

# Sport, the Audacity of Hope and the Bottom Billion

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## **Abstract**

A very significant contribution to research into sport in society has been made by those who have started to address and critically question the role of sport in development. The idea of justice in and through sport acknowledges that inequalities of power between countries matter just as much as inequalities of income. The study of sport presented in this article accepts the notion that there is more to inequality than disparities of income distribution. It suggests that one of the many possibilities that exist through sport is that it can help not just as a resource of hope for some but just as importantly it can contribute to assisting with the inequalities of capability.

Key words: inequalities, resource of sport, role of sport



## Introduction

The international flow of athletes from parts of Africa has been referred to as a global trade in muscle in which Kenyan and Ethiopian athletes have switched allegiance from the country of their birth to oil rich states such as Qatar and Bahrain (Gyulai, 2003). This scramble for African talent, write Simms and Rendell may be equated with the exploitation of Africa's mineral wealth during different periods of colonial rule (Simms and Rendell, 2004).- The assertion being that those living in poverty provide the muscle while the rich countries of the world capture the benefits. The scramble for Africa started as early as the 1960s with athletes being lured to American colleges, but now the oil rich countries of the world simply buy athletic talent that is then lost to Africa. Some observers have commented that while the freedom of movement for athletes may give rise to conflicting interests between different member federations of the International Athletic Federation (IAAF) there should be no exception to the increased mobility of individuals within the rules of free-market trade and global sporting capitalism (Pitsiladis, Sharp and Noakes, 2007) The IAAF notes that the rules with regard to the movement of athletes should not be to the detriment of the member federations. Kenya recently moved to try to stem the flow of athletes out of Kenya by tightening up on the circumstances and conditions under which athletes may be granted visas to leave the country (Gyulai, 2003).

There are initially two ways of reflecting about sport and capitalism. The first is to think of capitalism in terms of what it represents as a set of contemporary relationships between people and countries. The truth about sport as a universal creed is that it is also an engine of injustice between nations and peoples. The second is to think of the relationship between sport and capitalism in historical terms. Sport potentially provides a resource of hope for many people and places but it also runs the danger of aligning itself with historical calls proclaiming the principles of equality, justice, and the eradication of poverty. Past interventions through sport have not sufficed to make a reality of any of these aforementioned possibilities.

In early 2009 international communities were struggling to understand the significance of the New Depression- its causes, its duration, its consequences and its possible solutions. The global crisis that began in the summer of 2007 with the onset of a credit-crunch and the unravelling of the world financial systems also marked a potential fundamental shift in the balance of international power. While the financial crisis began in the United States the changing balances of power provided a further challenge to a neo-liberal ideology that has influenced broader western thinking since at least the 1970s. The value of the dollar and its future as the world's reserve currency perhaps depends on China. Some have suggested that such shifts constitute the most profound, financial, economic, political and ideological crisis facing the West since the 1930s (Jacques, 2009).

The meeting of the G20 leaders in London in 2009 may have delivered more than symbolism however the very fact that a meeting of the top twenty leaders took place at all is perhaps an indicator of a shift in the global balance of economic power from the rich countries to one involving the developing world. The April 2009 summit of world leaders agreed a \$1.1 trillion package of funding to secure stability, growth and jobs in the light of an economic recession. The G20 solution to tackling the economic crisis included commitments to financial regulation, sanctions against tax havens, increasing resources made available through the International Monetary Fund, commitments to global trade, and a degree of protectionism for developing countries. If development is about anything it may in part be about giving hope to ordinary people that their children will live in a society that has caught up with the rest of the world and if sport in development is about anything then it ought to act as a resource of hope in this process. Sport did not figure at all in the policies or approach adopted in London.

Many of the poorest countries in the world continue to defy repeated attempts by international communities to provide sustainable help. Sport has historically been used as a key facet of humanitarian aid and a proven avenue of social mobility for many athletes from developing countries. The historical writings on sport and capitalism are rich with proven examples of how sport has intervened in the past (Bass, 2002;

Bellos, 2003; Kidd and Donnelly, 2000; Kidd, 2008): The focus of this article limits itself to a reflection on an emerging body of research arising out of a more evidence based approach to sport and international development in the context of a shift to a new world order (Levermore and Beacom, 2009; Coalter, 2007). The article draws upon observations made by Collier and others who acknowledge that the real development challenge is one of closing the gap between a rich world and a poor world in which the world's poorest people- the bottom billion- face a tragedy that is growing inexorably worse (Collier, 2007). Helping the bottom billion remains one of the key challenges facing the world in the twenty first century. The question is whether sport has a part to play in this process.

## **A New Sports Agenda and International Development**

A very recent and significant contribution to research into sport in society has been made by those who have started to address and critically question the role of sport in development (Bolton, 2008; Levermore and Beacom, 2009; Davis, 2006; Sen 2001). Much of this research has talked to a world that existed before the emergence of credit-crunch, economic recession, the election of a new American President and the emergence of a New World Order symbolically represented by the G20. The role that sport has to play in the field of international development has been advanced through the work of Levermore and Beacon (2009). The aim of this work was to initiate debate, in primarily academic international development circles, upon the 'use of sport based initiatives to establish and assist development' (Levermore and Beacom, 2009: 5). The collection of essays remains the most comprehensive coverage of a potential new sports agenda in the field of international development and provides a body of evidence that testifies to the idea that power in world sport has become increasingly dispersed. The dispersal of power in world sport means that the control, management and organization of sport does not simply occur at local or global levels. The global era of sport has presented fundamental challenges for sporting governance but it has also created the opportunity for sport to be a social force for internationalism, reconciliation and international development (Jarvie, 2006).

The research associating sport with international development tends to rely on some or all of the following arguments, that: (i) sport represents a number of theoretical positions within the field of development; (ii) sport can be part of the process for development in a diverse range of different circumstances and contexts; (iii) the evidence to support the claim that sport can produce social change is at best limited and that we need to be clear about the limitations of sport as well as the possibilities; (iv) sport has only recently figured within the goals of modernization/ neo-liberal development thinking; (v) sport reproduces and helps to sustain the gap in resources between different parts of the world; (vi) that sport has some capacity to act both as a conduit for traditional development but also as an agent of change in its own right; and (vii) new forms of internationality and co-operation between countries provide a more realistic opportunity for progress rather than those that simply emanate from Westphalia or state-organized capitalism.

Historically sport and education have been key avenues of social mobility and an escape from poverty for some (OECD, 2008). Thinking systematically about emancipatory alternatives and the part played by sport is only one way or element in the process by which the limits of the possible can expand and the promise and possibilities of the power of education through sport can become more of a reality for more people. Education through sport projects have long since been viewed as agents of social change with the rationale being that they can (i) increase knowledge and skills and in a broader sense contribute to the knowledge economy; (ii) help to provide opportunities for life-long learning and sustain not just education but an involvement in sport and physical activity; (iii) make a voluntary contribution to informal education through sport that can make a positive contribution to helping young people; (iv) that education through sport can help foster and develop critical debate about key public issues; (v) support programmes in different parts of the world which involve sport as part of an approach to tackling HIV education and (vi) help to foster social capital through fostering relationships, networking and making connections. These networks through education and sport have the potential to act as a form of human resource (Bolton, 2008; Rees, 2008;

Sugden, 2006).

Inequality is a complex issue and varies both within and between countries and communities. An important although not causal determinant would be the inequality of opportunity or lack of access to good education, healthcare, clean water, poor economic and social services, markets, information and the lack of democratic right to participate in the key decision making processes. Often the root cause of poverty, marginalisation and injustice is the unequal power distribution that impacts upon many regions and areas of the South. There are historical causes linked to colonial impositions, extraction of resources (human and natural) and the reality of globalisation and international affairs only seems to perpetuate certain benefits of power. Within the South there are cultural, social, political and historical reasons today for poor governance and power in certain groups and places. Most noticeable are the major fault lines between the North and South. This is to say that there exists a very definite tension, sometimes ideologically based and sometimes intuitively based between the demands of those from the wealthy countries and those from the poorer countries.

Writers such as Coalter continually remind us of the substantive basis for such claims (Coalter, 2007). If there is any doubt about the potential of trade to reduce poverty far more effectively than aid then it will not be because of the efforts to alleviate poverty within certain parts of Africa. If the main aim of Millennium Development Goals to half the proportion of people of the world living in poverty by 2015 is likely to be met then it will not be because of Africa but because China, Brazil and India have been making progress on the back of increased trade with Western markets. Yet the major unanswered question remains whether the structures through which we manage trade, as a world community give poor countries a real chance to help themselves. While China, India and Brazil continue to develop the very poorest countries of the world may lack the economic power to negotiate favourable trading terms. OECD research suggests that the emigration of highly skilled workers, including athletes, may in fact prevent the poorest countries in the world from reaching the critical mass of human resources necessary to foster long-term development (OECD, 2008). What is undeniable is that part of the root of the problem lies in countries in the West failing to manage their own needs and poorer countries paying the price in terms of the emigration of national talent. It is often the poorest countries with the fewest opportunities and smallest salaries who suffer most. India, Brazil and China are reckoned to be losing about 5 per cent of their highly skilled workers while in countries such as Mozambique, Ghana and Tanzania the figure is closer to 50 per cent (Davis, 2006).

The promise and possibilities arising out of any new world order of power should not detract from the fact that increasing competition within some of the poorest areas of the world often depletes social capital and leaves its potential fragmented. The informal sector sometimes dissolves self-help networks and solidarities essential to the survival of the very poor and it is often women and children who are the most vulnerable. An NGO worker in Haiti describes the ultimate logic of neo-liberal individualism in a context of absolute immiseration-(Davis, 2006: 15):

'Now everything is for sale. The women used to receive you with hospitality, give you coffee, share all that she has in her home. I could go get a plate of food at a neighbour's house; a child could get a coconut at her godmother's, two mangoes at another aunt's. But these acts of solidarity are disappearing with the growth of poverty. Now when you arrive somewhere, either the women offers to sell you a cup of coffee or she has no coffee at all. The tradition of mutual giving that allowed us to help each other and survive- this is all being lost.

## **Sport, Poverty and the Bottom Billion**

Nelson Mandela described child poverty as modern slavery; thousands have demonstrated against it; New Labour on coming to power in Britain in 1999 vowed to eliminate child poverty within a generation; eradicating it has been viewed as been one of the most successful strategies to halt terrorism and it has been the object of fund raising campaigns by some of the World's top musicians and sportsmen and women.

James Wolfensohn, head of the World Bank noted in July 2004 that, in terms of expenditure, the priorities were roughly \$900billion on defence, \$350billion on agriculture, and \$60billion on aid of which about half gets there in cash (Bolton, 2008). Oxfam recently noted that it would cost £3.2billion to send all the world's children to school. Poverty may be one of the few truly global phenomena in that in relative and absolute terms it exists world-wide and while governments and policies change, the needs of the world's poor invariably remain the same.

The notion of poverty is not new but it is often suppressed, not just in the literature and research about sport and society. However, it is highlighted here as a fundamental reason and motivation for why some athletes run. Many NGOs have been at the forefront of initiatives involving sport as a facet of humanitarian aid in attacking the social and economic consequences of poverty. The Tiger Club Project in Kampala Uganda is one of many such initiatives using sport. The objectives of the Tiger Club include: (i) helping street children and young people in need; (ii) providing children with food, clothing and other physical needs; (iii) help with education and development; (iv) enabling children to realise their potential so that they can gain employment; (v) providing assistance to the natural families or foster carers of children and young adults and (vi) providing medical and welfare assistance (Tiger Club Annual Report, 2003). The 2003 Annual Report reported that in 2002 263 children had been offered a permanent alternative to the street; a further 116 street children and young people were in the START programme which meant full-time schooling; and 161 young people resettled in their village of origin and were provided with the means for income generation. 76% of those resettled children have remained in their villages (Tiger Club Annual Report, 2003).

Every year about 200 million people move in search of employment- about 3 per cent of the world's population (Seabrook, 2003). Legal migrants who leave their homes in poor countries to provide labour or entertainment in other parts of the world are generally regarded as privileged. Many African runners have provided an exhilarating spectacle for sports audiences but what is often forgotten is that the money raised from these performances often provides pathways of hope for other people. Sociologists such as Maguire have helped pave the way for an extensive body of research into the causes of sports labour migration and yet very little have been written about the part played by some athletes in earning money to support whole families and even villages in their country of origin (Maguire, 2004; 2005). When the career of a leading world athlete from a developing country is brought to a premature end, the consequences often extend far beyond the track. Maria Mutola the Mozambican, former Olympic and five-time world indoor 800m champion and world record holder routinely sends track winnings back to her country of origin. Chamanchulo, the suburb of Maputo in which Mutola grew up, is ravaged by HIV, passed on in childbirth or breast milk to 40% of the children (Gillon, 2004). In 2003 when Mutola became the first athlete to collect \$1million for outright victory on the Golden League Athletic Grand Prix Circuit, part of the cash went to the foundation she endowed to help provide scholarships, kit, education and coaching for young athletes (Gillon, 2004). Farms and small businesses have often been sustained by her winnings on the circuit, which have provided for the purchasing of tractors, fertilisers and the facilities to drill small wells.

The 3000m steeplechase at the 2005 World Athletic Championships held in Helsinki was won by Saif Saaeed Shaheen in a time of 8 minutes 13.31secs. The official world championship records will show that the gold medal went to Qatar, a country in which Saif Saaeed Shaheen is viewed as an athletic icon. The athlete's successful defence of this world championship 3000m steeplechase gold medal was his 21st successive victory since 2002 (Gillon, 2005a). His elder brother Chris Kosgei won the gold for Kenya in 1999 but unlike Shaheen did not defect to Qatar. Saif Saaeed Shaheen, born Stephen Cheronon, won his first world steeplechase title 17 days after defecting to the oil rich state which had granted him a passport. (Gillon, 2005a). In that same race Shaheen's brother ran for Kenya, refused to call him anything other than Stephen and did not congratulate him after the race. Kenyan athletic officials, writes Gillon, were so upset at losing this steeplechase world title for the first time since 1987 that they stopped Shaheen running for Qatar at the 2004 Athens Olympics through enforcing athlete eligibility rules following his migration (Gillon, 2005a).

Kenya won gold, silver and bronze medals in the men's 3000m steeplechase at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games.

Athletes such as Shaheen are single minded and mono-causal when it comes to explaining both personal and Kenyan athletic success. It is important here not to be confused by simple western stereotypes about non-western cultures. The context is such that as a boy Shaheen's family 'had 60 cows and 30 goats until a drought... left the family with 7 cattle and 3 goats... and it cost him his education', since the animals would have been sold to pay for his school fees (Gillon, 2005a). As Stephen Cheron he was raised in Kamelilo a village in Keyo in which there was no water-tap and every day after school, which cost two dollars for three days, he walked three kilometers to collect 10 litres of water. The move to Qatar was allegedly based upon an offer of a least \$1000 dollars a month for life (Gillon, 2005a). About 50 people now depend upon that athlete's success for their livelihoods. He puts eight children through school with two at college in America and, when asked to explain Kenyan running success said that the answer is simple 'an athlete in Kenya runs to escape poverty' and 'I fight to survive' (Gillon, 2005b).

In the same way that the all too easily accepted truths about globalization have ignored the uneven and differentiated forms of capitalism emerging in the 21st century, so too it is crucial not to ignore the injustices and uneven patterns of sports labour migration. It is essential that any contemporary understanding of sport must actively listen and engage with other sporting communities, places and voices. Perhaps it is impossible for humanity or sport to arrive at an understanding of the values that unite it, but if the leading capitalist nations ceased to impose their own ideas on the rest of the sporting world and start to take cognizance of 'other' sporting cultures, then the aspiration of sport may become more just and less charitable. It is not charity which Africa or African runners want but the tools by which Africans can determine their own well-being and life chances in a more equitable sporting world (McAlpine, 2005). If large parts of Africa are kept poor as a result of unfair trade arrangements, which facilitate cheap European and American imports that keep parts of Africa poor and dependent, then why should the resources afforded by running not be viewed as a viable route out of poverty for those that can make it?

The issue is put more explicitly in the work of Collier who asserts that single-factor theories about development fail to recognize that a one-size fits all theory of development fails in part to acknowledge the distinct poverty traps that some developing countries face. (Collier, 2007). For the past fifty years or more what we have defined as developing countries tends to encompass about five billion of the six billion people in the world. Those whose development has failed face potentially intractable problems and account for the bottom billion people and about fifty failing states. This bottom billion live on less than a dollar a day and while the rest of the world moves steadily forward this forgotten billion is left further behind and the gap between rich and poor fails to diminish in economic terms. Conventional international aid has been unable to impact in areas of the world in which corruption, political instability and resource management lie at the root of many problems (Collier, 2007). The lack of growth in the countries of the bottom billion needs particular strategies for particular circumstances. The object of international development should not be aid but growth. The politics of the bottom billion is not a contest between the rich developed world and a number of economically poorer worlds but it is difficult for parts of Africa, Haiti, Bolivia, Laos, Cambodia, Yemen, Burma, North Korea to compete with the likes of China, India and or Brazil. The fifty eight countries which make up Collier's bottom billion people have fewer people than China or India combined (Coillier, 2007) One of the few forums where the heads of the major governments meet is the G20.

## **Capitalism, A New World Order and the Audacity of Hope**

An important priori in any contemporary discussion of capitalism is to firstly acknowledge that it still exists but perhaps more importantly to acknowledge that it exists in new forms. Capital today is much more fluid, it flows much more readily looking for the optimum conditions with which to reproduce itself and in turn accumulate greater capital. Sports businesses continue to look around the world, not just around the

locale, the region or the nation for greater profit. Capitalism is marked by the rise to pre-eminence of the trans-national corporations that in terms of their size and power are able to take advantage of whatever opportunities exist to lower the costs of production, typically by shifting aspects of sports production from wealthier to relatively poorer countries, or through consolidation, merger or take over. Contemporary capitalism also takes place within an alleged regime of international governance that seeks to accommodate the interests of nation-states and the needs of trans-national capital.

At the same time there is almost the unquestionable challenge that sport in many ways is part of the hallmark of the triumph of capitalism coupled with the growing ascendancy of economics over politics, of the corporate demands for sport over public policy and of private sporting interest over public sporting interests. Neo-liberal thinking about sport in many ways implies the end of politics because of the centrality of the market as the resource allocator and the submission of public life and the commons to commodification.

But what happens when the market collapses- albeit temporarily? It is tempting to suggest that globalisation represents but a further acceleration towards the capitalization of the sporting world but to accept such an analogy would be to acknowledge uncritically the rhetorical promotion of globalisation as capitalism and the submission of public life and the commons to commodification. That is to say that at one level the services that remain in the public sector according to neo-liberalism have to be compelled to run themselves as private enterprises and the role of different sporting worlds is simply to compete for customers. At another level neo-liberalism also advocates a clear path towards economic convergence between the richest and poorest parts of the world if the governments of poor countries strictly adhere to liberal policies. While neo-liberalism is an intellectually complex body of knowledge involving diverse strands of argument its politics are pristinely simple in that politics ceases to have any meaning beyond terms prescribed by the market.

To accept such logic would be to deny or reduce to a matter of insignificance the many opportunities for social change and social reform that are presented by and through contemporary sport. To deny that such opportunities for social change do not exist would be just as utopian as thinking that older variants of capitalism remain the way of the 21st century- this is not the case. It would also crucially fail to acknowledge that contemporary capitalism is itself at a cross-road. New parameters of geo- global politics and socio-economic co-operation exist. That is to say that policies are forged and implemented and that political ideas wax and wane within an increasingly global space that at one level is geopolitical and at another level is socio-economic. Opportunities for social change in and through sport exist at both these levels.

Capitalism is in itself a good example of a contested concept or idea. It is contested along two dimensions- explanatory and normative. Capitalist sport, often synonymous with global sport, is also a contested idea but all too often the alternatives to it remain silent as a result key silences about sports' role within alternative debates about internationalism, anti-globalisation, anti-capitalism, social movements and the power of the social within the world past and present (Campbell, 2009; Rees, 2008; Tormey, 2004). Neo-liberalism some have suggested is dead but the values often associated with neo-liberalism may still have residual influences (Fraser, 2009). Freedom has often been reduced to the right to buy and sell and reduces opportunities for solidarity to privatized individualism. The meeting of the G20 world leaders was also meant to be symbolic of the coming of a new social order and a more humane form of capitalism in response to a crisis brought about in part by the collapse of US-led global finance and the American state (Rees, 2008). President Barack Obama acknowledged that the old Washington consensus of unfettered globalisation and deregulation was now outmoded and a more balanced approach to regulating markets rather than letting them run free was required (Obama, 2006). Set against this background the potential of sport cannot be seen to reside within the values promoted by sport or particular forms of capitalism. The possibilities that exist within sport are those that can help with radically different views of the world perhaps based upon opportunities to foster trust, obligations, redistribution and respect for sport in a more socially orientated humane world. This has to be part of any debate about sport and international development.

Sport's transformative capacity must not be overstated but possibilities do exist within sport to provide some resources of hope in a new world order.

The audacity of hope is Barack Obama's call for a new kind of politics- a politics that builds upon shared understandings to make a difference and pull people together. The Audacity of Hope is about the idea that we might begin to renew the process of changing politics and civic life and it is grounded in a notion of a common good (Obama, 2006). It is interesting to note that on the eve of the election for the new President of the United States of America (USA) both Barack Obama and John McCain were interviewed on the half-time show of Monday Night Football. Asked the same questions, they differed significantly on only one: if you could change one thing about American sports what would it be? McCain offered something worthy about sorting out the steroid problem while Obama wanted a college football play-off. Obama is not only the first black President of the USA but the first President to identify himself primarily as a basketball fan. Reagan played football at college, Bushes senior and junior are both baseball men, Clinton did play basketball at Oxford but Obama's basketball credentials are good. It has been widely reported that he shook off Election Day nerves playing basketball. In *Dreams of my Father*, Obama writes ' that I was trying to raise myself to being a black man in America and, beyond the given of my appearance, no one around me seemed to know what that means'.

The possibilities that exist through sport are those that can help with radically different views of the world and this has to be part of any understanding which underpins the complexity of the sport in development relationship. It also suggests that perhaps capitalism itself is at a critical crossroads and that the global financial crisis, a decidedly post-neo-liberal response and the election of an American President perhaps points to the fact that we may stand poised at the brink of a period of transformation. If so then the shape of any successor society will be the object of intense contestation. There are still no easy answers while conditions of acute exploitation, market irrationality and economic crisis are manifest everywhere albeit often in new forms. The new world order represented at the London summit was evident in the countries invited to the global summit. Unlike the former G8 countries the wider representation of the G20 group in which the presence of Ethiopia representing Africa, Thailand representing South East Asia alongside the more sizable emerging economies like India, China and Brazil ensured that wider issues were accounted for.

## **Narrowing the Gap or Resource of Hope?**

Improving life chances requires a co-ordinated effort and as such any contribution that sport can make must also build upon a wider coalition of sustained support for social and progressive policies. The life chances approach to narrowing the gap between rich and poor has a key role to play in producing social change (Fabian Society, 2006). It requires harnessing a strong political narrative and action plan that fits with many people's intuitive understanding that life should not be determined by socio-economic position and that people do have choices, whilst drawing attention to the fact that some people and places face greater risks and more limited opportunities. Equalising life chances and focusing on areas such as poverty should sit together as part of a vision for a better society, better sport and any progressive approach to sport and international development.

Sport it has been suggested should be thought of more as a potential resource of hope in that sport has some limited capacity to assist with development , can have an impact on life chances, be part of a holistic approach to what a recent report by a international think tank referred to as 'Narrowing the Gap' (Fabian Society, 2006). Intervention can come in many forms, legislation, policy, writing, investigating, uncovering silences, pressure groups, social forums, campaigns and activism, re-allocation of resources, not accepting injustice in sport, and intervention through projects designed stimulate aid. Historically sport, often linked with education, has been a key avenue of social mobility and an escape from poverty for some. Thinking systematically about emancipatory alternatives and the part played by sport is only one way or element in the

process by which the limits of the possible can expand and the promise and possibilities of sport can become more of a reality for more people. Sociologists and those interested in the role that sport has to play in social policy and international development still have to think about the transformative capacity of sport to contribute to the equalising life chances.

The promise of education through sport to narrow the gap should not be overestimated. The right of all people to have access to education and/ or sport and the small contribution that education through sport can make to this goal is not insignificant. With the international campaigns against world debt in a state of flux, new ideas and progressive ideas are needed to cure the problems in part caused by international finance institutions attempting to solve the debt problem of the global South and other places. Football is popular in places such as Brazil where it is estimated that some 25 million children work and a further 25 million who are not working are in school. The need to raise money for the family unit through the informal economy means that children often do not have access to education and the failure to study only serves to maintain poverty (OECD, 2008). Some of the projects presented through the work of Levermore and Beacom highlight both the promise and possibilities but also the limits of education through sport to make a difference (Levermore and Beacom, 2009). Sport cannot do this on it's own but swapping international debt for education, including education through sport, maybe one of the possible strategies open to a progressive, humanitarian international approach to education through sport which could challenge the very values at the heart of capitalisms impact upon sport. It may assist in creating the conditions that allow education through sport to thrive. In short, swapping debt for education including education through sport may assist millions of children and others to gain substantive education, transferable skills and enable some ultimately to become more active participants in a national economy, secure better life chances and escape the cycle of poverty.

## Conclusion

Sport needs to be more just and less charitable but it also continues to provide a pathway for hope for some in different parts of the world. Improving life chances requires a coordinated effort and as such any contribution that sport can make must also build upon a wider coalition of sustained support for social and progressive policies. The life chances approach to narrowing the gap between rich and poor has a key role to play in producing social change. It requires harnessing a strong political narrative and action plan that fits with many people's intuitive understanding that life should not be determined by socio-economic position and that people do have choices, whilst drawing attention to the fact that some people and places face greater risks and more limited opportunities. Certainly we may possibly be seeing the development of capitalism with a more human face, the early stirrings of a new wave of change aimed at articulating alternative views of the world and sport can make a limited but popular and very public contribution to an open future. The audacity of hope thesis acknowledges that unfettered globalisation and deregulation are now outmoded and a more balanced approach to regulating markets is needed rather than letting them run free.

The Ethiopian athlete and politician, once Olympic champion and former world record holder, Haile Gebrselassie has left us in no doubt about both the social and political responsibility of the athlete and the limits and possibilities of sport in relation to poverty in his country. In an interview Haile Gebrselassie drew attention to the context and circumstances that were his early life (Gebreselassie, 2003). Talking of his life aged 15 'This was all at a time when my father was cross with me because I was doing athletics and my country was going through famine in which millions died and all I had was running- I just ran and ran all the time and I got better and better'. Talking of the necessity to run-'I only started running because I had to-we were six miles from school and there was so much to be done on the farm that I ran to school and back again to have enough time to do farming as well as school work'. Finally his talking of the political responsibility of the athlete left one in no doubt about the priorities-'eradicating poverty is all that matters in my country. When I am training I think about this a lot; when I am running it is going over in my mind- as a country we cannot move forward until we eradicate poverty and whereas sport can help - the real problems will not be

overcome just by helping Ethiopians to run fast'. In reality sport can only make a small contribution, but small contributions can sometimes make a difference. How sport can help in the fight against poverty should not be shelved as a historical question until much more has been done to fight both relative and absolute experiences of poverty worldwide and to note what sport can or cannot do to help.

Finally, there is much in Amartya Sen's work on development and freedom (Sen, 2001). The author has argued that inequalities of power matter as much as inequalities of income. The idea of justice exposes the idea that to be genuinely free you have to have a capability set. What Sen argues is that the market economy is not a free-standing institution, nor a self-regulating one. You need support from other institutions. You need other resources of hope. You need supervision from the state, you need supplementation by the state and society to take care of poverty, ill-health, illiteracy, and educational achievement and opportunity. There is more to inequality than disparities of income distribution but this does not mean that people's ability to choose for themselves, the lives they wish to lead is not drastically curtailed by economic circumstances. In other words to take care of inequalities of capability you need resources of hope from many fronts and the question remains as to whether sport can be a resource of hope, add capability for people in need.

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# East Asian Sport Thoughts

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