

The moral glocalization of sport: Local meanings of football in Chota Valley, Ecuador

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Abstract

Studies of the glocalization of sport usually focus on ‘aesthetic glocalization’ (how local actors adopt a global sport and create a new hybrid aesthetic). This has led some critics to dismiss glocalization as a superficial ‘façade’ of diversity hiding global homogeneity. This paper challenges this view by looking at the ‘moral glocalization’ of sport and at the ways local actors give global sports local moral meanings. Drawing on interviews with Afro-descendants from Chota valley, Ecuador, it shows that in this peripheral community football is seen as: (1) a morally safe emotional outlet; (2) a moral education; (3) a source of national ‘communitas’; (4) racial pride; (5) a space for local moral heroes; and (6) a gateway to communal progress. In conclusion, local actors give global football deep moral meaning when they can associate it to local conceptions of the sacred.

Keywords

Chota Valley, Ecuador, football (soccer), globalization, glocalization, morality

Introduction

Football is undeniably ‘the global game’. The International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) has 209 member countries (FIFA, 2014b). In 2006, ‘270 million people – or four per cent of the world’s population – [were] actively involved in [organized] football’ (FIFA, 2014a). Also, close to 1 billion people around the world watched at least one minute of the 2010 Men’s World Cup final match (FIFA, 2010: 8).

Despite its global reach, football is not the same everywhere. Different nations give football different levels of importance (Markovits and Hellerman, 2001). Different fans have unique chants, traditions, or conceptions of ‘acceptable violence’ (Archetti, 1992;

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Giulianotti and Robertson, 2007a, 2007b). Different teams have their own names, uniforms, colors, and mythology (Benzecry, 2008; Edensor and Millington, 2008).

Robertson (1995) introduced the concept of 'glocalization' to explain these local differences amid global similarity. 'Glocalization' occurs when social actors combine globally circulating culture to pre-existing cultural frameworks at the local level. It is 'the "real world" endeavors of individuals and social groups to ground or to recontextualize global phenomena' (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2009: 46). This concept has inspired rich work in sport sociology (Cho, 2009; Lee et al., 2007; Wong and Trumper, 2002) but some scholars remain unconvinced. They believe that examples of 'glocal culture' are in fact 'superficial' and 'inconsequential'. They do not reflect the creative agency of social actors but are 'façades' hiding global homogenization (Andrews and Ritzer, 2007; Boli and Elliot, 2008; Lechner and Boli, 2005). Each football team, the argument goes, may wear different colored uniforms and have a unique name, but all teams play by the same rules, work within the same global organization, and (ostensibly) understand football in the same way.

In this paper, this criticism is addressed by introducing the concept of *moral glocalization*. So far, works on glocalization and sport have focused on *aesthetic glocalization*, studying, for example, how local fans create hybrid supporter organization names or how local players develop a distinct footballing style (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2007a, 2007b). In this paper, it is argued that we must also consider the glocalization of moral ideas. In this way, we can see whether glocalization involves a deep engagement with local culture or whether it only creates the illusion of diversity.

Specifically, this paper examines how football is adopted by an Afro-descendent community from the rural highlands of Ecuador, from a valley called Chota. Chota valley is a space on the social and geographic periphery of a country that is itself on the global periphery. Historically, Chota has been relatively disconnected from the world but since 2002 many young men from the valley have become successful professional football players both nationally and abroad. This has brought Chota recognition and material development. Football has since become an important part of Chota's local culture.

In what follows, it is argued that moral glocalization occurs when local actors associate globally circulating culture with local conceptions of the sacred. For the people of Chota – 'Choteños' as they prefer to be called – the local valley and community are sacred in the Durkheimian sense (Durkheim, 1995 [1914]). The valley is loved and admired and must be protected from profane influences like drugs, violence, and, above all individualism. Choteños are expected to be loyal to the valley and to always give back. In this context, football is seen as: (1) a morally safe emotional outlet; (2) a school of discipline and respect; (3) a source of national 'communitas'; (4) a fountain of racial pride; (5) a space for moral heroes; and (6) a gateway to communal progress. Therefore, glocalization is far from shallow. The moral glocalization of football is the process by which local actors give meaningful moral content to the most global of games.

Football, globalization, and glocalization

Globalization is the increased movement of capital, people, images, and ideas around the world (Holton, 2005). Sports like football are part of these processes, moving

money and players across borders (Campbell, 2011; Carter, 2013), and promoting images, celebrities, and brands through the global media (Cashmore, 2004; Gilmour and Rowe, 2010). Players and the media convey ideas about gender, race, and the nation (Falcous and Maguire, 2006; Maguire, 2011a, 2011b; Rowe, 2010; Silk and Andrews, 2001), especially in global spectacles like the Olympics or the World Cup (Horne and Manzenreiter, 2004). Football, therefore, is a complex, contradictory space where local actors can forge 'transnational connections and global consciousness' (Giulianotti and Brownwell, 2012: 214).

But *how* do people forge connections and experience globality? Or, as Maguire (2011b) has asked: 'if sport acts as a "global idiom," [...] whose tastes shape the global idiom?' (928). Robertson proposes that the tastes of people acting globally – like agents of transnational organizations, corporations, or the media – and the tastes of people acting locally – like teams, players, or fans – shape the global idiom of football; football is made meaningful through 'glocalization' or the '*interdependencies* of the global and the local' (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2009: 31). In a sense, glocalization is the translation of global culture into the local language and in so doing a new 'glocal' culture is created. Robertson emphasizes that the dialogue between the global and the local moves in two ways, while recognizing that it is usually an uneven conversation (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2009: 40).

Along with Giulianotti, Robertson has studied glocalization in the supporter associations of Scottish migrants in North America (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2007a), among fans and sports journalists in the United Kingdom (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2007b), and in the organization of football in Japan (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2007b). In all of these cases, these authors find that while the *form* of football or fan groups is similar around the world, the *content* or meaning given to the game is variable by local context (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2007b: 182). Japanese players are coached in similar ways as players elsewhere, but the names of Japanese teams, styles of Japanese players, or practices of Japanese supporters are distinctly local (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2007b: 182).

Other authors have made similar discoveries. They show that the media and advertising industries give global teams or celebrities a distinctly local meaning (Edensor and Millington, 2008; Lee et al., 2007; Wong and Trumper, 2002), that local fans interpret global sports by drawing from their local cultural repertoire (Armstrong and Mitchell, 2008; Cho, 2009), and that when fans engage with global sports they can also change their local culture (Jijon, 2013). Glocalization, in other words, involves the affirmation, invention, or reinvention of local culture in an increasingly connected planet.

Some writers, however, disagree; they do not believe glocalization processes assert or reconstitute differences. Andrews and Ritzer (2007), for example, claim that 'the cultural orientation of late capitalism has led to a recognition and embracement, however superficial, of the particularities of the micro [...] marketplace' (141), creating the illusion of local culture when in fact there is none. Lechner and Boli (2005) see cultural variation around the world as 'rather superficial, a matter only of consumption styles and taste options' (238). Boli and Elliot (2008) compare global cultural diversity with Disney's 'It's a Small World' ride where 'our differences make us one and the same because they

are superficial and irrelevant' (555). These writers suggest that glocal culture – team names, styles of play, banners, chants, uniforms, or marketed commodities – may not be as 'deep' or 'meaningful' as glocalization scholars suggest.

This paper challenges this view by showing that glocalization involves not only the creative adaptation and invention of the organization or *aesthetic content* of sport – styles, names, banners, etc. – but also the *moral content or meaning* of sport. This research follows the newfound interest among sociologists on the topic of morality (Hitlin and Vaisey, 2010), not in what people should or should not do but in the social and cultural context of moral judgments. This paper explores how actors discuss the morality of football.

Sports like football have historically been given moral meaning. Since its inception, FIFA has considered football 'civilizational', in that it teaches discipline, loyalty, hard work and solidarity (Tomlinson, 2000), often in the face of contradictions and controversy within the organization (Faflik, 2012). Similarly, activists and NGOs often see sport as a way to empower excluded populations (Donnelly, 2008; Rookwood, 2008). Also, the media and advertising industry exalt images of heroic masculinity in sport, creating moral role models or villains (Cashmore, 2004; Hughson, 2009; Whannel, 2002). This paper contributes to these studies and is a first attempt to look at football's *grassroots* moral meaning.

Empirically, this case study contributes to a literature that focuses almost exclusively on football in developed nations or metropolitan centers (Benzecry, 2008). Not only does this focus exclude the majority of the planet from the academic debate – 83 percent of the world population lives in developing regions (Population Reference Bureau (PRB), 2013: 3) – it also overlooks most of the people who practice and enjoy football. Of the 209 countries associated with FIFA, 146 are developing countries (International Monetary Fund (IMF), 2014). While we know quite a bit about how developing nations are excluded from global sport governing bodies like FIFA (Darby, 2002), how players move from the periphery to the core (Campbell, 2011; Maguire, 2008), or how actors from the global center (problematically) use sport to promote development in peripheral regions (Giulianotti, 2004), there is still little research that makes room for peripheral voices, illustrating what people on the periphery *think* about football. This paper examines how the people in Chota valley appropriate and talk about football, paying particular attention to their opinions on football's moral worth. In this way, it opens a new agenda for the sociology of sport, inviting scholars to engage with sport's moral dimension and with how it is affected by globalization.

Case study and methodology

This paper examines the glocalization of football in Chota valley, Ecuador. Men's football is the most important sport in Ecuador (Carrión, 2006) and in 2001, Ecuador qualified for its first FIFA Men's World Cup (Bustamante, 2006). At the time, Ecuador was experiencing a damaging economic and political crisis, so the relative success of the national team was a welcome source of solidarity and pride (Carrión, 2006: 65). This qualification also brought the nation's most invisible racial minority – Afro-Ecuadorians – into the national and global limelight (Rahier, 2008).

Table 1. Non-player interviews.

Pseudonym	Gender	Approximate age	Football interest
Elisa	Female	30	Low
Jacinto	Male	30	High
Alberto	Male	50	High
Aníbal	Male	30	High
Armando	Male	30	Low
María Rosa	Female	40	Low
Carlos	Male	30	High
María Inés	Female	20	Medium
Edgar	Male	50	High
Bladimir	Male	30	High
Jairo	Male	30	High
Ansieto	Male	18	High
Sonia	Female	20	Medium
Justo	Male	40	Low
Magali	Female	40	Medium
Fabián	Male	30	Low
Michele	Female	30	High
Esmero	Male	50	High
Enma	Female	40	Medium
Marcos	Male	40	High
Nohemí	Female	40	Low
María Edita	Female	80	Medium
Marlene	Female	40	Medium
José Eduardo	Male	30	High
Artemio	Male	40	High

Of the eleven players in the team's starting lineup, seven were black or Afro-Ecuadorian. Of these seven, six came from Chota valley, a poor assortment of settlements in the country's northern highlands (El Comercio, 2014). After the World Cup, many young men from Chota have continued to become successful football players both nationally and abroad (El Comercio, 2014). Studies have shown that when a community sees its members succeed in a global sport, this changes the sport's meaning for the community (Dóczy, 2012). After 2002, football gained new meaning in Chota valley.

In June and July 2010, in-depth interviews with twenty-five Choteños with ages from 18 to 80 (fifteen men and ten women) with varying interest in football were conducted. In this paper, non-players are designated with the notation (NP) (Table 1). Also eight male professional players originally from Chota, designated here with (P), were spoken to. All of these players were working for Ecuadorian teams at the time but half had also worked abroad, in Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, The Netherlands, Scotland, England, the United States, Australia, and Qatar. Five of the eight players had been part of the starting lineup for the Ecuadorian national team in either the 2002 or 2006 World Cups. Each interview lasted forty to ninety minutes and was conducted in Spanish. Only male

Table 2. Player interviews.

Name	Age	Position	Team in 2010	International experience
Walter Calderon*	31	Striker	Liga Deportiva Universitaria	No
Edison Mendez*	31	Midfielder	Liga Deportiva Universitaria	Mexico, Holland, Brazil
Ulises de la Cruz*	36	Defender	Liga Deportiva Universitaria	Brazil, Scotland, England
Giovanni Ibarra *	40	Goalie	Deportivo Quito	No
Christian Lara*	30	Striker	Liga Deportiva Universitaria	Qatar, Colombia
José Pavón	18	Striker	Liga Deportiva Universitaria	No
Edmundo Zura	27	Striker	Deportivo Nacional	Australia, United States
Nixon Carcelen	40	Midfielder/ coach	Liga Deportiva Universitaria	No

*Played with the national team at the 2002 and/or 2006 World Cup and/or 2010 World Cup qualifiers.

players were interviewed because women's football is significantly undervalued in Ecuador (Carrera, 2006)¹ (Table 2).

Chota is a small rural community, where approximately 14,000 people of African descent live in poor, scattered settlements (Sistema Integrado de Indicadores Sociales del Ecuador (SIISE), 2004).² About half of Chota's people work in agriculture (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo (INEC), 2010). 70% only have a sixth grade education or lower (INEC, 2010). Members of this community have historically lived in poverty; still today one fourth of Chota's households lack access to running water (INEC, 2010).

Choteños are not just poor, they also face racial prejudice. Racial identity in Ecuador is fluid; the boundaries between racial or ethnic categories are blurry (Whitten, 2003: 23). Still, the Ecuadorian government categorizes people into four main ethnicities in the national census. The most recent census found that almost 72% of the population self-identifies as 'mestizo' (a 'mix' between indigenous and white), 7% as indigenous, 6% as white, and 7% as Afro-Ecuadorian (INEC, 2010).

Like other Latin American nations, Ecuador experiences a 'pigmentocracy' or discrimination based on skin color (Telles, 2014). The darker a person's skin, the more likely he or she has low socioeconomic standing (Rahier, 1998: 421). A government survey shows that approximately 75% of the population is in some way racially prejudiced, especially against Afro-Ecuadorians (SIISE, 2005). One woman from Chota spoke of whites and mestizos leaving a pool as she came in, murmuring racial slurs. Several men described whites or mestizos crossing the street as they approached, clutching bags and purses. Another woman said that she has often been asked to stand in the bus or that municipal agencies make her wait in order that white or mestizo clients can be attended to first.

Still, in the past few decades the Choteños' situation has changed. The first highway into Chota was built in 1974, allowing for greater mobility (Pabón, 2007: 70). Electricity reached Chota in 1975 (Pabón, 2007: 84) and by 2010, 98% of Choteño households had electricity (INEC, 2010). In general, living conditions have improved and many Choteños feel like their valley is progressing. Most of these changes have been thanks to Afro-Ecuadorian social movements and to increased government public spending (Sánchez,

2011). Some Choteños also credit professional football with these improvements. A few successful players have established non-profit foundations for their communities, have lobbied with the government for their settlements, and have informally helped neighbors and family members. While these sources of income can be sporadic, many Choteños nonetheless consider football an important driver of local progress.

Glocalization is the translation of a foreign cultural text into the local language. In order to understand this translation we must know more about Chota's local culture. The following section reviews the different ways Choteños describe their culture and community. It then turns to their opinions on global football more generally.

Choteños and the 'beautiful valley'

According to interviewees, Choteño culture is about positive communal values and working amid difficulties. Bladimir (NP) explains that a Choteño is 'hardworking, honest, honorable, and [is] always trying to overcome his limitations. He is not like people from other parts of the country that only think about enjoying the moment'. Anieto (NP) adds that 'here everybody knows everybody. That just makes people happier and friendlier. Everyone helps each other out'. When discussing local culture, there is an emphasis on family, community, and solidarity.

Nevertheless, some interviewees also believe that Chota's social and economic situation has burdened Choteños with an 'indifferent' mentality that stifles progress. Edison Mendez (P) states that:

People in Chota are just like people everywhere, we simply live under different conditions. If you have running water, electricity, a computer like you have in the city, then there are so many things you can do and you can learn. I learned how to use a computer when I was 23 years old. [...] Before that I didn't even know what a computer was! I had never seen a phone! So if you live under those conditions things get difficult, it holds you back.

Similarly, Ulises de la Cruz (P) maintains: 'Our ancestors come from such a painful past filled with chains. I think that those chains have finally been opened but there are still a few left, mostly in the mind, in the way people think'. Mendez and De la Cruz believe that if the burdens of poverty were lifted, Choteños would wake from their resignation.

Still, other interviewees see these adversities as enriching Choteño culture. No one argues that poverty is desirable but many are proud of how they handle their position. For Esmero (NP), Choteños are characterized by their optimism: 'If we are hungry we sing and we dance. If we are suffering we sing, we dance, and we celebrate!' Choteños acknowledge their hardships but derive pride from how they cope.

Choteños also claim to be 'traditional'. Walter Calderon (P) states 'we like to follow what we've been taught, what our ancestors have done, following the same customs, being true to ourselves'. Outsiders, in contrast, are described as 'modern', they hold different, more liberal values. Many find these outsiders intimidating. Nixon Carcelen (P) calls Choteños 'naturally happy but introverted too. [...] I guess we're a little restricted when it comes to opening up to new people'. Jose Pavon (P) attributes this unease to

existing racial tensions, but also expresses pride for his racial heritage. Similarly, Alberto (NP) emphatically affirms: 'I'm really proud of my race, my color. I take my culture within me [...] I am black and always have been'.

However, no matter how important 'blackness' is in Chota, it is inextricably linked to a sense of 'place'. Geovanni Ibarra (P) says that 'the ideal is that people call us the "blacks from Chota" [...] we feel flattered to be called by where we're from'. Jacinto (NP) explains 'if you ask me who I am, I am Afro-Choteño'.

Local identity is a hyphenated combination of race and place because Choteños see their valley as a sacred space. Justo (NP) calls Chota 'beautiful' and for Michele (NP) it is 'paradise'. For Edison Mendez (P), 'talking about Chota is like talking about ourselves, about our mothers, because the player from Chota is very passionate about his town, he loves it a lot'. Non-players assert that they would rather live in Chota than almost anywhere else and migrant players regularly return to the valley. Geovanni Ibarra (P) gives examples:

In any vacation, carnival, New Years, anything, we professionals instead of going to the beach, having the resources to go out of the country, we go back to Chota. Look, this one player was in Europe, it was New Years, and he exaggerated an injury just to come back to the country! See how far it goes? [The wives of two players] were pregnant and the first could give birth in Holland and the other in England. They both came back to have their babies in Chota valley!

Choteños, therefore, feel a strong connection to their home; they consider it the best place in the world.

Because of their love for Chota, Choteños, feel the need to protect the valley from corrupting influences. A few interviewees, for example, spoke fearfully that drugs and violence might disrupt their idyllic community. However, the most common fear for Chota was 'individualism', or, as Alberto (NP) put it, 'that awful attitude of each person for himself'. Alberto believes that this problem has yet to fully infect Chota, 'here we haven't lost our unity [...] Let's say someone is building a house or paving something, everyone helps out'. He considers it his duty to instill social responsibility in the younger generations. In this context of disadvantage, racial pride, and love for the local community, Choteños give meaning to global football.

Moral glocalization

Football means many things to different people. Around the world, in the media, in advertisements, in NGOs, or in organizations like FIFA football is portrayed as a heroic, masculine, cosmopolitan sport that can foster discipline, development, and tolerance (Donnelly, 2008; Giulianotti, 2004; Hughson, 2009; Tomlinson, 2000). FIFA President Joseph Blatter believes that football spells 'basic education, character formation and fighting spirit, allied with respect and discipline' (FIFA, n.d.). Hence, football is imagined as a deeply moral practice.

Choteños share many of these understandings and add others specific to their local context. In general, they describe football as a moral emotional outlet, a space to learn discipline, hard work, and respect, an area where excluded peoples can feel like part of

their national community, a source of local and especially racial pride, a platform for local moral heroes, and a path taking the community towards greater development.

To be clear, this paper does not claim that football really does all the things that Choteños ascribe to it. Nor does it claim that football is merely a force for good. Football scholarship has overwhelmingly documented negative aspects of football such as gendered exclusion (Pelak, 2005; Scraton et al., 2005), racism (Bradbury, 2010; Doidge, 2013), and violence (Archetti, 1992; Dunning, 2000). Evaluating the actual local impacts in Chota – for good or ill – would require a different kind of research. Rather this project maps out the moral discourse of football, capturing the meanings Choteños ascribe to the game.

Morally safe escape

In Chota, people speak of football passionately; Edgar (NP) calls football ‘a poor man’s happiness’ and Ansieto (NP), ‘king of sports’. This is true even for professional players who have made football their job. Edmundo Zura (P) states: ‘I love football, I live football, I respect football. It is the most beautiful profession there is’.

Choteños emphasize that their passion for football is a cathartic and morally safe escape. Some contrast it to ‘polluted’ passions like taking drugs. Anibal (NP) believes that ‘sport helps release stress [because] people can just scream and unwind’. Marcos (NP) argues that ‘football kills hunger! It’s like eating! I start watching football and I forget everything!’ One woman explains that although she does not like football, she likes that her husband watches it: ‘he works so hard he needs to wind down somehow, he deserves it’. Choteños believe football is a way to forget about personal and social problems. They consider it ‘healthy’, people ‘deserve it’, it is a wholesome reward.

Moral education

More than an escape, football is an education. Jacinto (NP) argues that football teaches children discipline and authority: ‘You have to learn how to respect the coach’s decision [...] you can’t just say “I want to play”, but you learn to be guided by a leader’. These lessons are subsequently applied in everyday life: ‘You then go to a classroom and see that, in that context, the leader is the teacher. Now you know that you have to be respectful’.

Many professional players agree. According to Walter Calderon (P), ‘football makes you learn how to read, how to be educated, because you have a lot of contact with people from all over’. Calderon equates these teachings to ‘respect’, football taught him to respect and learn other customs and to question what he used to take for granted. ‘Football is more than a game’, he says, ‘it is a terrible responsibility [...] you carry a great weight over your back to be the best player and person you could be. Football taught me that’.

National solidarity

Football in Chota is further seen as a strong source of identity. Ulises de la Cruz (P) recalls that when Ecuador qualified for the World Cup ‘the political problems, the social

problems, they were left behind because there was a group of players [...] that made Ecuador known'. Football, he believes, became 'the glue holding this country together'. Armando (NP) concurs: 'football has the particularity of uniting different social sectors. It is loved by the poor and the rich'. Jairo (NP) calls football 'an Ecuadorian passion'.

Choteños have historically been excluded from the imagined national community, which is why they recognize this identity as a social construct. Also, they find this sense of community fleeting; it does not significantly alter social cleavages. But during football matches, Esmero (NP) argues, 'there are no races, no colors, nothing. When the national team plays, everybody is capable of hugging each other, of getting excited [...] It doesn't last that long, only that gripping instant, but that is an instant many people like me wait for anxiously to come again'. This unity, therefore, is nonetheless appreciated as it provides a taste of national solidarity.

Racial pride

Global agents like FIFA see football as a source of global harmony that erases national and racial differences (Faflík, 2012). Many Choteños, in contrast, believe football makes differences more visible. Football may provide brief moments of 'communitas' but racial disparities remain. What is more, these differences are cast in a positive light. Michele (NP) explains that when she hears the word football: 'I think about how my race is playing'. Similarly, De la Cruz (P) says 'they say that Ecuador qualified to two World Cups [...] but I think that [blacks] have won even more'. As a minority, this group has a unique football experience: they may feel closer to the nation but they maintain their racial uniqueness.

This is not to say that Choteños do not encounter stereotypes about race. Many have come to accept these ideas. For example, Bladimir (NP) maintains that 'blacks are the best for sports. We have a lot of advantages over a white person so it makes me really proud'. Jose Pavon (P) describes Choteños as more 'powerfully built' than others, therefore 'naturally' better at sport. Choteños, in other words, essentialize race but derive pride from this difference.

Moral heroes

For the global media, advertising corporations, and organizations such as FIFA, football creates heroic characters and (usually male) celebrities that are either role models or villains (Hughson, 2009). Football in Chota is also almost exclusively male; 'men and women play but mostly men', said one interviewee, 'only a few girls are the exception'. Football is also about moral heroes but not in the same way as, say, David Beckham is a hero to the global media (Cashmore, 2004). Players' personal lives, for instance, are hardly discussed. Players return to the valley 'like one of us', not god-like figures. Choteño football players are moral heroes not for their behavior in public but for their involvement in and responsibility towards their home communities.

In their conversations, Choteños seamlessly move from discussing football as a game to discussing Choteño players and their social work. Jairo (NP) says 'football is good because see what Geovanni Espinosa [a professional player] has done. He lobbied to

build more houses [...] Also, [player] Geovanni Ibarra donated money to rebuild the local church and built a library for our school'. Maria Rosa (NP) states, 'I simply don't get it. [...] What is it about football? The "rhythm of the ball"? Nah. But I do admire Ulises, God bless him, because Ulises has been very good to us'.

Many of the players interviewed agreed with non-players on the importance of giving back. Most had established non-profit foundations and those who had not were quick to excuse themselves. The most extreme example of this is the case of Ulises de la Cruz (P). De la Cruz paved the streets of his hometown Piquiucho; brought running water and sewage; raised foreign aid to establish a clinic; renovated the local school and employed new teachers which then earned the school a national prize on standardized tests; built a sports coliseum; donated houses to single mothers and senior citizens; established a savings and loans cooperative; contacted experts in England to determine an irrigation model that would fit the local context; bought chickens and cows for a communal shed; and is working on a campaign to have Piquiucho recognized as Ecuador's first all-black parish. De la Cruz describes his social endeavors as ultimately more satisfying than football itself.

A taste of achievement

Choteños see football as an escape, an education, a source of national solidarity and racial pride, and the birthplace of moral heroes. In all of these cases, Choteños are thinking about how football best serves Chota, by being safe, by educating, by bringing it closer to the nation, by bringing pride and moral leaders. Therefore, football is associated with Chota valley's improvement and with success more broadly. The game is often seen as responsible for 'awakening' Choteños who no longer want to be 'stuck' and 'traditional'. Ulises de la Cruz (P) believes that football taught people 'that because of who we are, because we are different, we can win at whatever we set our minds to'. This lesson is not restricted to football but can be applied to any endeavor. Football has become a gateway to all forms of success.

On the one hand, football is associated with large sums of money. Christian Lara (P) says 'I love football! Apart from that I get paid, how could I not love it?' Magali (NP) works at a football school and explains that money 'has served as a motivation for many young boys. They want to be football players especially because of the economic benefits. They have seen that football players can change their status so they say "I want to be a player so I can be rich"'. Money, in this context, is good for individuals and for the community, allegedly helping move all of Chota away from poverty.

On the other hand, football is seen more abstractly as evidence that success – any form of success – is now possible. Almost all of the interviewed players assert that Choteño children should aspire to more than just football, and that they hope that their achievements in football become an example for all kinds of ambitions. For instance, those players who have foundations insist that education be an important part of their social project. Ulises de la Cruz (P) invested in rebuilding the local school and Geovanni Ibarra (P) has a football-training program on the condition that children stay in school. Many non-player Choteños agree. Bladimir (NP) believes that people's 'mentality' has changed because of football: 'before there was indifference towards life, now people

want to study and overcome [social] limitations. [...] People who can't be players can become policemen, military officers, lawyers, anything'. Football, in other words, has shown Choteños what achievement in general feels like. This is another reason why Choteños believe football to be a 'good' and moral game.

Conclusion

This paper has explored how football is given moral meanings by the people in Chota valley. For Choteños football can mean many things. It is a morally safe outlet for stress and frustration, a source of national and local identity, it brings education, development, and recognition, and it provides a taste of success. Hence, Choteños read global football through local cultural frameworks, creating a new moral narrative of football in the process. And this new, glocal reading of football is not shallow; it deeply implicates players' social responsibility, Choteños sense of racial and local pride, and ideas about community and the sacred. Therefore, the glocalization of sport, of an aesthetic, corporeal, playful practice, involves the glocalization of deep moral meanings.

This paper has separated the moral from the aesthetic dimension of sport, focusing on Choteños' answers that directly spoke to why football was 'good' or 'evil'. However, as Alexander (2010) has argued, in reality the two aspects of culture are indistinguishable; in order to understand moral meanings, human actors usually make them aesthetic, make them 'iconically visible as something beautiful, sublime, ugly, even the banal appearance of mundane "material life"' (11). Hence, the next step for studies of sport, globalization, and glocalization is to examine this relationship, to look back at the styles of play, team names, chants, and banners and see the moral ideas they express. Also, we should compare people's moral statements about football to their aesthetic judgments or creative expressions about sport.

This study is only an initial attempt to understand how sports can be spaces for the creation and circulation of social and moral meanings. More research is needed in other social contexts, in other sports, or in communities with different relationships to sport (with more or less global success, for example). In general, the sociology of sport has to take into account how games such as football have strong associations with morality. We need to know more about what people think these global games are good for.

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Conflict of interest

None declared.

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Notes

1. The data were first analyzed by distinguishing the moments Choteños spoke about their community, their culture, and about football as something 'good' or 'bad', highlighting the issue of morality. Then the ways they justified their opinions in each case were coded, using an 'open coding' strategy (Emerson et al., 1995: 175). Each reason was made a unit and these units were organized according to themes (Weiss, 2004). The data presented in this paper are the themes that were most prevalent across interviews.
2. Chota valley is located at the intersection of two provinces, Carchi and Imbabura. In order to obtain demographic data, what parishes self-identified as part of Chota were determined – Los Andes, San Vicente de Pusir, San Rafael, Mira, Juan Montalvo, Ambuquí, Salinas, Pimampiro, Urcuquí, and Pablo Arenas – and extrapolated from census data.

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