

RESEARCH ARTICLE



# A model for the multi-centered regulation of world sport

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## ABSTRACT

This article presents a framework for the regulation of international sport. It is based on an analysis of each sport's global ecosystem, conducted to identify the actors involved, as well as their respective weights, objectives (for-profit/non-profit), relationships, and roles. The underlying thesis is that actors within or outside the ecosystem activate four areas of regulation (social, economic, legal, political) and mobilise appropriate competencies to create, strengthen, or destabilise specific regulation modes or configurations. Applying this analysis framework revealed five configurations of sport regulation: regulation by a dominant IF; regulation coordinated by an IF; parallel regulation; commercial regulation supplanting an IF; commercial regulation with no IF. These categories explain the relative power of the actors involved and the way they use their social, economic, legal, and political regulation competencies, which depend on their circumstances, to further their interests.

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## 1. Introduction

Recent years have seen the creation of new forms of sport, including esports, mixed martial arts, and speedgate, the first sport to be designed by artificial intelligence. At the same time, sports that had once considered themselves part of the counterculture have begun joining the Olympic system (see Chappelet 1991) and accepting sport's international legal order built around *lex sportiva* (Latty 2007, Freeburn 2018, Karaquillo 2019). Even parkour may soon follow sports that have taken this path, such as snowboarding, skateboarding, surfing, 3 × 3 basketball, and breaking. More generally, most traditional sports are being forced to accept challenges to their ecosystems from a variety of new actors, who often aim to take over or compete with a sport's major events or to take over broadcasting of that sport. These actors include private companies with interests in the sport business (e.g. media, sponsors, investors) and public bodies wishing to develop their country's sporting soft power, following the lead set by the large western powers and then by Japan, South Korea, China, Russia, Brazil and the countries of the Arabian Gulf.

Control over institutionalised international sport currently lies in the hands of around 20 key actors (with variations between sports), which form what Chappelet (2016) calls the 'total Olympic system'. However, changes in society and global crises, such as Ukrainian war and the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated societal and economic impacts, are forcing the sector to address numerous geopolitical, economic, and environmental issues and challenges to its credibility and acceptability. In this context, the question of world sport's present and future regulation has taken a singular turn. The notion of regulation covers all the processes, which may be contradictory or even conflicting, involved in orienting behaviours and in defining the 'rules of the game' in a social system

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(Reynaud 1997). Commaille and Jobert (2019) defined regulation as ‘a group of processes assuring the equilibrium of a social/political system or a permanent process of adjustment’. Hence, it is not possible to regulate a system without considering the diversity of actors involved and their often-complex interdependencies.

The current article focuses on the institutionalised sports system forged by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and international sport federations (IFs) in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries (Nauright and Zip 2018), soon after the birth of modern sports. This system has gone through four major turning points in the last half century, most notably the end of the IOC’s doctrine of amateurism in 1981 (Chappelet 2020) and the development of new ‘fun’ sports following the cultural revolution of the 1970s (Loret 2003), the commercialisation of Olympic sport during the 1980-90s (Parent and Seguin 2018), and the technological and digital revolution of the 2000s (ASOIF 2020, Schmidt 2020). Although the IOC and IFs continue to lead the system, each of these turning points shook up its social, judicial, economic, and political balances by prompting the emergence of new actors and changing the roles of existing players. How then can we understand the role IFs play in the evolution of their ecosystem? The IFs’ primary mission is to organise, promote and develop their sport around the globe. Traditionally, they have done this through their events, notably world championships, by participating in (or seeking to participate in) Olympic Games, and, in some cases, by running international professional circuits. These events are key means for promoting and funding for the development of mass practice grassroots sport and ensuring a sport’s popularity. For example, most governments around the world target their sports funding towards national Olympic federations. However, commercial firms (sponsors, media groups, marketing agencies, event agencies, sports stars, professional sports leagues) and new types of investors (Chinese/American/Russian billionaires, pension funds, states using sport to boost their soft power notably countries of the Arabian Gulf, private equity firms like for example CVC Capital Partners Fund in formula 1, WTA, football or volley-ball) are creating new commercial events and/or seeking to take control of a sport and the value of its ecosystem. How do regulatory configurations evolve in response to the interests and power relationships of the (new) actors present in a given ecosystem? What principles and skills do IFs use to keep control of their ecosystems?

To address this issue, the present contribution presents a framework for analysing the international regulation of sport. Regulation involves numerous themes, actors, levels, principles, and tools, and its analysis raises several theoretical, methodological, and empirical issues. Moreover, it has an ideological component that suggests a new role for the sport system’s leading actors and questions their will and/or ability to self-regulate or reform (Geeraert 2016, 2019). Hence, the questions of sport institutions’ traditional autonomy (Chappelet 2015) and of sport’s international governance underlie all analyses of sport regulation (Chappelet 2018).

After discussing theoretical approaches to analysing regulation in the social sciences (2), we outline a conceptual (3) and methodological (4/5) framework. Drawing on the literature on IFs, we drew up this methodological framework for the study, which we discussed with a group of experts involved in the regulation of international sport. We used this framework as the basis for a qualitative study of Olympic and emerging sports (e-sport, MMA, etc.). It allowed us to identify five the regulation configurations currently seen in international sport (6). The resulting typology provides the basis for a new research program, based on new concepts and new frameworks, for exploring the evolution of the governance and regulation of world sport. We discuss the implications and research perspectives in the conclusion.

## 2. Approaches to regulation in the social sciences

Regulation is a central component of general systems theory (Von Bertalanffy 1968) and has therefore been widely studied in the social sciences since the 1970s. Bertalanffy postulated that every organised system composed of interdependent and interacting elements is continuously exposed to destabilising factors within its environment. Regulation, a concept initially developed in the

engineering sciences and now used throughout the social sciences, describes the processes social organisations and structures use to try and maintain their position. The social sciences embraced the concept of regulation at the same time they adopted the systemic approach, which envisages every element of social reality in terms of its interdependencies and interactions with other elements, rather than in isolation. Regulation has now become a key concept in sociology, especially the sociology of organisations, as it has in economics, the political sciences, and law (D'Hombres 2007).

According to Reynaud (1997, 1999), social regulation theory focuses on the social regulation provided by the existence of rules and their development and renewal, even tacit. By showing that social rules are endogenous products of the relationships between individuals, this theory explains how the social obligations individuals accept are constructed (De Terssac 2003). It offers a third path for analysing organisations that focuses on the actors who construct 'systems of rules' and accept the resulting constraints (at least for a time) so they can act together (Maroy 2006), rather than on individuals' 'rationalities' or on the imposition of 'social norms'.

Although the rules social groups create may not be formally binding, they can have a binding character. In the case of organisations, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) observed the tendency for certain practices, including rules, to converge between organisations. They called this type of convergence 'isomorphic change' and suggested three processes by which it may occur: mimicry, normalisation, and coercion. Hence, the social regulation paradigm covers two different issues: the processes social groups use to maintain their cohesion and ensure their survival, despite the diversity of interests within the group, and the processes of change affecting contemporary societies, which must adopt more flexible coordination and integration mechanisms to address the increasingly complex problems they are facing (Allaire 2003).

Regulation has also been a key concept in political systems analysis since the 1960s. In his seminal book *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* Easton (1965), examined the mechanisms political orders use to survive, despite external disturbances. Political regulation took on another form in the 1980s and 1990s, when governments began introducing new forms of public action and intervention that were intended to be more efficient, more participatory, and more reactive. Their aim was to overcome the limitations and contradictions generated by traditional forms of action, such as legislation, control, and subsidies. Political scientists described the numerous experiments governments conducted – involving varying degrees of decentralisation/devolution, participation, partnerships, contracts, evaluation, and, more generally, governance – as new forms of political regulation. Commaille and Jobert (2019) advocated using a systemic approach to identify the actors involved and their modes of intervention, the resources at their disposal, and their respective positions and powers. Other authors maintain that new and increasingly important international actors, notably multinational corporations, NGOs, and social networks, have overtaken government regulation (Windholz 2018).

Some scholars see the concept of political regulation as an indicator of the emergence of the 'post-modern' state (Chevalier 2004) in a time of uncertainty and complexity. This analysis, like others that followed, highlights the processes of negotiation and compromise between political actors. Political regulation also designates the mechanisms and means of action available to a 'regulatory state' or, more widely, to an international or intergovernmental body whose objective is either to regulate the whole economy or to maintain balance in a market, whether for goods or services.

This idea can be seen in the theories developed by economists of regulation, notably Aglietta (1976) and Boyer (1986, 2018), which highlight the central role of political bodies. According to these theories, the characteristics of a given form of capitalism are determined by institutional forms (competition, currency, state, wage relations, insertion in the world economy). An ensemble of mechanisms that enables a-priori independent institutional forms to form a system is called a 'mode of regulation'. Research on this theme examines the compromises different modes of regulation engender, the conditions required for regulatory actions to function, and the ability of these actions to durably shape actors' behaviours and to resolve possible breakdowns and crises.

Legislation is a central tool of social, economic, and political regulation. For Chevallier (2001, p. 830), 'judicial regulation appears to be a vague, polysemic concept that covers three possible

significations: [It may be] either an essential characteristic of all law, a characteristic of the law of the welfare state, or an indicator of ongoing transformations in the legal phenomenon'. Chevaller showed how these significations can be combined and that judicial regulation now comes from multiple actors operating in different judicial spaces. This fragmentation impacts law's regulatory function and leads to a proliferation both of hard law and, increasingly, of soft law, thereby reducing the complexity of the legal framework. Transformations in judicial regulation are characterised by new ways of drawing up and applying laws, although Jeammaud (1998) noted that phenomena thought to characterise postmodern law (pluralism, consensualism, soft law, arbitration) are actually quite old.

For Maroy (2006, p.3), 'these approaches to regulation show it to be a multi-faceted process, due to the multiplicity of its sources, its mechanisms, and its objects, but also due to the multiplicity of actors that construct it (transnationally, nationally, and locally)'. Building on Barroso (2004), Maroy (2006, p. 5) stressed that "in reality, regulation is always multi-regulation, complex, sometimes conflictual, and potentially contradictory. Because multi-regulation can also generate disorder and contradictions, regulation is a pluralistic, unfinished process, essentially based on negotiations between actors (at different levels). Moreover, the process of regulation can shape the actors involved. Hence, regulation is primarily an action, not a property of a system. This 'regulation-via-actions' approach goes beyond a purely institutional perspective because it involves deciphering the interplay between actors.

Although few researchers have combined and/or compared the four areas of regulation – social, economic, political, and legal – considered in the social sciences, regulation has become a key concept in studies of the types of intervention used to maintain or re-establish a social, economic, or political system's status or acceptability. The present study focuses on the regulation of international sport, both as a whole and in the case of individual sports.

### 3. A conceptual model of the regulation of international sport

The model shown in Figure 1 provides a framework for analysing the regulation of international sport. It is based on an analysis of each sport's global ecosystem, conducted to identify the actors involved, as well as their respective weights, objectives (for-profit/non-profit), relationships, and

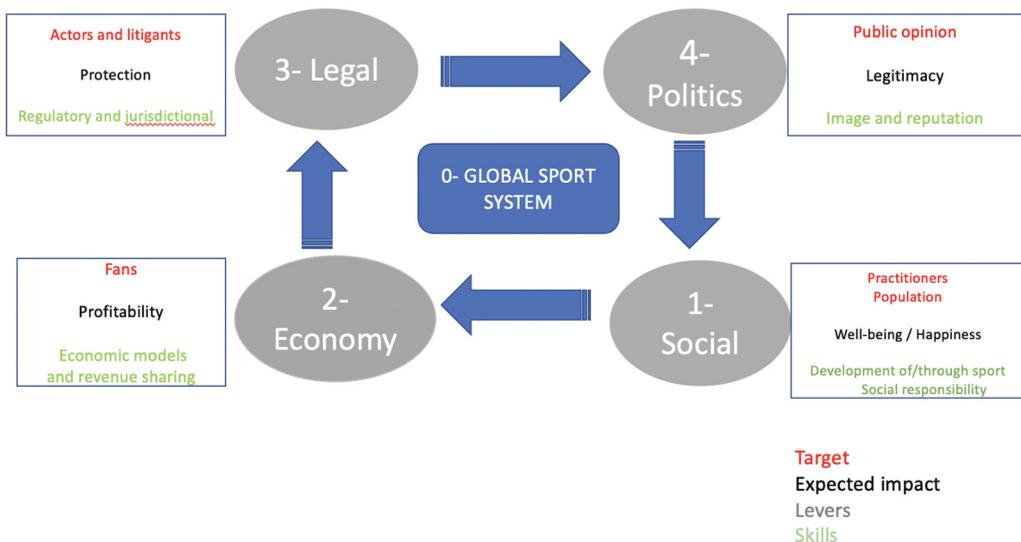


Figure 1. A Social-Economic-Legal-Political (SELP) Model of Sport Regulation.

roles. The underlying thesis is that actors within or outside the ecosystem activate the four areas of regulation described in the previous section (social, economic, legal, political) and mobilise appropriate competencies to create, strengthen, or destabilise specific regulation modes or configurations. The term configuration describes all the elements composing a system.

According to resource theory (Prahalad and Hamel 1990), organisations develop their organisational capacities by combining competencies and resources (financial, human, technological) into organised processes. Organisational competencies allow organisations to coordinate/mobilise resources and are the result of an alchemy that arises from interactions between individual knowledge, organisational knowledge, practices, and attitudes. Some authors (Teece *et al.* 1997) use the term dynamic capacities to describe the 'ability to adapt' in response to change.

The SELP model defends the thesis that the configuration of a sport's international ecosystem depends on the context within the sport (stability, prosperity, crises, etc.). A sport's main actors (IFs, IOC, public bodies, commercial companies, athletes, NGOs, etc.) mobilise competencies within the four areas of regulation either to defend the status quo or to modify it according to their interests and the balance of power between actors. Each area of regulation has specific aims (Figure 1):

- Social regulation: use the sports offer to attain social objectives; implement a policy of social responsibility in/through sport.
- Economic: establish marketing principles; adopt new economic models, especially for events; introduce financial-control and redistribution mechanisms.
- Legal: define and protect rules; establish contracts; create dedicated bodies or work with the IOC to prevent/resolve disputes (e.g. via the Court of Arbitration for Sport).
- Political: manage interactions and negotiations between actors to prevent/resolve crises/conflicts and create partnerships/compromises; promote democratic decision-making via forums created by the IF.

The Olympic system and other global sport systems are singular ecosystems that have been shaped by history, evolving values (Brownell and Besnier 2019), and each sport's cultural identity (Lee and Kim 2016). Governments and inter-governmental organisations have little involvement in regulating international sport, leaving this responsibility to non-profit international bodies (IOC and/or IFs) and, in some cases, to commercial companies (Freeburn 2018). This regulation involves formal and informal arrangements between institutions, combined with mechanisms for controlling/guiding stakeholders' actions. Regulation is achieved through private international rules (*lex sportiva*) and increasingly through instruments of soft law (codes, charters, standards, etc.). As in other sectors, regulation involves new forms of coordination such as incentives to work together and form partnerships, the sharing of 'good practices' (e.g. governance and sustainability practices), contractualisation, and evaluation (Forster and Pope 2004). Many types of individual and collective actors contribute to building this regulation, notably international sport bodies, organisers of commercial sport events, professional leagues, the media, public bodies, sponsors, sport leaders/administrators, and athletes. In the same way that national governments regulate states, the IOC is striving to become the regulator of world sport, but it lacks the power to impose its vision on all sports and all actors (Chappelet and Kübler-Mabbott 2008). Hence, the IOC must constantly build and protect its legitimacy as sport's global regulator by persuading other actors to enter formal and informal arrangements whose nature depends on circumstances.

In theory, the structure of the international sport system is determined by its functions of organising, promoting, and developing both competitive and leisure sport with, in the case of the Olympic system, the aim of 'contributing to building a better world' through sport and Olympism (Olympic charter). Institutional sport's socio-political functions and objectives are to produce social regulation by providing social added-value and helping to create a better world. To achieve this societal impact, participatory and spectator sport must be pursued in ways that promote social links, diversity, education, and health notably for the children (Eime *et al.* 2013, Neville *et al.* 2022), not just

for people who do sport but also for sport's supporters/fans and therefore for the population as a whole. These goals, associated with institutional sport's associative/voluntary mode of delivering activities, explain why people in most of the world's countries have long viewed, explicitly or implicitly, this social function as a (quasi) public service that legitimises the substantial public support sport receives, both directly (subsidies) and indirectly (staff and provision of sports facilities, tax exemptions, etc.). By giving rise to economic markets, this social regulation has also generated economic regulation, especially for events and spectator sport.

Economic regulation involves maintaining the balance of the sport-event and participatory-sport services markets, which are imperfect in terms of the characteristics of service providers and the social value of the services provided. Indeed, some sport organisations hold monopolies over certain long-established competitions (e.g. national, continental, and world championships), international circuits, and multisport games that are prized by the media. The challenges for these organisations are to conserve their monopolies, to optimise their fan/supporter-based economic models (sponsorship/advertising, broadcasting contracts, ticketing, merchandising), and to redistribute as much as possible of the revenues generated for structuring and/or developing sport. The events market has grown constantly since the 1980s, but the socio-economic value and effects of sport events, especially mega-events, remain controversial due to negative externalities such as sustainability issues and problems ensuring the integrity of sport. It is an unusual market in that it has to optimise its ability to attract three types of resources: commercial revenues (media rights, sponsoring, ticketing, merchandising), public support (subsidies, tax exemptions), and non-commercial inputs (volunteering, private donations). The participatory sports market has also grown and has, a priori, positive social externalities, even though they are difficult to evaluate in financial terms (contribution to education, social inclusion, social ties, health, etc.).

Social and economic regulation of the sport system would not be possible without legal regulation, which relies on a combination of rules established by international sport organisations (*lex sportiva*, Latty 2007) and government legislation. For example, all sport organisations operating in Europe are subject to European law and the European Convention on Human Rights (Siekman 2011). National legislation can also be important, notably Swiss federal and cantonal law, to which three-quarters of the world's IFs are subject because they have their headquarters in Switzerland, generally in or near Lausanne (the 'Olympic Capital'), in the Vaud canton. However, sport's internal rules are not always compatible with national or supranational legislation (Latty 2007, Karaquillo 2019). The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), created in 1984, and other national dispute resolution mechanisms (arbitration, conciliation, mediation) have established a specialised 'sport justice' system that is more discreet and quicker than national and international civil justice systems, and independent from governments. All physical and moral persons who take part in international sport competitions controlled by the Olympic system and the IFs accept, more-or-less voluntarily, the CAS's jurisdiction (Ryall *et al.* 2019, Baddeley 2020).

A multitude of ever-changing transnational codes and charters has made world sport's pluralistic legal system more complex. Actors in the world of sport are subject not only to government legislation, the Olympic Charter, and each IF's/sport's statutes and rules, they must also abide by various codes of ethics, codes of 'good behaviour', the world anti-doping code, rules on the status and transfer of players (football), financial fair play rules (in European football), recommendations from intergovernmental organisations (UN, OECD, EU, etc.), and ISO standards, etc. However, international sporting legislation arising from treaties between nation states is poorly developed (Chappelet 2018), as the only treaties directly aimed at sport are the UNESCO convention against doping and three Council of Europe conventions on doping in sport, on violence in and around stadiums, and on the manipulation of competitions (Kuwelker *et al.* 2022). Some other conventions may also be applied to sport, notably the United Nations Conventions against Corruption. The Swiss government has ratified all these conventions and transposed them into Swiss law. Hence, the legal regulation of sport has become extremely dense and specialised and involves all areas of law, from local to international.

Because social, economic, and legal regulation have to be built and legitimised by actors, their (co)construction depends on a fourth area of regulation, political regulation. Political regulation refers to political actions/interventions aimed at implementing/developing sport policies, notably with respect to staging sport events and protecting sport's integrity by combatting all forms of misconduct in sport (Caneppele *et al.* 2019, Philippou and Hines 2021). It involves using organisational (internal), political (relations between non-profit actors, private commercial actors, and the public authorities), and systemic governance mechanisms to ensure the functioning and coordination of actions between the actors within each sport's global ecosystem and, more widely, within the Olympic system. In this case, governance refers to the institutional configuration of a field (sector) of regulation, as forged by rules, conventions, and social norms. In line with convention theory (Boltanski and Thevenot 1991), the concept of convention is defined here as the tendency for actors to conform to behaviours they think others will adopt. Given the variety and complexity of the issues facing sport (human rights, integrity, governance, sustainability, etc.), political regulation increasingly requires dialogue and partnerships between sport's administrators and public bodies (Windholz and Hoge 2019) and between states via sports diplomacy (Murray 2018). In addition, sport must seek the support of NGOs inside and outside the field of sport (e.g. Play International, Pro Sport Development, Surfrider Foundation, Red Cross, Terre des Hommes). NGOs such as Transparency International (2016) and Play the Game provide counterweights to the power of the IFs and the IOC.

The general model outlined here suggests the hypothesis that actors within a sport's ecosystem can mobilise one or more of these four areas of regulation and its associated competencies to induce specific forms regulation. Depending on a sport's development stage, its economic weight, and the internal or external crises it faces, actors will try either to strengthen or conserve their positions or to destabilise the ecosystem and create a new balance via confrontation, negotiation, or alliance building. The resulting configuration may affect the whole of the Olympic system or a specific ecosystem and the foundations on which it is built, as the following three examples show.

First, when the American justice system triggered what became known as the FIFAgate scandal in 2015 (legal regulation; Bayle and Rayner 2016), it impacted the legal and political regulation of sport by convincing the Swiss government to pass a new private-corruption law (called 'lex FIFA') and by prompting the Olympic system to adopt the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations' annual governance self-evaluation system, created in 2016 (Chappelet *et al.* 2021). Second, in the fight against doping, the French government played a key role in the issue's legal regulation by helping to create the World Anti-Doping Agency in 1999 (legal and political regulation). Third, the European Court of Justice's 1995 Bosman ruling overturned an important aspect of the legal regulation of European football and of professional team sports in general (Garcia and Meier 2017).

All these examples describe external intervention in the sport system. Internal change is much rarer and usually only occurs to forestall change imposed from outside sport. This was the case for the IOC's Agenda 2020, drawn up by Thomas Bach following his election as IOC president in 2013, which offers a new approach to the political and legal regulation of international sport. Agenda 2020's recommendations aim to inspire a new approach to regulation for the entire sports movement.

Using the SELP model to analyse the situations in individual sports shows how the actors in different sport ecosystems use their regulatory competencies and resources to achieve their objectives.

#### **4. Applying the SELP model**

The proposed framework comes from the literature but it has also been created and adjusted through exchanges with a group of experts (conducted in 2021 and 2022).

This group of experts is composed of social scientists who are experts in the IOC, the Olympic movement and international federations but also professional experts in charge of the governance of international sports institutions and working explicitly or implicitly on this theme of regulation.

For the six academic experts, the selected experts were: a specialist in the history and geopolitics of international sport, a specialist in the economics of international sport, a sociologist specialising in issues of integrity in international sport, an expert in criminal science and international sport, an expert in Olympic governance, a jurist specialising in international sport law and sport arbitration.

For the 4 professional experts in international sport: one from Association of summer Olympic international federations (ASOIF), one from Global association of international sports federations (GAISF), one from the IOC, one from the International Testing Agency (ITA).

We also relied on the collection of data (legal, economic and political), on two research programs (2014–2018) and (2020–2024) on governance and performance management of international sport federations. This research is funded by the Swiss national research fund (SNF).

All international sport ecosystems, even the ecosystems for non-Olympic sports, have interconnections with the larger Olympic system. The first step in characterising these ecosystems is to identify each one's main actors and the amount of control/influence each actor has over a given sport, which depends on the following four variables:

- (a) The number of actors involved in running a sport
- (b) Uniformity of the 'rules of the game'
- (c) Which actors control the sport's competition calendar and world rankings
- (d) Which actors own/control the sport's major competitions

#### **4.1. Number of actors**

We hypothesised that the larger the number of actors involved in running a sport, the more complex regulation becomes. Moreover, the lack of an obvious hierarchy makes each actor's position more uncertain. In international boxing, for example, control over the sport is split between the International Boxing Association (IBA) and three other professional boxing federations, each of which organises its own competitions, as well as several small, independent organisers. Tennis is also a fragmented system with four major operators: the International Tennis Federation (ITF); the four grand slam tournaments, which are run independently from the ITF but by ITF members (except for Wimbledon); and two independent professional circuits, run by the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) and the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), respectively. Competitions run as exhibitions, such as the Laver Cup, set up by Roger Federer and his agent in 2017 along a similar model to the Ryder Cup, further complicate the situation.

Other sports with multiple actors include cycling, basketball, and swimming. Cycling has four major operators: the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI, cycling's international federation); the powerful press and events group Amaury Sport Organisation, which owns numerous professional cycling competitions, including the Vuelta a Espana (since 2014) and the sport's flagship competition, the Tour de France; the RCS Sport publishing group, which owns the Giro d'Italia; and Flanders Classic, which owns several classic races in Belgium and the Netherlands. The International Basketball Federation (FIBA) faces two very powerful and hegemonic operators, North America's NBA, which has adopted an increasingly global marketing strategy, and Europe's Turkish Airlines EuroLeague, a semi-closed league formed in 2000 by the association of European professional leagues (ULEB), a private commercial organisation that delivers Europe's most prestigious club title. Before Ukrainian war, there were two actors in the international swimming events market: the World Aquatics (ex-FINA) and the International Swimming League (ISL), founded in 2019 by a powerful Russian oligarch.

Football has just two dominant actors, FIFA and UEFA, both of which are non-profit associations. They own world and European football's most lucrative competitions, that is the Football World Cup,

in the case of FIFA, and the European Nations Championship (called the Euro) and several European club competitions, in the case of UEFA. FIFA and UEFA also own the women's versions of these competitions, which seem to be on the brink of a commercial breakthrough. Thus, in contrast to sports such as basketball, no private commercial operator, with the collapse of the European Super League in 2021, has been able to make inroads into the professional football event ecosystem, for the moment at least.

Other sports have only one dominant global actor, who holds a virtual monopoly over the sport in question. This actor may be an international federation, as is the case for many entirely amateur sports, such as fencing and archery, or a commercial operator, as is the case in niche sports such as freeride skiing (freeride skiing's biggest events, including a junior world championships, are owned by Free Ride World Tour Management, a Swiss for-profit company).

These differences in the number and type of dominant actors in a sport's ecosystem have arisen for historical and cultural/identity reasons (globalised or 'regionalised' sport) and as a result of economic opportunism (existence or absence of a market).

The number of actors and their respective powers explains the uniformity of international sports rules.

#### **4.2. Uniformity of the "rules of the game"**

Sports with a single dominant actor tend to have a single set of rules that apply across all competitions. However, in sports with two or more dominant actors, competition owners may decide to apply slightly different rules to those applied in other competitions. This is the case in basketball, where FIBA and the NBA have different rules, and in tennis, where the number of sets needed to win a match differs between competitions and where the grand slam tournaments have different rules for the decisive games in the final set. We hypothesised that having a single set of rules throughout the world provides clarity for all the actors in the ecosystem.

#### **4.3. Control over the international competition calendar and world rankings**

Who controls the international competition calendar and world rankings is another key aspect of international sport ecosystems. In football, FIFA and its continental and national associations have complete control over the sport's calendar, from international competitions to continental club competitions and national championships. As a result, avoiding clashes between major competitions is easier for football than it is for sports without unified calendars, such as basketball and ice hockey.

Control over the calendar generally goes hand-in-hand with control over world rankings and awarding titles (world champion, European champion, etc.) and sometimes over major professional competitions. The UCI is an exception to this rule. Despite not owning most of road cycling's main competitions and despite having a powerful competitor in the form of Amaury Sport Organisation, during the 2000s the UCI managed to unify the international calendar, take control over world rankings of professional racers, and persuade event organisers and teams to pay licence fees to take part in its calendar. It did this by creating the UCI ProTour (2005 to 2010) and then the UCI World Tour (2011 to present) (Aubel and Ohl 2015).

We hypothesised that sports with more fragmented international competition calendars and world rankings are less attractive to fans and financial backers.

#### **4.4. Ownership and control of hallmark event by the IF**

A Hallmark event is a highly prestigious event and a source of substantial revenues, earned either directly or indirectly via media rights and sponsorship. The most prestigious competition in most Olympic sports is the Olympic Games, but there are Olympic sports in which a world championship or private, commercial event supersedes the Olympics. These events may be

held every four years, as in the case of football's world championship (FIFA World Cup), every two years (Athletics), or every year, as for cycling's Tour de France and tennis' grand slam tournaments.

Each area of regulation (social, economic, legal, political) requires specific competencies that determine how ways of coordinating resources are organised.

## **5. Four areas of sport regulation**

### **5.1. Social Regulation**

Social regulation shapes the framework for developing sport and/or promoting development through sport. These initiatives, which can benefit the general population, as well as a sport's participants, contribute to a sport's social responsibility.

#### **5.1.1. Worldwide sport development programs**

Does a sport's main actor(s) offer development programs to help national federations and their clubs develop the sport nationally (e.g. building facilities, training coaches and umpires, supporting women's sport, promoting sport for people with disabilities, etc.)?

#### **5.1.2. Development through sport programs**

Does a sport's main actor(s) offer development through sport programs via a foundation or via partnerships with charities or NGOs? Such programs may cover international development issues as varied as improving public health, promoting social integration, and combatting racism.

#### **5.1.3. Solidarity with Less-Developed Countries**

Does a sport's main actor(s) offer solidarity and aid programs to help poorer countries or countries hit by natural disasters or war?

#### **5.1.4. Sustainability actions**

Does a sport's main actor(s) have a clear sustainability strategy that is visible both internally and externally? Are sustainability actions just greenwashing or truly concrete actions?

### **5.2. Economic regulation**

Economic regulation shapes a sport's economic model, including an IF's ability to obtain revenues from major competitions, whether/how it redistributes these revenues and to whom.

#### **5.2.1. Size of the global economic sector**

A sport's international economic sector corresponds to the turnover generated by manufacturers and distributors of sporting goods, event organisers, and members of the leisure sector in that sport. This sector may be substantial, as in horse riding (thanks to sports betting and the stud market) and in sailing (due to nautical tourism), or more modest, as in fencing and wrestling.

#### **5.2.2. Economic value and profitability of a sport's major competitions**

Does a sport have one or more major competitions/events outside the Olympic Games that generate sufficient income for it to use some of this revenue to fund grassroots sport. These competitions may be world championships, private commercial events, and/or an international professional circuit.

#### **5.2.3. Redistribution of 'Surpluses' and effects for developing sport**

Is part of the surplus/profit redistributed to help develop the sport? What are the effects of the sums redistributed?

#### **5.2.4. *The sport's image and externalities***

Does the sport have a positive image with the public and the public authorities? Having a positive and attractive image both legitimises public support for sport and sport events and helps attract volunteers.

### **5.3. *Legal regulation***

Legal regulation shapes a sport's international regulatory framework and the way in which sport organisations and national and international judicial bodies apply this framework.

#### **5.3.1. *Influence on national legislation***

Is the sport's main actor able to obtain direct or indirect legislative advantages in its host country by demonstrating the importance of its events and/or its social utility (e.g. the location of its head office might allow an IF to negotiate direct and indirect financial advantages)?

#### **5.3.2. *Influence on European law***

Is the sport's main actor able to influence national legislation by demonstrating the importance of its events (direct or indirect advantages recognised by European law) and/or its social utility (training, labour-market rules, commercialisation of sport, etc.)?

#### **5.3.3. *Number (and relative cost) of disputes submitted to the court of arbitration for sport***

How often do a sport's stakeholders submit grievances to the Court of Arbitration for Sport? Such litigation can have substantial costs for a sport, both directly (procedural costs and lawyers' fees) and indirectly (damage to the sport's image).

#### **5.3.4. *Policy on (and relative cost of) protecting the integrity of sport***

Does the sport's main actor(s) allocate legal and financial resources to combat (alone or collectively) problems impacting the integrity of sport (match-fixing, doping, corruption, etc.)?

### **5.4. *Political regulation***

Political regulation aims to shape the relationships between an ecosystem's main actors and to ensure these relationships are harmonious (partnerships on principles/actions) and productive for developing the ecosystem. Ways of achieving this include setting up discussion forums and encouraging official and/or unofficial exchanges.

#### **5.4.1. *Integrity policy (doping, match-fixing, etc.)***

Has a sport's main actor drawn up an integrity policy, either internally and/or in conjunction with other actors, notably the World Anti-Doping Agency and the new International Testing Agency? How effective are these policies?

#### **5.4.2. *Quality of the main actor's governance***

How good is the governance of a sport's main actor and of its IF, as measured by the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations' governance indicators or other independent sets of indicators (Geeraert 2019)?

#### **5.4.3. *Presence of dialogue and decision-making mechanisms in a sport's governance***

Have an ecosystem's actors created discussion and decision-making mechanisms within the sport? Do these mechanisms allow actors to reach consensus on important issues?

UEFA's Professional Football Strategy Council is an example of one such mechanism. Created at the end of the 2000s, it brings together representatives of players' groups, leagues, and professional

clubs. UEFA also allocates two seats on its executive committee to the association of European professional clubs.

#### **5.4.4. Power of the main actor in the governance of international sport**

Does a sport's ecosystem provide clear power of the main actor? What is the main actor's focus for developing the sport and/or for development through sport (societal/social/economic)?

The conceptual framework described above can be used to analyse each sport's global ecosystem and identify which areas of regulation and which regulation competencies an ecosystem's actors mobilise. The results shed light on the ways in which organisations gain, maintain, and lose control over a sport and on how both the compromises between actors and an ecosystem's stability/instability impact the evolution of the sport in question and of sport in general.

## **6. Five regulation configurations**

While the mode of governance can be defined as the institutional framework and modalities of decision-making, the regulation refers, in our analytical framework, to the modes of interaction and legal and political coordination of social activities (sports) and economic flows. In this approach, the regulation configurations developed allow to present ideal types in the Weberian sense established on a qualitative basis (Fox-Wolfgramm 1997).

We applied our framework to a qualitative study of Olympic and emerging sports (e-sport, MMA etc.), conducted as part of a larger research program on the governance of IFs since 2014 (financed by Swiss national research fund). This comparison between 'historic' Olympic sports, more recent in the Olympic program (triathlon, golf, rugby sevens . . .) and 'emerging sports' allows us to understand the regulation in action and in evolution in very different contexts. This also enables us to apprehend the effects of the Olympic label (preserved/obtained/in search of obtaining) in the regulation of a sport's ecosystem. In addition, professionals from several IFs who were following a continuing education program to obtain a diploma in global sport regulation, launched in 2019, provided, in applying our analytical framework, mini case studies of 24 sports ecosystems (20 Olympic sport and 4 'new sports' : e-sport, MMA, trail, freeride skiing). The data used were also collected during ten years of monitoring the sector via the specialist literature on international sport and Olympics, international sport organisations websites (International Olympic Committee 2014, 2014 and 2021), expert reports (Transparency international 2016, ASOIF 2020; ASOIF 2017–22), and international sport research programs (Geeraert 2016 Play the game reports/analysis – e.g. Weinreich 2020) or journalists experts in the field of international sport governance (Inside the Games). Data analysis involved an iterative procedure moving between analytical framework (elaborated from theory and constructs) and data (Miles and Huberman 1994). The coding of the material was done inductively and deductively. Based on the similarities and differences between these case studies, we identified a typology of five configurations of global sport regulation : regulation by a dominant IF; regulation coordinated by an IF; parallel regulation; commercial regulation supplanting an IF; commercial regulation with no IF.

### **6.1. Regulation by a dominant IF**

In the first configuration, an IF (and its continental and national federations) controls a sport's rules of play, calculates world rankings, and owns all the sport's major competitions. These IFs receive all international media and commercial rights to their sport's major competitions while transferring the risks of organising these events to national/local public actors, who provide most of the funding, mostly indirectly.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, these IFs' dominant positions enable them to provide true leadership for their sport.

IFs in this position generally took control of their sport during its early days and then locked out possible competitors via mechanisms such as sanctioning clubs that do not free players to represent

their national teams at international competitions. Indeed, they use all four areas of regulation to build and strengthen their dominant positions in the events market and sports offer. For example, they activate social regulation by redistributing a proportion of their revenues to their national federations.<sup>2</sup> Since the late 2000s they have used political regulation to stave off threats from within their ecosystems. UEFA's Professional Football Strategy Council (see [section 5.4.3](#)) is a good example of this type of political regulation. UEFA also uses economic regulation by paying national associations bonuses based on their rankings and their performances in the Euro, paying compensation to clubs for releasing players to play for their national sides, and insuring players who take part in international competitions. UEFA's economic regulation follows the lead set by FIFA following the 2010 Football World Cup.

The key competency applied by such dominant IFs and their federal networks is legal-political, that is, the ability to lock access to international and national competitions. Football and rugby provide clear illustrations of this model. Their organisational capacity involves marketing a mega-event (World Cup and Euro for football) from a monopoly position.

Volleyball and athletics are also controlled by their sport's IFs. The International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) has joined forces with an investment fund (CVC) to draw up a strategy for marketing a rich (but confusing for fans) portfolio of events, whereas World Athletics controls its sport's two most prestigious events (outside the Olympic Games): the bi-annual world championships, launched in 1983, and the annual Diamond League, created in 2010 to replace the Golden League, which ran from 1998–2009.

Non-professional Olympic sports controlled by their IFs include rowing, canoeing, gymnastics, wrestling, pentathlon, taekwondo, and archery. Unlike their professional counterparts, these IFs depend on the Olympic revenues redistributed by the IOC for most of their funding (Clausen and Bayle, 2018). Their main competency is clearly political, as they must meet criteria set by the IOC and carry out internal and external lobbying to remain on the Olympic program and/or in the categories of IFs that receive the most support from the IOC.

## **6.2. Regulation coordinated by an IF**

The second configuration occurs when an IF does not own its sport's main competitions but retains a large degree of control by overseeing a prestigious international circuit and determining world rankings. The IF's key competency is political, and its organisational capacity consists of persuading events' commercial owners, and sometimes professional athletes/teams, to adhere to its system and to pay substantial fees to take part in its international circuit. It is a 'tax collector' type of economic model.<sup>3</sup> By controlling its sport's world rankings, the IF allows athletes to earn points to qualify for world championships and Olympic Games. IFs in this position often own a lucrative world championships, and those with access to the Olympic Games have an important second source of funding and legitimacy, which allows them to have diverse economic models.

Cycling typifies this type of configuration. Road cycling's most prestigious events are owned by three commercial operators – Amaury Sport Organisation, RCS Sport, and Flanders Classic – which control all the events within the World Tour, a circuit run by cycling's IF, the UCI. Despite not owning any of the World Tour events, the UCI has used the World Tour to control cycling's calendar since 2005 and has retained control over the world rankings (Aubel and Ohl 2015). After losing road cycling's most prestigious events (apart from the world championships) to private operators, the UCI took steps to ensure this did not happen in e-mountain biking by launching an e-mountain bike world cup in 2018.

Similarly, the International Federation for Equestrian Sports (FEI) saw the organisation of professional equestrian sport slip through its fingers when a private company, Global Champions Tour, launched two international outdoor show-jumping circuits in 2005: an individual competition called the Longines Global Champions Tour, and a team competition called the Global Champions League. Although the FEI owns four circuits, they offer far less prize money. In addition, a new actor arrived

on the scene in 2013 in the form of the Rolex Grand Slam, a circuit combining show jumping's four leading tournaments. Consequently, most of the FEI's revenue comes from athlete and horse registration fees, issuing horse passports, and the FEI calendar.

These IFs have formal regulatory roles, but their ability to finance their sport's worldwide development is limited. In some cases, a dominant economic operator will step into the breach and cover the cost of minor, loss-making international competitions. ASO has filled this role in cycling since the 2010s, seeing it as a way of strengthening its dominant position, ensuring the development of the next generation of cyclists, protecting the viability of the secondary professional circuit, and, importantly, demonstrating its social responsibility.

### **6.3. Parallel regulation**

The parallel regulation configuration arises when two or more organisations regulate a single sport, with each organisation following its own principles, imposing its own rules of the game, and setting its own calendar. This is the case in basketball and ice hockey, where the IFs (FIBA and IIHF, respectively) face powerful North American leagues (NBA and NHL) that have begun adopting more global economic strategies by selling media rights abroad and by drafting players from outside North America. These leagues are commercially very successful: The NBA, for example, earns 80 times as much as FIBA.

This situation also brings together the European and North American sports models, which differ greatly in how they organise and operate sport (Andreff 2007). Consequently, there is competition, as well as cooperation, between IFs and the North American leagues, and sometimes a degree of misunderstanding of the other system, especially by North America's franchises and star players. Moreover, economic considerations, legal issues (payment of participation fees, injury insurance, etc.), and players' need for recovery time make it difficult to negotiate a sporting calendar that enables star players to take part in their IF's world championship and/or the Olympic Games.<sup>4</sup>

Basketball and ice hockey's IFs have also lost control over the most lucrative European club competitions. In basketball this competition is the EuroLeague, a semi-closed private league created in 2000, which awards Europe's most prestigious club title. European ice hockey has the KHL, a privately owned, closed league dominated by Russia. The IIHF has tried to improve its position by creating the Champions Hockey League, which is run by European Ice Hockey Club Competition Ltd, a for-profit company jointly owned by the IIHF (12% shareholding), 26 major ice hockey clubs (63%) and 6 ice hockey leagues (25%). However, this competition is still struggling to take off eight years after its launch in 2014.

The peculiarity of this mode of control is that a sport's IF and its powerful commercial operators both have a degree of control over the sport, which leads to competition but also instances of cooperation. For example, in 2020 the NBA and FIBA joined forces to create the Basketball Africa League and to discuss creating an NBA Europe. In addition, the NBA helps to implement FIBA's 'Basketball without Borders' program as part of its *NBA Cares* international social responsibility strategy. Hence, in contrast to their separate modes of economic and legal regulation, FIBA and the NBA work together on certain aspects of the sport's social regulation.

The key competency for IFs in this category is political, as they must convince the North American leagues to allow their players to play for their national teams in world championships and Olympic Games. The sporting and economic value of these competitions, whose revenues are essential to the IF's economic model, depends on the participation of the sport's top stars.

### **6.4. Commercial regulation supplanting an IF**

The fourth configuration occurs when one or more commercial actors controls a sport completely and marginalises the sport's IF. In tennis, for example, the four grand slam tournaments, which belong to three national federations and a club (Wimbledon), and the

powerful ATP and WTA circuits, which allow professional players to earn their living throughout the year,<sup>5</sup> have marginalised the ITF. Because the ITF does not receive a share of the profits from these tournaments/circuits, it decided to strengthen its financial position by selling exclusive commercial rights to its main product, the Davis Cup, for 25 years to the investment fund Kosmos for 2.5 billion euros. At the initiative of the ATP, in 2021 tennis' seven main stakeholders (4 grand slam tournaments, ATP, WTA, and ITF) formed a working group called T7 to address the issues raised by the sport's fragmented governance, draw up a unified calendar, and consider shared commercial offers. Despite this new political regulation, the 'Peng Shuai affair' showed the continuing inability of tennis' stakeholders to speak with one voice.<sup>6</sup>

Golf and motor racing also fall into this configuration. International golf is dominated by six large commercial circuits (including the powerful PGA Tour), whereas the sport's IF has very modest revenues and is limited to overseeing amateur golf and golf at the Olympic Games. In such highly fragmented control configurations, new actors may be tempted to try and enter/challenge a sport's existing ecosystem. This occurred in golf in 2022 when a Saudi Arabian sovereign wealth fund launched a new professional league called LIV Golf. Motor racing is dominated by a single professional circuit, Formula 1, which the American group Liberty Media Corporation bought for \$4.4 billion in 2016. Formula 1 is a highly lucrative circuit, but it redistributes just 1% of its revenues to motor racing's IF, the FIA. Other 'smaller' sports in which a private commercial operator owns the most lucrative competition circuits and over which the sport's federation has no control include surfing (World Surf League) and roller-skating (World Riders Association).

IFs in this model do not control the international rules for their sport, the competition calendar, or world rankings. Nor do they have an economic model that allows them to implement ambitious development and solidarity programs for their national federations. Their key competency is politico-social because they have to convince other actors in the ecosystem to contribute to developing the sport. This frequently involves calling upon the social responsibility of the sport's dominant commercial actors (major events, major sponsors) and star athletes. A complementary strategy is to obtain Olympic status for the sport, as the IFs for tennis and golf managed to do in 1988 and 2016, respectively, and which surfing is currently trying to do (the IOC has included surfing as a demonstration sport at the 2020 and 2024 Olympic Games). Achieving Olympic status allows IFs to globalise their development strategies by legitimising the subsidies governments pay to Olympic national federations.

### **6.5. Commercial regulation with no IF**

The final configuration, entirely private-commercial control over a sport, occurs when a sport does not have an IF or when an IF is just beginning to emerge. Sports in this category include freeride skiing and trail running. These relatively new niche sports now receive extensive media coverage and have become very popular. Their rise began when private operators created major events (Xtreme Verbier for freeride skiing in 1986 and Ultra-Trail du Mont-Blanc for trail running in 2003) that became their sport's flagship events and formed launch pads for international circuits.<sup>7</sup> Although freeride skiing and trail running arose from sports with well-established IFs (skiing, athletics, mountaineering), these IFs did not immediately embrace these new disciplines, thereby allowing opportunistic private actors to capture their market value and internationalise their appeal. These private actors have become quasi-federations outside the Olympic system, as they control the sport's international calendar, rules of play, and world rankings. Freeride skiing has recently begun holding junior competitions – FWT qualifiers juniors with 240 competitions- to bring through the next generation of athletes. A similar configuration can be seen in Esport, where video games publishers currently own all the major competitions. Moreover, the IOC considers esport to be a business, not a sport, and the Global Association of International Sport Federations (GAISF) does not recognise an esport federation or international governing body.

Breakdancing has followed a slightly different trajectory. Although the world's most prestigious breaking competition, the Red Bull BC One, is owned by a private company (Redbull), the World DanceSport Federation has followed the IOC's advice and embraced breaking so it can be a demonstration sport at the 2024 Paris Olympics. In Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), whose major events are run by a few private leagues, including the powerful Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), three international organisations are vying to become the sport's legitimate governing body: the Global Association of Mixed Martial Arts (GAMMA), the International Mixed Martial Arts Federation (IMMAF), and the World Mixed Martial Arts Association (WMAA). The IMMAF was the sport's first representative body and is now signatory of the World Anti-Doping Code, as would GAMMA, which has stolen a march over its rival by signing a multi-year contract with the International Testing Agency (organisation in charge of providing independent, international anti-doping testing). The IMMAF's bid for primacy is supported by the western bloc, whereas the Russian-Asian bloc supports the WMAA's claim. This situation is highly confusing for institutional operators.

All these sports are new and sometimes controversial, but they are attractive to young people, an important target group for the IOC and Olympic Games. Consequently, their nascent IFs' key competencies are political, and they need to have the organisational capacity to become institutions. Their priorities are to obtain GAISF recognition (the first institutional gateway to the Olympic system) and/or to sign the World Anti-Doping Code, and/or to persuade official national bodies (e.g. sports ministries, national Olympic committees, existing national federations) to recognise their members.

## 7. Conclusion and perspectives

The regulation configurations outlined above are model categories whose boundaries are porous and flexible. Some sports have recently moved from one configuration to another. The International Ski Federation's purchase of the Freeride World Tour in December 2022 has resulted in freeride skiing going from commercial regulation with no IF to a regulation by a dominant IF. Freeride skiing's goal in doing so may be to obtain Olympic status for the sport.

Other example, the global swimming ecosystem controlled entirely by World Aquatics (ex-FINA) for many years has been the subject of a destabilisation attempt to create a new regulation with a private commercial player (International Swimming League – ISL-) arrived in 2019. However, ISL was not successful due to COVID-19. More over, ISL may soon disappear following his lost trial in an American court (inside the Games, 9 January 2023).

These categories explain the relative power of the actors involved and the way they use their social, economic, legal, and political regulation competencies, which depend on their circumstances, to further their interests. The dynamics of this regulation can be analysed in terms of its:

- Scale: Regulation may be macro (global—the focus of this article—continental, or national), meso (i.e., within organisations such as professional league or clubs), or micro (based on analyses of individual behaviors: athletes, agents, executives, etc.).
- Form: Regulation may be bottom-up or top-down (as in federal pyramids) or horizontal (as in the bilateral or multilateral relationships between a federation and actors outside the federal system).
- Intensity: Depends on opportunities, tensions, dysfunctions, or crises.
- Rhythm: Rapidity/continuity/discontinuity.
- Modalities: Institutional control by the IOC or another international sport organisation, independent control by specific actors, shared control through partnerships between the IOC/ international sport movement and international public bodies to protect the integrity of sport.
- Balance of power: Within a single international sport system (IOC/FIFA/UEFA) or between the IOC/IFs and private commercial leagues, associations of athletes, human rights NGOs, or governments, etc.

The SELP model shows how control over sports can evolve and enables sports to learn from other sports' experiences. For example, since rugby became professional in the mid-1990s, its IF has benefited greatly from the example set by football (economic model based on a quadrennial world cup and the value and limitations of tools linked to regulating spectator sport).

IFs must also demonstrate their ability to regulate their sport with respect to issues such as integrity, governance, and sustainability, while doing more to satisfy their stakeholders. To do this, they must define a coherent regulation strategy and use their economic models to serve the development of sport and development through sport. Only by achieving these goals can they justify the financial and legal advantages they receive compared with the ever-growing number of commercial actors involved in international sport.

The COVID-19 and Ukrainian war crisis, because they have fragmented the world in general and sports in particular by making it more uncertain, will certainly accelerate the evolution of this multicentered regulation of international sport. Three scenarios are possible. First, the status quo may continue. Second, international public institutions (UN, European Union, etc.) and private bodies (NGOs) may ringfence Olympic sport as an essential public good and protect the IOC's and IFs' positions as its guardians. In exchange, the IOC and IFs will need to show a clearer commitment to defending human rights and promoting sustainability in and through sport. Third, if traditional actors are unable to stamp out misconduct in sport, control over sport may become completely fragmented, liberalised, and privatised. This process will be accelerated if America's and China's internet giants (GAFAM and NATU in North America, BATX in China) invest massively in the sports' market and if artificial intelligence and digital disruption fundamentally transform sport.

## Notes

1. By funding the construction and renovation of stadiums and urban infrastructure, by providing subsidies and tax privileges to organising committees, and by seconding public-sector staff to an event.
2. Examples in football include UEFA's 'HatTrick' program and FIFA's 'Forward' program.
3. Clausen, J. & Bayle, E. (2017), Major sport events at the centre of International Sport Federations' resource strategies, in Dodds, M., Heisey, K., & Ahonen, A. (Eds) *International Sport Business Handbook*, Routledge, 37–53.
4. NHL players did not take part in the Beijing 2022 Olympics because they had to play domestic games postponed because of the COVID-19 crisis.
5. Each ATP and grand slam tournament has a turnover of around \$1 billion, whereas the ITF had an annual income of around \$70 million before changing the format of the Davis Cup in 2018.
6. After making accusations against a senior Chinese leader at the end of November 2021, this Chinese professional tennis player found herself at the centre of an international media storm that raised the wider issue of China's human rights record.
7. Freeride World Tour, launched in 2008 with 5 stages on 3 continents; Ultra-Trail World Tour, created in 2014 with 28 races in 22 countries on 5 continents.

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