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Mapping the global football field: a sociological model of transnational forces within the world game

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This is a copy of the Author's Original Text of an article whose final and definitive form, the Version of Record, has been published in *The British Journal of Sociology* [copyright London School of Economics and Political Science], DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-4446.2012.01407

To Cite: Giulianotti, R. and Robertson, R., (2012) Mapping the global football field: a sociological model of transnational forces within the world game, *British Journal of Sociology*, 63:2, 216-240.

Published Version Available At: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2012.01407.x/pdf>

Abstract

This paper provides a sociological model of the key transnational political and economic forces that are shaping the 'global football field'. The model draws upon, and significantly extends, the theory of the 'global field' developed previously by Robertson. The model features four quadrants, each of which contains a dominant operating principle, an 'elemental reference point', and an 'elemental theme'. The quadrants contain, first, neo-liberalism, associated with the individual and elite football clubs; second, neo-mercantilism, associated with nation-states and national football systems; third, international relations, associated with international governing bodies; and fourth, global civil society, associated with diverse institutions that pursue human development and/or social justice. We examine some of the interactions and tensions between the major institutional and ideological forces across the four quadrants. We conclude by examining how the weakest quadrant, featuring global civil society, may gain greater prominence within football. In broad terms, we argue that our four-fold model may be utilized to map and to examine other substantive research fields with reference to globalization.

Keywords: Global field; globalization; football; neo-liberalism; neo-mercantilism; global civil society

Introduction¹

The global game of football has a unique sociological significance. Football's showcase tournament – the World Cup finals – draws over 200 nations into the quest to qualify, is screened worldwide for one month, and attracts over 3.3 million spectators to its fixtures. When Germany hosted this tournament in 2006, some reports indicated that 50,000 new jobs were generated, up to 20 million fans were attracted, and the national economy boosted by 0.3 per cent.² Even the USA – long regarded as a 'rejectionist' of football – has an estimated 24 million

players, a national professional league with world stars like David Beckham, and a good track-record in recent World Cups (Markovits and Hellerman 2001).³ In global business, football is deeply embedded in corporate advertising and brand-building strategies, and has been pivotal to the creation of transnational media networks, notably Sky. And at everyday level, particularly in Europe, Latin America and East Asia, football is intrinsic to the construction of social identities and the enlivening of public life, and fills newspapers, peak-time television schedules, and communications on new social media.

Given this global status, we contend that football is a potent and increasingly significant catalyst of globalization. By way of definition, we understand globalization to refer to intensified kinds and levels of global connectivity, and to the growing social consciousness of the world as a single place (Robertson 1992: 8). The World Cup finals illustrate these processes very strikingly, through the global range and scale of the competing teams and television audiences, and by the universalistic messages that envelope the tournament. The World Cup also exemplifies our conception of 'transnationalism', which registers the processes through which individuals and groups are interwoven and interconnected across diverse geo-political terrains. For example, over 800 qualification matches are played across every continent over a three-year period in order to determine the 32 final teams.⁴ Thus, given these global and transnational reverberations, social scientists have turned to scrutinize in greater detail football and sport in general (see, for example, Boyle and Haynes 2004; Giulianotti and Robertson 2004, 2007a, 2009; Goldblatt 2006; Lechner 2007; Markovits and Rensmann 2010; Ritzer and Andrews 2007; Smart 2005).

The focus of this paper is on what we term the *global football field*, which is constituted by the interrelations of the game's growing diversity of stakeholders. Established institutional forces within the global football field include official governing bodies, clubs, players, various sponsors, associated media, sports ministries, and formal fan associations. Since the late 1980s, more emergent forces have included new inter-club alliances, supporter movements and subcultures, an international players' union (FIFPro) encompassing over 40 nations, and player agents and representatives. In addition, many major national bodies, international governmental organizations (IGOs), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and transnational corporations (TNCs) have engaged more fully with football. While we recognize the diversity of constituents within every category of stakeholder, we argue here that these different institutions and agencies are each strongly associated with a corresponding set of specific collective interests, ideologies, and social, political and economic policies.

The model of the global football field which is presented significantly extends Robertson's (1992: 25–7) original model of the 'global field'.⁵ Our new model goes into substantially more detail than the original, in order to examine the four major components of the global (football) field according to their respective ideological and political aspects, and their cross-category interrelationships. In broad terms, in line with our earlier collaborative work, we should underline that the model registers the interplay between culture, the social, and political economy in shaping the relationships between world football and wider globalization processes (Giulianotti and Robertson 2004, 2007b, 2009).⁶ For reasons of brevity, we are not able to explore some of Robertson's other key arguments, notably his six-phase historical model of globalization and his theory of glocalization (Robertson 1992, 1995, 2007), although we have examined these elsewhere in substantial detail with respect to the sociology of football (Giulianotti and Robertson 2004, 2009). The model that we advance here has a strong continuity with Robertson's theory of glocalization, which highlights the mutual interdependencies between local and global social forces, and also between global trends towards cultural convergence and cultural divergence. In this context, we also draw upon a diverse array of theoretical standpoints on globalization in order to elaborate the model's different aspects.

The model may be transferred beyond football, and applied to map the global fields in other substantive research domains, such as art, consumerism, labour markets, migration, security, or sexuality. The model's portability reflects our dual conviction that football is, in itself, an increasingly important domain for sociological inquiry, and also a highly informative research field for examining how different agencies and ideologies shape contemporary global processes (cf. Foer 2004; Markovits and Rensmann 2010). We conclude by exploring some of the key policy issues and strategies that may be employed within the global football field.

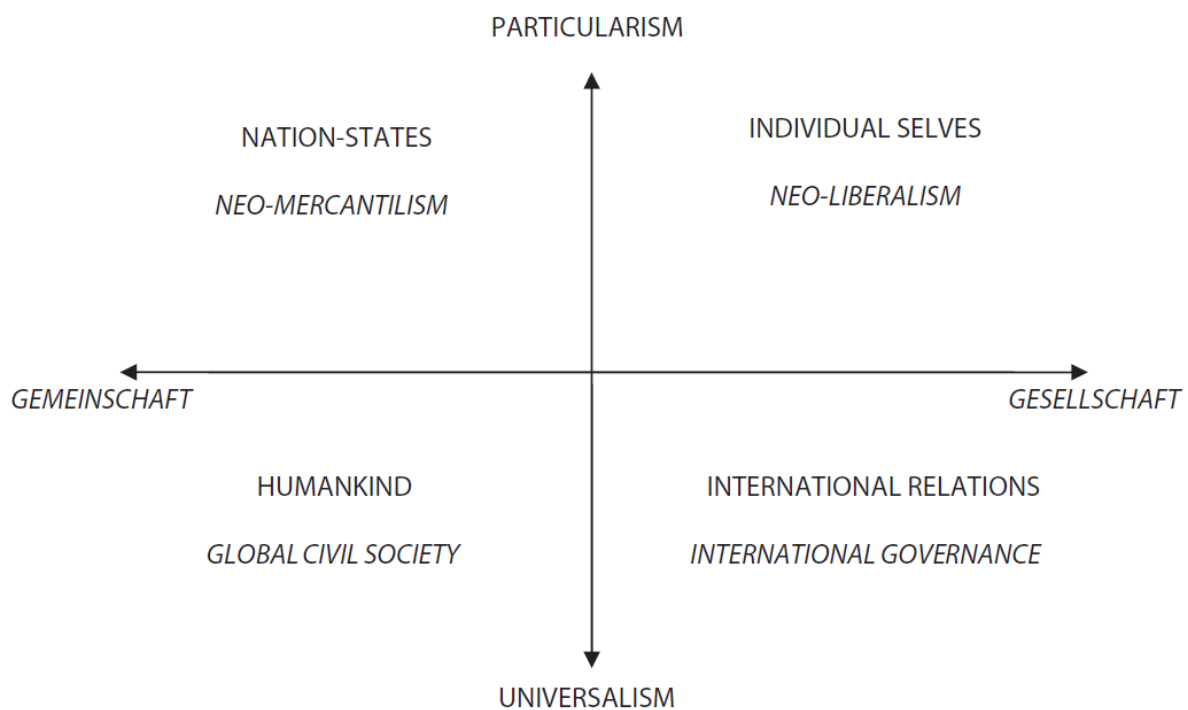
The global football field: a conceptual map

As we set out in Figure I, the global football field is comprised of four quadrants. Each quadrant is created by the intersection of two axes, one horizontal and one vertical. Each axis features two poles which are defined by a specific binary that is central to global processes.

In setting out the horizontal axis, we have drawn upon and substantially updated the famous *Gemeinschaft-gesellschaft* dualism, as advanced originally by Tönnies (1957 [1887]), with reference to global processes.⁷ At one end of the horizontal axis is *Gemeinschaft* (or 'community'), characterized by 'tradition', strong group solidarity, cultural homogeneity, and the valuing of deep social relationships. Individuals within such communities have a consciousness that they

‘belong together’ and share a ‘mutual dependence’ (Tönnies 1925: 69). In contrast, *gesellschaft* (or ‘society’) is defined by modern and commercial principles, heterogeneity, thinner solidarity, and more instrumental or secondary social relationships. *Gesellschaft* is more evident in urban and modern settings, wherein objective principles such as ‘common traits or activities’ underpin the social bonds between individuals (1925: 67). In updating Tönnies’s binary opposition to account for global processes, we understand *gemeinschaft* as referring principally to thick solidarity at local, national or global levels, while *gesellschaft* involves more individualistic and looser forms of social, societal and trans-societal relationship.

Figure I:



The vertical axis in the global football field is predicated upon the *particularism–universalism* binary opposition. As one of the ‘pattern variables’, Parsons and Shils (1951) applied this dualism to register how social actors judge objects, people or relationships according to unique (particularism) or general (universalism) criteria. Here, we analyse the particularism–universalism binary in socio-spatial terms, so that the *particular* may include neighbourhoods, nations and regions, while the *universal* as ‘the world’ transcends such differentiation.

At first glance there are strong elective affinities between specific poles on each axis: *gemeinschaftlich* relations incline towards particularity, while *gesellschaftlich* relations lean towards

universality. However, these affinities do not preclude more unusual or counter-intuitive relationships, between *gemeinschaft* and universalism, or *gesellschaft* and particularism.

The intersection of the horizontal and vertical axes creates four quadrants. Each quadrant has three core features:

- *Elemental themes*, which feature four kinds of relationship: *gemeinschaft*/particularism, *gemeinschaft*/universalism, *gesellschaft*/particularism, and *gesellschaft*/universalism.
- *Elemental reference points*: this category is drawn directly from Robertson's (1992: 25–9) initial definition of the 'global field', and features the four key aspects, namely individual selves, nation-states, international relations, and humankind.
- *Dominant operating principles*, which reflect four different standpoints in respect of policy and ideology; these are neo-liberalism, neomercantilism, international governance, and global civil society.

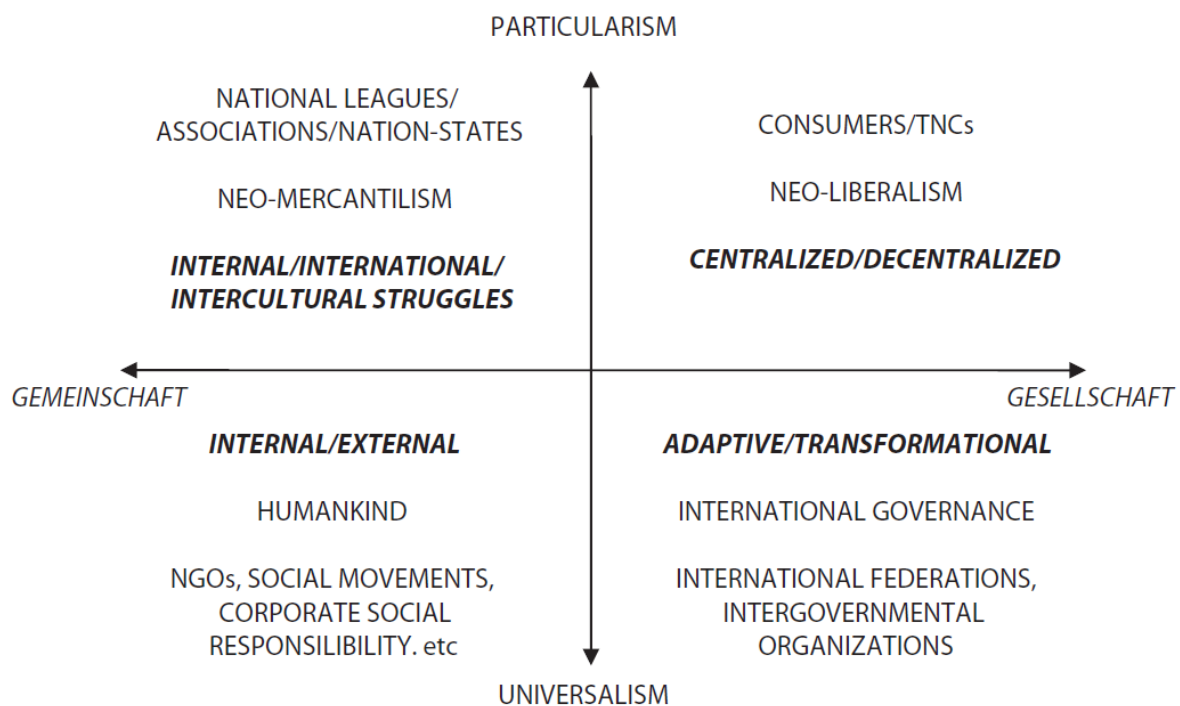
Each quadrant contains a corresponding elemental theme, elemental reference point and dominant operating principle. The four quadrants thus comprise:

1. The *gemeinschaft*/particular relationship, corresponding to nation-states and neo-mercantilism;
2. The *gesellschaft*/particular relationship, corresponding to individuals and neo-liberalism;
3. The *gesellschaft*/universal relationship, corresponding to international relations and international governance;
4. The *gemeinschaft*/universal relationship, corresponding to humankind and global civil society.

Each of the four quadrants may be understood as producing a Weberian ideal type. Ideal types bestow more precise meanings upon specific social phenomena, and are characterized by the analytical 'coherence or unity' of their components. Differences inevitably arise between any phenomenon's ideal-typical construction and its actual empirical manifestation (Weber 1978: 23–4). However, these differences may be understood as adding to the sociological value of ideal types, for example by enabling clearer distinctions to be established between each type. As an ideal type, our model serves to highlight the strong elective affinities that exist between particular institutions, ideologies, policies and interests in the world game: for example, between neo-liberal policies and ideologies in world football and the particular interests of the world's largest clubs. The model's focus is on the dominant (rather than absolute) operating principles associated with different institutional categories. Thus, we are not advancing a deterministic explanation of the empirical contents of the global football field, for example by insisting that *all* practices of *all*

clubs, supporter groups and national football bodies must fit into single categories. Rather, we recognize the social heterogeneity and diversity of practices within each stakeholder group; for example, while benefiting particularly from neo-liberal policies that have come to prominence in world football, many elite clubs also engage in activities which promote their national league systems (neo-mercantilist) and humanitarian causes (global civil society). In the next section, we turn to examine the specific aspects of each quadrant within the global football field. Our analysis is presented concisely in Figure II.

Figure II:



Mapping the four quadrants

1) *Gemeinschaft/particular: neo-mercantilism and national football systems*

The first quadrant features the *gemeinschaft/particular* relationship as its elemental theme, the nation-state as its elemental reference point, and *neomercantilism* as its dominant operating principle. Mercantilist policies were particularly prominent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as nations like Britain, Spain and the Netherlands struggled to establish economic self-sufficiency, and pursued wealth and power particularly through international trade.⁸ International struggles between mercantilist powers may be understood as zero-sum trade battles between rival nations, although inter-city rivalries within national contexts were also apparent (cf. Ormrod 2003: 6, 46).

In partial differentiation from alternative approaches (e.g. Hettne 2005), we understand *neo-mercantilism* as referring to self-protecting and self-aggrandizing social, political and economic policies that have been initiated since 1945, principally by Western nation-states. Neo-mercantilism may also feature collaborations between particular nation-states, or nations and international organizations in order to secure mutually advantageous outcomes. Neo-mercantilist strategies have been evidenced in some states in the global North, notably the USA, by an emergent neo- or inverted totalitarianism that intensifies homeland security and surveillance (cf. Falk 2005: 223; Robinson 2004a: 150; Robertson 2007; Wolin 2008).

In football, neo-mercantilist ideologies and policies are associated particularly with the game's state-like institutions – namely, national football associations and league systems – and the nation-state *per se*. The development and empowerment of these national organizations at global level broadly reflects the substantial contribution of processes of formal institutionalization to globalization (Drori, Meyer and Hwang 2006; Meyer 2009). In football, national associations are empowered formally by the global governing body (FIFA)⁹ to control the game within member nation-states and to run national football teams; and, national league systems are authorized to organize national club competitions. National football bodies are committed to 'growing' the game's participants (players and spectators), and to developing the domestic football system, for example through advanced coaching and facility upgrades. The nation-state contributes significantly to football's national regulation and growth, for example in financial support, infrastructural investments, and provision of security at fixtures and tournaments (cf. Giulianotti 1994). Among fan groups, neo-mercantilism may be most associated with regular supporters of a specific national team, or those who are most committed to following elite national football tournaments such as the English Premier League or Italy's Serie A.

There are significant variations between national football systems in regard to the intensity of their neo-mercantilist policies. Relatively small national football systems in developing nations are mainly focused on sustaining and building up their domestic infrastructure (e.g. in terms of improved coaching, attendances, and the league system), while being competitive in international fixtures. The more extensive neo-mercantilist policies are pursued by leading national football systems which seek to capture industries, incomes and imaginations in both national and foreign markets – for example, as the English Premier League markets itself assiduously throughout the UK and across the world. Within most nations, a common neo-mercantilist strategy is for national football associations to tap into potent nationalistic 'structures of feeling' in order to ignite popular support for national football tournaments and for the emblematic national team.

Leading football league systems publicize the particularistic qualities of the 'national game' in order to generate interest and revenues in other nations; for example, English league football connotes long history, voluble crowds, and fast and exciting play, while its Italian counterpart is associated with sophistication in playing skills and tactics, and the spectacle of fan displays.

Three broad neo-mercantilist struggles arise in football. First, *internal* struggles occur within nations between the relevant institutional forces. In England, notable tensions arise between the national governing body (Football Association) and the elite league system (Premier League), in a relationship described by the FA's ex-chairman as 'hugely conflicted' and 'systematically flawed' (The *Telegraph*, 9 February 2011). In Ghana, Greece, Kenya, Nigeria, Poland and other nations in recent years, serious conflicts have arisen between national governments and football associations, as the former have criticized corruption or mismanagement in football, while the latter complain about oppressive governmental interference.

Second, *international* struggles occur as different national associations or league systems compete for international influence and status. Witness, for example, the intense contest to host the 2018 and 2022 World Cup finals, ultimately awarded to Russia and Qatar. At the everyday level, leading national league systems compete for market share in relatively new football territories in Asia and North America. The English Premier League (EPL) has been the most effective strategist, being televised in 211 nations worldwide by 2010 (The *Independent*, 23 March 2010). Rival leagues such as the German Bundesliga have looked to mimic EPL mercantilist practices, such as by scheduling weekend fixtures for times that suit different international television audiences.

Third, *intercultural* struggles arise between the governing bodies of football and other sports. For example, in England, the summer sport of cricket has been enfeebled by the football season's regular extension into June and early July. In North America, the hegemonic 'big four' sports (American football, baseball, basketball, and ice hockey) have sought to rebuff challenges from the new soccer league (MLS). At the transnational level, major competitors which clash with football in the battle for worldwide audiences and consumers include North America's basketball and baseball leagues (the NBA and MLB); the Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket tournament; and, the rugby league and Australian rules football systems in Australia (NRL and AFL).¹⁰ All of these rival leagues and sports are in a largely zero-sum, neo-mercantilist struggle for international market pre-eminence.

2) *Gesellschaft/particular: neo-liberalism, individuals and TNC football forces*

The second quadrant features the *gesellschaft/particular* elemental theme, individual selves as the elemental reference point, and *neo-liberalism* as the dominant operating principle. Neo-liberal ideologies advocate a global 'free market' which is to be facilitated through different policies that shrink the state – by privatizing public assets, and 'rolling back' welfare programmes – to facilitate the unfettered transnational circulation of goods, services, capital and investment (Clarke 2004; Harvey 2005). Some analysts define globalization *per se* in terms of the global spread of neo-liberal political-economic policies (cf. Bhagwati 2005; Bourdieu 1999; Wolf 2004); however, that restrictive focus excludes analysis of alternative economic policies, and underplays drastically the multi-dimensionality of globalization.

The individual is the obvious elemental reference-point here, as neo-liberal ideologies celebrate the choice available to 'free-agents' who have shed their residual national allegiances in a 'borderless world' (cf. Ohmae 2005).¹¹ Global consumption is fed by transnational corporations (TNCs): profit-centred businesses that traverse national borders in trade and investment, while holding weaker connections to their 'homes' compared to prior corporate models (Cuyvers and De Beule 2005). TNCs have comprised 95 of the world's largest 150 economic entities, with Wal-Mart, oil and motor companies heading the corporate list; nation-states filled the remaining 55 places (*Fortune Magazine*, 25 July 2005). Unchecked neo-liberalism can lead to the emergence of TNC monopolies or cartelization within market sectors.

The *gesellschaft/particular* relationship applies to neo-liberal ideologies and social, political and economic policies. In football, the strongest beneficiaries of neo-liberal policies include elite clubs (led by owners, shareholders and officials), top players and their agents, media corporations and corporate sponsors, and spectators who are advantageously positioned within global marketplaces. Thus, neo-liberalism is associated with weaker social solidarities in football, for example as free-agent players are increasingly mobile between clubs, and as supporters 'shop around' in consumer-mode, switching to the most fashionable or successful teams/'brands' (Giulianotti 2002). Yet, these market actors do remain *particularistic* in specific time-space terms, for example by 'buying into' particular clubs, partly as a way of producing relativized and differentiated identities within the transnational football marketplace.

Neo-liberal policies – notably, the deregulation of the mass media, enabling the rise of pay-TV systems – have greatly advantaged the largest clubs in the 'Big 5' European leagues (England, Spain, Italy, Germany and France).¹² Thus, clubs like Manchester United, Arsenal, Liverpool, Real Madrid, Barcelona, Juventus, Milan and Bayern Munich are comparable to TNCs in their

international labour pools, high wages, target markets, and consumer development (Giulianotti and Robertson 2004, 2009). Indicatively, the collective revenues of Europe's top twenty clubs rose from €1.3 billion in 1997 to €4.3 billion in 2010 (Deloitte 1998, 2011). Reflecting the growing transnationalization and economic value of elite player labour markets, in 2007–8 in the English Premier League, the average club featured 17 non-British players (The *Guardian*, 6 October 2007), while average individual wages rose from £75,000 in 1992–3 to £1.47 million in 2008–9 (The *Guardian*, 31 July 2003; The *Telegraph*, 27 March 2010). Moreover, neo-liberal principles have increasingly influenced spectator experiences and access to key resources, for example, as priority seating for prestige fixtures is allocated to corporate sponsors.

Elite football's broader commodification has exacerbated competitive inequalities between clubs, nations and regions. In most European leagues, clubs with high revenues or rich benefactors dominate national tournaments, while Europe's leading tournament, the Champions League, has been virtually monopolized by leading clubs from the 'Big 5' nations since 1993 (Pawlowski, Breuer and Hovemann 2010).

The free-market has accelerated the 'brawn drain' of elite players from South America and Africa into Europe. In Brazil, between 1990 and 2007, the annual number of players transferred abroad rose from 130 to 1085: the latter figure would equip over 50 clubs with full playing squads. Indicatively, Brazil consistently provides the highest number of national players in Europe's Champions League tournament; in 2010–11, there were 78 registered players from Brazil, followed by 65 from France, 49 from Spain, and 41 from Argentina. Overall, dependency theory might be applied to trace global labour markets in football, linking the 'world metropolis' (top Western European clubs) to international satellites (leading South American teams in major cities) to provincial centres (teams in cities like Belo Horizonte or Asuncion) and to satellite areas (like Minas Gerais or eastern Paraguay).

Moreover, economic liberalization has precipitated serious outbreaks of indebtedness and bankruptcy. In 2004, European clubs were estimated to owe around £5 billion; many prominent clubs fell into administration or bankruptcy, delayed payments to players, or sought external emergency revenues to alleviate crippling debts (Ascari and Gagnepain 2006; Baroncelli and Lago 2006; Frick and Prinz 2006; Lago, Simmons and Szymanski 2006). Leading South American football clubs have become hugely indebted, frequently fail to pay player wages, and typically require foreign transfer revenues to survive (Giulianotti and Robertson 2009).

Neo-liberalism features *decentralized* and *centralized* versions. The more conventional, *decentralized* model has promoted policies of deregulation that strengthen market agency, for example through the implementation of European law to allow out-of-contract players to move freely between clubs (Weatherill 2003). The *centralized* model is more sport-specific, as free-agents coalesce to advance collective interests. In sport, such cartelization is more profitable than monopolization, as individual athletes or clubs earn more from close competition in which results are uncertain.¹³ In football, the centralized model has been embodied particularly by the Clube dos 13 – founded in 1987 – to represent Brazil’s leading clubs. A similar model followed with the G-14 – founded in 2000, and disbanded in February 2008 – to represent eighteen of Europe’s richest clubs. Subsequently, the 201-member European Club Association has been particularly influenced by the interests of Europe’s wealthiest clubs, as reflected by their challenges to UEFA and FIFA for more influence over governance and finance in international football (The *Guardian*, 28 July 2011).

3) *Gesellschaft/universal: international governance and governing bodies*

The third quadrant features the *gesellschaft/universal* elemental theme, international relations as the elemental reference point, and *international governance* as its dominant operating principle. International relations emerged from the expansion of colonialism, heightened international diplomacy, and global warfare, and have been marked more recently by the explosive growth in formal organizations that administer individual activities and social life (Meyer, Drori and Hwang 2006). Leading IGOs such as the UN and EU, as well as major NGOs, TNCs, and diverse professional associations are among the most prominent in organizing international interdependencies, and in encapsulating greater awareness or reflexivity regarding these interconnections (Scholte 2000: 143–51). Different forms of regional and global integration further accelerate the development of more extensive international networks that are centred on information and policy (Holton 2008: 198).

Some analysts argue that the international system of societies has divested the nation-state of its major powers, as political ‘rescaling’ moves organizational influence upwards to international institutions and downwards to subnational entities (Brenner 1999; Swyngedouw 1997; cf. Rosenau 1997: 43–4). One neo-Marxist argument is that, in supplanting nation-states, a new ‘transnational state’ (TNS) has been created out of the globalization of capital, the restructuring of national state institutions, and the expansion of supranational organizations like the IMF, World Bank, EU and WTO (Robinson 2004b). More Habermasian analysts advocate the

reconstruction of international governance along systematic, ‘cosmopolitan democratic’ lines (Archibugi 2003, 2008; Held 1995, 2009). However, unlike nation-states, supra-state formations cannot match the nation-state in building ‘communities of sentiment’ through *gemeinschaftlich* bonds, and still lack crucial state-defining powers, such as the full execution of military force, direct taxation of citizens, and immediate intervention into individual affairs (cf. Walby 1999).

The *gesellschaft/universal* relationship applies to international governance, and is characterized by *realpolitik* forms of interaction and exchange within and across international organizations. In football, international global governance has been established since the early 1970s by FIFA’s successive Presidents – João Havelange and Sepp Blatter – through the building of different and decisive hegemonic blocs, featuring shifting matrices of national and regional associations. Recurring allegations of corruption and clientelism have been directed at FIFA over the making and reproduction of these governing alliances and networks (cf. Jennings 2007; Sugden and Tomlinson 1998). In 2010/11, these concerns reached new heights, and were reported worldwide, as FIFA’s Executive Committee controversially awarded the 2018 and 2022 World Cup finals to Russia and Qatar respectively, and as Sepp Blatter was re-elected unopposed as President for a final term. Two Executive Committee members were suspended by FIFA following corruption allegations by UK media, Blatter’s sole initial challenger (Mohamed bin Hammam of Qatar) for President was suspended and then banned from football for life by FIFA for attempted bribery, and one FIFA Vice-President (Jack Warner of Trinidad and Tobago) resigned while being investigated for corruption (The *Sunday Times*, 17 October 2010; The *Guardian*, 4 February, 20 June, 23 July 2011). These events seriously undermined FIFA’s international standing, drawing public criticisms and expressions of concern from many elite clubs, national and international football governing bodies, national governments, the mass media, and corporate sponsors.

Inside the global football field, international governance has functioned in part to maintain the political identity and differentiation of nation-states and associations. For example, international governing bodies prevent clubs from switching national league systems. They also organize major tournaments – like the World Cup finals, European Championships or Copa America – that are contested by national teams, and which typically inspire periods of exceptional nationalism within competing nations. The statutes of international governing bodies enshrine the equal status of all national members; that principle can problematize relationships between governing bodies and large, wealthy nation-states or associations, particularly when ‘small nation’ interests are strongly represented among office-holders. At FIFA, for example, in 2010, the 24-

member Executive Committee included representatives from football 'minnows' like Cyprus, Guatemala, Jordan, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Tahiti, Thailand, and Trinidad and Tobago.

International governance features *adaptive* and *transformational* policies and strategies. Adaptive policies facilitate the gradual modification and stabilization of the international system to accommodate shifts in power within football and partnerships with emerging stakeholders. For example, reflecting the growing power and transnational migration of professional players, FIFA signed an agreement with FIFPro in August 2001 to regulate the global employment of players. More broadly, FIFA has established diplomatic ties with many national governments, the EU, United Nations, and World Economic Forum, thus locating football's international governance within the elite networks of world society.

The *transformational* version points to a set of policies that would restructure the international system in root-and-branch ways, and which may enable football's governance to engage a much broader range of groups, movements and institutions according to normative principles that look beyond *realpolitik*. For example, transformational policies have been demanded by some leading clubs, football governing bodies, national governments and media commentators in order to eradicate the perceived cultures of corruption within FIFA. Elsewhere, transformational policies might enable new types of relationships between international football governance and the 'world cities' that host the game's mega-events. One illustration is provided by the UEFA/City of Barcelona seminar in 2010 on hosting successful football events, which was attended by diverse delegates, including city officials, clubs, supporter groups, police forces, and academics.¹⁴

4) *Gemeinschaft/universal: global civil society*

The fourth quadrant features the *gemeinschaft/universal* elemental theme, humankind as its elemental reference point, and has *global civil society* as its dominant operating principle. Civil society may be defined in Hegelian terms as the vast social realm which falls between family and state (Hegel 1967[1821]; Kaldor 2003: 584). In recent years, substantial analysis has explored global civil society as a contested arena wherein diverse institutions, movements and groups pursue social policies that are intended to promote international development, peace, and social justice (see, for example, Anheier et al. 2004; Baker and Chandler 2004; Giulianotti 2011a; Kaldor 2003; Keane 2003; Kumar et al. 2009). NGOs and community-based organizations have been intrinsic to global civil society since the 1980s, and have been joined by IGOs like the UN and World Bank, the development agencies in national governments, and the corporate social responsibility arms of TNCs. Critics have argued that pro-development NGOs are often

weakened versions of new social movements, lacking democratic mandates to implement programmes, and acting as agents for the implementation of neo-liberal policies in developing contexts (Baaz 2005; Kaldor 2003; Lister 2003; Manji and O'Coil 2002; Shaw-Bond 2000). Conversely, neo-liberalists tend to advocate corporate social responsibility and other forms of philanthropic voluntarism, with the economic incentive that the self-regulation of industrial and social practices tends to be 'good for business' (see *The Economist*, 17 January 2008). In a football or wider sport context, global civil society is best understood with reference to the growing 'sport for development and peace' sector, in which diverse institutions (IGOs, NGOs, new social movements, TNCs and others) use sport as an interventionist tool to address issues regarding peace, development and social justice (Giulianotti 2011a).

The *gemeinschaft/universal* relationship underpins global civil society. In this context *gemeinschaft* refers to how a Durkheimian collective conscience is thematized at the global level with humankind as its elemental reference point. Various institutions – from radical new social movements through to TNCs – promulgate universalistic discourses regarding humankind. In football and other sports, these discourses are often conveyed in essentialist corporate messages and popular mythologies regarding the world-unifying powers of the 'global game'.¹⁵

Football is manifested within global civil society in internal and external ways. *Internally*, struggles arise over issues of social inclusion, human rights, development and social justice. Many conflicts have pivoted on the right of marginalized social groups – such as the working classes, non-whites and ethnic minorities, women, gay and lesbian groups, the disabled – to participate fully in football (Giulianotti and Robertson 2009; Goldblatt 2006). In England, Germany and Italy, among other nations, supporters have established different social movements to protest against rising ticket prices; incompetent or profit-orientated owners; perceived threats to traditional 'fan culture'; and excessive legal regulation of fan activities (Giulianotti 2011b).¹⁶ The Football Supporters' Europe (FSE) network serves to coordinate many of these activities. More broadly, football's governing bodies and commercial partners have invested in 'development of football' programmes in the Global South, often with political or commercial benefits. For example, since 1975, FIFA's successive Presidents, Havelange and Blatter, have earned crucial political support from national football associations in the Global South, in part by channeling revenues towards developing nations (Goldblatt 2006: 525–6).

Externally, specific policies and programmes that operate beyond the running and management of football, and which engage directly with global civil society themes, have been implemented in

diverse ways. In recent times, governmental organizations, NGOs and community-based organizations have utilized football and other sports to publicize and to activate development and humanitarian programmes. The UN listed 2005 as its 'Year of Sport and Physical Education', with football at the forefront of subsequent debates and practical programmes, and in turn established the 'UNOSDP' (United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace). Football has been used by NGO projects in many divided and post-conflict zones to facilitate positive social contact, to promote health initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa, and to advance anti-poverty messages globally (Giulianotti 2011a).¹⁷ One humanitarian initiative is the annual Homeless World Cup, founded in 2003, which features 64 national teams aiming to 'create better and brighter lives', with sponsorship from the UN, Nike, CNN and other bodies.¹⁸ Other humanitarian partnerships have been established between civil society organizations and elite clubs (e.g. the Barcelona/UNICEF nexus) and international governing bodies; for example, FIFA has helped to finance SOS-Children's Villages since 1995, and joined with the German NGO streetfootballworld to implement over 100 projects that pursue the 2015 UN Millennium Development Goals. Overall, with reference to our broad model, such initiatives highlight the capacity of many football stakeholders (such as top clubs or major media and merchandise corporations) to cross into fields of practice that are beyond their respective 'dominant operating principles' (such as neo-liberalism or neo-mercantilism).

The global football field: relationships, tensions and conflicts

Each quadrant within our model comes under pressure through relations with other elemental themes and dominant operating principles. The most substantial tensions and conflicts in recent years have featured the quadrants of neo-mercantilism, neo-liberalism and international governance. However, the growing significance of the global civil society over the past two decades has opened up new kinds of political possibility within football. Our analysis of these tensions is mapped in Figure III.

First, the neo-mercantilism/neo-liberalism relationship features conflicts in regard to issues of *regulation and autonomy*. The 'club versus country' conflict has long been evident in football, wherein national associations clash with leading clubs over the selection of elite players by national teams to play in international fixtures. We anticipate that clubs will continue to complain that they pay player salaries, and do not want to risk the exhaustion or injury of their human assets; conversely, national associations will continue to argue that players want to play international fixtures, and that too many club fixtures are played during the football season.

Other conflicts may arise when the most successful clubs look beyond national tournaments for more lucrative competition, by arguing that they should be free to establish or to join alternative competitions which match their globalist ambitions (Boyle and Haynes 2004; Szymanski and Kuypers 1999).¹⁹ One future club-versus-country conflict may arise *within* clubs, on occasions when foreign owners or influential investors press the playing team into undertaking time-consuming visits or wearying tours in these individuals' home nations.

Second, the neo-liberalism/international governance relationship features conflicts over *recognition and regulation*. For example, international governing bodies had dismissed the G-14 (featuring 18 of Europe's wealthiest clubs) as a 'pseudo-political' entity, a mere 'lobby group' or 'economic interest group' that they would never formally recognize (The *Financial Times*, 17 December 2003). In turn, the G-14 questioned the legitimacy of new international tournaments, such as the 'Confederations Cup', which are controlled by football's governing bodies. More recently, the European Club Association, led by Europe's elite teams, again threatened to break away from regulation and governance by UEFA and FIFA unless it acquires greater influence over finances and fixture schedules (The *Guardian*, 27 July 2011).

Further conflicts have arisen over attempts by international governmental bodies to regulate the free-market within football. For example, UEFA's financial 'fair play' rules from 2012 seek to ensure that clubs in European competition do not incur large balance-sheet losses, particularly due to heavy expenditure on players by rich owners (The *Guardian*, 27 May 2010). Additionally, the European judicial system has challenged the monopoly broadcasting positions of some television networks such as Sky, for example by requiring competing companies to gain access to live fixtures, or by allowing public venues to screen live coverage of fixtures via alternative television networks (The *Guardian*, 18 November 2005; The *Telegraph*, 3 February 2011).

Third, the neo-mercantilism/global civil society relationship highlights tensions in regard to *universalism and differentiation*, notably in reflecting national differences over social inclusion and civil rights. In England, for example, during the 1980s, black players resisted their widespread racist abuse at football matches, and inspired a popular movement which pressed the football authorities and government into legislation, tighter regulation, and public information campaigns. In turn, the English football authorities, the players' union, national media, and various NGOs have criticized other national football associations (notably in Spain and Russia) for failing to prevent the racial abuse of black players.²⁰ We anticipate that race, gender and sexuality will continue to be prominent in future conflicts in this relationship. For example, the hosting of the

World Cup finals by Russia (2018) and Qatar (2022) will draw NGOs and journalists from First World nations to investigate the civil and human rights of ethnic minorities, migrant workers, and gay and lesbian groups in these locations.²¹

Fourth, the international governance/global civil society relationship has crystallized tensions on themes of *egalitarianism* and *transparency*. Investigative journalists, critical sports workers, social scientists, new social movements and radical NGOs have critiqued international governing bodies on issues such as human rights, corruption, and social justice. International governing bodies may insist that their mission is to develop football, not to solve global problems; yet critical NGOs and new social movements may argue that the game's international bodies should become more transparent and contribute more towards helping impoverished nations. The Danish NGO, *Play the Game*, is a potent hub for concretizing and extending networks of critical commentators and analysts, while new social movements and social scientists have explored how advanced security measures at international sport mega-events may infringe civil liberties (cf. Eick, Sambale and Töpfer 2007; Klauser 2008). The anti-corruption NGO *Transparency International* (2011) released a report calling on FIFA to introduce root-and-branch reforms in its system of governance, which should be overseen by an independent panel featuring all stakeholders in world football.

Fifth, the neo-liberal/global civil society relationship contains disputes on the balance between *market interest* and *social inclusion*. Professional sports clubs and associations argue that football is competing with other 'leisure industries' for 'customers' and stronger market share. Conversely, many supporter movements criticize the perceived commercialization of football, with some advocating alternative models such as the mutual cooperative framework for club ownership. One conflict centred on ticket prices for the 2011 UEFA Champions League final at Wembley: UEFA argued that having cheapest seats of £106–176 was in line with comparable events; many football managers and players joined fan groups in protesting that the fixture was overpriced (The *Guardian*, 18 February 2011; The *New York Times*, 22 February 2011).

More global conflicts have arisen in the Global South over TNC production techniques and industrial and human rights issues. For example, NGO and UN reports exposed the routine use of child labour to manufacture footballs in Pakistan, which sparked various IGOs, TNCs and FIFA into public action to tackle the problem.²² Elsewhere, in a bid to take the lead on corporate social responsibility, sport merchandise TNCs such as Nike have published reports that reveal at least some of the widespread abuses of workers in production plants.²³

Sixth, the neo-mercantilism/international governance relationship features significant conflicts on issues of *colonization and development*, involving elite European football systems, national associations in developing regions, and international governing bodies. In Africa or Asia, governing bodies complain that their football development is retarded by neo-mercantile European leagues which televise glamorous club fixtures throughout the world, to the detriment of local clubs in developing nations.²⁴ In February 2008, the EPL announced its expansionist plans to play a round of fixtures in developing markets, notably in Asia and North America. The proposal – subsequently shelved – was dismissed by both UEFA and FIFA, and opposed by most Asian and North American football officials who feared further marginalization of their domestic competitions.

Although this brief outline cannot encompass all possible disputes and tensions that arise across each relationship, it does help to illuminate these particular categories of conflict within the global football field in ways that may be transferred to explore oppositions within other global fields. We should add, of course, that many contentious issues within the global football field will involve institutions from across the four dominant operating principles. One example is provided by the problem of the increasingly congested football calendar, with its growing numbers of fixtures, and the competing interests of different institutions: elite clubs like to play high profile fixtures, and go on foreign tours to secure new markets; national associations look to play international fixtures, including friendly matches, to enhance their international status and to generate revenues for development; and, a primary function of international governing bodies is to stage major football tournaments. Moreover, we find too that various IGOs and NGOs (global civil society) have started to stage a greater number of ‘friendly’ fixtures for the benefit of humanitarian causes. Thus, the world football calendar provides but one illustration of the different ways in which the interests of the various stakeholders within the global football field come into conflicting relationships.

Concluding comments

The contested making and remaking of the global football field provides an intriguing case study of the global field *per se*, with particular reference to the identities and interrelations of diverse ideological and institutional stakeholders. The model of the global football field which we have developed here, through a substantial extension of Robertson’s (1992) original model of the global field, invites much wider application by social scientists to other transnational social domains, such as art, business, cuisine, education, labour markets, and welfare regimes. In

analytical terms, our approach to understanding globalization emphasizes the interplay between connectivity and global consciousness, and is thus comparatively close to the perspectives of Lechner and Boli (2005) on world culture and Meyer (2009) on world society. The model also accords with Robertson's perspective on glocalization, which registers the complex interdependencies of local and global processes, which shape different forms of cultural convergence and divergence.

To conclude here, we consider some of the future issues and tensions that are set to surface within the global football field, and explore some of the arising policy options and opportunities. Most institutional battlegrounds have been demarcated for some time along the fault-lines between neo-mercantilism, neo-liberalism and international governance. Thus, for example, TNC clubs, national leagues and associations, and international governing bodies (with their heavily-branded tournaments) will continue to compete over resources and revenues, such as access to elite players, TNC sponsors, and the largest television contracts.

Within each quadrant, future conflicts over policy and interest will emerge, particularly as new institutional forces come to prominence. Among TNCs, for example, powerful networks such as Sky will be squeezed by anti-monopoly regulations, and by competition from dot.com corporations, for image rights to major football tournaments. Among national football bodies, there will be further policy struggles, particularly as neo-liberalist pressures are exerted on football systems in Europe and Latin America (such as France, Germany and Sweden) which have hitherto restricted individual or corporate ownership of clubs. In international governance, fresh struggles will continue to arise between different national and continental associations, which are often personified during presidential election battles, and which pivot on how established football regions (such as Western Europe, South America, and also North America and East Asia) respond to the pursuit of new revenues in emerging markets, for example in Brazil, Russia, and Qatar/Gulf States (all due to host the World Cup finals), with possibly China, India, and Turkey to follow.²⁵

It is particularly interesting to explore how the continuing concretization of global civil society in broad terms will provoke new political and policy struggles within football. Indeed, much of this process has been facilitated by the entry of football's established stakeholders – such as national and international associations, corporate sponsors, and elite clubs – into the terrain of transnational social issues. In this way, global civil society within the football and sport contexts will continue to be constructed out of the competitive interplay between NGOs, new social

movements, and many other stakeholders with diverging interests, ideologies and policies. Thus, for example, where private corporations become involved, relatively neo-liberal forms of sport charity and philanthropy will be evident in this sphere.

To conclude, we consider the position of NGOs, new social movements, and other types of 'progressive' social groups, associated with global civil society, by outlining four different strategies which they may deploy to have greater influence within the global football field. First, we anticipate the more extensive growth and interpenetration of institutions and organizations which represent these progressive social groups. Thus, for example, autonomous supporter-focused organizations should grow at national and international level, and are more likely to engage with and work alongside civil rights NGOs. There is also substantial further scope to probe the more extensive participation of relatively marginalized communities within football, notably in regard to social class and sexuality. In line with Robertson's theory of glocalization, we anticipate that there will be strong differences between local and national football societies in how these movements and conflicts take shape. Second, the growing financial gulf between elite professional and local grassroots football systems may be challenged, for example with greater expectations being brought to bear upon the game's wealthiest institutions to invest more substantially within diverse development programmes in the global North and South. Third, weaknesses and irregularities in football's commercial and administrative sectors may be highlighted more concertedly by investigative journalists, academics, and critical NGOs. The most effective strategy would see these professional and political forces joining with reformist forces in government and in football to challenge corruption and lack of transparency inside the game. These progressive groups should also exploit opportunities to participate fully in reform-making forms of football decision-making and governance. Fourth, we anticipate further bottom-up growth at the everyday level, as new, transnational networks and partnerships evolve to facilitate social changes. For example, ties between European supporter movements and players from developing nations may help to mobilize awareness and collective responses to apparently distant issues regarding peace, development and social justice in the Global South. In this regard, relatively new types of transnational social media may continue to be harnessed to organize for progressive change within the global game.

Notes

¹ We would like to thank three referees, Susan Brownell, and the *Journal's* editor, Richard Wright, for their very helpful comments and criticisms regarding an earlier version of this paper.

² Reported at <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,1842332,00.html>; <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2263053,00.html>

³ See http://www.fifa.com/mm/document/fifafacts/bcoffsurv/bigcount._7024.pdf.

⁴ Drawing on Castells (1996) on the network society, we might also highlight how everyday transnational communications regarding the World Cup finals occur through contemporary social media such as internet blogs, twitter, and facebook.

⁵ Our conception of the global football field has noteworthy continuities with Hannerz's (1992: 218) idea of the *global ecumene*, which envisions a transnational domain of 'persistent cultural interaction and exchange'.

⁶ Taking this argument further, Robertson and Lechner (1985) have argued that political economy is an aspect of culture. Thus, for example, the philosophy and policies associated with 'neo-liberalism' may be understood as strongly underpinned by cultural forces (cf. Harvey 2005).

⁷ A similar updating of Tönnies's work is extended by Robertson (1992: 78–9) in setting out four different images of world order.

⁸ Despite significant discursive and national variations, mercantilism tended to feature strong agricultural and industrial bases, a growing population, sea power (to colonize and secure international resources, trading posts and markets), and a regulatory state (cf. Magnusson 1995: 4–12).

⁹ *Fédération Internationale de Football Association*.

¹⁰ On these processes, see Kuper (2008); also, <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/SPORT/football/10/07/football.nba.fear.world/index.html>

¹¹ This is not to deny that neo-liberal policies are pursued by many nation-states, international governmental organizations, and civil society organizations. However, the strongest beneficiaries of such policies are broadly understood to be corporations and market-privileged consumers.

¹² For example, in 1984, English clubs earned around £2.6 million collectively from free-to-air television contracts. When BSkyB entered the market, the value of domestic television rights for the Premier League catapulted to £214 million (1992–1997), £743 million (1997–2001), £1.46 billion (2001–4), and £1.2 billion (2004–7; plus £320 million in overseas rights); the subsequent £2.7 billion deal (2007–10) covered both domestic and international rights (Banks 2002: 110–18; Dobson & Goddard 2001: 81–84; Smart 2005: 93–4). Defying the economic slump, the deal for live screening of fixtures in the UK only, for 2010–13, generated £1.78 billion (*The Independent*, 7 February 2009).

¹³ In economic theory, this is known as the 'Louis-Schmelling paradox', and sets out how, in sport, audience interest and commercial revenues are strongest when athletes or teams do not monopolize particular sports but instead have one or more strong challengers (Neale 1964).

¹⁴ See <http://www.uefa.com/uefa/socialresponsibility/respect/news/newsid=949211.html>.

¹⁵ See, for example, the FIFA 'brand promise': 'For the Game. For the World'; and, the FIFA statement that, 'Football means hope and brings the peoples of the world together' (see <http://www.fifa.com/aboutfifa/federation/insidefifa/news/newsid=675798.html>).

¹⁶ Examples include the 'Spirit of Shankley' (SOS) movement which opposed the ownership of Liverpool Football Club by Americans Tom Hicks and George Gillett; the campaign at Manchester United against the owners, the Glazer family; Berlin protests in 2010 against rising ticket prices; and, regular protests against club owners in Italy, as well as protests in Rome against proposals to introduce mandatory membership schemes for supporters.

¹⁷ By 2011, the UNDP had organized eight international 'Matches Against Poverty', featuring famous footballers from across the world.

¹⁸ See <http://www.homelessworldcup.org/content/tournament>.

¹⁹ For example, the Glasgow clubs Celtic and Rangers have regularly raised the possibility of leaving the Scottish football system to join the more lucrative English Premier League.

²⁰ On Russian football racism, see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport1/hi/football/8955148.stm>; The *Guardian*, 3 December 2010; and, The *Telegraph*, 14 September 2010. On Spanish football racism, see The *Guardian*, 10 February 2009; The *Telegraph*, 3 March 2006.

²¹ On Qatar see: The *Guardian*, 14 December 2010; <http://www.fsf.org.uk/news/Should-fans-boycott-Qatar-2022.php>; *Sports Illustrated*, 14 December 2010.

²² See International Labour Organisation, 7 July 2006; <http://www.fifa.com/aboutfifa/worldwideprograms/news/newsid=102476.html>.

²³ In 2005, the corporation Nike produced a self-report – which referred to around 700 factories and some 650,000 workers worldwide – that criticized conditions in 25–50% of its Asian production plants. (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/4442145.stm>).

²⁴ See, for example, a report on Tanzania at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/4265291.stm>. In Asia, national football leagues schedule fixtures to avoid clashing with live televised European matches. Asian football officials have argued that English clubs which tour Asia to win new supporters should also help to develop youth football across the continent (see <http://in.reuters.com/article/2009/05/14/idINIndia-39617220090514>).

²⁵ Indeed, in early 2012, an Indian football league based in West Bengal began to take shape through the auctioning of star foreign players across the teams, while the signing of top French striker Nicolas Anelka by a Shanghai side was interpreted by some analysts as a clear sign that Chinese league football was set to boom (The *Guardian*, 18 January 2012).

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