

SPORT AS CULTURAL PHENOMENON

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Abstract

Culture as industry is an indisputable fact which has expanded due to developmental requirements and trends of capitalism, as well as high technological contents which unavoidably tend to extend their productive and distributive forms to all areas of the society. Technological order is an evil destiny which negates the traditional concept of culture, and “which will resurrect in the form of industry”. Criticism of culture industry assumes criticism of one way of production of social life. Culture loses its actual emancipation power since the system uses it for its own aims and includes it into its own circle; it gets submerged but comes to surface again as a regenerated industry. Thus the way of production enters the stage of constitution and regulation of the structure as a whole.

Keywords: culture industry, consciousness industry, everyday life, sport, cultural modulation of spirit

Culture, goods esthetics and sport

Quality of culture is often suspended by the market system. “Goods esthetics” gets increasing importance as a powerful means for placement of products of the mass culture in which sport occupies a significant place.

Culture loses its actual emancipation power because the system uses it for its own aims and includes it into its circle; it gets submerged but appears on the surface again as a regenerated form of industry. Thus the way of production enters the stage of constitution and regulation of the structure and development as a whole (Koković, 2005).

Capital has “sneaked” between the man and his authentic needs. Urge for satisfaction becomes a trigger of capital reproduction, during which certain mechanisms are put to motion: from a complex of needs, an interesting segment is usually isolated, “which may be sold through goods, and whose occurrence and language of signs get stuck in the selected segment of needs as a “key to a lock “ (Haug, 1978, p. 98).

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In consumer society, everything gets esthetic dimension. Analysts of the “culture industry” have shown how unexpected and unobserved goods structure has penetrated the contents of a work of art. This is victory of industrialization over art (“purposeness without aim”), neverending conquering and colonization of the last domain of the non-critical, pure game, by one world in which each aim gets instrumentalised while the aims get increasingly barren. *Instrumentalized culture gets the simplest form – instrument-aim.*

Consumer celebrations uncover the weakest side of reproductive art. Intention to transfer new knowledge no longer exists, nor is there any intention to create a new reality, but there is a need to launch products on the market. If the procedure of goods esthetics can be encompassed by the concept of “technocracy of sensuality” and consumer world as a seemingly human world, then it can be stated that true esthetics stays within the field of the human freedom and self-accomplishment. Its abuse is possible only at the level of “esthetic consumer value”, i.e. within a particular contemporary character of esthetics.

The process of mutual, although not free of conflict, economical and social influence, created by specialized esthetic production, is marked by concepts of *culture industry and goods esthetics*. Cultural production has started to follow the laws of production of goods. Transformation of cultural production and its functioning according to the laws of production of goods provides *ideological background* of cultural products: they undergo standardization and offer germs of authentic needs of free and developed personality.

Cultural production and culture industry tend to fit an individual in the governing system “without residues” (Koković, 2002, p. 176).

Time acceleration and capital circulation

- Cultural-industrial production of goods serves the purpose of taking immediate *power over the invested capital in the field of production of cultural goods*.
- Apart from other technical and economical manifestations, production of cultural goods in the form of advertisements and esthetically created advertising material (logos, materials, slogans, designs) serves the purpose of *accelerating time and circulation of the capital* invested in industry of consumer goods for formation of monopolistic positions on the market.
- There is an increasing effect of *audiovisual media*, not only radio and television but also other recent media (Internet, Facebook, etc.).
- Through mediation of the production, the capital succeeds in developing “*new needs*” which tend to become artificial and non-authentic. Due to this, culture industry brings about resistance of those being affected as well as of culture critics (L. Winckler).
- Culture in the sense of industry is a “*sign of historical bankruptcy*”, and a *sign of a global rationalization* being constituted according to the rhythm of the goods reality. It no longer mediates reality and it is not a criticism of this reality.
- Culture industry implies a triumphal and definite *rejection of culture as an autonomous and intellectual production*, and culture as a human activity in the final instance. There is a *cultural profit* which functions according to standards of a direct economical benefit, just like any other profit. Economical network is primary for determination of culture industry; *industry and factory tend to impose a world of their own*.
- The concepts of “price”, “surplus value”, “market”, and “profit”, as applied to products of culture, manifest analytically the *relations of homogeneity of culture and industry*;

methodologically, they indicate the path to be followed in order to learn the ways in which a capitalist organization *tends to encompass every aspect and level of reality until it becomes a universe*. Cultural products are infinitely multiplied producing free-time contents.

- Representatives and creators of culture industry point out that their intention is not technocratic but democratic power, but that they plan to include multitude of participants in distribution of income from cultural products. *Rationalization of work organization should be matched by simultaneous rationalization of organization of culture*. Mass communication becomes a precious instrument of rationalization and democratic integration; it gets the *status of industrial organization* and becomes imposed as an element of a market being increasingly less different from the market of goods. Today one can buy toothpaste, books, musical tapes, compact disks, etc.
- Culture industry does not only produce new forms and new contents but it also encapsulates and distributes the contents of traditional culture. *Mass culture becomes a reality culture* and gets the general form of capitalistic work organization. Means of mass communication are *technical media* of cultural transformation. Reduction of the two fields of culture and industry to a single entity which is characterized by increasingly homogenous functions and aims *leaves behind all controversies related to the “two cultures”* taking away any sense from the theses tending to present culture as a therapy against the “disease” of technological civilization.

Culture in the form of industry is no longer a crystallized form which can be found on the library shelves of business companies, but it is the *form of living work and a condition of productivity*.

Negation of traditional concept of culture – industrial modeling of spirit

Culture viewed as industry is an undisputable fact whose expansion is due to developmental requirements and capitalism trends, as well as high technological contents which necessarily tends to extend the production and distribution forms to all segments of the society. *Technological order is an evil destiny negating the traditional concept of culture*, which is, however, bound to resurrect in the form of industry”.

Criticism of a culture industry assumes the *criticism of one way of production of social life*.

The issue dealt with at present is *industrial modeling of spirit*. A question is raised in terms of the man’s axiomatic presence in the field of consciousness which used to be thought of as inaccessible fortress against onslaughts of industry. Consciousness used to be conditioned in different ways even earlier, but it is only at the level of industrial scales, that the social phenomenon of management and conditioning of consciousness has become a problem.

Even though the concept is happily selected, industrial modeling of spirit would like to remind the consciousness, even though being false one, of the fact that it can be reproduced and that it is controlled “in an industrial manner”, but not that it is also created in such a manner. *It is created in the mutual dialogue of people*. Industrial modeling is not a production of any kind; it only gets multiplied and distributed to the consumer.

According to Hans Encensberger (*Industry of consciousness*), *four conditions* are indispensable for creation and appearance of an *industrially formed spirit*:

- 1) *Rationalism* in the broadest sense of the word is philosophical precondition of any industrialization of thinking; it is directed to industrialized man just in the moment when it makes him dependant;
- 2) Political precondition of industrial modeling of spirit is *proclaiming* (although not realized) of *the man's rights, especially equality and freedom* (so called equality trend);
- 3) *Economical i.e. primitive accumulation precedes development*; it is only when an industrial raw material is built up and when the *mass production of consumer goods* gets secured, that industry of consciousness and thinking can be developed;
- 4) Economical processes of industrialization bring *technological conditions* without which spirit cannot be industrially modeled (principles, techniques, radio, film, television, internet, etc.). (Encesberger, 1980, p. 10-11).

Industry based on the task of spirit modeling always gives something to its consumers that must be taken away from them. It is criticized for elimination of true cultural values and for conquering key instances of modern society.

Disappearings of realiable patterns – commercialization and colonization of sport

Everyday life is increasingly interwoven with the feeling that “*permanent and reliable things miraculously go down and vanish from the man's life*”. Such a feeling has probably never been so strong and widespread. It is believed that accelerated production has caused positive evaluation of speed of immediate accessibility of goods (instant food, fast food, and similar satisfactions). After that, mass production has had effects on evaluation of diversified selection of goods. Metaphorically speaking, *house of birth is transformed to the department store*, and a widely used syntagm is launched, *use and throw away*. The things being thrown away are values, lifestyles, sustainable relations, people, houses, places, things, and generally accepted models of living and activity.

‘Culture industry’, ‘industry of amusement’, ‘sports industry’, ‘stadium ideology’ are examples of justification of the existing conditions in sport. The way of using free time is the best indicator of different forms of alienation. Concepts such as: exploitation, market, profit, business, production of goods and money, industry, etc. are increasingly met in analyses of free time and sport. From working, these categories are necessarily transferred to free time, which loses its freedom due to being subdued to capital power.

Control over free time and sport in this sphere is taken over by others; *sport becomes industry*, which is organized according to work standards, while their utilization is determined by industry. Contemporary living world is experienced as a division of time to working time and relaxing time. However, an aspiration towards idleness, i.e. time during which nothing is to be done fast, gets transformed to pseudo-greed.

Monotony, sleepy and dull consciousness last longer in free time since they cannot find counter-forms to the previous way of living. Free time is no longer the space in which the man finds his own self as it is only the time that has to be eliminated in any way possible. Sports events and spectacles mostly serve this purpose.

“With increasing family disintegration, with transformation of private life to free time, and free time to limited activities being controlled to the very end, internal life disappears from satisfaction of sports stadiums, cinemas, bestsellers, and radio. Culture has assumed capitalist characteristics long before it was replaced by such manipulating pleasure. People resort to the world of private conceptions and they organize their thoughts in a new way at the moment when

time has come to organize reality. ... So-called entertainment, which has inherited art, is only a means of recovery, such as swimming and football. Popularity has nothing in common with specific content or truth of artistic products. **In democratic countries, this is no longer the matter governed by intellectuals, but the matter of fun industry** (emphasized by K.D.). Popularity manifests in unreserved consensus of people about everything fun industry believes they like. In totalitarian orders, popularity is decided upon by direct and indirect propaganda, which is essentially indifferent towards truth.” (Horkheimer, 1982).

To talk about free time devoted to sport means to have in mind the audience or recreative sport. Professional and top sport become increasingly work-oriented.

Out of all ‘mass entertainments’, sport seems to be the most attractive one. It reproduces, among other things, an overall unsparingness and complete uncertainty of everyday living. *The “barer” life becomes, the greater the aspiration for freedom* which cannot be realized in any way, due to the fact that freedom is not given in advance and that it must be reached only later. Adding to this the fact that it is increasingly difficult to differentiate false and manipulating needs from authentic, human ones, there is a greater possibility that the man’s essence is realized through trivial contents. The man pays high price for his free time, not only economically but also morally and psychologically. It costs a lot to ‘kill’ one’s free time by means of fun industry (film, television, deceptive fashion, sport, etc.). In this manner, the man who used to sell his work only (labour force), thanks to a new industry, starts to sell his free time too. In fact, he returns or should return the payment he received for his work. ‘Life consumption’ becomes self-consumption of one’s own life at the same time. This provoked researchers to conclude that people sell their own life in parts every day, in order to buy them back in the evening or at the end of the week for fun, sport and entertainment. The circle is obviously closed, but the man is the only loser. The life we live is the best witness of such development and spirit of time (Rusconi, 1973, p. 143).

Critical analysis of sport industry

Critical sociology has always dealt with the issue of critical consideration of different aspects of social and intellectual life. Most papers created in this tradition takes the form of a criticism, and their ultimate goal was to discover the basic nature of social processes as precisely as possible. Critical sociology does not study sport in order to describe its basic characteristics, but to understand the particular society as much as possible by pointing out its functions.

Sociologists of such an orientation believe that sociology insufficiently criticizes the society and that it gave up obligations of helping other people in subordinate position. Especially criticized issues are sociological tendencies to reduce everything which is human to social variables. When sociologists are directed to the society alone, and not on individuals within the society, they ignore their interaction. This is a fundamental issue being attacked by critical sociology, along with reminding ourselves that sociology must not become an integral part of the existing society, but criticism and fertile ground for its renewal.

Critical sociology has always shown high interest in culture and cultural needs. By redirecting traditional Marxist interests, critical sociology has concentrated on “superstructure”, and not on economical “base”, by believing that Marxists have overemphasized the significance of economical relations, which led to neglecting interests in other fields of social reality, especially culture. When culture is in question, critical sociologists are worried about two things: falseness, since they believe that cultural needs are packed up and mass-produced in advance, and on the other hand, they point to repressive and stupefying effects of so-called “culture industry”, “industry of free time”, and “sports industry”.

Author of the book *Sport – critical sociology*, Richard Giulianotti (2005), starts from an idea that it is useful to define general characteristics of historical and multicultural influence in the socio-genesis of modern sports. In this way, it is possible to discover centers of power relations in the social history of sports, as well as important cultural differences between bases of modern sports traditions and institutions. The author points out that he intended to present a “reasonable selection of sociological experiences, having in mind the interest of potential reading audience, and especially his disciplined research interest and theoretical obligations” (p. XV).

Analyzing sport from the aspect of critical sociology, the author starts with analysis of Emil Durkheim’s facts and elements which, even today, make up the weft of sports analysis (religion, integration, cohesion, social organization in sport). Without ignoring weaknesses of this approach, Richard Giulianotti shows that even contemporary functionalistic sociology can be of some help in analyses of social solidarity, rituals, religiousness, and sport disorganisation (Parsons, Merton), even though it underestimates the role of social conflicts. It is especially emphasized that Irvin Goffman presents an interesting development of Durkheim’s sociology. This looks unusual since Durkheim’s approach is to a great extent macrosociological, whereas Goffman dealt primarily with microrealisations – social interpersonal relations. The concept of sacred Goffman has redirected towards the level of the individual within modern society.

Max Weber represents an unavoidable figure in sociology. Trends of his sociology are unavoidable in explanation of meaning and rationalization in sport. Model of rationalization is disputed by critical sociology due to evident fact that the man is instrumentalized in contemporary sport, and reduced to “homo metrum” and pure “physicalness”. Modern process of rationalization in sport can be intensified just as it can be disputed even stronger at the same time.

Marxist and neo-Marxist point of view has served the author to analyze sport within the context of criticism of capitalism, within the sport-work relationship, alienation and sport, and ideologization of sport. Special attention is devoted to neo-Marxists and Frankfurt school, which has always been focused on criticism of mass culture and sport. In addition, it has also tackled sports issues, industrial production, goods status, professionalization and corruption in sports.

Author’s major remark concerning Marxist and neo-Marxist attitudes is given in terms of economical reductionalism “which does not explain everything”. This is why the significance of cultural studies is pointed out, since sociologists have “hardly scratched the surface of issues related to reflexive and social critical elements of sport” (Giulianotti, 2005, p. 42).

According to the author’s opinion, cultural studies represent the most effective theoretical and research paradigm within studies of sport. They direct attention to cultural strategies which occur between dominant groups that create official culture and subordinate groups bearing sub-cultural and counter-cultural trends including sport too.

The mentioned groups take the form of a symbolic or actual protest. Cultural theories devote special attention to hegemony and resistance. Resistance is a key concept in cultural studies, and it is expressed through general denial of sports brand status, especially in those cases when competition or the right to compete is defined by money or market compensations. However, the position of cultural studies is less efficient in explanation of subculture of resistance, which is characterized by “active acceptance of brand status representing a disguised business in sports industry”.

Cultural studies have significantly helped the sociology of sport, since sociologists of this orientation have started to exploit anthropological topics more intensively, such as the issues of cultural identity and pluralism of lifestyles. However, it should be noted that cultural studies can sometimes underestimate structural inequalities and exaggerate “resistant” aspects of everyday cultural practice.

Critical sociology could not avoid the issues of races and intolerance in sport, ranging from the social Darwinism to genetics. Callous racial politics and ideology in sport is criticized. Sport must have a mechanism to counteract cultural prejudices and intolerance in sport. Such efforts assume facing with the nature of racial logic, *per se*, if a firm normative redefinition of sport is desired in terms of a cultural field free of racism, prejudices, and ethnic intolerance.

Gender identity and gender sexuality in sport is a chapter dealing with an idea of creating a male-dominated world, however, the issue of women in sport is also dealt with, including analysis of sexuality and political transformation. Politics of sport is studied through gender analysis and pro-feminist politics. Author of this study notices that an “open game” of homosexual cultural policies and sport has also begun. Concluding remarks present a concise analysis of the measures of political equality in sport, in which “less attention should be paid to sports reproducing male power”.

Sociologies of sport rarely deal with sports areas and evaluation of topophilia (love of place) and topophobia, in which environment has negative emotional significance. The concept of “patina” is also introduced, which helps explaining how old sports stadiums get additional value for spectators. In fact, patina represents signs pointing to the value acquired by an object in the course of time. Sports environment is treated as an “enclosed area” for mega-events, including football hooliganism too, which is analyzed in this book within the framework of Elias’s ideas of the “process of civilization”. It can be noticed that Elias’s explanations of football hooliganism “seem somewhat raw”. They assume the simplest possible forming positions by insisting on “ill-mannered behaviour i.e. relatively uncivilized habitus of a hooligan belonging to lower working class”.

The author finishes the critical consideration of sport by analysis of postmodern culture which is confronted with a dilemma: production or deception, just like sport itself. Apart from good results, sports competitors must deceive audience by play and style via gambling; modern people reestablish deceptive prodigal principles of luck and destiny. In deceptive cultures, “mental picture has advantage over reality. Hyper-reality refers to the world saturated by media, which is false and more real than “the real one”, and it creates dizzy real and yet stimulated experiences”. We live in time when everything is simulation except the simulation itself, in which the difference between reality and its representation disappears. In extreme cases sports events are illusions. Hyper-reality is a “catastrophe of the modern”, in which social action is dead, whereas sociology is old-fashioned and doomed because its fundamental categories are old-fashioned – power, class, social relations, etc. Relations between media simulation and new forms of social consciousness and identity become visible and significant.

Not a single contemporary paper in the field of social and economic sciences can be finished without mentioning globalization. Sport is not an exception. The Author of this study has endeavoured to explain not only the politics of global sport but also that of “glocal” sport, as well as globalization as a means of establishing a compact world and “intensification of consciousness in the world as a whole”. Globalisation-related arguments of critical political economy and sociology are provided by precise theories dealing with the way neoliberalism not only encourages but also intensifies global inequalities of people. The concept of “glocalization” is increasingly becoming an important characteristic and determinant of contemporary globalization. Glocalization describes how local social participants interpret global processes and phenomena in order to answer their specific needs or cultural contexts.

Contemporary criticism of sport starts from a hypothesis that today’s world is dehumanized and degraded and that it does not represent the true essence of the man.

As a recommendation to the readers, I would like to point out that critical sociology has seriously considered the issue of relationship between sport and society and that it has not given up its human dimension.

Humanistic values – which also refer to sport – do not measure according to that which has been prevented as a negative tendency, but according to what is positive i.e. which has been made possible, provided, and accomplished. This positive humanistic content, which should be provided, is pretty diversified and rich as much as human needs themselves. One of these “new human needs” is sport. Humanism and the possibility to humanize the relations in sport can result from a critical negation of the existing condition and it is contrary to ideological functions of sport. Humanistic criticism of sport is possible from the aspect of understanding the possibilities of changed way of production. Each development has got its own logic; capitalistic one has also got its own, which is being “copied and reproduced – its towns are reproduced, its internal controversies, opposites of towns and villages, and finally the way of life. Sport as a spectacle is modeled by genesis of industrial-urban civilization. It goes hand-in-hand with “industry of entertainment”, thus becoming consumption of everyday life. This is enabled by continuous increase of free time and construction of large sports complexes and facilities.

Spectacle has become a dominant form of expression of contemporary way of life. In all ways of production where there is exploitation, exploiters are forced to offer a spectacle occasionally as a compensation; on one hand, it is a compensation for crisis of everyday life, and on the other, it is manifestation of power.

Growth alone cannot result in achieving true humanization of sports relations; it is necessary to reevaluate all values rationally. It is impossible to change relations in sport (“radical change of relations in sport” is a frequently heard slogan), without changing social relations from which sport is being reproduced. It is difficult to talk about new sports relations within the framework of preserved social relations, with all their controversial functions. The man has the need to develop as an active and independent subject, a person capable of action, and a free being. Freedom of a human personality cannot be defined as an abstraction independent of the society and relations, since these conditions are not only the limits of activity and freedom but basic assumption of affirmation of the man as a free and creative being. Humanism has always analyzed the limits of the possible from the aspect of the man’s self-realization. Freedom is the possibility and power for active participation in changing these conditions and taking active part in organization of social life.

Sport is inseparable from freedom which is an assumption of creative games. If freedom is equated with the right to self-specificity of each human being, if the man is believed to be free as much as he is in agreement with his own self, free of prejudices, tradition, standards, it will be possible to follow more clearly the development of creative processes by following the path on which we can recognize ourselves and our potentials, as well as a part of the structure making up a whole, including possibilities of our own selves.

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