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Led by a Franco-Brazilian team of scholars in the humanities, social sciences, arts and literatures, this joint research project is developing a digital platform for Transatlantic Cultural History to be published in four languages. In a series of essays exploring cultural relations between Europe, Africa, and the Americas, it presents a connected history of the Atlantic space since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, highlighting the cultural dynamics of the Atlantic region and its crucial role in the contemporary process of globalization.

## Sport

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South Atlantic - North Atlantic - Africa - Europe - Caribbean - South America - North America

Considered from the point of view of sport during a long twentieth century, the Atlantic space shows multiple circulations of practices born in specific contexts (soccer or cricket in Victorian England, basketball or baseball in the United States), their successful or unsuccessful transplants, as well as their effects on the receiving societies.

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Throughout the twentieth century, sport in the Atlantic area was shaped by the interaction between four sub-ensembles, each with its own specificities: Europe, Africa, North America and Latin America. A quadrangular trade developed in the last third of the nineteenth century, involving transfers, counter-transfers and cultural imperialism practices, and producing boomerang effects along with acclimatization, adaptation and reformulation processes. These movements generated a constant flow of practices, representations and people. This phenomenon can be approached from various angles: first from the perspective of source societies; secondly by considering each sport individually; and finally by looking at the issues, mechanics and processes of circulation.

From the perspective of the societies that have produced new sporting practices—Victorian England with football, rugby, cricket, boxing and polo; the USA with basketball, volley-ball and baseball ; and Europe in general with the Olympic movement—one could analyze the causes and means of a form of cultural imperialism that was never voluntaristic (or at least, as far as the former two countries are concerned). This analysis could examine the conditions under which a sport can be grafted into diverse spaces and contexts (pre- and post-independence Africa, Latin America under the British rule and later the US rule, the Caribbean, the US in their emancipation from British cultural domination in the nineteenth century, Europe in the aftermath of both World Wars), and under diverse mechanisms of domination (the settlement of populations, colonial exploitation, informal empires, areas of influence), also considering both the endogenous and exogenous factors affecting the "sportivization" of societies, as well as the consequences of such imports on host societies. This approach draws upon categories such as colonization, imperialism, cultural and ideological hegemony, acculturation, cultural resistance, the construction of national and continental identities, etc.

An approach considering each sport individually partly repeats the considerations outlined above, but its merit rests in its ability to deliver more detailed studies focusing on specific spaces and characters. For instance, the very particular case of the development of cricket in the West Indies provides an example of an original reformulation of the game, which has produced abundant and important scholarship by the tenants of Black emancipation (including Cyril Lionel Robert James). The same applies to the development of this sport in India, under the legacy of indenture. Some major figures, illustrating the many facets of a new triangular trade, also provide key objects for research: for instance Pelé (from the Santos football club to the New York Cosmos, through to the 1958 Swedish World Cup), as well as boxer Muhammad Ali or basket-ball player Michael Jordan.

Finally, by tackling these transatlantic flows through the prism of their stakes and mechanisms, one can highlight medium-term timescales and re-situate the analysis within an economic and political context that has an influence on these processes. In this respect, one could for instance look at the transfer market for football players, with

its periods of shutdown (from the late fifties to the mid-seventies) and its acceleration, which affects all four regions and provides material to explore phenomena such as the shift from amateurism to professional sport; the emergence of specialist exporter regions, with its consequences on emitting societies; or the diffusion of the North-American sporting model. Another example is provided by the effects of the Cold War in its trans-Atlantic dimension (for instance, expressions of the USSR-USA antagonism through the Olympic games), with its potential consequences on the nature and intensity of inter-country relations in this polycentric space.

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[See on Zotero](#)

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