

GLOBALIZATION, INEQUALITY AND OLYMPIC SPORTS SUCCESSES

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Introduction

To note that we live in an era of globalization has become commonplace. As geographical distances shrink in terms of time and money, people all over the world become more and more interconnected and interdependent. As border-crossing flows of information, goods, capital, and people vastly expand, these borders lose much of their former significance. Different human groups and societies are becoming integrated into one global society encompassing humanity as a whole.

The term globalization became widely popular in the 1990s, though the processes to which it refers are much older. Since then it has become the object of heated debates. One central issue concerns the causal relationship between globalization and trends of increasing or decreasing inequality in the world. Do the processes subsumed under this concept, such as the expansion of world trade and foreign capital investments, contribute to the economic growth of poorer nations and therefore to diminishing world income inequality, or do they reflect the interests of the rich nations and their leading groups and therefore lead to ever more global inequality? The issue has been raised by the movement of 'anti-globalists' who vehemently criticize powerful international organizations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO) for their policies of free trade, free capital movements and privatization. Against these organizations' claims that such policies are good for everyone, the anti-globalists argue that they help big transnational corporations to exploit workers in low-wage countries and only contribute to widening the gap between rich and poor countries.

Thus far, theoretical and empirical studies on the relationship between globalization and inequality have concentrated on material or economic inequality as indicated by, in particular, income data, and have neglected non-economic goods. This paper will deal with the (possible) effects of globalization on the distribution of one type of non-economic goods: sports achievements. We will focus on the internationally most prestigious sports achievements, the winning of Olympic medals.

Sport competition is a competition for status, though a lot of money may also be involved; the primary reward for the winner is status, prestige, or symbolic capital (Bourdieu), which may take the physical form of a medal, a cup, or some other sign of honour. It is not only the winning athlete who is rewarded this way, but also the group he or she belongs to and whose members identify with 'their' champion: the club, the city, or – in international competitions – the nation. The Olympic Games are the outstanding example of a series of contests in which not only athletes but also, and through them, whole nations compete with one another for status. The athletes act as their countries' representatives, as is stressed in the opening ceremony and the repeating ritual of playing the national hymn and putting up the national flag for the winner of a gold medal. Media reports compare national achievements by making lists of the numbers of gold, silver and bronze medals each nation has won. In this way a status hierarchy of nations is constructed.

In this hierarchy, nations may rise and fall in the course of time, just as they may rise and fall in other respects. And the nature of the hierarchy may change in the direction of more or less inequality. This paper deals with the question how inequality in the distribution of Olympic medals among nations and groups of nations changed in the period 1952-2000, and how this relates to processes of globalization. Before entering into this, we will deal with the more general question, what are the connections between globalization and changes in inequality? The focus will be on international economic inequality.

Globalization and trends in global economic inequality

Theoretical considerations

The concept of globalization has various meanings. Most often it is used to refer to quite recent developments that started in the last decades of the 20th century. In the social sciences, however, the concept has been broadened to refer to processes over a much longer period of time. Globalization in the wide sense can be defined as the formation, extension and intensification of worldwide networks of human interdependence (cf. Mennell 1990; Held et al. 1999).

Conceived in this way, globalization may be said to have started in the late 15th century AD when different continents – Eurasia, Africa and the Americas – became permanently interconnected through relations of trade, domination and flows of migration. European merchants and rulers were the main dynamic force in this process. Western Europe became, in Wallerstein's terms, the core of an expanding capitalist world-system, the dominant zone which increasingly exploited other areas in the world through a combination of military force, commercial trade and productive investments (Wallerstein 1974). In other words, globalization went hand in hand with growing inequality on the world level. This process accelerated with the industrial revolution since the second half of the 18th century when the growth of production and productivity slowly but steadily led to rising real incomes for widening parts of the population in the industrializing countries. Early industrialization was conditioned by the interregional division of labour established in the preceding centuries, and had a strong impact on its subsequent development. Thus, the raw cotton that was made into textile in the factories in Lancashire in the late 18th century came from American plantations worked by black slaves whose ancestors had been bought by Europeans on African slave markets and shipped over the ocean; and part of this textile was sold in (increasingly British) India where it outcompeted the native hand weavers and spinners. This illustrates how industrialization and globalization were intertwined and led to larger inequality between different regions of the world. In the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, rich and poor countries increasingly diverged. Thus, according to one estimate, the per capita income

gap between the United Kingdom and China rose from 3:1 around 1820 to 6:1 in 1910 and further to 10:1 in 1950 (Bourguignon & Morrisson 2002: 734; cf. Maddison 1995). The widening gap between rich and poor countries became identified with the division between industrial and nonindustrial, modern and traditional, advanced and backward societies.

This development of growing global inequality can be explained with the help of sociological dependency and world-system theories (such as Wallerstein 1974, 1979) which, in a neo-Marxist vein, stress the exploitative nature of economic relations between groups with different power resources. On the other hand, this same development seems to be at odds with the neoclassical economic view on globalization which posits that the expansion of international trade and capital flows will lead to convergence in prosperity levels between the regions involved. What is left out in this latter approach is organized violence and coercion. This was an integral part of the globalization that actually took place in the modern era, as it included colonial conquest by European states, coercive labour, and the opening of markets by force (as in China and Japan in the 19th century). Western powers enforced a global division of labour to which non-Western people had to adapt.

Today we live in a postcolonial world in which direct political domination of non-Western regions by Western states has largely disappeared. While present-day global inequality is partly the result of preceding colonization, it is now maintained and changed by other means (though we may regard the American occupation of Iraq as a revival of old imperialism).

The contemporary debate on globalization and inequality usually takes the concept of globalization in a much more restricted sense: it is used to refer to a set of interrelated economic, political-institutional and technological changes, starting in or around the 1970s, that lead to a more integrated world economy in which national states are more interdependent than ever before. These changes include:

- the increasing openness of national economies to imports through the lowering of import tariffs and the removal of other restrictions (stimulated by international organisations such as GATT/WTO) combined with an increasing orientation on

export; as a result, a strong expansion of world trade, in absolute terms as well as relative to total world output;

- a strong growth of international capital mobility, involving the expansion of bank loans, portfolio investments, speculative financial trade, and foreign direct investments by companies – as a consequence of political reforms (deregulation, removal of restrictions on capital import and export, privatisation) as well as technological innovations such as ICT;
- increasing transnationalisation and international mobility of companies;
- the acceleration and expansion of long-distance communication through new technological devices such as computer networks (internet), mobile telephones, fax, and satellite television.

The most salient feature of this recent globalization wave is *market liberalization*, the removal of institutional and technical barriers to the international, border-crossing, long-distance movement of goods, capital (financial and physical), symbolic messages, and, to some extent, people. The question is whether globalization in this specific sense contributes to a continuation or even reinforcement of the long-term trend of growing income disparities between countries - as could be expected on the basis of dependency, world-system or (neo-)Marxist theories - or will lead to a weakening or even reversal of this trend – as is suggested by neoclassical economic theory. A middle ground is taken by critical globalists such as the economist Joseph Stiglitz (2002) who state that globalization in the sense of market liberalization potentially but not automatically enhances growth and alleviates poverty in developing countries, depending on various specific conditions.

Arguments for the thesis that globalization will contribute to economic growth in poor countries and income convergence in the world as a whole (see e.g. Bhagwati 2004) amount to the following:

Free international trade and free capital mobility will lead to an optimal allocation of production factors among countries. The openness to trade will give each country the opportunity to specialize in those products in which it has a ‘comparative advantage’ and

thereby lead to more prosperity. Inflows of foreign capital will lead to higher productive investments. These include the direct investments of foreign firms, which will also bring technological knowledge and business know-how to the country. Where capital is relatively scarce – i.e. in poorer countries – returns to investments can be expected to be high, which will lead to more investments and a higher growth rate. Economic openness is related to cultural openness; diffusion of knowledge, facilitated by modern communication media, will help poorer societies to catch up with the prosperous ones.

Arguments for the statement that globalization in the sense of market liberalization is detrimental to economic growth in poor countries and will lead to more global inequality (see e.g. Went 2002) can be summarized as follows:

If national economies are highly dependent on one or only a few export products, they are vulnerable to the vagaries of the world market. If they lose their comparative advantage, if the terms of trade deteriorate (as has been the case with cash crops and raw materials relative to industrial goods), these countries will not be able to redirect their production within a short period of time: poverty will increase. Protection of ‘infant industries’ by restrictions on imports is a necessary step in a process of successful industrialization; industrial practices that are learned in this stage prepare for open competition on the world market at a later stage. Inflows of foreign capital may ‘crowd out’ domestic investments whose returns remain in the country and therefore are a better basis for capital accumulation. Subsidiaries of large foreign companies may drive small local firms into bankruptcy, and may come to dominate whole sections of the national economy, making the economy as a whole highly dependent on these ‘footloose’ companies. If these subsidiaries are managed by foreigners, transfer of useful knowledge to the local population will hardly take place (cf. Dicken 1992). Nor will the diffusion of foreign and in particular Western culture through mass media spread such knowledge; rather it will contain elements of a globalized popular culture which will wet the appetite for luxury goods and enhance feelings of relative deprivation. Finally, globalization is likely to lead to more inequality *within* countries when governments give free reign to market forces.

Empirical findings

How did the international income distribution actually change during the last decades? There is not one simple answer to this question, since it depends on which data and which measures of inequality are used (Wade 2001). Calculations based on per capita Gross National Product (GNP) of countries according to currency exchange rates show a continuous and substantial increase of inequality since the 1960s (see e.g. Korzeniewicz & Moran 1997). If, however, price level differences between countries are taken into account and GNP data are corrected on the basis of purchasing power parities (PPP), the trend becomes less clear. To illustrate this, we present in Table 1 the results of our own calculations based on PPP data of the World Bank and other sources (Wilterdink & Potharst 2001; Wilterdink 2002).

Table 1: International per capita income inequality (PPP), 1950-2000

Year	D1	D10	D10/D1	Gini	Theil
1950	2.80	40.56	14.4	0.543	0.521
1960	2.47	37.06	15.0	0.537	0.497
1970	2.19	36.69	16.7	0.558	0.536
1980	1.83	37.46	20.5	0.564	0.547
1990	1.36	39.22	23.7	0.545	0.525
2000	1.24	40.72	32.8	0.541	0.536

D1: share of 10% with lowest incomes in total world income;
D10: share of 10% with highest incomes in total world income;
D10/D1: ratio of D10 and D1.

This tables shows not only huge international income differences throughout the second half of the 20th century, but also a continuous income *polarization*: the share of the countries who comprise the poorest 10% of the world population (D1) steadily declined, whereas the share of the 10% of world population in the riches countries (D10) remained fairly stable, so that the inequality ratio D10/D1 increased substantially. The Gini and Theil indices of over-all inequality give a different picture, however. According to the Gini index international income inequality remained about constant in the whole period, and decreased since 1980. This may give some support to the optimistic thesis that globalization in the sense of market liberalization will diminish inequality, but the Theil

index tells a slightly different story: after decreasing in the 1980s inequality increased again in the 1990s.

It appears, moreover, that the decrease of over-all inequality since 1980 can be largely ascribed to the fast economic growth in one country: China, which comprises more than 20% of world population. If China is left out, income inequality between countries continuously increased after 1960 according to all indicators. On the other hand, the observed income polarization is mainly due to the growing relative and absolute poverty in one part of the world, Sub-Saharan Africa. If this region is left out, international income inequality is clearly decreasing after 1980.

This illustrates how the trends in world income inequality reflect the combined effects of different developments in different regions. In order to investigate this assumption more systematically, we categorized the world into eight regions on the basis of supposed economic, political and cultural similarities between the countries in each of these regions: the West (Western Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand); Eastern Europe (the former Soviet Union and the other former communist states of Europe); Japan; China (including Hong Kong, excluding Taiwan); Asia (apart from Japan, China, the Asian part of the former Soviet Union and the Middle East); the Middle East and North Africa; Sub-Saharan Africa; and Latin America (Wilterdink & Potharst 2001). The income inequality between the countries of the world appears to reflect the differences in average income between these eight regions to a very large extent: about 90% of the Theil index of inequality is covered by these interregional differences. Yet the relative income position of each region varied considerably over time, as is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Per capita incomes of world regions relative to per capita world income (= 100), PPP estimates, 1950-2000

Year	WE	EE	JA	CH	AS	ME	AF	LA
1950	299	122	087	029	032	061	037	117
1960	305	133	139	032	031	058	034	110
1970	322	138	251	029	031	059	031	104
1980	337	139	290	033	031	072	027	115
1990	355	130	352	047	037	074	025	094
2000	379	090	358	055	041	075	022	095

WE: Western countries; EE: Eastern Europe and (former) Soviet Union; JA: Japan; CH: China; AS: rest of Asia/Oceania; ME: Middle East and North Africa; AF: Sub-Saharan Africa; LA: Latin America.

It appears, among other things, that the Western countries maintained and even strengthened their privileged position in the course of time; that the average prosperity in Eastern Europe declined dramatically since the fall of communism around 1990; that Japan transformed from a relatively poor to a rich country; that China improved its position considerably since 1980, as did, to a lesser extent, the rest of Asia; and that the average incomes in 'underdeveloped' Sub-Saharan Africa only further declined. Are these trends reflected in sport achievements as indicated by the winning of Olympic medals?

If the over-all income inequality between countries as measured by Gini and Theil indices diminished somewhat between 1980 and 2000, the income inequality *within* countries in general exhibited an upward trend. This was at least the case in most Western countries, the Eastern European countries, and China. As a result, world income inequality defined as the sum total of inequality between and within countries, probably increased in these two decades.

Yet the available income data indicate that the proportion of very poor people in the world (often defined as those who can spend no more than one dollar a day) diminished, at least relative to total world population if not in absolute numbers (Sala-i-Martin 2002). This was mainly the result of economic growth in China and other Asian countries. In Sub-Saharan Africa, on the other hand, poverty increased. All these findings can hardly be used to substantiate unambiguous conclusions. The most we can say in support of the positive globalization thesis is that the historical long-term trend of growing international income inequality flattened in the period of market globalization since about 1975. But this was not a clear break with the past, let alone a reversal of the historical trend. Moreover, as we have seen, the over-all development in the world as a whole is the result of very different, positive and negative, developments in different world regions and countries within these regions.

Hypotheses on the effects of globalization have been tested by comparing countries whose economies are 'open' or 'globalized' in varying degrees. Several studies found a positive correlation between (increase of) foreign trade and (increase of) economic

growth (e.g. Dollar & Kraay 2002). One cannot conclude from this correlation, however, that more openness will lead to more growth; it may be the case, for example, that growth leads to more export rather than the other way around (Baldwin 2004). Statements on the relationship between openness to foreign investments and inflows of foreign capital on the one hand and economic development on the other, are even more difficult and controversial (Firebaugh 1992; Rodrik 1999; Herkenrath & Bornschier 2002).

The most sensible conclusion is probably that there is no general conclusion to make: there are no fixed, lawlike relationships between specific features or indicators of globalization and economic growth figures or other indicators of successful development. The effects of 'globalizing' policy measures depend on several specific conditions, and the wise policymaker – as well as the wise social scientist - is the one who takes these conditions into account.

Globalization and trends in global sports successes

Theoretical considerations

The spread of modern sports since the late 19th century is itself to be regarded as a process of globalization (Guttman 1994; van Bottenburg 2001). They originated in a period of intense globalization coupled with growing nationalism. Sports today still bear the characteristics of that period, as can be seen most clearly in the Olympic Games: a global contest between nations, in which both global integration and national differentiation are celebrated.

The globalization of sports followed a common pattern: they spread from powerful, wealthy, and prestigious nations – originally the United Kingdom, above all – to less powerful, wealthy, and prestigious ones. The growing numbers of participating nations in the Olympic Games are indicative of this process. In the Helsinki Games in 1952 69 nations participated, most of them European and North American; in Sydney in

2000 191 nations were represented, with a large majority from outside Europe and North America.

The globalization of sports is an example of a cultural diffusion process in which lower-status groups take over practices, preferences and symbols from higher-status groups. In this sense, the global spread of sports is similar to the spread of other elements of popular culture, like clothing fashions, fast food, pop music and tv soaps. However, with regard to modern sports, as presented at the Olympic Games, there is a difference: while these other cultural forms lend themselves to endless variation and all kinds of hybridization – mixtures of ‘global’ and ‘local’ – modern sports are highly standardized, bound by fixed and common rules. Another, related difference of modern sports is competition and hierarchy formation: the aim of the game is to make out who is the best. The hierarchy that is the outcome of a sports competition cannot be contested on the basis of personal preference, as can be done – and is often done – in, for example, the field of arts.

The diffusion of sports from one to another group is therefore an ambiguous process: it makes the groups more equal in a sense, but also more unequal by establishing a hierarchy between them as the outcome of sports contests. The newcomer runs the risk of having to accept the other’s superiority, though the tides may turn after a period of time. The globalization of sports, in so far as it involves international competition, therefore implies the globalization of a status hierarchy among nations. Participation in the Olympic Games binds increasing numbers of nations to this status hierarchy.

Within this hierarchy, there is not only an international rank order of nations, but also a grouping of these nations, which can again be interpreted in Wallerstein’s terms as core, semiperipheral and peripheral blocs (Bale & Sang 1996: 20). Thus far, Western countries have dominated the Olympic Games. Countries of the European and American continent won almost 90 percent of all medals in the Summer and Winter Olympics between 1896 and 1996 (Jütting 2001). In general, the core states in the world system are the winners in the global sport contest. They do have hegemonic control in the world of sports too (Maguire et al. 2002).

Talent is assumed to be equally distributed throughout the world’s population. However, this does not mean that population size has the strongest impact on the number

of medals won. An analysis of Kuper and Sterken (2003) of several economic, geographic, and demographic determinants of Olympic participation and success across the entire history of the modern Olympics confirmed findings of earlier research that the economic status of a country (GNP and GNP per capita) is the major factor in Olympic success, followed by population size. Oakley and Green (2001a; 2001b) take a step further and add the importance of a strategic and consciously planned approach to elite sport development to explain country-specific effects in Olympic medals results after controlling for income and population. Gratton and Shibli conclude from this study that the ability to invest and fund elite sport combined with the strategic management of those resources and the strategic development of policy leads to greater success in international sport (SIRC 2002).

Maguire (2003) notes that these strategies reinforce the structure of the global sports complex. To guarantee success in international competition, states increasingly mobilize and utilize all relevant national resources and adopt the models of more successful nations. And they have to: it is inherent in the logic of competition. He refers to Heinilä (1982), who observed that the more total the utilization of relevant resources, the greater the probability of international success. The success of a nation's athletes in international competitions is not a matter of individual efforts, but instead a matter of the effectiveness and total resources of the whole national sports system (Heinilä 1967; 1982).

Bale & Sang (1994: 220) elaborate on this insight and argue that it is no longer tenable to attribute national success in international sport to national sports systems alone; instead we need to take into account an international or *global* sports system, which shares several characteristics with the world political and economic system. In other words, as Maguire et al. (2002: 19) summarize, international sport success in the late 20th century and in the early part of this new century involves a contest between systems located within a global context.

In the context of our discussion in the first part of this paper, the question arises whether the ongoing processes of globalization have contributed to a continuation or even reinforcement of the inequality in the distribution of Olympic medals among nations and

groups of nations, facing the fact that the acceleration of these processes of globalization, starting in or around the 1970s, went together with a redoubling of the number of countries participating in the Olympic Games and a growth in the border-crossing, long-distance movement of athletes, coaches, and administrators. As was the case with respect to the international income distribution, there are arguments for both the thesis that these globalization processes – and especially the process of market liberalization – has led to a more even worldwide distribution of Olympic medals and for the statement that these processes reinforce and enhance global inequalities in Olympic success. We will discuss these arguments with respect to three developments: the growing number of participating countries in the Olympic Games; the accelerating global migration patterns of elite athletes; and the impact of changes in the global distribution of income in relation to the rising elite sports budgets.

First, sports competition at the Olympics is intensified by the growing numbers of participating countries and the globalization of coaches, training methods, talent identification systems, and so on. This would diminish the contrasts between dominant and dominated countries. However, newcomers in the international arena of a given sport are at a disadvantage because the diffusion of cultural practices takes time. The introduction of a modern sport in a given national society is a process of institutionalization of new practices through learning and organization. If the ambition is to develop elite sports on an international level, expert knowledge – on appropriate techniques, training schemes, medical treatment, sports management, nutritious supplements, etc. – and special facilities have to be built. Only after a certain period of time this disadvantage may disappear. This would mean that the growth in numbers of participating nations in the Olympic Games in itself will lead to increasing inequality in the distribution of Olympic medals among the participating nations. Only if the number of participating countries would remain more or less constant, a decrease of inequality would be expected, since the diffusion process will spread the cultural capital needed for elite sport more evenly.

Second, migration patterns are speeding up. As Bale and Maguire (1994: 5) have demonstrated, the migration of sports labour is both gathering pace and occurring over a more widespread geographical area and within a greater number of sports subcultures. The migration of performers, coaches, administrators and sport scientists within and between nations, continents and hemispheres has become a pronounced feature of late-20th-century sport (Maguire et al. 2002: 19).

The direction of these migration patterns is clear. The last decade has seen a drain of athletic talent from Africa, Asia, and South America to Europe and Northern America. In addition to athletes, Western nations recruited sports scientists and coaches from the former Soviet bloc. Again utilizing a world systems theory, it can be argued with Bale and Maguire (1994: 16) that the core states dominate and control the exploitation of resources and production. A deskilling of semi-peripheral and peripheral states occurs on the terms and conditions set by core states. The most talented workers, in whom peripheral and semi-peripheral states have invested time and resources, are lured away to the core states whose wealth derives from their control over athletic labour and the media-sport production complex.

The 'talent pipeline' (Bale & Sang 1994) from peripheral and semi-peripheral to core states undoubtedly strengthened economically more powerful European clubs and American colleges and universities. But whether these migrant patterns had a negative or positive impact on the capability and success of *national* teams is quite a different matter. By migration, talented sportsmen and women can get access to the best facilities, coaches, training methods and club competitions, with potentially having an impact upon their development and capability and, as a result of this, not only success in Europe or North America, but also as a member of their national teams, for example during the Olympic Games (Maguire 2000).

In their study of Kenyan running, Bale and Sang (1994: 213) for example observe that it is sometimes felt that the substantial migration of Kenyan athletes to American universities has, in no small part, contributed to Kenya's rise in visibility and success in world running. A causal link between US domicile and development has been inferred by several observers of the international track and field scene. Also the famous Kenyan

runner Mike Boit, who was an alumnus of an American university himself, supports the view that the American college system is an avenue for developing athletic talent.

Bale and Sang, however, disagree with this view. They argue that the development of Kenyan athletics did not owe much to the out-migration of Kenya's athletes. The first migration to the colleges of the US did not occur until the late 1960s, by which time Kenya was already establishing itself as an emerging athletic power. They even interpret the widespread foreign migration of athletic talent as having had a negative effect on Kenyan athletics: "with overseas migration, athletes come to devalue their own country, its traditions and its culture. Competing for a university or college in small-town America becomes more important than representing one's own country." (Bale and Sang 1994: 217). In Denmark, for example, two Kenyan athletes opted to represent their adopted country in international competitions. By doing so, they were able to be sure of selection for these competitions without having to face the high pressure Kenyan trials. The most well known of them is Wilson Kipketer, who was recruited by a Scandinavian coach while at St Patrick's High School and taken to Denmark at the age of 17 (Bale and Sang 1994: 129). According to these authors, such strategies, initiated by athletes' agents, to induce migration to relatively weak athletic nations may become a feature of an increasingly minimalist approach towards national identity favoured by an increasing number of athletes."

Relying on the national Olympic teams for Athens 2004, these strategies might indeed be part of an expanding process. Thirty members (i.e. 6%) of the US Olympic team were born in other countries. Among them Colleen De Reuck, track and field, three time South African Olympian, who moved to Colorado in 1993 and became a US citizen in 2000. Meb Keflezighi, track and field, whose family left the African nation of Eritrea in search of a better life and settled in San Diego in 1987. Jasna Reed, table tennis, who was born in what is now Bosnia-Herzegovina and won an Olympic bronze for Yugoslavia in 1988. Maritza Correia, the first black woman to make the US Olympic swim team, now living and training in Georgia, but was born in Puerto Rico to Guyanese parents. And Tom Pappas, decathlon world champ, whose grandfather was born in Greece. According to the official website of the US Olympic team, he often received

email from Greeks asking him to change his citizenship and win gold for their country at the Olympics in Athens.

The practice of changing nationalities is not new in the world of sports. We could refer to former Hungarian football star Ferenc Puskas, who appeared for Spain on a handful of occasions. Or to former tennis stars Ivan Lendl, Martina Navratilova and Monica Seles who all ended their professional tennis careers as Americans. But it looks as if more and more athletes from peripheral states change their nationality, in favour of Western countries. Like Lornah Kiplagat, born in Kenia, who will run the five and ten kilometres for the Netherlands at the Olympics in Athens. Or Jie Yao, born in China, who will represent the Netherlands in badminton (women singles). Likewise, we could give examples of the German, Swiss and many other European teams. Moreover, there are indications that Western and other rich countries are purposefully inclined to make use of this relatively new possibility. An extreme example of this is provided by Qatar, which is attempting to recruit footballers from around the world for its national team by paying the players in an effort to qualify for the World Championships in Germany 2006. They have approached a number of African and Latin American stars. Global sports success and Olympic medals could be increasingly for sale, which will undoubtedly favour rich and thus particularly Western countries.

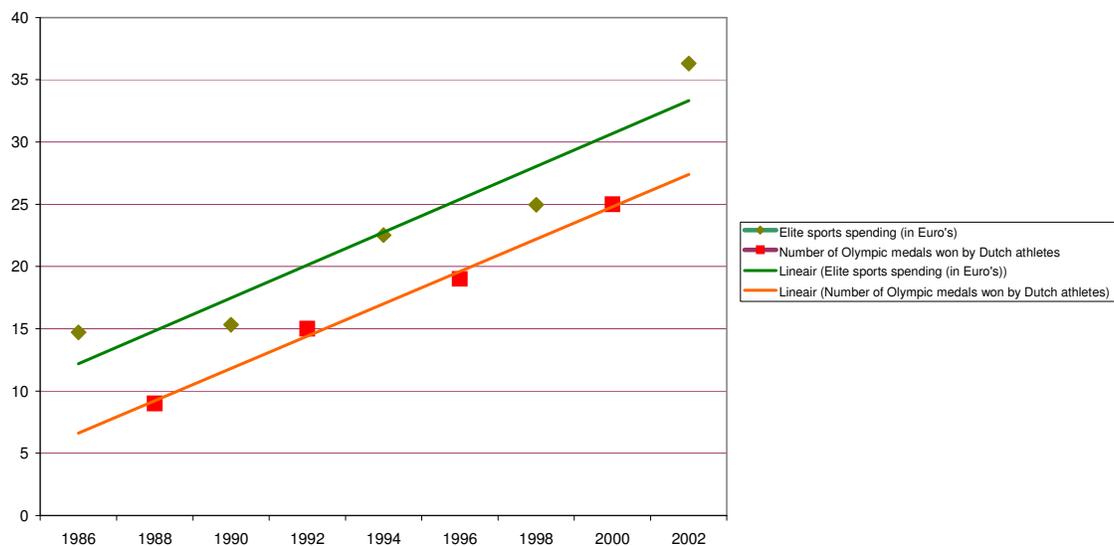
Third, as was explained above, several studies found a positive correlation between the international distribution of Olympic medals and of income. The inhabitants of wealthy countries have more time and money to engage in leisure activities such as sports; they also have more time and money to attend and watch sports competition and therefore stimulate the commercialisation of elite sports; and these countries, through the government or other organizations, can afford more money to invest in elite sport. When the international distribution of income changes, it is therefore to be expected that the distribution of medals among nations will change accordingly.

As our analysis of changes in the distribution of income showed that the historical long-term trend of growing international income inequality flattened in the period of market globalization since about 1975, this might have some impact on the distribution of Olympic medals, although we have to take into account that we only found ambiguous,

heterogeneous effects, differing between regions and countries in the world. This would be an indirect effect of globalization processes on the distribution of international sporting success among nations, and could perhaps help to explain the findings of Lamprecht and Stamm (2001: 117) and Kuper and Sterken (2003: 11) that the explanatory power of socio-economic differences with regard to the Olympic medal ranking has diminished in the 1980s and 1990s, compared to the 1960s and 1970s.

In the same period of market globalization, however, the ‘price’ of Olympic medals has increased significantly. Elite sports policy, focussed on an exhaustive talent search and identification, athlete monitoring, provision of sports services, lifestyle support for athletes, training and international competition abroad, well-developed facilities, and so on, increasingly asks for higher spending budgets. Norton and Hogan (2000) found that funding (in 1998 Australian dollars) accelerated from about 1 million in 1976/77 to 106 million in 1997/98. There was a significant linear relationship between money spent and total medals won. This was also found when all medal types were analysed independently. The same trend can be observed in the Netherlands. Although elite sports funding in the Netherlands clearly stayed behind Australia – as did Olympic success! – investments in elite sports tripled between 1986 and 2002.

Figure 1. Elite sports spending in the Netherlands and Olympic medals won by Dutch athletes, 1988-2004



Moreover, figure 1 confirms the linear relationship found for Australia between money spent and medals won. This trend is at a disadvantage for semi-peripheral and peripheral states and would again be an argument for an increase of global inequalities in Olympic success.

Empirical findings

As remarked above, inequality in the distribution of certain goods can be measured in different ways which may lead to different outcomes. One of the choices to be made is that between different types of units among which the goods are distributed; it depends on the nature of the goods and the questions asked which are the relevant units. Whereas in the study of incomes (taken as indicators of life chances and material well-being) the ultimate relevant units are individuals, families or households, here the relevant units are the nations whose representative athletes compete for Olympic medals. Tables 3, 4 and 5 present the results of our calculations.

Table 3: Distribution of medals among countries in Olympic Games, 1948-2000

Year	N	D10	Q5	G	Th	N*	N*/N	D10*	Q5*	G*	Th*
1948	59	56.4	81.0	0.76	1.18	37	63%	42.8	63.7	0.62	0.71
1952	69	62.9	81.7	0.78	1.24	43	62%	50.4	69.2	0.64	0.77
1956	68	65.1	86.1	0.81	1.40	38	61%	48.9	68.5	0.66	0.81
1960	84	74.4	88.9	0.84	1.61	44	53%	56.6	76.0	0.70	0.96
1964	93	74.9	91.7	0.86	1.70	41	44%	53.1	71.2	0.68	0.88
1968	112	74.8	91.1	0.86	1.76	44	39%	51.1	67.9	0.65	0.83
1972	122	79.5	94.0	0.88	1.84	48	39%	54.5	72.3	0.69	0.91
1976	92	77.5	91.7	0.86	1.75	41	45%	57.5	74.2	0.70	0.95
1980	80	78.0	91.8	0.87	1.87	36	45%	60.4	75.4	0.71	1.07
1984	140	84.9	96.2	0.90	2.05	47	34%	51.7	72.8	0.69	0.95
1988	159	84.0	97.0	0.90	2.07	52	33%	55.4	73.3	0.70	0.96
1992	168	80.4	94.2	0.88	1.88	63	37%	52.4	71.1	0.68	0.90
1996	197	75.8	92.2	0.86	1.71	79	40%	49.5	68.8	0.65	0.79
2000	191	73.1	89.7	0.85	1.63	78	41%	48.4	67.6	0.63	0.74

N: Number of participating countries; D10: share of top 10% of participating countries in all medals won; Q5: share of top 20% of participating countries in all medals won; G: Gini index of over-all inequality among participating countries; Th: Theil index of over-all inequality; N*: number of countries with at least one medal; N*/N: percentage of countries with at least one medal; D10*, Q5*, G*, Th*: corresponding measures of inequality among countries with at least one medal.

Table 3 shows, first of all, a very unequal distribution of medals among the participating nations in all the postwar Olympic years. One-tenth of the participating nations always won far more than half of all the medals, and the top 20% never acquired less than 80%. Inequality increased over the period as a whole, though not continuously; the Gini index rose from 0.76 in 1948 and 0.78 in 1952 to 0.90 in 1988 and then declined to 0.85 in 2000. As expected, increasing inequality went together with growth in the number of participating nations. The entrance of new nations in the Olympic arena brought an absolute and relative increase of the number of nations that won no medal at all: from 22 (37%) in 1948 and 26 (38%) in 1952 to no less than 118 (60%) in 1996 and 113 (59%) in 2000. Since 1964 these ‘zero-nations’ (many of them ministates and semi-independent units, such as Monaco or the Virgin Islands) always comprised more than half of the participating nations.

The growth of the number of participating nations and the concomitant rise in the proportion of nations without any medals go a good deal in explaining the increase of inequality; but the correlation is far from perfect. From 1952 to 1956 the number of participants decreased whereas inequality rose; and from 1964 to 1968 the number increased whereas inequality remained about the same. More interestingly, from 1988 to 1996 the numbers of participants rose to an unprecedented high whereas inequality decreased.

If we confine ourselves to the countries that won at least one medal, we see a parallel though somewhat different development. Inequality over the period as a whole is more or less stable, and even slightly declining if we leave aside 1948 (the first Olympic year after the war, in which the Soviet Union did not participate). The development contains two cycles: a rise of inequality from 1948 to 1960, then a decline to 1968, then again a rise to the years 1976-1988 (with 1980 and 1984 as atypical years since these Games were boycotted by, respectively, the USA and the Soviet Union plus its satellite states), and since then a decrease. It is especially the decrease of inequality in the 1990s that is noteworthy. This decrease, particularly the most recent one from 1996 to 2000, might be explained as a manifestation of a further globalization of sports, or ‘deep diffusion’, a stage in which relative newcomers – possibly (partly) as a result of the

migration of their athletes – gradually acquire the knowledge and skills to compete effectively with the representatives of the established nations.

This tentative explanation rests on an abstract diffusion model which holds ‘other things equal’. In reality other things are not equal or stable. As noted, the level of economic development as indicated by per capita income is one of the conditions that have an impact on the chances of sport success, and this can be captured by the above-mentioned distinction between eight world regions. Tables 4 and 5 show how the distribution of Olympic medals between these regions changed over time.

Table 4: Distribution of medals in Olympic Games among world regions, percentages, 1948-2000

Year	WE	EE	JA	CH	AS	ME	AF	LA
1948	77.8	10.0	-	0	1.0	4.4	1.0	5.8
1952	57.5	30.1	2.0	0	0.9	2.8	2.2	4.6
1956	55.6	34.3	4.1	0	0.4	2.8	0.9	1.9
1960	51.2	37.3	3.9	-	1.1	3.7	1.1	1.7
1964	52.4	36.1	5.8	-	1.2	2.0	0.8	1.8
1968	45.9	40.4	4.8	-	1.7	1.7	1.5	3.9
1972	42.2	45.2	4.8	-	1.5	1.0	2.7	2.7
1976	36.2	53.8	4.1	-	1.8	0.3	0	3.8
1980	16.6	75.1	-	-	1.6	0.2	1.3	5.2
1984	71.0	10.5	4.7	4.7	3.2	1.3	1.2	3.5
1988	36.6	47.6	1.9	3.8	5.1	0.8	1.5	2.6
1992	48.0	26.4	2.7	6.7	6.2	2.1	2.5	5.4
1996	57.5	16.5	2.0	7.1	6.3	2.3	3.9	4.3
2000	47.2	26.9	1.9	6.3	5.2	2.6	2.7	7.2

Table 5: Ratio of percentage of total medals to percentage of world population, by world region, 1948-2000

Year	WE	EE	JA	CH	AS	ME	AF	LA
1948	4.18	0.87	-	0	0.04	1.02	0.14	0.91
1952	3.18	2.66	0.61	0	0.03	0.64	0.31	0.69
1956	3.14	2.13	1.28	0	0.01	0.62	0.12	0.28
1960	2.98	3.39	1.26	-	0.04	0.79	0.15	0.24
1964	3.16	3.41	1.93	-	0.04	0.41	0.10	0.24
1968	2.89	3.96	1.66	-	0.06	0.34	0.19	0.51
1972	2.78	4.61	1.71	-	0.05	0.20	0.34	0.35
1976	2.50	5.78	1.52	-	0.06	0.06	0	0.47
1980	1.19	8.34	-	-	0.05	0.04	0.15	0.63
1984	5.34	1.21	1.88	0.21	0.10	0.24	0.13	0.42
1988	2.88	5.73	0.79	0.17	0.16	0.14	0.15	0.31
1992	3.81	3.47	1.17	0.31	0.20	0.34	0.25	0.63
1996	4.64	2.29	0.91	0.33	0.20	0.36	0.38	0.50
2000	3.93	3.96	0.90	0.30	0.16	0.41	0.25	0.84

WE: Western countries; EE: Eastern Europe (former communist countries, including Asian part of former Soviet Union); JA: Japan; CH: China (including Hong Kong, excluding Taiwan); AS: Asia (except China, Middle East and Asian part of former Soviet Union) and Oceania (except Australia and New Zealand); ME: Middle East and North Africa; AF: Sub Saharan Africa; LA: Latin America.

As could be expected, the Western countries were and are still highly dominant in winning Olympic honours. Both in 1952 and in 1996 these countries won more than half of all medals (57.5%), in 2000 slightly less than half (47.2%). In the same period their share in total world population dropped from 18 to 12%; if we take this into account, we might say that the dominance of the Western countries has become even stronger in the course of time (see Table 5). This is not surprising in view of the wealth growth in the West compared to other parts of the world, as Table 2 indicates. However, another, less wealthy part of the world has been even more successful: formerly communist Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union. From 1952 to 1976 this 'Eastern bloc' steadily increased its share of medals at the cost of the West. Even in 1988, one year before the fall of the Berlin wall, these countries won more medals than the combined Western countries that had not only much higher incomes but also a much larger total population. Evidently, other than merely 'economic' factors were at work here: a long and well-established tradition of organized sports and a political regime that was able and willing to invest intensively in sports for national glory and ideological legitimacy. Superiority in sports was to prove the superiority of the Soviet-socialist system. The globalization shock of the breakdown of this system coupled with economic decline brought a predictable downfall in sports successes. This was followed, however, by a partial recovery since the second half of the 1990s. In 2000 the share of the former communist countries in all Olympic medals was four times their share in world population, a ratio comparable to that of the West in spite of much lower standards of living.

The Western and the Eastern European countries together nearly monopolized the winning of medals for a long time; from 1948 to 1980 their combined share was always more than 85%. In this period they successfully blocked the ambitions of newcomers, which resulted in the observed increase of inequality. Since then their dominance diminished somewhat - to a share of about 75% in 1992, 1996 and 2000. Part of their place was taken by other countries such as China, which re-entered the Olympic arena in 1984, industrializing South Korea, and still communist Cuba. Some shifts can be

explained by connecting them to economic developments, such as China's modest successes and slight upward tendency of the rest of the Asian region (in which, however, the Indian subcontinent and the Indonesian archipelago hardly take part). But the downward mobility of Japan after the Tokyo Games in 1964 is contrary to what one would expect on the assumption that sport achievements are strongly connected to overall economic achievements. Similarly, the slightly growing shares of the Middle East/North Africa, Latin America and even Sub-Saharan Africa in the distribution of Olympic medals are hard to explain on this basis.

To conclude: differential economic developments give at best only a partial, very incomplete explanation of differential sport success. If globalization processes help to explain the modest upsurge of Third World countries in international sport since the 1980s, they do not simply work in connection to economic growth. Different globalization processes, while interconnected, do not necessarily determine one another. The world of modern sports is, in Bourdieu's terms, a relatively autonomous field which creates its own dynamics. It expresses the large inequalities in the world today, but does so on its own terms, and not always in predictable ways.

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