

Thrown for a Loss?

(American) Football and the European Sport Space

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This article discusses the cultural insignificance of football in Europe despite the receptiveness of Europeans to American popular culture in general. It is argued that this anomaly can be explained by a sociohistorical perspective on the differential popularization of sports and the changing social structure in which sports are being diffused. In doing so, it is shown that football only entered the European sport space after 1980 and that the attempts by the National Football League to launch football as a spectator sport will fail without a basic foundation at a grassroots level.

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Early globalization theories foresaw a development toward cultural homogeneity and uniformity.¹ That development was more or less equated with Americanization, a form of cultural imperialism in which American cultural forms, products, and meanings are imposed on other cultures at the expense of the domestic culture.² The ubiquitous presence of American brands and cultural icons such as McDonalds, Coke, Disney, Nike, Levis, CNN, and Microsoft would seem to suggest that the diffusion is indeed one way. Elaborating on this theme, George Ritzer (1993) talked in a popular way about “the McDonaldization of society”.³

These views of Americanization and cultural imperialism received extensive criticism in the course of the 1980s and 1990s. This criticism was based on new perspectives on cultural flows between nations. First, there was a greater awareness of the way in which items of cultural significance are embedded in, and adapted to, local cultures. This involves active processes of interpenetration, adaptation, appropriation, and reinterpretation, processes that are more likely to result in diversity, complexity, and fluidity than in homogeneity and uniformity. It is true that globalization involves asymmetric processes between the center and the periphery (in which the periphery is more the taker than the giver of

meanings) but it is far more likely to result in a multiplicity of global cultures than a single one (Featherstone, 1990; Hannerz, 1987; Klein, 1991).⁴

Second, there is a greater awareness of cultural diffusion in the opposite direction. Apparudai (1990) draws our attention to the non-isomorphic paths of cultural flows (King, 1997). The dominant Western culture is also enriched by non-Western products and lifestyles thanks to the flow of people (tourists, immigrants), technology (multinational corporations, government agencies), money (currency markets, stock exchanges), information (the media), and images (movements and ideologies). Pizza, capoeira, Sumo, Djembe-drums, reggae, klamboe; the global culture is everywhere, and everywhere it is received and interpreted differently. Joe Maguire (1994), drawing on Norbert Elias, is right in saying that globalization is a process of diminishing contrasts and increasing varieties.

Such perspectives have enriched globalization theory. But this theory still begs a number of questions. One of the most important of these is why one cultural item rapidly spreads and becomes popular on a global scale, whereas another only barely transcends its original context (if at all). There are two cases where this question becomes especially poignant. The first of these involves cultural goods that hardly catch on at all on the global scale, even though they originate from the core countries in the world system and enjoy the support of the media and business community. The second involves cultural goods from the periphery that do in fact succeed in achieving global diffusion and popularity. The processes involved in these two cases have so far received little attention in studies of globalization. Research has tended to focus on the cultural flows that are the most fertile and influential rather than on items of cultural heritage that do not spread nearly as far as we might expect in the light of current theory.

The challenge is to describe and explain such counterexamples in light of a coherent theory. There have been attempts to develop such a theory in a few sociological studies of the world of sports (Guttmann, 1994; Markovits & Hellerman, 2001; Stokvis, 1989; van Bottenburg, 2001). I will attempt to build on these theories in the following case study, a case that is very well suited to illustrate such issues, namely, the relatively minor global spread and culturally insignificant popularization of (American) football. I shall limit myself here mainly to the European response to the sport, particularly in the Netherlands.

THE PROBLEM

One of the most intriguing phenomena in the global sport space is the difference between Association football (which we will refer to as "soccer") and American football (which we will refer to simply as "football"). Soccer is diffused worldwide and is today the most popular sport of all in many countries, with the United States as the most striking exception (Markovits & Hellerman, 2001). In the United States, other sports are the main focus of attention, with

football as the undisputed number one. And it is precisely football that has failed to catch on in other countries, in spite of the central position of the United States in the world system.

Even though America leads the way in the globalization of popular culture, football has scarcely crossed national boundaries at all, in spite of the best attempts of the business community and media to promote worldwide interest in this sport. Why does football receive so little attention outside the United States compared to soccer and other American sports such as basketball and volleyball (which are now among the four most popular sports in the world)? Why has the most popular sport in the United States not taken off in Europe, even though Europeans eat at McDonalds, read Stephen King novels, watch Hollywood movies with popcorn in their laps, and visit American-style amusement parks?

In as much as this question has been addressed in scholarly literature, the basic assumption is exactly the obverse from the one informing this article. For example, Joe Maguire published an article in 1990 in which he attempts to clarify the *growing* popularity of American football in England. He undoubtedly had his reasons, because the figures on numbers of teams, spectators, and viewers in the 1980s seemed to point to a breakthrough for football in the European sport space. Maguire also laid bare the network of interdependencies involved in the making of American football in England. The National Football League (NFL), the business community (Anheuser-Busch), and media (Channel 4) all played a part. In light of this article, Allen Guttmann (1994) commented that “gridiron football seems especially appropriate as an example of ludic diffusion impelled by American power” (p. 112). Today, we can see that this conclusion was premature. In terms of players, spectators, and television audience, football remains a minor sport in Europe at the present time.

So what is the story? In the 1980s, football grew considerably in England. At the peak of its popularity there were some 209 teams, 3.7 million television viewers, and at the final for the World Bowl in Wembley in 1991 there were 61,000 spectators (Maguire, 1990). This interest dwindled throughout the 1990s however. The London Monarchs lost their place in NFL Europe and apart from the Scottish Claymores there were no more British football teams contending for the World Bowl or Euro Bowl. The remaining teams in England (64 in 2000) are all amateur, drawing no more than a few hundred spectators per game. The final of the competition for the National Bowl in 1997 drew 2,500 spectators. Channel 4 telecasts, which attracted an audience of several million in the 1980s, made way for evening and especially late night satellite coverage by Sky Sports Extra and Channel 5.

Europe as a whole offers a more checkered picture. One country stands out: Germany. Here, football does appear on television quite frequently: 1% of the collective sport transmission time for all commercial and noncommercial stations in Germany is taken up by football. This may not be much compared to the 15% share for soccer, 14% for motor sports, and 9% for tennis (Rühle, 2000) but there is no other European country that comes anywhere near this 1%. Of the six

professional European clubs taking part in the NFL Europe competition, three come from Germany. These German pro clubs attract about 30,000 spectators per home game, comparable to the figure for soccer matches. Games involving the other three professional football clubs participating in NFL Europe (the Netherlands, Scotland, and Spain) draw on average about 11,000 spectators. In 1998, membership of the American Football Association Germany was at 20,000. This made football only the 42nd sport, behind rowing, fencing, and squash, for example (DSB [German Sports Federation], 1998). At the same time, however—and this is illustrative of the situation—this number in fact represented almost half of all the players affiliated with a football club throughout all of Europe.⁵

Football in most of the other European countries is therefore a distinctly minor phenomenon. The Web site of the Norwegian Football Junkie reports a “struggle to survive in a hostile environment,” in which virtually no one knows the rules.⁶ In the Netherlands, the Amsterdam Admirals is a professional club that takes part in NFL Europe. An average of 12,000 people attend the club’s home games. There is also a commercial television station, SBS6, with a weekly football highlights transmission on Sunday afternoons. Nevertheless, football is not part of the sports culture in the Netherlands, at least not in the Markovits sense as being “what people breathe, read, discuss, analyze, compare, and historicize” (Markovits & Hellerman, 2001, p. 9). The most influential sport channel devotes less than 2 hours a year to football. The major daily and weekly newspapers scarcely mention football at all. Superbowl 2002 was transmitted live between 11:50 p.m. and 3:30 a.m. it is true, but in the morning, none of the main news stations reported the result. Attention from the main newspapers was more focused on safety regulations than the game between the Patriots and the Rams itself, even though two former players from the Amsterdam Admirals (quarterback Kurt Warner and kicker Adam Vinatieri) played a major role. At the grassroots level, football, with some 700 club members compared to a million players in soccer clubs, is one of the smallest sports. Other American sports fare better in the Netherlands: volleyball clubs have 130,000 members, basketball clubs 47,000, and baseball clubs 24,000 (NOC*NSF [Netherlands Olympic Committee*Netherlands Sports Federation], 2001).

THE DIFFERENTIAL POPULARIZATION AND GLOBAL DIFFUSION OF AMERICAN SPORTS

An explanation for the minimal spread of football would be inadequate without a sociohistorical perspective on football and other sports. Football can be seen as an adaptation of football-like activities that used to exist in many variants in England. In the mid-19th century, the two dominant variants were standardized and regulated: the so-called kicking game played at the public schools of Eton and Harrow and the handling game played at the public school of Rugby. In

1863, the Football Association was established to reach agreement about the rules for football. The Rugby followers were unable to agree with the Football Union rules so they codified their handling game for themselves, and 8 years later the Rugby Football Union was set up.

Before this “sportization” process (as Norbert Elias [1971] calls it) was complete, English emigrants were practicing football-like activities at prestigious American colleges and universities. Here, just as in England, a dispute about rules arose. Yale, Columbia, Rutgers, and Princeton managed to agree among themselves a set of kicking game rules, whereas Harvard insisted on its own handling game variant. Later, however, Harvard and Yale succeeded in reaching agreement about the rules of the game for a match between the two rivals. The solution was a compromise, the so-called Concessionary Rules, a mixture of both kicking and handling rules in which the Harvard influence was predominant. Harvard prestige then did the rest. Yale stopped taking part in the kicking games with Columbia and Princeton, after which these and other universities switched to the new rules (Markovits & Hellerman, 2001).

A number of factors contributed to the fact that a new football variant was able to emerge in the United States but not elsewhere.⁷ The American sportization of football-like activities was able to go its own way because by the second half of the 19th century, the United States had developed into a nation that could equal or even surpass Great Britain on many fronts. Especially after the Civil War, the original admiration of the Americans for the English lifestyle gave way to a new sense of confidence in their own abilities and a sense of superiority over other cultures. In sport, this was expressed in a much greater sense of freedom to re-interpret English influences than was felt by the inhabitants of other countries. The rise of baseball as the national sport (and direct antipode of English cricket) is one example in this regard, and the creation of the uniquely American game of football is another. The fact that the sportization of football took place at a time when the rules of rugby and soccer were still under development also played a significant role here. The two English football games only became widely known on a world scale after separate rules for both sports had been drawn up (van Bottenburg, 2001).

Until the turn of the century the practice of football in the United States was limited to the sons of the elite at the most prestigious universities. Only in the 20th century did the sport begin to spread from elite universities to more peripheral colleges and lower institutes of education and from students from higher social milieus to youth from lower social classes. This contrasts to baseball and basketball. Baseball began to grow in popularity after 1855 with the army catalyzing its spread during the civil war, and a decade later, the majority of its followers were to be found among laborers and the lower middle class. Basketball and volleyball were invented in the 1890s in a YMCA context, and these sports soon had a broad following in virtually every U.S. state thanks to effective YMCA promotion. A specific American sport pattern thus emerged, one dominated by baseball, basketball, and somewhat later, football.

The differential popularization of these sports in the United States had important consequences for their global diffusion. Just as with English sports such as football, tennis, hockey, and cricket, American sports spread mainly to countries within the sphere of influence of the United States. Before 1900, that meant Latin America and the Pacific region in particular. The degree to which American sports caught on in these countries depended on the nature of their relationship with the United States, the presence of catalysts of diffusion (people with international links through their involvement in migration, colonization, trade, armies, schools, churches, and media), and the receptiveness to new sports on the part of specific groups from the local population (van Bottenburg, 2001). In countries with which the United States maintained strong trade relationships, soldiers, sailors, and laborers introduced baseball, the sport they played most in their home country. Because baseball (just like soccer in England) was already a part of mass culture in the United States, this game had far fewer class-related characteristics than the other (still exclusive) sports being diffused at the same time. In countries where the United States was able to put its stamp on the education system through the YMCA, as in the Philippines and China, basketball and volleyball also gained a strong foothold. The popularization of these sports outside the United States was strongly linked to the success of the YMCA in the respective countries (Guttmann, 1994).

Sport was spreading throughout the world at an unprecedented rate. During the period in which the basis for national sport patterns was established (from about 1870 to 1930), national and international sport organizations were set up for the vast majority of the sports currently practiced on a world scale, primarily following the English and Americans. And so it was for baseball and basketball, but not for football. The latter sport did not have the catalysts of diffusion from which baseball and basketball had benefited. In the foundation phase of the American sport space, the creation, dissemination, and reproduction of the football culture were in the hands of the universities and colleges. The horizon of their sports world was largely a national one (Markovits & Hellerman, 2001). University football of this period was far removed from soldiers, sailors, or laborers, at least as players of this game. Football did not surpass baseball as the most popular sport in the home country until the middle of the 20th century.

In that respect, there is an obvious comparison with hockey and cricket. Just like football, these sports flourished at schools attended by the sons of the elite. They all had a special resonance among the elite groups of the English colonies. Here, it was army officers trained in England, teachers, and high government functionaries who were the catalysts of diffusion. But the United States did not have a colonial empire like the British, and so football lacked the network of elite schools that provided a foothold for the English elite sports. The YMCA did not have a favorable attitude to football either. In fact, this institution initially invented basketball and later volleyball in the home country as an antidote to football. The YMCA stood for good clean sport, and the rugged game of football did not suit this image (van Bottenburg, 2001).

FOOTBALL AND THE EUROPEAN SPORT SPACE

Baseball, basketball, and volleyball only spread to Europe after they had already become well-known in Latin America and East Asia. Europe and the United States formed relatively independent regions with their own spheres of influence so that an independent sport pattern with a specifically European character could be created on the European continent. In the first half of the 20th century, this pattern consisted of sports originating from hegemonic Britain (football, athletics, tennis, field hockey, rowing), its rival Germany (gymnastics, handball), and a number of recreational "sportized" activities in various countries (such as skating in the Netherlands, floorball in Norway, and Pesäpallo in Finland).

The sports that gained a place during the period of sportization had distinct advantages in comparison to sports introduced later. I will not go so far as to say that the sport space was entirely filled by the early arrivals or that there was no space left for other sports, but I do agree with Markovits's analysis that the sport organizations set up in this crucial period exhibited "a resilience that has kept them alive and well for over one hundred years" (Markovits & Hellerman, 2001, p. 14). These organizations gained a permanent place in sport culture and developed traditions, regulations, and customs that gave a new significance and an extra dimension to the sports in question. It is generally true that the sports that established themselves in the sporting landscape in the key period between 1870 and 1930 enjoyed a number of advantages over sports that made their debut at a later time. Empirical data from the Netherlands give support to Markovits and Hellerman's argument (2001) that "early arrival does not guarantee late survival, but it certainly helps" (p. 15). Of the 10 most practiced sports in the Netherlands in 1910, 8 of these were still among the 14 most popular sports 90 years later. The top 4 of 2000 (soccer, tennis, gymnastics, and skating) are the same as 70 years ago. Their positions have only changed relative to one another. For soccer and skating, this applies to the entire sport experience and not just to sporting practice. The sport space is nevertheless subject to constant change, which can mean either expansion or shrinkage. Skiing, judo, taekwondo, volleyball, basketball, baseball, and darts all attained a place in the growing Dutch sport space after 1930, and golf, skiing, and volleyball in particular have since made enormous progress so that they can now be counted among the 10 most prominent sports (van Bottenburg, 2001).

As several authors have shown (Guttman, 1994; Maguire, 1990; Stokvis, 1989; van Bottenburg, 2001), changes in the sport space do not happen by themselves. They are linked to changing balances of power between and within nations in the longer term. They also may be linked to critical junctures in the short term (Markovits & Hellerman, 2001). The American intervention in World War I was the first critical juncture that affected the popularity of American sports in Europe. During and after this war, the YMCA organized basketball and volleyball contests for American and allied military units. As a result, these

sports expanded in the countries that were most involved in war activities. They also tied in well with the sports developed under German influence in the gymnastic movement (and therefore in education). The American soldiers exported baseball too, but this game did not catch on to the same extent. It received less support from the YMCA and there was less enthusiasm for it in the gymnastic movement. It was also a sport that was regarded in the United States as already democratized and professionalized. In Europe around 1920, the practice of sport among the lower social classes was not well established, and to the extent that it was, those practicing it were not people with an international perspective looking for an alternative to soccer (which had just embarked on its great period of expansion). For football, the opposite applied. In the United States, this sport was mainly practiced inside the grounds of universities and colleges until the foundation of the American Professional Football Association in 1920 (later renamed the National Football League). For the Americans posted in Europe, this sport therefore seemed relatively far away. In any case, we do not have any instances of football games in Europe at this time.

This situation has changed in the second half of the 20th century with the coinciding of three important developments. At first, Europe, including the earlier superpowers of Great Britain, Germany, and France, became much more dependent on the United States. The decline of European power was a prolonged process, but the need for American military and economic assistance during and after World War II made it absolutely clear that the old world system had been replaced by a new world order. This change occurred concomitantly with two other major developments: the emergence of new electronic media that magnified and made more visible every aspect of American culture and the breakthrough of football as the undisputed number one sport in the United States.

As a result of the popularization of football in the United States, the posting of American forces in Europe immediately after World War II went hand in hand with the introduction of football. From the scanty reports I have managed to find, we may conclude that American army teams were already playing matches among themselves in different European countries before Europeans took up the game seriously around 1980. Shortly after the war, two teams of the USA Army Chanor Base Section stationed in Belgium played a football match at the Olympic Stadium in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. In 1952, there was a match played before a full Wembley Stadium in London between two USA Air Force teams from England and Germany, probably the conclusion of a longer running army tournament. In the late 1950s, U.S. Marines and other American service personnel played a football match in Oslo, Norway. And in 1972, a football tournament took place between four NATO-based teams near their bases on the Western coast of Italy.

Exhibition games of this kind were the precursor of a broader European orientation toward American culture. In terms of sport, there were two distinct phases in this regard: first, the period from 1945 to 1980, during which American products were still being adapted somewhat reluctantly to suit European

culture and structure; and second, the period from 1980 onward, in which the orientation to American culture grew stronger, leading much more often to the creation of new adopted structures.⁸

It was during the first phase that American sports gained a place in the Dutch sport space. The membership of basketball, volleyball, and baseball clubs dramatically increased between 1950 and 1980 from 7,000 to 197,000. This increase was in fact stronger than the general growth in the number of sport participants in the Netherlands, and the success of these American sports should certainly not be underestimated. But the total number of people playing American sports in 1980 in the Netherlands was still less than 6% of the total for all sports taken together. Furthermore, football was still absent in the Dutch sport space. Moreover, neither Major League Baseball, the NFL, the National Basketball Association (NBA), nor the National Hockey League (NHL) received anything more than incidental attention in the Netherlands before 1980. Matches were seldom seen on television and the newspapers ignored them. Media attention in the Netherlands focused on soccer, tennis, cycling, and skating. These sports were part of daily life, with tight organizational structures and elaborate facilities. For these sports, the media employed specialized journalists. People knew what was happening and understood the symbols, able to empathize with both triumph and tragedy.

These cultural roots were felt most strongly in relation to soccer, and this was precisely the game with which Europeans compared football. The world status of soccer (in British English: football) also encouraged a feeling that (American) football was an anomaly in the world sporting system, out of place, and more in keeping with the intrinsically headstrong character of American culture. In conformity with ideas more generally held by Europeans about the differences between American and European culture, football was regarded as a non-European sport and a counterpoint to soccer (see Kroes, 1996). The views about society upheld by those who *did* play football (in the Netherlands) reflect these ideas. Their views are highly critical of Dutch society in general and soccer in particular. Their identity as a football player is overwhelmingly that of a non-soccer player, one who finds fault with Europe and/or admires the United States.⁹

In the second phase, the number of organized practitioners of American sport stabilized, with 197,000 in 1980 and 204,000 in 2000. However, two other developments also were taking place. First, there was the huge growth of new sports that young people throughout Europe were adopting from the United States through commercial satellite television and the Internet. These new grass-roots sports, such as fitness, inline skating, skateboarding, snowboarding, BMX, and other Xtreme and adventure sports, were not part of the typical European sport club structure but were developed in the context of new commercial relationships and on the street, where the appropriate American subculture (tricks, gestures, words, clothing) also was imitated and adapted. Second, there was growing media attention for American professional sports. Here, the

commercial television channels that broke through to various European countries in the 1980s were responsible for a new critical juncture in the development of football. Unable at first to obtain the most coveted television rights—for soccer—they focused their attention on other sports, including the NFL and NBA.

This development also occurred in the Netherlands. The established “public broadcasting corporation” (founded in the early days of television and still partly financed by the government) was the carrier of traditional sport culture, concentrating on the big mass-audience sports. The commercial channels, on the other hand, targeted relatively new television sports, including football. The pioneer among commercial television channels in the Netherlands, Veronica, was the first to cover football. This was followed later by Sky Channel, a commercial channel operating throughout Europe. Today it is the commercial channel SBS6 that covers NFL games. It is the same story in the print media. The established daily and weekly newspapers hardly ever report on the major American professional football tournaments. *Spits*, on the other hand (a new, more youth-oriented magazine available free of charge on the trains with a readership of about 1 million readers per day), reports news about the NBA and NFL virtually on a daily basis. It also has a weekly section on American sports.

The intention of the NFL is not so much to encourage more people to play American football through this greater media attention but to encourage more people to follow the sport. And no money or effort is spared in this endeavor. It would seem, however, that the effect of media attention has been overestimated. There is a wide range of research data that suggests a strong correlation between sport participation and other forms of sport involvement (e.g., Irlinger, 1994; Shank & Beasley, 1998; Thrane, 2001). People who practice or have practiced a sport in the past have more sport competence and are therefore more likely to watch sport on television, attend sporting events, and read about sport. The size of the audience is therefore dependent to an important extent on the scale of sport participation.

This competence helps to explain why Americans like to watch football so much. They know the ins and outs of the game because it has been part of their sport experience from a very young age, as viewers of Monday Night Football; spectators at high school, college, or NFL games; or as participants in touch, flag, or tackle football. Europeans do not have this competence because football is not in any way an integral part of the Dutch sport culture. At the beginning of a home match of the Amsterdam Admirals, the rules of the game are explained to the public. At the amateur level, football has remained a marginal sport. The football clubs have no grounds of their own and are generally obliged to use the facilities and locker rooms of other sporting clubs. Games are often played on soccer fields that are about 11 yards shorter than an official football field. Before a match starts, the goalposts and soccer lines have to be removed and new lines for the 10-yard strip and end zones chalked in (with each 10-yard strip shortened by a yard). If spectators are present, these are usually family or friends. Money is

collected at the end of the game to pay the referees. And the next day, the newspapers are full of soccer, without a word about football.

Attempts so far to create a football public by way of the media have had little effect. It seems obvious that the sensible thing to do is to reverse the strategy and adopt the one successfully followed by another American sport: volleyball. This involves seeking connections with groups who are receptive to the sport so that a higher level of interest can be realized and a broader public mobilized. The interest of young people in adventure sports and other American sports (active interest in clubs and passive interest through the media) suggests an excellent starting point in this regard, as does the initiative to give clinics at school in flag football and to set up a 5-on-5 Tackle School League. The road is longer but to achieve a place in European sport space in the longer term, this approach would undoubtedly be more effective for (American) football to attain a meaningful foothold in the Dutch and European sport space.

CONCLUSION

Football occupies a marginal position in the European sport space. On the face of it, this is surprising because American values, behavior patterns, products, and commodities have spread strongly throughout the world, to the extent that some people feel world culture is being Americanized. And yet it is precisely one of the most successful expressions of American culture that fails to tie in with this picture, even though a well-financed network of NFL, media, and sponsors is doing its best to make the game popular in Europe. Clubs and television time can be bought, but winning the attention of the Europeans does not seem to be such a simple matter.

This anomaly can be explained by placing the development of football in the broader perspective of the differential popularization of sports and the changing social structure in which the sports are being diffused. Because football did not become the most popular sport in the United States until the second half of the 20th century, and there were no catalysts of diffusion present to help spread the sport before that time, football only started to gain a foothold in the European sport space after the basic layout of that space had already been determined. As a result, football was only able to establish shallow roots in the European sport culture, and this hindered later popularization of the sport in Europe, especially because it also was seen as a natural competitor of the most successful European sport of all, soccer. Yet opportunities did arise for football to gain a place in the European sport space when the United States established itself as the core country in the world system after World War II. That development coincided with the breakthrough of football as the most popular sport in the United States, and the emergence and expansion of the new electronic media rendered these other two developments much more visible to the public at large.

As an extension to these developments, there seemed to be a new movement emerging at grassroots level in various countries, but this growth flattened out toward the end of the 1980s. A fairly large audience for football only emerged in Germany, where the largest number of American troops had been stationed in the post-war decades. In the 1990s, the NFL committed itself to launching football as a spectator sport with the help of media and sponsors, but as long as this approach is not accompanied by the building of a basic foundation at a grassroots level (a foundation that has been established for volleyball and to a lesser extent for basketball and baseball), football in the European sport space will continue to be “thrown for a loss.”

NOTES

1. See, for example, Schiller (1976), and for a more balanced treatment of Americanization in the world of sports, see Kidd (1991).

2. As defined by Donnelly (1996).

3. Compare Tomlinson (1999). For further discussion of cultural imperialism, see Featherstone (1990) and Tomlinson (1991).

4. So far, sport has received little attention in the general, theoretical literature on globalization. Most of the examples in this literature are drawn from food, music, clothing, film, and television. However, cultural imperialism, Americanization, and globalization are not neglected in the sociology of sport. Several authors have examined how these processes are manifested in sport, engaging in a debate about how these phenomena should be interpreted in theoretical terms (see, e.g., Donnelly, 1996; Guttmann, 1991, 1994; Kidd, 1991; Klein, 1991; Maguire, 1990; McKay & Miller, 1991; Wagner, 1990).

5. Source for German membership is Deutsche Sport Bund. The Berlin Thunderbirds Web site provides membership figures for countries affiliated with the European Federation of American Football (www.wbs.cs.tu-berlin.de/user/tiny/history.html).

6. The Web site of the Norwegian Football Junkie is located at www.tnffj.com/hist.html.

7. The exceptions to this rule, Ireland and Australia, are not considered here. For a discussion of these countries, see van Bottenburg (2001).

8. There are indications that the greater receptiveness to American culture also continued outside sport during the second phase. For example, the number of McDonald restaurants in the Netherlands (since the first franchise in 1971) rose to more than 20 in 1980, and this number quadrupled to 212 in the subsequent 20 years. The situation in relation to soap operas presents a similar picture. After *Peyton Place* in the mid-1960s, the genre made its breakthrough in the 1980s with extremely high viewing figures for soaps such as *Dallas* and *Dynasty*.

9. This information comes from a football participants' survey in the Netherlands ($N = 71$).

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