but by natural means (Camporesi & Maugeri, 2010:379). "Diversity and integrity are probably the two biggest values in sport and nobody has embodied those qualities more than Semenya."<sup>40</sup>To avoid discrimination, either all naturally obtained advantages need to be accepted or all need to be policed and investigated.

## TOO FAST TO BE A WOMAN

*"People are suspicious of strong women – especially when they are strong and black like Serena Williams, or strong, black and lesbian, like Caster Semenya, or just when they don't fit our image of a "conventional" woman."<sup>41</sup>*

By exclusively testing sex in the examination of physical advantages, sport-governing bodies reaffirm the belief that all male athletes are better at sports when compared to female athletes. When women achieve great success in sports, their athletic performance is perceived as suspicious and they often tend to be subjected to sex testing. Explosive athletic performances by male athletes are never questioned as these are automatically attributed to natural talent and hard work (Cooky & Dworkin, 2013:108). Thus, there seems to be an underlying belief that men are always superior athletes when competing in the same sport which is why athletic excellence naturally becomes associated with men. They are considered to be stronger, faster, and bigger, which results in the belief that sex segregation and sex testing are necessary to ensure fairness and equal opportunities. A successful female athlete is quickly singled out for gender verification because if an athlete is performing extremely well, it is expected to be a man. (Sloop, 2012: 90) As a consequence of the institutionalized linkage between athleticism and masculinity, it is assumed that superior athletic performances are a natural essence of biological

<sup>40</sup> Thomas, "Every Olympic athlete has natural advantages."

<sup>41</sup> A'Court, M. & Elwood, J. "We love a natural advantage."

males – thus, suspicion only arises when a female athlete excels. (Dworkin et al, 2013:45) Sport is therefore reinforcing hegemonic masculinity and a binary understanding of gender. There are few other areas where so much work is put into affirming that each body fits perfectly into a male or female category and all bodies that do not fit are questioned and supposed to change. Especially female athletes like Semenya are supposed to deliver not only an athletic performance but also a gender performance (Miller, 2015: 296). As Semenya does not confirm to the expectations of what a female athletic body should look like, the IAAF intends to force her to change her physical identity if she wishes to keep competing. Requiring someone to change their natural body to continue their career also involves a question of ethics due to the severe psychological impact. Instead of questioning Semenya's excellent athletic performances only because of the association of this kind of success with male athletes, they should rather be embraced and appreciated. Instead of requiring her to take medication to change her body with the intention of making her slower in competition, sport-governing bodies should question on what basis they organize sports and reconsider the way they segregate competition. Natural female athletic success should be celebrated, not questioned.

## WHITE NOTION OF FEMININITY AND WHITE BEAUTY STANDARDS

In claiming that the gender verification process in Semenya's case was "consistent with European racism and imperialism" (Dworkin et al, 2013: 52) and that her treatment "paralleled a racist history" (Dworkin et al, 2013), the question arises whether the female athlete simply did not conform to the white definition of femininity. As sport is one of the sectors of society that puts great emphasis on the strict division of male and female categories, each body is expected to perfectly fit into the fixed category. If it does not, it becomes suspicious and expected to change. Caster Semenya's case demonstrates the way athletes are treated when their genders do not conform to traditional white conceptions of gender, of what men and women should look like, which is why sport strongly reinforces the binary understanding of gender (Miller, 2015: 296). By assessing her physical appearance as not "womanly enough" (Miller, 2015: 298), it becomes clear that female athletes are supposed to fit into the Western notions of femininity and are expected to deliver a gender performance next to their athletic performance (Miller, 2015: 304). Her deep voice, short hair, and muscular physique are perceived as signifiers of her not 'real' or 'normal' womanhood because sport governing bodies see her as overly masculine. Consequently, no one seems to pay attention to her athletic performance and instead, the entire focus is on her gender performance. Semenya belongs to the women who do not conform to Western expectations of femininity and her treatment seems to contribute to a long history of "demonizing black female athletes" (Miller, 2015: 301). As women of color do not correctly perform 'mainstream femininity', their success or athletic excellence is quickly considered suspicious by sport governing bodies. Semenya carries a lot of qualities, such as explosive and muscular physical performances, which are not associated with traditional notions of femininity (Dworkin et al, 2013: 43). Instead, female runners are "encouraged to be empowered through 'toned' bodies while still continuing to reinforce traditional concepts of femininity" (Young, 2015: 333), which demonstrates the social expectation of a particular look. Women,

who do not fit the white, Eurocentric ideals of femininity, like Semenya, are often the ones being subjected to gender verification testing as they differ from “cultural understandings about what a woman should look like, how she should behave outside of sport, and how she should perform when competing in it” (Schultz, 2011: 236). Semenya does not conform to any of these dominant expectations about a woman’s appearance, which is why the IAAF’s decision to investigate her sex has been considered as an “extension of the West’s long-standing abuse and enfreakment of black women” (Schultz, 2012: 289) – only because she does not meet the Eurocentric definition of beauty. To grant Semenya some socially acceptable femininity, ‘You’ magazine decided to give the female athlete a makeover after she was subjected to gender verification testing in 2009 (Winslow, 2012: 298). Since she was being accused of not being female, the magazine decided to provide her with a more “socially acceptable identity” (Winslow, 2012: 307) in order to align her more closely with the female gender category. To transform her seemingly masculine performance into a more feminine one, the magazine editorial involved photos of Semenya with a changed hair style, she had makeup on her face and she was wearing high heels and a dress. (Winslow, 2012: 303) The caption of the magazine’s article “We Turn SA’s Power Girl Into a Glamour Girl—And She Loves It!” (Young, 2015: 337) already implies that the aim was to change Semenya into a more feminine and glamorous woman to satisfy the sport governing bodies’ expectations and to pursue her assimilation into dominant norms of White feminine beauty (Young, 2015: 340). In order to make Semenya fit perfectly into the female category, the magazine assumes that she has to reflect ideals of white femininity: beauty, heterosexuality, glamour, and of male romantic interest (Young, 2015: 337). As the magazine feels the need to focus on “visual markers of Euro-American femininity” (Young, 2015: 337), i.e. stereotypically white, Western femininity, her makeover “echoes a colonial tone” (Young, 2015: 338). The purpose of the makeover was her assimilation into Western standards of beauty so that she would fit into her given category—but a makeover is usually often only done to people who are considered to be flawed and only afterwards realize their true identity. “Transforming the indigenous, ethnically Other Semenya into a civilized, Western woman” (Young, 2015: 338) therefore echoes a European colonial history as colonizing often involved that indigenous people could only assimilate by submitting to the culture and standards of the colonizers. Semenya’s makeover thus clearly demonstrates how Semenya was given a new, Western, gender conform identity, which was then supposed to stop her gender from being questioned and should achieve acceptance of her by the sport governing bodies and society in general. If she submits to the IAAF’s ruling and agrees to take the medication, the sport governing bodies have achieved their purpose of making her fit into the socially accepted standards of white Western femininity.

## THE SUPPORT OF THE PRESS

Opinion expressed in the press about Semenya’s case has resulted in a division into two main positions. One is strongly advocating that human rights should always prevail over sports’ criteria and categories, while the other is defending the IAAF by stating that eligibility in international competition must be limited and controlled. The latter is, however, surprisingly

weak in comparison to the first one. The majority of journalists and newspapers have taken a clear position in the support of Caster Semenya and her human rights. There is widespread consternation at the IAAF's statement that its ruling is discriminatory, but that discrimination is necessary to promote a level playing field<sup>42</sup>. This perspective gained support on a small scale in newspapers such as the *Süddeutsche*, which claimed that ethics should not be intertwined with sports. Instead, a clear and categorized structure should be in control to provide competing athletes with equal chances and parity<sup>43</sup>.

However, magazines like the *Sportstar* have strongly represented the opposing stance of the priority human rights<sup>44</sup>. Athletes' human rights should always be the "starting point,"<sup>45</sup> which is why it was recommended to Semenya to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights<sup>46</sup>. The voice of the press has especially criticized the IAAF's private status and the absence of a policy commitment to internationally recognized human rights. Since the sporting institutions are currently weighing fair play higher than non-discrimination, they should be subject to a universal declaration of human rights. The *taz* magazine has called their decision "disturbing"<sup>47</sup>. Further online journals such as *Euronews* and *Time* have emphasized the unethical character of prescribing this medical intervention and said that Semenya was being treated as a "human guinea pig"<sup>48</sup> or a "lab rat"<sup>49</sup>. The scientific community has also underlined the lack of ethics when forcing a healthy human being to take medication<sup>50</sup>. The sporting institutions have therefore been questioned by newspapers such as the *Zeit* about the non-existing scientific basis for this hormonal treatment and its unknown consequences<sup>51</sup>. Athletes who are affected by Differences of Sexual Development (DSD), like Semenya, cannot conform perfectly to either the male or female category<sup>52</sup>. *Zeit* underlines that the IAAF declares that their measure was necessary for fair play and integrity in women's sport and questions how sporting institutions

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42 IAAF

43 Mölter, J. "Aufschrei der Ärzte im Fall Semenya," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, May 6, 2019 <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/sport/leichtathletik-semenya-aerzte-medikamente-1.4434438>

44 Sudarshan, N. (2019) "Semenya's human rights should come before science," *Sportstar*, August 3, <https://sportstar.thehindu.com/athletics/athletics-iaaf-olympian-caster-semenya-testosterone-human-rights-violation-gosports-symposium-bengaluru-cas/article28808622.ece>

45 Sudarshan, N. "Semenya's human rights should come before science."

46 AmbyBurfoot, "After Latest Swiss Court Ruling, the Odds Are Against Caster Semenya," *LetsRun*, August 2, 2019, <https://www.letsrun.com/news/2019/08/after-latest-swiss-court-ruling-the-odds-are-against-caster-semenya/>

47 Kopp, J. (2019) "Ein verstörendes Urteil," *taz*, July 31, <https://taz.de/Caster-Semenya-darf-nicht-an-den-Start!/5610239/>

48 Kennedy, R. (2019) "Caster Semenya barred from defending 800m title at World Championships," *euronews*, August 1, <https://www.euronews.com/2019/07/31/caster-semenya-barred-from-defending-800m-title-at-world-championships>

49 Gregory, S. (2019) "Caster Semenya Won't Stop Fighting for Her Right to Run, Just as She Is," *Time*, July 18, <https://time.com/5629249/caster-semenya-interview/>

50 Mölter, J. "Aufschrei der Ärzte im Fall Semenya."

51 Brems, L. (2019) "Nur mit Medikamenten eine Frau," *Zeit Online*, May 2, <https://www.zeit.de/sport/2019-05/caster-semenya-frau-cas-urteil>

52 Brems, L. (2019) "Nur mit Medikamenten eine Frau."

are supposed to answer complicated and essential questions about genetics, gender identity, and fairness as such<sup>53</sup>. A central question in this debate has been if it is even possible to classify athletes as men and women at all and how the sector of sports should find clarity in this issue<sup>54</sup>. While Semenya may be genetically exceptional, the voice of the press has emphasized that the female athlete must nevertheless be integrated, just as her fellow competitors who carry other natural performance advantages<sup>55</sup>. The South-African Olympic Gold Medalist has thus received overwhelming support from the press by its criticism of the sport categories and institutions and by defining her as an inspirational fighter for human rights. The press presented the reality of the appreciation of natural advantages, “unless you’re Caster Semenya”<sup>56</sup>. Moreover, journalists emphasized the gendered problematic of Semenya’s case by stating that it is “almost impossible to believe that any of the rulings, controversy and back and forth accusations would be heard if she was a man”<sup>57</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

This article demonstrated that the IAAF’s ruling in Semenya’s case cannot be justified on the basis of ensuring a level playing field. The ruling, which requires her to take medication to lower her testosterone levels if she wishes to compete, was supposed to be legitimized by Semenya having an ‘unfair performance advantage’, even if it is a natural development in her case. However, only certain naturally occurring performance advantages are considered problematic, usually only those concerning the sex of the female athlete. Furthermore, athletic excellence is only questioned when it has been achieved by a woman. Natural advantages of male athletes are considered to be ‘genetic gifts’ and superior athletic performance has been institutionalized as only being ‘normal’ for men. The sports sector is in desperate need of a new structuring and categorization—the biological diversity athletes represent should be celebrated and not undermined just because they do not fit neatly into the established categories. The sexist and racist status quo of international sporting competitions is a highly political and legal issue that should be challenged by a human rights court. To avoid what other female athletes have had to suffer from in the past and what Semenya is currently experiencing, equal treatment needs to be created through sporting institutions committing to universally binding human rights regulations. A real level playing field would not have to accept strong discrimination and exclusion but instead would promote the right to integrity, privacy, equality, and most importantly, dignity.

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53 Gregory, S. “Caster Semenya Won’t Stop Fighting for Her Right to Run.”

54 Mölter, J. (2019) “Der Sport muss Antworten finden,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, August 1, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/sport/caster-semenya-cas-iaaf-leichtathletik-1.4547460>

55 Mölter, J. “Der Sport muss Antworten finden.”

56 A’Court, M.&Elwood, J. “We love a natural advantage.”

57 Ibid.

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## The Sport Database and the History of the Netherlands until 1940

### Abstract

*Sport is sometimes called the mirror of society and rightly so. All kinds of social relationships and developments can be found in the sports world of a country. The database *Sporting organisations, sports clubs and sporting periodicals in the Netherlands until 1940* contains data on thousands of existing and past associations and clubs for six prominent sports: gymnastics, hockey, korfbal, chess, tennis and football. This article shows how political relationships and philosophical differences had a major influence on the development of sports in the Netherlands until 1940. The article also deals with the naming of clubs, the background of their members and their size.*

**Keywords:** sport databank, social relationships, leisure activities, sports practice, use of club names

### How to cite this article:

Michel van Gent (2019). The Sport Database and the History of the Netherlands until 1940. *Erdélyi Társadalom/Transylvanian Society*, 17(1), 83–94. <https://doi.org/10.17177/77171.226>

The article can be downloaded from the CEEOL ([www.ceeol.com](http://www.ceeol.com)) and GESIS data catalogs: <http://www.da-ra.de/dara/search?lang=en&mdlang=en>.

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Sport is expressed for example in times, distances, heights and final results, but rarely in dates. Athletes, sports associations and clubs have always focused on the future, because ‘tomorrow’ there are new competitions and new tournaments. Only on anniversaries sporting organizations and clubs tend to look back on their past, which sometimes results in an anniversary book. The anniversary book, however, often focuses on the history of one association or club and does not include others. In a broader context sport can make an important contribution to a better understanding of the history of a country or at least may serve as an illustration of popular culture. Numerous social relationships and developments can be reflected in the sports world from season to season. The databank *Sporting organisations, sports clubs and sporting periodicals in the Netherlands until 1940* maps thousands of existing and past sporting associations and clubs for six prominent sports: gymnastics, hockey, korfbal, chess, tennis and football. In this article the information in the database is linked to the national history of the Netherlands between circa 1880 and 1940.

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## THE DESIGN OF THE DATABASE

On September 15, 2011, André Bolhuis, chairman of the NOC\*NSF (the Dutch Olympic Committee/Dutch Sports Federations), launched the database *Sporting organisations, sports clubs and sporting periodicals in the Netherlands until 1940* during a meeting at Papendal – the national training centre – near Arnhem. The database (further referred to simply as: Sport Databank) was compiled by the Huygens Institute for History of the Netherlands, part of the KNAW and currently located in Amsterdam. The digital database contains data on sports organizations and clubs established before the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 1940 in the field of gymnastics, hockey, korfbal, chess, tennis and football. For every branch of sport there is an introduction with background information about the organization of the sport until 1940, such as the number of national sports associations and their departments ('afdelingen' and 'kringen' in Dutch)<sup>2</sup>.

For national and regional sports associations, the records contain the name of the organization, the date of establishment, the objective and the periodicals in which the official announcements were published. In addition to the name and place of establishment, the records of the clubs state the date of incorporation (or first mention) and eventually the date of dissolution or merger (last mention), the objective, participation in competitions and the foundation of the association (neutral, Roman Catholic, Protestant Christian, Socialist or Jewish). If possible, abbreviations for club names are given in full. All in all, the database contains more than 16.000 records.

Gymnastics, hockey, korfbal, chess, tennis and football were chosen because these sports are still among the most important sports in the Netherlands. They are also interesting from a historical and sociological point of view. Some sports became very popular (gymnastics, korfbal, football) while others remained elitist due to the small number of practitioners (hockey, chess, tennis). There are sports with separate departments for men and women (gymnastics, hockey, tennis) and one sport that is played with mixed teams (korfbal). It was also a conscious decision to opt for one mind sport (chess) as opposed to sports in which the entire body is involved.

The database ends on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 1940, because the new Nederlandsche Voetbalbond (Netherlands Football Association) was founded on this day. All existing football associations merged into this organization for the first time since the foundation of the Roman Catholic associations in 1915. The classification of the competition for the 1940-1941 season is still included for all clubs in all six sports to show the user where they were all classified, either in the national or in the regional league.

The database is equipped with a search page, whereby it is possible to search for clubs per province, per location, per association or per conviction (neutral, Roman Catholic, Protestant Christian, Socialist and Jewish) or combinations thereof. If desired, one can also search by year or period of incorporation (first entry). The results can be arranged alphabetically by club name or chronologically by year of incorporation or by last entry. The record van A.F.C. Ajax of

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2 See <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/sportbondenclubsperiodieken> for more information.

Amsterdam, the best known and most successful football club in the Netherlands, is given as an example of the records in the database in Appendix 1.

## THE SOURCES

Archives of national and regional sports associations form the basis of the database. After all, they provide information about some of the clubs over the same period. This includes address books, registrations, the beginning and end of membership of clubs and other official announcements, annual reports and final positions of competitions. Many associations have left little or no archival material behind, especially from their first years of existence. In that case, data from national, regional and local newspapers were sought as compensation. Prime sources were *Delfpher*, the large collection of digital newspapers and magazines of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (Royal Library of the Netherlands), and collections of archive institutions.<sup>3</sup>

Hardly any archives of individual sports clubs have been used. After all, these mainly contain documents from one specific club and they give little or no information about other clubs from that period. Jubilee books of clubs have been consulted, because they often give details about the establishment of a club and their subsequent performances.

The names of the founders of associations and clubs are only included in the records if they were mentioned in the sources. The database does not specify the colors of the club suit, the number of members from season to season or the location of the accommodations. After all, the number of clubs is so large that this can never be done properly or completely in a short time. Also the performances of the best teams are not included in the records, only when they have played in the national competition and in the regional competition.

The database contains more than 16.000 records of sporting organizations and clubs that were established before August 1, 1940. On the basis of this data, a great deal can be learned about the rise of sport in the Netherlands and the relationship between sport and society. Some examples of this will be given below.

## THE RISE OF SPORT IN THE NETHERLANDS UNTIL 1940

Most modern sports were introduced in the Netherlands in the period between around 1840-1910. This happened in a society that was divided into different groups: liberal-Neutrals, Roman Catholics, Protestants, Jews, socialists and communists. In historiography the term pillarization ('*verzuiling*' in Dutch) is used to describe this kind of society. Each group had its own social circles, its own political party, schools and social organizations, newspaper and later radio broadcasting. People mainly dealt with people from their own group and didn't have much contact with other groups. There were big differences between rich and poor within this

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3 Please note that this only concerns newspapers and magazines that were already digitized in 2011.

society as well. Many still had to go to work or school on Saturday, leaving Sunday as the only day for relaxation.

Initially, only the upper classes had money and time for sporting activities. They could buy the necessary clothing and equipment and they could lay out or rent fields to play their sport. Later the lower classes of society also joined in sports activities, leading to the foundation of neutral national sports associations: gymnastics (1868), chess (1873), football (1889), hockey (1898), tennis (1899) and korfbal (1903), to limit ourselves to the six sports of the database. However, none of them had member clubs in all eleven provinces of the country in the first decades of their existence.

The national government and most municipalities thought that sport was a private matter that did not need financial support from public funds. Some large cities gradually started to spend money for the construction of sports fields, the construction of gyms and the like, but in smaller towns and villages sports practice could be opposed by political parties based on religion, invoking the Sunday Act of 1815.

Many Catholics and Protestants objected to sports on Sundays, because that was a threat to Sunday rest and church attendance. Catholics wanted to allow sport on Sunday after the mass celebration, but the practice of sport had to be under the supervision of the local clergy. The Protestants were content with sporting activities only on Saturday afternoon.

During the First World War (1914-1918), many young men were mobilized for national defense. The army command let them do sports for relaxation, because this was good for their physical condition and for team building. Many soldiers wanted to continue their sporting activities after their release from the army and they established their own sports clubs or joined existing ones. From 1919 a new workers' law applied, whereby every employee was given a free Saturday afternoon and a free Sunday. These changes triggered a growth in the number of sports clubs, as is shown in Appendix 2. Many saw the importance and usefulness of practicing sport for society. This was also officially acknowledged, because between 1918 and 1940, Queen Wilhelmina gave numerous neutral sports associations the right to call themselves 'Royal' ('Koninklijk' in Dutch), as can be seen in Appendix 3.

However, sport remained suspicious in Catholic and Protestant circles, as they did not want mass sporting events on Sundays. In 1928 the Olympic Games were held in Amsterdam. It was typical of social and political relationships that the government did not provide financial support to the organization. All necessary funds for the Games were brought in by private initiative. The Olympic Games greatly increased the active and passive interest in sports in the Netherlands. The participation of the Dutch national team in the World Football Championships in 1934 and 1938 also generated a great deal of enthusiasm in society. Despite the economic crisis of the 1930s, the number of sportsmen and the interest in sport in the media (radio and newspapers) would only increase.

## SPORTS AND PHILOSOPHIES OF LIFE

The existence of several social groups in society had a massive impact on the development of sports in the Netherlands<sup>4</sup>. If one didn't have a specific philosophy of life, one could set up a club and join the neutral association of that sport. Catholics and Protestants, however, did not want to let their sons and daughters exercise with peers outside their group. Therefore, they had to set up their own sporting organizations.

Between 1915 and 1919 all Catholic football clubs founded their own organization with the help of the Roman Catholic Church. All five dioceses in the Netherlands got their own football association (Breda, Den Bosch, Limburg, Utrecht and Haarlem). They had a R.K. Federation of R.K. Football associations to organize a national competition. A similar structure based on dioceses with a national federation developed for gymnastics as well. All Catholic clubs were given a spiritual advisor, usually the local pastor. There were no Catholic sports associations in the other four sports of the database. The Protestants established a national gymnastics association in 1910, a national korfbal association in 1920 and a national football association in 1929.

In 1926, the socialists founded their own *Nederlandse Arbeiders Sportbond* (N.A.S.B., the Dutch Workers Sports Association), which offered several branches of sport to its members. This was completely different from the neutral and confessional sporting organizations. Some socialist football and korfbal clubs, however, preferred to become member of the neutral civic sports associations (the "burgerlijke bonden" in the socialist jargon), because they had more opponents here in their immediate environment. The Jews and communists also had their own sports clubs, but they were too small and too far apart to organize their own competitions. They also had to join the neutral sports associations if they wanted to play matches on a weekly basis.

In football, there were also all sorts of regional and local organizations, which did not join the neutral national football association. This often happened because they had few members and preferred to take care of their own affairs. In large cities such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and Groningen there were also office football associations with teams from local companies and institutions. They played their games on Saturday or Sunday afternoons.

Hockey had two neutral national organizations, one for men (founded in 1898) and one for women (founded in 1911). This division based on sexes was unique in Europe. They would not merge until 1941. Tennis only had one national neutral association. Many hockey and tennis clubs were socially exclusive and had regulations for joining the club (ballotage). Both associations had strict admission requirements as well, so that not every club could become a member of the association. Each aspiring member had to be nominated by two clubs that were already members of the association before joining the organization. All other sports associations didn't have such strict rules. The first hockey clubs in the Catholic south were founded in the 1930s, but they would not join the neutral association until after 1940. There were hardly any Catholic tennis clubs, because the clergy were not in favor of mixed sports.

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 3.

Chess was such a modest sport in the Netherlands that one neutral national organization was sufficient. There were Catholic and Protestant clubs affiliated with the association in the 1930s, but the games were always played on weekday evenings, so the problem of playing on a Sunday did not exist here.

Therefore religion and political views definitely had an influence on the practice of sport. In the 1920s and 1930s the neutral N.V.B. (Netherlands Football Association) had a national competition divided in five districts (West I and II, North, East and South). In four districts there were separate competitions for first teams and for lower teams except in the South district. In North Brabant and Limburg there were not enough neutral clubs so that the first teams had to compete against the best lower teams of other clubs in the same national competition. The neutral Nederlandsche Korfbalbond (Netherlands Korfbal Association) hardly had any clubs in North Brabant and Limburg because the Catholic clergy opposed mixed sports here. There were mixed korfbal clubs only in large cities such as Den Bosch, Breda, Tilburg, Eindhoven and Helmond because only in these towns were enough non-Catholics to set up and maintain clubs. It was not until the late 1930s that more korfbal clubs emerged in the two southern provinces, but those were only women's korfbal clubs. The Christian gymnastics and korfbal federations and the N.A.S.B. also hardly had any clubs below the major rivers Rhine, Waal and Maas. On the other hand, the Catholic sports associations had none or a few clubs in the northern provinces Groningen, Friesland and Drenthe.

## A CLOSER LOOK AT SPORT CLUBS

As Appendix 2 indicates, more clubs were established every decade than in the previous decade. Only in the 1930s was there a slight decline due to the economic crisis. These figures should not be taken as absolutes; they mainly serve to indicate a trend. Research has shown that many clubs were small and that they only had one team in the competition. This meant that a lot of clubs disappeared as quickly as they came to the scene because of lack of members, financial problems and cancellations. Others had to merge with neighboring clubs in order to survive. If a club wanted to play in the national league of the Nederlandsche Voetbalbond, it had to have at least forty members (almost four teams). The entry requirement at the R.K.F. (Catholic Football Association) was twenty members, so one team with nine reserves. In 1919, D.E.V. (Amsterdam) was the only club in the competition of the Nederlandsche Korfbalbond with more than a hundred members (106). T.O.G. (Lochem) was the smallest with fifteen members, or twelve field players and three on the reserve bench. In 1935, only Blauw Wit (124) and R.O.H.D.A. (119), both from Amsterdam, had more than a hundred members in the Nederlandsche Korfbalbond. It is no coincidence that the largest korfbal clubs came from the largest city in the Netherlands. Lochem was just one of the many small towns in the Netherlands, located in the province of Gelderland.

The database makes it clear that certain club names were very popular in the Netherlands. Countless clubs were called Ajax, Excelsior, Olympia, Sparta, Volharding, and so on or had abbreviations such as H.B.S. (Hold On Firmly), K.D.O. (Strength Through Exercise), O.D.I. (Relaxation By Effort) or S.S.S. (Sport Steals Muscles). Certain color combinations derived

from the club kit were also used as a club name, such as Rood Wit (Red White), Blauw Wit (Blue White), Groen Wit (Green White), Oranje Wit (Orange White) and so on. Many clubs linked their sport to their location, such as M.V.V. (Maastrichtsche Voetbal Vereniging), S.V.V. (Schiedamsche Voetbal Vereniging) and V.V.V. (Venlosche Voetbal Vereniging) and A.K.C. (Almelosche Korfbal Club), D.K.C. (Delftsche Korfbal Club) and P.K.C. (Papendrechtsche Korfbal Club).

Some sporting organizations tried to regulate the tangle of club names to avoid errors in their administrations. The Nederlandsche Voetbalbond tried to introduce unique club names through registration. A.F.C. Ajax was among the first clubs to be registered; it got number 32 – 1911<sup>5</sup>. The Nederlandsche Korfbalbond also had a registration, but these registrations only applied to their own members. Other sporting organizations did not take their registrations into account.

In May 1940 the Germans occupied the Netherlands. Only a few weeks later, on July 31, 1940, a new Nederlandsche Voetbalbond was established with all neutral clubs combined with all clubs of the Roman Catholic, Protestant and Socialist organizations and office football associations. Officials feared the Germans would force a merger and decided to bring their clubs together on their own terms. The new national football association enforced uniformity of club names by adding the year of establishment (A.D.O. versus A.D.O. 1920 and Blauw Wit versus Blauw Wit '34), by the addition R.K. of Roman Catholic or C. of Christian (A.V.V. versus R.K.A.V.V. and G.V.V. versus R.K.G.V.V. and C.G.V.V.) or by the addition of the (first letter of the) name of the location (Ajax Amsterdam versus Ajax Breedenbroek and D.O.S. versus D.O.S.R.). Anyway, the database helps the user find a club from the jumble of clubs with almost the same names or abbreviations.

The names of the sports clubs sometimes also reveal the social background of their members. There were clubs where all players came from the same neighborhood (Het Funen, Feijenoord, Laakkwartier), from the same school (H.B.S., De Eerste Vijfjarige and Gymnasias-ten Korfbalvereniging) or from the same parish (Sint Anna, Sint Lodewijk, Sint Willebrordus). Some clubs were founded by students of a university and were only open for others students. A.E.G., Hema and Shell started as company clubs, but this caused problems when they wanted to join the N.V.B. They registered their names as abbreviations for Allen Eén Goal (All One Goal), H.E.M.A (The Team With Ambition) and S.H.E.L.L. (Sport Keeps Every Body Limber). In korfbal, clubs as Gemeente Telefoon and Stedelijke Gasfabrieken comprising employees of the municipal telephone company in Amsterdam and the municipal light factories in Leiden. Some clubs came from the total abstinence movement, such as Blauwe Vogels (Blue Birds) and D.O.T.O. The last abbreviation stood for Through Abstinence Comes Development. A.G.O.V.V. started out as Apeldoornsche Geheel Onthouders Voetbalvereniging (Apeldoornsche Fully Abstaining Football Club), but later admitted alcoholic beverages within the club. The abbreviation was then adjusted to Alleen Gezamenlijk Oefenen Voert Verder (Only Common Practice Provides Progress). Some socialist clubs took the name N.A.S.B. after their organization, followed by the town in question.

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5 See Appendix 1.

All clubs in the database have foundation dates or a first mention. However, these dates are not always 'hard facts'. Members of the oldest sports clubs didn't always record the exact birthday of their club. They sometimes chose a date just to be the oldest club in the city or to be one of the first clubs in the country. Some clubs took the date of joining a sport association as a foundation and made themselves younger than they were in fact. Certain clubs had a turbulent history in which they were established and dissolved several times under the same club name. It appears that they sometimes chose the oldest foundation date to give their club a respectable age. For club mergers, the founding date of the oldest merger partner was often used for the same reason. Some clubs started with one sport, but later also got a division for other sports. These so-called "omniverenigingen" used the original founding date for all departments. In the database, all departments are listed separately for their specific sport with their 'real' date or year of establishment.

## THE DATABASE IN THE FUTURE

The database *Sporting organizations, sports clubs and sporting periodicals in the Netherlands until 1940* contains a wealth of information about sport associations and clubs that were active in six prominent sports. It is a wonderful source of inspiration and background information for research into the sports history of the Netherlands.

Archives of sports associations and sports clubs can be used for broad social research. One can beautifully illustrate the pillarization in the Netherlands and the influence of faith and politics on sport on the basis of the records of the database, as illustrated above. Other interesting issues such as the role of women in sports and the emancipation of workers in sports can also be adequately studied with archival documents from sports federations and sports clubs.

The database helps interested parties with data about sport associations and clubs and through references to relevant archive material. The records do not contain details such as the composition of the board and the committees, the membership numbers, the performances and the accommodations. It would take too much work to collect such data, but the interested researcher can find it himself/herself in the federation magazines and club archives. Even genealogists can use sports archives, because many people in the Netherlands got married to another member of a sports club and some families can sometimes be found for generations at the same sports club.

Currently, the Sport Database contains more than 16.000 records from roughly the period 1800 to 1940. The Huygens Institute for History of the Netherlands intends to expand the database up to December 31, 1999, so that all kinds of developments come to light in the even longer term. The expansion will take place in parts. The first supplement is planned for next year with a new version for the part up to 1940 and a new part for 1940-1945. The first contains additions and improvements for the part up to 1940 based on digital newspapers and magazines that came online from 15 September 2011 onwards. The second will contain new information about sports in the Netherlands during the Second World War.

With the end date of December 31, 1999, all mergers between neutral and denominational sporting organizations are also covered. In 1940 all national football associations merged into

a new one Nederlandsche Voetbalbond. In 1973 the Christian Korfbal Association merged with the neutral Korfbal Association. In 1987 the Catholic gymnastics association joined the neutral gymnastics association and in 1999 the Christian gymnastics association did the same (see Appendix 3). This meant the end of sports federations on a religious basis in the Netherlands. In short, the Sport Databank will continue to be an important tool for research in the future.

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**Appendix 1** The record of A.F.C. Ajax Amsterdam in the Database Sport.

Name	Ajax
Comments about name	Full Amsterdamsche Football Club Ajax
Place	Amsterdam
Province	North Holland
First mentioned	18 March 1900 (establishment)
Last mentioned	
Royal Decree	4 April 1908 no. 11; 14 September 1912 No. 60; 8 September 1913, No. 10; 4 April 1918, No. 24; 4 January 1930 No. 11; 2 February 1934 No. 35; 6 March 1937, No. 25
Objective	Practicing the football game (1908). Practicing the football game and also other sports, for which the approval of the board is needed (1930).
Scope	Local
Sport	Football
National association	K.N.V.B. (1902)
Regional association	Amsterdamsche Voetbalbond (1900-1940) Afdeling Amsterdam (1940)
Denomination	Neutral
Accountability data	Het Sportblad 13 sep. 1900, p. 3 (accession A.V.B.). Voetbal-almanak 1900-1901, p. 161 (A.V.B.). Voetbal-almanak 1902-1903, p. 22 (accession N.V.B.). Bijvoegsel Staatscourant 10-11 mei 1908 no. 110 (Royal Decree no. 586; foundation). O.M. van den A.V.B. 8 aug. 1911, p. 3 (registration club name for N.V.B. and A.V.B.). Adreslijst N.V.B. 1911-1912. Bijvoegsel Staatscourant 17 okt. 1912 no. 243 (Royal Decree no. 1437; amendment of the articles of association). Voetbal jaarboekje 1912-1913, p. 266 (A.V.B.). Bijvoegsel Staatscourant 23 okt. 1913 no. 248 (Royal Decree no. 1468; amendment of the articles of association). Bijvoegsel Staatscourant 27 aug. 1918 no. 200 (Royal Decree no. 1057; amendment of the articles of association). Adreslijst N.V.B. 1921-1922 (foundation). Sportkroniek 9 mrt. 1925, p. 311-312 (overview at the 25th anniversary). Bijvoegsel Staatscourant 14-15 feb. 1930 no. 32 (Royal Decree no. 255; foundation and extension). Bijvoegsel Staatscourant 13 mrt. 1934 no. 51 (Royal Decree no. 259; amendment of the articles of association).

	Bijvoegsel Staatscourant 23-24 apr. 1937 no. 77 (Royal Decree no. 263; amendment of the articles of association). Sportweek 26 aug. 1937, p. 23 (Saturday A.V.B.). Het volk 7 okt. 1940, p. 9 (reserves in District Amsterdam Sunday).
Remarks	Ajax (Amsterdam) was registered as 32 - 1911. The amendment to the articles of association of 1912 concerned the establishment of associate members; that of 1918 minimum age of 16 for working members.

**Appendix 2** Foundations of new clubs in the Netherlands between 1850 and 1940. All sport clubs are included even the ones that didn't become member of a sports association. The numbers are only indications. Most of the new clubs disappeared in the following years because of cancellations, financial problems or mergers.

Period	Gymnastics	Hockey	Korfball	Chess	Lawn tennis	Football
1850-1860	-	-	-	18	-	-
1861-1870	16	-	-	16	-	-
1871-1880	61	-	-	22	-	2
1881-1890	169	-	-	23	21	70
1891-1900	133	15	-	54	39	189
1901-1910	325	36	89	60	53	685
1911-1920	299	34	347	68	438	2201
1921-1930	417	82	638	159	293	3567
1931-1940	342	132	487	393	322	3350

**Appendix 3** The national sporting organizations of the six sports of the Sport Database. The dates and K in brackets indicate the year in which Queen Wilhelmina gave permission to use the adjective Koninklijk (Royal).

#### Gymnastics

Name	Denomination	Founded	Dissolved
(1919: K.) N.G.V.	Neutral	1868	1987
(1966: K.) N.C.G.V.	Protestant Christian	1910	1999
R.K.N.G.B.	Roman Catholic	1921	1987
N.A.S.B. afd. Gymnastiek	Socialist	1926	1941
K.N.G.B.	Neutral	1987	1999
K.N.G.U.	Neutral	1999	

Football

Name	Denomination	Founded	Dissolved
(1928: K.) N.V.B.	Neutral	1889	
R.K.F.	Roman Catholic	1916	1940
N.A.S.B. afd. Voetbal	Socialist	1926	1940
C.N.V.B.	Protestant Christian	1929	1940
A.V.B.H.	Communist	1932	1935

Korfbal

Name	Denomination	Founded	Dissolved
(1938: K.) N.K.B.	Neutral	1903	1973
C.K.B.	Protestant Christian	1920	1973
N.A.S.B. afd. Korfbal	Socialist	1926	1940
K.N.K.V.	Neutral	1973	

Hockey

Name	Denomination	Founded	Dissolved
(1938: K.) N.H.B.	Neutral	1898	
N.D.H.B.	Neutral	1911	1941

Chess

Name	Denomination	Founded	Dissolved
(1935: K.) N.S.B.	Neutral	1873	

Lawn tennis

Name	Denomination	Founded	Dissolved
(1939: K.) N.L.T.B.	Neutral	1899	

TS

MASCULINE FIGURATIONS IN  
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

2



Miklós Hadas<sup>1</sup>

## Taming the Volcano: Theoretical Foundations

### Abstract

*This paper is part of a project to write a book about the long-term transformations of Western masculinities. Its goal is to outline and to put into critical context the main theoretical references on which the historical analyses are based. First, the central statements of Pierre Bourdieu's Masculine Domination are presented, then the French sociologist's thesis, namely that the "structure of the gap is maintained between genders" is challenged. Next, in order to re-position Norbert Elias' Civilizing Process as the founding text of Historical Studies on Men and Masculinities, the German sociologist's work is subjected to critical scrutiny. Finally, Raewyn Connell's conceptual framework is outlined from a critical perspective. In the wake of Bourdieu, it is intended to conceive of masculinities as habituses crystallized in social practice. However, contrary to Bourdieu, it is suggested that there are different layers of the habitus, and, as argued by Norbert Elias, these layers have crystallized in the long run as part of the European civilizing process. In the wake of Connell, this long term historical transformation is conceptualized as an interplay between hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculine dispositions. Finally, it is concluded that there is a strong family resemblance among these three authors, mostly, due to their relational thinking and qualitative research orientation.*

**Keywords:** history, West, habitus, civilizing process, hegemonic and counter-hegemonic masculinities, Pierre Bourdieu, Norbert Elias, Raewyn Connell

### How to cite this article:

Miklós Hadas (2019). Taming the Volcano: Theoretical Foundations. *Erdélyi Társadalom/Transylvanian Society*, 17(1), 97–111. <https://doi.org/10.17177/77171.227>

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“Our languages are constructed in such a way that we can often only express constant movement or constant change in ways which imply that it has the character of an isolated object at rest, and then, almost as an afterthought, adding a verb which expresses the fact that the thing with this character is now changing. For example, standing by a river we see the perpetual flowing of the water. But to grasp it conceptually, and communicate it to others, we do not think and say, ‘Look at the perpetual flowing of the water’, we say, ‘Look how fast

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the river is flowing.’ We say, ‘The wind is blowing’, as if the wind were actually a thing at rest which, at a given point of time, begins to move and blow. We speak as if the wind were separate from its blowing as if a wind could exist which did not blow.”

(Elias, 1978: 111-112)

## INTRODUCTION

*A spectre is haunting the realm of big-picture social historical narratives – the spectre of Historical Studies on Men and Masculinities!* This paper is part of a larger work, a book provisionally entitled “*Taming the Volcano*”<sup>2</sup>, in which I intend to take a birds-eye view on the thousand-year-long dispositional transformations of Western masculinities. The main paradox here is that the topic of masculinity usually remains hidden within social scientific analysis. As it is rightly formulated by Harry Brod:

“While seemingly about men, traditional scholarship’s treatment of generic men as the human norm in fact systematically excludes from consideration what is unique to men *qua* men. The overgeneralisation from male to generic human experience not only distorts our understanding of what, if anything, is truly generic to humanity but also precludes the study of masculinity as a *specific male* experience rather than a universal paradigm for *human* experience.”

(Brod, 1987: 2)

Although social historians are mainly preoccupied with the realms of masculine existence, they do not recognize that masculine domination can be interpreted as the model of all kinds of dominations. Despite Georges Duby being one of the exceptions who explicitly writes about the *male moyen age*, he still doesn’t delve into the intricacies of masculine habitus.

The main thesis of *Taming the Volcano* is that as a result of changing structural constraints, pacified and civilized counter-hegemonic dispositions gradually build upon violent hegemonic masculine dispositions. I suggest that we cannot understand present-day societies without taking into account the historical embeddedness of the non-conscious, non-reflected masculine habituses. Following Norbert Elias who stresses that the European civilizing process is reversible and there are many de-civilizing counter-spurs within it (Elias, 1996; Mennell, 1990), I suggest that the masculine habitus is a civilized volcano which can erupt anytime if the conditions are given. (Just think of Auschwitz, the Gulag, Katyn, Srebrenica, Rwanda, or the

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2 The volcano-metaphor is used by Karl Loewenstein, a disciple of Max Weber, after his first encounter with the German sociologist: „When I took my leave I was literally drunk. I was at a turning point in my life. From that moment on I had taken the oath of fealty to him; I had become his vassal... It is a manly face, something elemental, at times actually titanic, emanates from him... *His volcanic temperament erupts again and again.* Max Weber was a daemonic personality. Even in routine matters, there was something incalculable, explosive about him. *You never knew when the inner volcano would erupt.*” (Quoted by Bologh, 1990: 39, my italics).

Armenian genocide.)<sup>3</sup> However, in the long run, as a result of changing structural constraints, rational, pacified, and civilized counter-hegemonic dispositions, rooted, originally, in the clerics' existence build upon violent hegemonic dispositional patterns, originally rooted in knightly life.

Certain parts of the material for this book-project have been published during the last few years. In the first text, I concentrated on the interplay between hegemonic knightly and counter-hegemonic clerical masculine dispositions, pointing out how hegemonic patterns had been structured by the uncivilized libido dominandi, i.e. by the more or less free indulgence in physical violence. I also showed the ways in which counter-hegemonic dispositions had incorporated violence control. I argued that the borders between knightly and clerical masculinities had become blurred; consequently, as a result of the changing structural constraints, by the end of the Middle Ages hybrid masculine habituses had been formed (Hadas, 2016; 2019). In the next text I identified guild members as the agents par excellence of medieval urban masculinity. My main statement was that merchants, craftsmen and artisans, similarly to clerics, had been able to control their violent impulses and to organize their lives on the bases of rationality, professionalism, and disciplined work (Hadas, 2017a). In the third text, two forms of Renaissance masculinity were presented: the hegemonic courtier and the counter-hegemonic humanist intellectual. I argued that the former had been engaged in symbolic struggles for status and prestige within ruling (royal) courts, while the latter, by creating symbolic/artistic representations and explaining natural/scientific phenomena had been responsible for the emergence of the fields of arts and sciences (Hadas, 2017b). Next, military masculinities in Early Modernity were subjected to scrutiny. I argued that as a result of the infantry- and artillery revolutions, chivalry had evolved into cavalry: knights had been transformed into military officers and the dispositional patterns of self-discipline, sangfroid, and steadiness under fire built upon the requirements of physical strength, courage and risk-taking behavior (Hadas, 2018a). Finally, by laying out the rise of an exceptionally successful modern economy and bourgeois society in the Dutch Golden Age, the activities of the members of the painters' guilds were analyzed. I emphasized that new, psychologically sensitive, plural hegemonic masculine habituses had been crystallized from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Hadas, 2018b).

In what follows, I outline the theoretical background on which the historical analyses above have been based. Following Pierre Bourdieu, I conceive of masculinities as habituses, i.e. the incorporation of enduring behavioral patterns that govern human praxis at the non-conscious level. By being perceptible, these *structured, structural structures* are liable to social classification and differentiation. At the same time, I will argue that Bourdieu erroneously claims that "the constancy of habitus (...) is one of the most important factors in the relative constancy of the structure of the sexual division of labor" (Bourdieu, 2001: 95). Relying on Norbert Elias' pro-

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3 "Mass violence against unarmed civilians has claimed three to four times as many lives in the past century as war: one hundred million at least, and possibly many more. These large-scale killings have required the efforts of hundreds of thousands of perpetrators. Such *men* were ready to kill for many hours a day, and sometimes for months or even years. Murderous regimes created these 'killing compartments' making possible the worst abominations without moral misgiving, without a sense of personal responsibility, and without pity" (Swaan, 2015: back cover, my italics).

cess sociology and Raewyn Connell's conceptual framework I highlight the historically conditioned changeability and plurality of masculine dispositions. It should also be underlined that I treat masculine habituses in a particular place and time as ideal types in the Weberian sense: in the long run, these pure types are permanently on the move (like the wind in the motto). Furthermore, these patterns are not in an either/or but in a both/and relationship with one another: the ideal types merge into one another, build upon one another and ulterior dispositions contain elements of earlier ones. In other words: habituses are historically conditioned, relational social constructs.

## THEORETICAL REFERENCES: BOURDIEU, ELIAS AND CONNELL

1. Whereas masculine domination can be considered as the model of all kinds of domination (Bourdieu, 2011), social sciences do not pay due attention to its study. The most frequently referenced sociological work – with the exception of the academics specializing in Studies on Men and Masculinities – on the long-term history of masculinity has been written by Pierre Bourdieu. His *La domination masculine* (Bourdieu, 1998) was granted the privilege of becoming a sociological classic in his lifetime. It has had great success. It was published in 78 000 copies in 1998 and another 30 000 copies four years later in France; within a few years it has been translated into several languages. The English version (Bourdieu, 2001) came out three years later. Although he was an outsider to both historiography and Gender Studies (and, apparently Studies on Men and Masculinities) considering his acknowledged international prestige, his book has become the most widely known sociological narrative on masculine domination.

Pierre Bourdieu's central thesis is that masculine domination – actually the model of all kinds of domination – is a social institution deeply inculcated in the objective social and subjective mental structures over the millennia, and practically structured by the same laws in the pre-modern Kabyle society of the Mediterranean region as in London's Bloomsbury district in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in Virginia Woolf's circle. The basis for its emergence is the *libido dominandi*, i.e. the instinctive desire for domination, a sort of sense of duty based on an inner drive that a man "owes himself", acquired unconsciously in the course of socialisation. This drive, or *illusio dominandi*, is constitutive of masculinity and causes men to be socially instituted to let themselves be caught up, like children, in all the games of domination that are socially assigned to them, of which war is the form par excellence. At the same time, men also become victims – victims of their illusion.

Bourdieu ascribed salient significance to habitus, i.e. behavioral patterns fixed in enduring dispositions, which govern human praxis at the non-conscious level; being perceptible, these *structured, structural structures* are liable to social classification and differentiation. Bourdieu writes about the somatisation of power relations, and formulates the thesis according to which the socially constructed biological body is also a politicised body, or, more precisely, no less than embodied politics. He refers, among others, to elementary school education which incorporates in the dispositions of growing generations a multitude of sexually differentiated ethical,

political, or even cosmological elements – e.g. teaching pupils how to hold the (masculine) right hand, how to walk, look into someone's eyes, dress – and so on, and so forth.

In this sexually determined, *sexualized and sexualizing* social order of labor division, men are active mainly in the public spheres, while women in the non-public, private spheres are not oriented towards profit or power and mostly require unlimited time input. The latter are practically goods of exchange in the games of men based on honour and dignity, serving in this capacity the reproduction of men's symbolic capital. Women, argues the author, are disposed to generate liking. Hence it is no wonder that they spend a considerable part of their time with cosmetic work. They are mainly in charge of the ceremonies organized according to aesthetic rules (family and company feasts, literary salons, receptions, etc.), so they may fill important positions in different cultural fields and are specialized in producing and differentiating symbolic distinctions. Besides, continues Bourdieu, borrowing Virginia Woolf's metaphor, they act as "flattering mirrors" in which men can view their enlarged images. Ultimately, then, all women do enrich the wealth of men who possess them. At the same time, they have the perspicacity of the outsiders so that they can view the "most serious" games of men with amused indulgence.

Two types of empirical references support these arguments. The book's primary source is the pre-modern Kabylean community in Algeria, where women are mainly associated with negative connotations while men with positive ones. All activities connected with the concepts of *internal, damp, low* and *crooked* (not only child-rearing but also mucking out the stable) are performed by women, compared to the *external, official, straight, dry, tall* (etc.) activities of men. The act of sexual intercourse itself is deemed *normal* and *classical* in the case where the man is over the woman, while all other positions of love-making are deemed perverted and often penalized by sanctions. The other reference is Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, the protagonist of which, Mr. Ramsey incorporates modern-time masculine dispositions based on the *libido academica*, i.e. a special variation of the *libido dominandi*. An early 20<sup>th</sup>-century academic intellectual, Mr. Ramsey is a man of whose words are verdicts, all whose predictions are self-fulfilling, they make themselves true, and whose paternal prophecy is both a forecast of science and a prediction of wisdom, which sends the future into the past.

Aiming to demonstrate "the historical labor of dehistoricization", Bourdieu states that "the major change has doubtless been that masculine domination no longer imposes itself with the transparency of something taken for granted. Thanks, in particular, to the immense critical effort of the feminist movement" (Bourdieu, 2001: 88). By referring to the increased access to secondary and higher education, waged work, public sphere, the degree of distancing from domestic tasks and reproductive functions, he also mentions "the substantive transformations seen in the conditions of women, especially in the most advantaged social categories" (Bourdieu, 2001: 88). However, the book's main statement is that "the changes visible in conditions, in fact, conceal permanent features in the relative positions: the levelling-out of the chances of access and rates of representation should not be allowed to mask the inequalities which persist in the distribution of boys and girls among the various types of schooling and therefore among possible careers" (Bourdieu, 2001: 90).

He uses the term "permanence in and through change" (Bourdieu, 2001: 91) and contends that "whatever their position in the social space, women have in common the fact that they are

separated from men by a negative symbolic coefficient which, like skin colour for blacks, or any other sign of membership of a stigmatized group, negatively affects everything that they are and do, and which is the source of a systematic set of homologous differences”. Consequently, “the structure of the gaps is maintained” (Bourdieu, 2001: 91) because “girls internalise, in the form of schemes of perception and appreciation not readily accessible to consciousness, the principles of the dominant vision” (Bourdieu, 2001: 95). In other words: “the constancy of habitus (...) is one of the most important factors in the relative constancy of the structure of the sexual division of labour” (Bourdieu, 2001: 95).

He defines the study of social institutions (church, state, school, family) sustaining continuity as the primary task of the approach to “the history of women”:

“In fact, it is clear that the eternal, in history, cannot be anything other than the product of a historical labour of externalisation. It follows that, in order to escape completely from essentialism, one should not try to deny the permanences and the invariants, which are indisputably part of historical reality, but, rather, one must reconstruct the history of the historical labour of dehistoricization, or, to put it another way, the history of the continuous (re)creation of the objective and subjective structures of masculine domination. (...) Historical research cannot limit itself to describing the transformations over time of the conditions of women, or even the relationship between the sexes in the different epoch. It must aim to establish, for each period, the state of system of agents and institutions – family, church, state, educational system, etc., which, with different weights and different means at different times, have helped to remove the relations of masculine more or less completely from history” (Bourdieu, 2001: 82-83).

Even if we accept the unacceptable that, structurally speaking, at the end of the twentieth century masculine domination remained unchanged in the Western world as far as the church and the state are concerned (disregarding the differences between the Protestant and Catholic Churches, and, say, the Portuguese and British state bureaucracies) the degree of Bourdieu’s essentialist over-generalization appears untenable for both the school and the family. In *Masculine Domination* he also ignores perhaps the most momentous change in gender relations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the transformation of intimacy (Giddens, 1992). Hence, when he discusses “the constancy of habitus” or the “strength of the structure”, and states that “the structure of the gaps is maintained” between genders, he extends his theory, elaborated in his masterpiece, *Distinction* (Bourdieu 1994), about the displacement of the social structure to the displacement of the relationship between men and women, which is none other than a strategically motivated paradigm-expansion.

Several critical remarks have been formulated since the publication of *Masculine Domination*. Most of them find the book wanting in providing adequate empirical grounds for the statements (Moi, 1991; Wallace, 2003; Witz, 2004). Some say that Bourdieu is particularly defective in the analysis of changes in the period of capitalist modernity (Fowler, 2003), while others charge him with determinism, pessimism, hyper-functionalism, extreme structuralism (Joas & Knöbl, 2011) that overemphasizes order and structure (Skeggs, 2004), and even rules out social change (Perrot, Sintomer, Kraiss, & Duru-Bellat, 1999; Chambers, 2005). Some

critics think that the struggles of women today are not reflected at all in Bourdieu's text, and his picture of a gender order is so completely doxic and closed that it seems almost totalitarian (Krais, 2006). Several feminist scholars argue that the author fails to refer to the literature on gender studies (Wallace, 2003).

It can be added that *Masculine Domination* also ignores the representatives of Studies on Men and Masculinities. Bourdieu, who is apparently an outsider to both historiography and gender studies, not only clads his work in the (straight)jacket of his conceptual framework, but also formulates propositions which contradict the conclusions elaborated by Studies on Men and Masculinities. Namely, Bourdieu does not attempt to ascribe any importance to the plurality of masculinities, nor is he interested in looking at forms of masculine bonding, i.e. in different forms of connection and cooperation between men (religious orders, pubs, sport clubs, the army, etc.). Then, it is not surprising, that contemporary studies focusing on the plurality and historical variability of masculinities take a path which is the opposite of Bourdieu. It is characteristic that hardly any scholar of prominence references him within the field of Studies on Men and Masculinities.

2. Besides Bourdieu, my most important reference is the process sociology<sup>4</sup> of Norbert Elias. His opus magnum, *The Civilizing Process* (Elias, 2000), appeared in German in 1939, but was only released in English some thirty years later, after which it was translated into dozens of languages. One of my main objectives is to try to re-interpret his masterpiece as *the* founding text of Historical Studies on Men and Masculinities. By analyzing the long-term transformations in the behaviour of the secular upper classes in the West, Elias constructs a big-picture narrative about Europe as a whole. The core of his argument is that faced with external social pressures, people develop self-control mechanisms that suppress 'uncivilized', animal-like behavioral elements based on violence. These suppressions function as feelings of shame, confusion and embarrassment. Hence, these feelings are not natural endowments but the internalized products of social-historical circumstances (Dunning & Hughes, 2013; Mennell, 1989; 1992). Elias explores the permanently changing interdependencies between phenomena (such as spitting, defecating, behaviour in the bedroom, living standards, shame and repugnance, etc.) that seemingly are not linked to one another. His use of secondary qualitative sources is understandable as there were no quantitative historical data available on various forms of violence at his disposal yet. His perspicacity is attested to by the fact that, in the past few decades, investigations on the history of homicides have convincingly verified his statements (Eisner, 2003; Hadas, 2017).

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<sup>4</sup> If we would like to understand the kernel of the process (or figurational) sociology, it is advisable to bear in mind the stream- and wind-metaphor of this article's motto. If we take it seriously and wish to apply it, we must recognise that we have to break radically with our routine, for – as Elias notes – our language forces us to try and grasp the analyzed subject with the help of static notions. One of the fundamental specificities of process sociology that it thinks relationally, and wishes to grasp the studied phenomena as they *move* and *change*. For example, the concept of power does not denote static and rigid dichotomies (oppressor/oppressed, lord/servant, etc.) but lays emphasis on motion, change, and transition, i.e. always refers to *changing balances of powers* (Elias, 1978).

He characterizes the everyday activity of a knight and his wife in the following way:

“ ‘He spends his life’, we read of a knight, ‘in plundering, destroying churches, falling upon pilgrims, oppressing widows and orphans. He takes particular pleasure in mutilating the innocent. In a single monastery, that of the black monks of Sarlat, there are 150 men and women whose hands he has cut off or whose eyes he has put out. And his wife is just as cruel. She helps him with his executions. It even gives her pleasure to torture the poor women. She had their breasts hacked off or their nails torn off so that they were incapable of work’ ” (Elias, 2000: 163).

It is easy to understand the central thesis of *The Civilizing Process* if we reflect on the feelings and sentiments that overcome us while reading the above lines. No doubt, there is hardly any 21<sup>st</sup> century reader in whom the acts described in these sentences do not cause a feeling of embarrassment, confusion, puzzlement, abhorrence or shame. In other words, we have internalized violence control, which, according to Elias, is the decisive indicator of the civilizing process.<sup>5</sup> Violence control is to be traced, first of all, to the emerging state monopoly on violence and taxation:

“Everyday life is freer of sudden reversals of fortune. Physical violence is confined to barracks, and from this store-house, it breaks out only in extreme cases, in times of war or social upheaval, into individual life. (...) When a monopoly is formed, pacified social spaces are created which are normally free from acts of violence” (Elias, 2000: 369-372).

In much of the world, *The Civilizing Process* is now considered one of the most important sociological books written during the 20th century.<sup>6</sup> Around the 1960s he even wrote a book on the transformation of the relationship between men and women, which was almost ready in 1971 when – to the greatest dismay of posterity – it perished due to the neglect of the cleaning personnel (Mennell, 1989). It can only be partially reconstructed what he would have written on the subject. Fortunately, we have a study (Elias, 1987) which is rightly presumed to contain parts of the destroyed book. Here he argues that a civilizing process took place in the Roman Empire over the centuries. By way of illustration, he refers to Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria*

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5 After this description, he adds the following comment: “Such affective outbursts may still occur as unusual phenomena, as ‘pathological’ degeneration, in later phases of social development. But here no punitive social power existed. The only threat, the only danger that could instill fear was that of being overpowered in battle by a stronger opponent. Leaving aside a small elite, raping, pillage, and murder were standard practice in the warrior society of this time. (...) Outbursts of cruelty did not exclude one from social life. They were not outlawed. The pleasure in killing and torturing others was great, and it was a socially permitted pleasure. To a certain extent, the social structure even pushed its members in this direction, making it seem necessary and practically advantageous to behave in this way” (Elias, 2000: 163).

6 This statement does not refer to the USA: Steven Pinker, the eminent American public social scientist wrote in 2011 that Elias is “the most important thinker you have never heard of” (Pinker, 2011: 59).

which he finds to exemplify the increasingly refined and self-controlled interpersonal relations in sexual behavior, art and social life in general: people communicate with increasing sensitivity, sophistication and empathy with each other. As can be seen, the reasoning of this late work is substantially identical with that of his masterpiece: he repeats what he expounded earlier, carrying out a kind of paradigm expansion: he applies his theory of civilization to different social-cultural circumstances.

However, as in the case of Bourdieu, Elias' ideas are not beyond criticism. Although he explored vital elements of the civilizing process, he didn't ascribe due importance to specific decisive factors. Indeed, he had interesting and original thoughts on the transformation of the relationship between men and women. However, he failed to examine to what extent and in what way the dynamics of these relations within the intimate sphere had contributed to the civilization of violence in the long run. Nor did he adopt, between the 1960s and 1980s, the conceptual framework of the emerging Gender Studies. It would be excusable that in *The Civilizing Process*, written in the 1930s, the concept of gender was not included. However, it is less acceptable that as late as in 1987, when the gender-term was already in use in social sciences, he preferred to choose the *sex*-concept in the title of the article on the ancient Roman Empire ("*The Changing Balance of Power between the Sexes*"). To put it sharply, Elias failed to differentiate between gender, sex and sexuality, and he did not deal in an appropriate way with the transformation of the intimate sphere.

He did not take into account that – with the decrease in family size and the increase in the importance of the child-rearing modern motherhood – the centre of family life moved from patriarchal authority to maternal affection (Ryan, 1981). It is symptomatic that, when writing about the emerging importance of women who attract poets, singers and learned clerics in the pacified feudal courts, he did not delve deeper into the analysis of the changing power relations between genders but concentrated on how the poetry of these troubadours and minnesingers surrounding the high-born ladies with devotion and love poems promoted the advance of the civilizing process. Namely, he failed to explore what further changes had been generated by the transformation of the intimate sphere, concerning, first of all, the long-term transformation of gender(ed) habituses.

I also agree with those critical views (Taylor, 1989; Jarrick & Södeberg, 1993; Dülmen, 1996) that admonish him for not ascribing due importance to the churches and religion, first of all, Protestantism in his analysis of the Western civilizing process. I also accept the critique that he has underplayed the role of the lower social groups in the civilizing process. Hence, if we take seriously the Eliasian thesis according to which "the rise in the division of functions also brings more and more people, larger and larger populated areas, into dependence on one another; it requires and instills greater restraint in the individual, more exact control of his or her affects and conduct, it demands a stricter regulation of drives and – from a particular stage on – more *even* self-restraint" (Elias, 2000: 429; italics in the original), it is justifiable to regard the shift of the power balance between genders as a key explanatory factor of the civilizing process.

3. My third reference is Raewyn Connell, the most important researcher within the field of Studies on Men and Masculinities. As is well-known, the novelty of her approach is that since

the late 1970s, she has concentrated on the plurality and changeability of masculinities. As a pro-feminist scholar, she intends to grasp gender relations as power relations. Connell sees masculinity “not as an isolated object, but as an aspect of a larger structure” (Connell, 1995: 67), and defines it as “simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture” (Connell, 1995: 71). Her central question is how the social structure determines masculine existence, i.e. how patriarchy is reproduced. This is undoubtedly an original and legitimate postulation – particularly when one keeps in mind that the broadly defined problem of masculinity was outside the scope of social scientists until the last third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Her most often referenced term is “hegemonic masculinity”, i.e. “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell, 1995: 77). The concept of hegemony, derived from Gramsci’s analysis of class relations, “is a historically mobile relation” and “likely to be established only if there are some correspondences between cultural ideal and institutional power, collective if not individual” (Connell, 1995: 77). She also points out that there are “specific relations of dominance and subordination between groups of men” (Connell, 1995: 78): first of all, the “dominance of heterosexual men and the subordination of homosexual men”; furthermore, we should also recognize “the relationship of complicity with the hegemonic project” (Connell, 1995: 79).

Nevertheless, her approach has also certain weaknesses. First, she does not offer a full-fledged analysis of the long-term transformation of masculinities. She covers the “history of masculinity” between 1450 and the end of the 20th century, in less than 20 pages: from the Protestant Reformation and the philosophy of Descartes, she passes via the issues of colonization, the growth of cities, gentry masculinity, the Boy Scouts of America, Bengalis in India to the “global gender order” of our time (Connell, 1995: 185-203). Prior to offering this historical overview, sensing that her argument might not be sophisticated enough, s/he remarks: “What follows is, inevitably, only a sketch of a vastly complex history. It seems important to get even rough bearings on a history so charged with significance for our current situation” (Connell, 1995: 186). Just like Bourdieu, Connell also tends to ignore relations among masculinities that are not based on struggle or domination, but on co-operation and solidarity. Consequently, several decisive bonds within all-male communities (friendship; fandom; solidarity between soldiers, monks, classmates, members of subcultures, etc.) cannot be grasped through her conceptual framework. Next, by referring to the “*cultural dynamic* by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life” (Connell, 1995: 77; my italics), the use of the concept of hegemonic masculinity contributes to the underestimation, even oversight of the pre-modern situation, when power relations were based on the monopoly of *physical violence*. Another problem is that, emphasizing the “dynamic character of Gramsci’s concept of hegemony”, namely that “Gramsci always had in mind a social *struggle* for leadership in historical change” (Connell, 1995: 249, my italics) her approach, similarly to Bourdieu, tends to ignore relations among masculinities.

A further debatable element of her theorizing is that the concept of hegemony is used, consistently, in the singular. In an article written with Messerschmidt (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) they acknowledge that although in different societies and cultures it is logically possible to define a ‘thousand and one’ variations of masculinity’, they proclaim that there is a *single* hegemonic form in every relation, even if it is incessantly changing. By referring to Messner’s book on masculinity politics in the United States (Messner, 1997), according to which “most of these movements with contrasting agendas (...) present a claim to be *the* way for men to think and live”, Connell and Messerschmidt conclude that “whatever the empirical diversity of masculinities, the contestation for hegemony implies that *gender hierarchy does not have multiple niches at the top*” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 845, my italics).

This position concerning the singularity of hegemonic masculinity is debatable even if we exclude social relations structured by solidarity and co-operation and remain within the framework of the Connellian approach and accept that hegemonic masculinity is a configuration of gender practice based on the dynamics of a cultural struggle. Admittedly, examples can be found at any time in support of using hegemony in the singular and argue, for instance, that the mythopoetic men’s movement represents a single desirable masculinity model that crystallizes at a particular time and place. However, many other situations and relations can also be found where a comparably lasting balance evolves among competitive alternatives, that is, no single model can acquire (and even claim) hegemony. Just think of western-type parliamentary democracies in which identical groups of citizens may be drawn for decades to one or the other political force representing different values, ideologies, and, implicitly, more or less hidden masculinity codes and masculinity politics.. No sociologist would think – provided that s/he wishes to interpret the social processes underlying the political changes on the surface – that the ascent of any rival political party to power would result in the masculinity forms the winner represents becoming hegemonic overnight, while those associated with the loser becoming subordinated, marginalized (or, what is more, accomplices of the hegemonic model).<sup>7</sup>

Another source for the vulnerability of this conceptual framework is that it is based on a naïve theory of reflection, which does not reckon with the complexity of the process of representation and interpretation. According to this position, “hegemony works in part through the production of exemplars of masculinity (e.g., professional sports stars), symbols that have authority even though most men and boys do not fully live up to them” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 846). Connell and Messerschmidt fail to provide a theoretical explanation here of exactly *who* represents *what* and – more importantly – through which transmitting and interpreting mechanisms do these connotations get into masculinity practices. What they do provide are no more than some brief and underdeveloped references. For example, they devote a mere two sentences to the “admired masculinity conduct” represented by the Soviet regime’s celebration of the Stakhanovite industrial worker, noting that “such models refer to, but also in various ways distort, the everyday realities of social practice” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 838).

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<sup>7</sup> As it was intended to be shown by my empirical historical analyses mentioned in the introduction, the transformation of masculine habituses can be grasped as a process during which hegemonic and counter-hegemonic dispositions react to each other, and produce new, hybrid (hegemonic) forms in the long run.

Unfortunately, they do not deal either with the specific connotations of this “distorted” masculinity model or with the distinguishing qualities of distortion as a form of specific representation. They handle this “ambivalent” and “distorted” model as the indicator of Soviet-type hegemonic masculinity without further argumentation. In doing so, they invalidate the Gramscian depth of the concept and reduce the phenomenon of hegemony to pure ideology or propaganda. Nor do they ponder, although this aspect should not be eschewed in a subtle analysis, that a model offered by the propaganda might be interpreted in innumerable forms by the “oppressed”: e.g. turning it upside down, putting it into quotation marks or giving it a critical reading. Hence, if a researcher is satisfied with the exploration of the propagandistic model when searching for masculinity patterns in a Soviet-type system, s/he forgoes the possibility of studying the much more interesting further (hegemonic) masculinity patterns.

Finally, the quality of her theory can also be criticized: the price she pays for her attractive conceptual framework is the involvement of sometimes confusing simplifications and conceptual inaccuracies. When in a book of two to three hundred pages, instead of a detailed analysis there is only one or even half a page to discuss, let us say, the logic of the gendered accumulation process in industrial capitalism, the power relations of empire or subordination (Connell, 1995); one to three pages on power relations, production relations, emotional relations or symbolic relations (Connell, 2002); it does not seem to be completely unfounded to label the author’s approach as “reductionist” (Whitehead, 2002: 93), or even a “schematic oversimplification” (Tosh, 2004: 56).

## CONCLUSION

One of my main objectives was to question the key statements of Bourdieu’s *Masculine Domination*. Nevertheless, I don’t want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. To put it shortly and sharply, in the wake of Bourdieu, I conceive of masculinities (and of course femininities) as habituses conditioned in social practice. Following Elias, I assume that masculine habituses are crystallized in the long run, as part of the Western civilizing process. My interpretation differs from the Bourdieuisan approach inasmuch as I aim to take the structurally conditioned plurality of dispositions into account. Unlike Elias, I intend to ascribe greater emphasis to the study of non-secular (i.e. clerical) patterns. Compared to Connell, the novelty of my analysis lies in the fact that it tries to grasp the historical dynamics of both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic masculinities.

Fortunately, however, these three eminent authors have a common denominator: there is an intellectual kinship, a kind of familiarity among them, the essential component of which is their qualitative and cultural(ist) orientation on the one hand, and their relational thinking, on the other. Besides, both Bourdieu and Connell are embedded in Marxism and conflict theory; accordingly, Connell’s masculinity-definition is not far from Bourdieu’s definition of habitus. Furthermore, the habitus-term has a place in the Eliasian process sociology, too: Elias draws a parallel between the parliamentarization of the squire and the sportisation of leisure-time, arguing that the people who sent the deputies to the parliament and pursued sports in each other’s company were motivated by similar *habitus* components irrespective of their political

orientation (Elias & Dunning, 1986). His argument also warns that it would be ill-advised to take parliamentarianism as the cause and sporting customs as the effect, because both phenomena are conditioned by the same structural specificities of 18<sup>th</sup> century English society. Bourdieu formulates the same kind of relations when he states that various existential conditions produce different habituses, which can be simply transferred to diverse areas of practice (Bourdieu, 1984).

All in all, the conceptual framework outlined above might have several dividends for the Studies on Men and Masculinities. The Bourdieusian paradigm can comfortably coexist with both Eliasian process sociology and the theory of hegemonic masculinity – without erasing the Gramscian reminiscences of the Connellian approach. As a result of this family resemblance, we can get a consistent and coherent, theoretically embedded terminology with a lot of free valences on the basis of which there is a good chance to grasp complex social processes and to open new perspectives for the study of the long term transformations of Western masculinities.

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TS ————— REVIEWS 3



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## The Anthropology of Corruption

Wenner-Gren Symposium Supplement 18.

Current Anthropology, Volume 59, Supplement 18, April 2018

More than a decade ago, the revision of the literature on the anthropology of corruption was opportune, because corruption and anti-corruption discourses had to be placed in a wider context of globalization, global ethics and neoliberal (economic) policies. Then the volume edited by Dieter Haller and Chris Shore was published. *D.L. Zinn* (Haller & Shore, 2005: 229-241), in a short afterword about the state of art in anthropology of corruption, argues that the topic of corruption is familiar to anthropology, but is often an embarrassing and uncomfortable issue; linking remote places and different forms of incidences, and that the issue of corruption should be put in a right frame and formula by the anthropologists. Anthropologists can't agree on a single general definition of corruption, so they're more likely to "have often adopted an ad hoc perspective, taking into account the point of view of the observed", including some methodological aspects. All definitions are problematic for anthropologists, at least because the axioms and hypotheses in most definition types are problematic themselves. The dichotomy between public and private sphere is sometimes blurred by new, or very different action forms, or organizational practices; the plurality of the law ('the secret law') allows for corrupt practices to occur; the persistence of stereotypes built on corruption typologies limit the acknowledgement of social dynamics; and the central question in anthropology, the point of view of the observed, is often different from the general content of the definitions (Torsello & Venard, 2015: 35-38). "Cultural intimacy" often hides the illegal activities of very embedded and traditional groups like the Mafia in Sicily, the USA, or elsewhere. Researchers need to invest extraordinary efforts in order to study the issue, but it's not impossible to accomplish, even in a comparative manner (Schneider & Schneider, 2005: 29-47). Indeed, the perspective of the local and observational viewpoint that anthropological studies abide by, assumes that only the corruption or bribery that the locals, the social and cultural medium consider as such is valid. Very often, gifting, as a reciprocal procedure regulating social relations, is considered acceptable not only in private life but also among institutions and is not seen as part of bribery. In anthropological terms, a distinction can be made between donation and bribery. If it is an act of public gifting, where there are two different parties involved (one of them a public servant), and there are some kind of specific benefits to be obtained, even if done transparently, it is a bribe ("bureaucratic bribe"), and the involved parties themselves acknowledge it as such. Gift and bribery are relative concepts and can take many forms, especially if they are based on hidden transactions, mutual trust and informal norms. There always is a "tipping point where

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a normal gift turns into a bribe”, i.e. if organizational resources are involved in an informal transaction, they create a bribe-type action (Graycar & Jancsics, 2016).

Now, ten years later, the anthropology of corruption needs to be reconsidered in an environment where there are a series of writings and studies born since then to present the phenomenon, while a series of economists and political scientists focus on the topic and set the global framework for the anti-corruption industry. In addition, the decline of neoliberal policies was followed by the worldwide advancement of populism, which has changed alongside *Zeitgeist*, and has both set a new framework for rethinking the topic, as well as it had a weakening effect on the once stable foundations of anti-corruption policies.

*Current Anthropology* devotes a whole Supplement (in fact, a meaningful volume) to the anthropology of corruption, with the dual intention of providing a new theoretical perspective, or at least another review of the theory on the subject, and, at the same time, to illustrate through case studies not only the topic but also the various existing forms of the phenomenon.

The difficulties that usually arise in our research are related to the thematic diversity and spatial distances, which carry cultural differences, and, therefore, can hardly be given a uniform definition of the phenomenon. It is difficult for anyone who wants to categorize the clientelistic nature of the Italian party system, the corrupt elements in the administration of universities in New Zealand, along with the practice of South African ritual corruption to find a common ground.

## UNDEFINABLE CONCEPT

In addition to the case studies, Muir Sarah and Akhil Gupta's *Rethinking the Anthropology of Corruption: An Introduction to Supplement 18* is one of the most important studies in the compilation.

Any one-sided approach to corruption, inadvertently, leads to oversimplifications that ultimately brings about the failure to define the phenomenon. It does not simplify, but complicate understanding, seizing the phenomenon, arguing, and ultimately, misleading the efforts to curb it. Of course, conceptual framing and even thinking itself is in some sense a simplification of reality, but it is good practice to outline and describe the history of the analytical concepts and the steps of their creation in every social science process. The scientific procedure of the anthropology of corruption is no exception when it seeks and favors definitions that support its specific methods and interpret its research results.

The peculiarity of the anthropological investigations of corruption is that it assumes that the phenomenon reveals – as far as possible – its essence in the dynamic context that considers corruption together with the area and changes of anti-corruption procedures and anti-corruption industry. Most forms of corruption emerge from responses to the procedures that arise from political, legal and moral actions aimed at detecting, condemning, and, in other words, eradicating it. And then we didn't say “anti-corruption efforts routinely produce unintended and unwanted consequences” (S7), the handling of which complicates the dynamics of the phenomenon. Namely, in the audience's perception, for example, ignorance and incompetence may appear to be corruption, not to mention that the anti-corruption fight can often serve as

a tool for settling political scores and attacks among corrupt institutions and politicians themselves. Separately, we can only create a partial and sometimes misleading picture of the phenomenon, and corruption and anti-corruption together form a corruption/anti-corruption complex. The complex phenomenon thus conceived provides a framework for the anthropological investigation of corruption and brings new perspectives and results in strengthening the knowledge base in this field. In other words, changes in the anti-corruption industry are causing changes in the corruption field, but the other way around, changing forms of corruption require new and different procedures on the other side in the anti-corruption fight also. Acknowledging this makes — in my opinion — a major contribution to the importance of anthropological viewpoint to the theory and to other disciplines, primarily because it becomes clear in terms of the dynamics of the two sides that neither legal instruments, economic/market mechanisms, nor moral principles of resistance in themselves are able to control the phenomenon in practice. A complex and consistent political approach based on understanding and extending the mechanisms on both sides can improve the situation, which takes into account the specific dynamics of corruption/anti-corruption fields, their connection to society, to different cultures, and so on. In the spirit of this discovery, the authors write in their theoretical introduction that “the corruption/anti-corruption complex always involves socially situated judgments” and constitute a serious challenge “to specify the contexts in which those judgments are viable and the publics for whom those judgments are important” (S9) and that the essays of the Current Anthropology Supplement deal with every phase of this circle, revealing the role, the visibility and the publicity of this field.

The corruption – generally speaking – is not only one, or a series of illegal acts, not only one, or a series of unethical acts, but a “transgression” in many senses, as some introductory remarks by Sarah Muir and Akhil Gupta show us. They promise to map the very terrain of anthropology of corruption for further analysis, rather than give one comprehensive definition. The anthropological notion of corruption denotes a transgression of a) boundaries, b) bypasses the definitions, and c) prevents historical progress, i.e. the modernization in the normative sense of concepts. First, corruption is blurring the boundaries between the private and the public sphere; second it leads to the lack of analytical definition by multiple deceptive facts, and, finally, corruption resists the modernization process and undermines the correct functioning of modern institutions and civic virtues.

The main problem with the topic that anthropological research is trying to uncover is the relationship between public discourses on corruption/anti-corruption and actual related practices and their circulation. Current challenges only make exploration difficult when there are rapid and divergent institutional changes (see, for example, the Eastern European Transition), that “often create zones of legal, ethical, and practical ambiguity”. The local and national elements are at the forefront not only of politics but also of research and obscure the observation of global processes and there is also a strong need to focus on the dynamics and visibility of the corruption/anti-corruption phenomena.

The recommended procedure leads to the problem of the affective state, as the state is built or rebuilt, depending on the corruption/anti-corruption practices. The issue is based on „two contradictory sets of desires: on one hand, for the rule of law, proceduralism, and justice, and on the other hand, for modes of sociality, discretion, and intimacy that exceed the law” (S10).

Finally, the authors raise the anthropological examination of the issue of corruption/anti-corruption in relation to inequalities. Here too, it is contradictory not only to judge what constitutes corruption, but also what effects anti-corruption policies have on social inequalities. Anti-corruption practices link „displaced elites and rising middle classes” but at the same time can reinforce existing „social and political inequalities”. The anti-corruption struggle is strongly linked to the middle classes, meritocracy and the idea of professionalism, but can be linked to the interests of the working class as well (for example in India or China). An important dimension is the gendered one, „corrupt act occurs within social domains that are gendered masculine” (S11), but often race, ethnicity and nationality play an equally important role in the perception and modus operandi of the corruption/anti-corruption complex. In any case, it is important for anthropologists to understand accurately and deeply the social context in which the corruption/anti-corruption complex is formed, operated, and transformed, but this must be done through a parallel examination of the interpretive communities that belong to the context. The essays in the collection seek to explore the perspectives of interpretive communities around the world and the contexts in which the corruption/anti-corruption complex emerges.

Lack of space doesn't allow for a presentation of all the studies published in the Supplement, so I only select two that deal with two characteristic anthropological topics, one that is of particular relevance to the anthropological interpretation of corruption in Romania.

## ACADEMIC CORRUPTION

Chris Shore *How corrupt are universities? Audit culture, fraud prevention, and the Big Four accountancy firms.*

The issue of academic/university corruption is of particular relevance, especially in the context of suspicions of plagiarism surrounding doctoral theses in Romania – the issue of doctoral dissertations at the Police Academy has long been at the forefront of the media – and, recently, as many political and other leaders' academic achievements were questioned, it provided ammunition for political battles on all sides of the palette. Unfortunately, in this important study Chris Shore focuses only on the audit and fraud prevention in universities, and not on other aspects of academic corruption, that seems to be more important to Romanians, such as the corruption scandals surrounding doctoral theses. After all, academic/university corruption comes in many forms including “bribery, emblezzement, fraud, extortion, favoritism, nepotism, cronyism, ghost teachers, unauthorized tutoring, unfair promotions, misuse of public property, research misconduct, cheating and plagiarism”, Ararat Osipian cited by Shore (S95). In any case, Shore begins his text with a provocative statement and two important methodological remarks, that university bureaucracy is “organized crime” and that corruption is neither a stable nor a universal concept, since the concept of corruption itself varies cross-culturally. He also states that the anthropological interpretation of corruption/anti-corruption procedures allows for the exploration of broader social structures and cultural relations. New Zealand exemplifies university practices that outsource activities to audit and accountancy firms in the name of anti-corruption, and as soon as the companies are selected, they are already engaging in

anti-corruption business, which is itself corrupt. Outside firms encourage tax avoidance at the university and regard the procedure as not an immoral issue but an alternative economic morality. Shore warns that in this case, and in many others, these are not unique or even culturally defined transactions, but a widespread structural and systemic problem of neoliberal university administration.

There is only scarce data and studies available in Romania about the financial fairness and quality of management in Romanian universities, but they show that the problem examined by Shore, and in particular the anthropological approach, has its own topicality. According to a recent report (Mungiu-Pippidi et al., 2016), the most important Romanian universities average a score of 7 (on a scale of 10) in terms of financial correctness, but we hardly know more about the phenomenon as there are problems in this area as well. On the other hand, the details of financial corruption activities could only be brought to light by an anthropological analysis rather than a statistical one. Through what mechanisms does corruption in the university administration take place? Who are the main actors and why do the others accept financial misconduct? How can we improve the situation, change institutional behavior?, etc., all of which remain unanswered in the report.

## LEGAL CORRUPTION?

Italo Pardo *Corrupt, abusive, and legal: Italian breaches of democratic contract.*

One pertinent aspect of the anthropological viewpoint is formulated by Italo Prado, in a way that can be clearly distinguished from the definition of corruption – legal, economic and political – in the investigation of Italian legal corruption. The author claims that corruption can be captured in at least three aspects, such as illegal, legal and “borderline”, i.e. more or less legal acts. Above all, the anthropological field research and the empirical investigation of corruption can capture the last two, but the way and essence of the operation of illegal corruption is revealed through these. Although these often are not perceived in everyday life and do not appear in public discourses, illegal corruption implements all three of the above. Therefore, for example, if someone cannot be tried by a court for immunity, or dismissed (or subjected to light sentences) in a lawsuit, the public will automatically disregard the informal aspects, de facto or morally unacceptable, corruption. The subtle abuses of power (one can call it “patronalism”), and clientelistic constructions, promotion of incompetent bureaucrats, etc., are actions that undermine democracy, or at least tend to empty the democratic institutions. But, Pardo’s main conclusion is that “[l]egal corruption in public life breaks trust. Persistent legal corruption in public life may do so irreparably”. It is very important to understand how corruption erodes democracy itself, its legitimacy and the citizens’ trust that most politicians and most bureaucrats do not want to recognize or admit. In a very remarkable essay, Pardo analyzes the legal nature of Italian political parties as irregular, which destroys democracy and public confidence, from the perspective that these are activities that are not punishable by law but are illegitimate and harmful to public life. In these circumstances, it becomes clear that “Governance must be more than merely legal. It must enjoy authority and trust across society that gives it legitimacy” (S68), which is not emphasized by any other discipline.

In this sense I also argued that the public perception, in the agenda of media communication, and discourses, the Romanian state is more corrupt than the extent of real corruption. I suggested that the Romanian state is too corrupt in its own experience, in the design of interpersonal experiences, prejudices, everyday perceptions, and interactions with state institutions, in other words in a hypothetical way, at the level of potentials. The requirement of the system is that the representatives of public institutions must have what I call “corruption as form of knowledge”, in the administration “scientifically based expert knowledge has a fairly small role. In contrast, a kind of experiential knowledge, pertaining to modes of finding legal and procedural loopholes (whether creatively or intuitively) is highly valued” (Magyari, 2019: 286-287). This is contrary to the Hungarian case, as the corruption of the central government, and oligarchs does not seem to be perceived by the Hungarian public, while petty corruption in Romania is more typical and hardly found in Hungary. Why? The perception of corruption depends on the popularity of the parties and politicians in the government, and on the affective judgment of the state, on the attitude towards it.

And then we have to take into account that in Hungary, the government-media is now in absolute majority (and even four-fifths) on almost every platform, hence, on the one hand, it hides and does not reveal the corruption by the government, and on the other – if it cannot do so because it is so scandalous – corruption is presented as a ‘political program’ in the public’s interest.

Never directly, or overtly, the new style of populism supports corruption, by creating a zone of transgression, a space in which the rules are suspended, boundaries blurred, a favorable terrain for public corruption. And in extreme cases, new rules are created in favor of clients, promoting the new oligarchies, like in the case of Russia, or a series of former Soviet states, and Orbán’s Hungary.

The advantage of an anthropology of corruption is its ability to track corrupt activities, procedures, even legal but illegal transactions, in every corner of society, wherever they appear in the visible and largely invisible areas of the vast and heterogeneous corruption market. Meanwhile, it looks at the phenomenon not only from the outside but also from the perspective of the participants, either on the corrupt side or the victims of the inequalities inherent in it. It monitors the dynamics and interactions of not only corruption but also the anti-corruption industry and thus provides a more comprehensive picture of the social and cultural impact of corruption than any other discipline. While “anthropologists refuse to give a definition to the researchers (...) to use a universal definition of corruption”, the definitions of observers as well as official, legal, etc., are used in the emic approach (Torselo & Venard, 2015: 35). The anthropology of corruption research has repeatedly demonstrated that, in its specific approach, this discipline is strong, original, and credible.

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Attila Kustán Magyari<sup>1</sup>

## Prophets on the Field – review

Shoemaker, Terry (Ed.). (2019). *The Prophetic Dimension of Sport*.

Cham: Springer

<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007%2F978-3-030-02293-8#toc>

Sport is not only an aggregate of players, rules, equipment etc. but a social phenomenon in which interactions, messages, actions take place. The Springer series – *Briefs in Religious Studies* – focuses on one particular aspect of this: how sport became a civil religious phenomenon in the United States and how some actors can be understood as prophets. The short book offers a comprehensive introduction and five more chapters, including case studies on the topic.

The introduction points out that sport is an escape from political issues but at the same time its actors (athletes, coaches, fans etc.) provide criticism – moreover, today these actors have more platforms available to them.

The book's next chapter outlines the notion of the prophetic dimension of sport: while sport reflects our dominant values in a culture, at the same time it is capable of challenging some of these – as religions do. Sport can be understood as an institution which gives opportunities for “prophetic work” and itself can behave as a “prophetic institution”. According to Marxist views sport as religion reflects the economic base and supports its norms and values such as competition, but at the same time it can challenge these, for instance by loyalty and teamwork – two qualities also associated with sport.

The sociologist Harry Edwards is mentioned as a kind of prophet of sport as he believed in the humanitarian and equalitarian counter-creeds of sport and its capability of not only being a mirror of society but a tool for changing it. Dave Zirin sportswriter and sports editor perceived athletes as political beings and carriers of a dream, and believed that sport can achieve a more cooperative and accessible state without a competitive spirit.

In the following chapters we find some of interesting case studies. One of these summons Jackie Robinson, the African-American basketball player's story: he was signed by Branch Rickey sports executive, breaking the color barrier of Major League Baseball. This “great experiment” was later based on a myth created by Rickey, who thought of himself as a kind of prophet: he wrote in a letter how God wanted him to act, and he chose Robinson because of his religious background.

Colin Kaepernick's recent actions are better known for the public: a chapter summarizes and analyzes these events. Kaepernick was an American football quarterback who knelt during the national anthem to draw attention to racial injustices in the United States. His actions are analyzed through the philosopher Cornel West's concept of “black prophetic fire”, the

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ability to deliver a social critique in the name of the oppressed people within an idealistic national past and also a promising future. Kaepernick's actions are grasped as a counter-force against neoliberalism (which is not part of "the best of the past"), the current structure that mistreats marginalized groups.

The book also gives insight of how American basketball athletes are related to the Black Lives Matter movement, setting up sport as a principal field for prophetic activities.

In the final chapter civil religion's presence in sports is understood in two ways: the first is based on testimonies of faith, celebrating passion towards sports as a religious phenomenon, the second is the prophetic kind by which athletes have the opportunity to challenge the status quo.

The short publication offers great instruments for the understanding of the religious and prophetic dimensions of sport not only by earlier and new theoretic approaches but by case studies which are very useful. While it may seem that the book focuses on a marginal topic, in fact it tackles an important social phenomenon. It concentrates only on the U.S. but this gives opportunity for scholars to follow the path and analyze similar issues in their own societies.

**Miklós Hadas**, DSc, a former student of Pierre Bourdieu, is professor of sociology, head of the Social Communication Doctoral School and co-director of the Centre for Gender and Culture at Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary. He is author of numerous articles on gender and masculinity and of *A modern férfi születése* (The Birth of Modern Man, 2003). This book was awarded the Polanyi Prize by the Hungarian Sociological Association for the best sociological book to be published that year. His articles have appeared in journals such as *The Anthropological Forum*, *Actes de la recherche des sciences sociales*, *The Journal of Social History*, *History of Education*, *The American Sociologist*, *International Journal of the History of Sport*, *Sports Historian*, *Masculinities and Social Change*, *Historical Sociology*. Relying on Norbert Elias' process sociology, his current research interest concentrates on the transformation of Western masculinities over the past centuries.

**Nikolas Kockelmann** is an MA student at the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, Master of European Studies: Governance and Regulation. He defended his BA degree with a thesis on the impact of the European refugee crisis in German party politics at the University of Amsterdam. His research focuses on European identity in different fields, involving comparisons of Europe and America, Europe and Africa, divides in East-West identity and memory after the end of the Cold War. He lays a strong imagological and cultural focus on European identity, on how Europe perceives itself and how it perceives the non-European "others", including non-(Western)-Europeans entering the EU. In an interdisciplinary context of politics, law and economics, his MA research is focusing on the impact of migration into the EU on the Union's foreign policy.

**Leona Kolberg** has recently graduated from the University of Amsterdam and is now a student of the MA program "Peace and Conflict Studies" at the University College Dublin. Her research focus lays on human rights violations, gender studies, intercultural dialogue and EU politics.

### **Attila Kustán Magyar**

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**László Marác**z has studied Hungarian language and literature and East European Studies at the University of Groningen. He defended his PhD dissertation in General Linguistics at the same university in 1989. In 1991-1992, Marác has been granted the prestigious Niels Stensen Fellowship and was a visiting scientist at the Linguistics Department of MIT and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Since 1992, he is affiliated as an assistant professor, and later as a senior lecturer to the Department of European Studies of the University of Amsterdam. In 2015, Prof. Dr. Marác has been awarded the title of 'honorary professor' at the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University in Astana, Kazakhstan. He is vice-coordinator of the MIME-consortium ([www.project-mime.org](http://www.project-mime.org)) that won the European FP7-tender in 2013 under the reference of 'SSH Call 2013.5.2-1: Multilingual Challenge for the European Citizen'. He has been publishing on a range of topics in Humanities & Social Sciences, including European studies, Hungarian history and culture, historical linguistics and cultural and linguistic diversity. Personal website: <http://www.uva.nl/en/profile/m/a/l.k.maracz/l.k.maracz.html>

**Markus Stauff** works at the Media Studies department at the University of Amsterdam (UvA). His main research interests are television and digital media, governmentality, and the visual culture of media sports. Recent publications: "Taming distraction: The second-screen assemblage, television and the classroom." *Media and Communication* 4.3 (2016); "A Culture of Competition: Sport's Historical Contribution to Datafication." *TMG – Journal for Media History* 21.2 (2018). Accessible at: <http://www.uva.nl/profiel/s/t/m.stauff/m.stauff.html>

**Michel van Gent** is a researcher at the Huygens Institute for History of the Netherlands KNAW (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences) in Amsterdam. He studied at Leiden University and wrote a dissertation on the struggle between the Hoeken and Kabeljauwen (Angles and Cods) in the county of Holland during the fifteenth century. He made a database about the meetings of the Gelderse landdagen between 1423 and 1580. He later turned his professional attention to the rise of sport in the Netherlands. Nowadays he is working on the extension of the database *Sporting organisations, sports clubs and sports periodicals in the Netherlands to 2000*. Since 1982 he has been a part-time korfbal reporter at the *Leidse Courant* and nowadays at the *Leidsch Dagblad*.

**Ivo van Hilvoorde** is an assistant professor at the Department of Behavioral and Movement Sciences (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) and professor (lector) at the School of Human Movement & Sport (Windesheim, Zwolle, the Netherlands). In his research he combines sociological and philosophical perspectives on sport and physical education, with special interest in new technologies.

**Ali Ziaee** holds a Msc in sport management from the Faculty of Sport Sciences (Kharazmi University, Theran) and is a researcher at the Department of Behavioral and Movement Sciences (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam). He is interested in sport management studies with a focus on organizational studies, physical activity, and the way that sport and physical activities can influence developments of a nation as well as social life.



