Global Citizenship and the Ethical Challenges of ‘Sport for Development and Peace’

Simon C. Darnell
Lecturer in Sport, School of Applied Social Sciences
Durham University

Keywords: Sport; Development; Globalization; Global Citizenship; Politics

ABSTRACT: Recent years have seen increased recognition, promotion and institutionalization of the role of sport and physical activity amidst struggles for just and sustainable development on an international scale. This paper explores the ways in, and extent to, which global citizenship – the idea that humans are citizens of the world with global rights and responsibilities – underpins this institutionalization and popularity of Sport for Development and Peace (SDP). These connections are then used to put forth a series of critical and ethical complications regarding the mobilization of sport towards meeting international development goals. In particular, the paper argues that any progressive and ethical invocation of sport as a means of supporting sustainable development depends more on the ways in which global citizenship is interpreted and acted upon by SDP stakeholders than it does on the global popularity of sport as an entry into the field or context of international development.

I. ‘Sport for Development and Peace’ as a Global Phenomenon

This paper focuses on the connections between global citizenship and the mobilization of sport for international development. Recent years have seen increased recognition, promotion and institutionalization of the role and contributions of sport and physical activity within struggles for just and sustainable development on an international scale. A host of organizations are now interested and active in mobilizing sport to meet enduring international development goals such as improved education, HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention, conflict resolution, economic growth, community cohesion and the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (see Kay, 2011). The International Platform on Sport and Development (www.sportanddev.org) lists hundreds of different organizations coordinating sport and sport programs towards development goals and the United Nations’ Office on Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP) works to facilitate the organization of sport-based development programs and policies internationally and throughout the UN system.

The recent popularity and institutionalization of this movement towards ‘Sport for Development and Peace’ (SDP) (see Kidd, 2008) has been accompanied by increased scholarly attention and critical analysis. Much of this work has illustrated and described the various ways in which sport is connected to, and mobilized towards, development goals from conflict resolution
and gender empowerment to social and economic mobility and health promotion (see Burnett, 2006; Kay, 2009; Coalter, 2010; Levermore & Beacom, 2009; Kidd, 2008; Black, 2010; Darnell and Black, 2011; Spaaij, 2011; Giulianotti, 2011 among others). This paper does not set out to repeat these analyses but is concerned, instead, with some of the broader socio-political shifts and concepts necessary to have facilitated, and to currently support, the burgeoning interest in SDP, both in practice and at a conceptual level. Here, recent scholarship has drawn attention to at least three shifts in globalization, international relations and the political economy of development that underpin the momentum of SDP.

First, the argument has been put forth that the interest in SDP, particularly from the perspective of sport organizations, can be viewed as part of an emerging 4th pillar of development aid (Develtere & DeBruyn, 2009) that complements but stands apart from the traditional development sectors of government, multilateral institutions and non-governmental organizations. Sport organizations are now interested in development issues, and in making a contribution to meeting development goals, to a degree not seen before. This is evident in the active role played in SDP by professional sports clubs and leagues, transnational corporations from the sport sector, international sport organizations, and celebrity athletes. Second, the move towards SDP can be understood as constituted by, and constitutive of, the shifting international aid paradigm that has moved away from traditional aid deliverance and towards new strategic development programming and policies (see Coalter, 2010). In this way, the institutionalization of SDP has been facilitated by the ability of those with an interest and/or stake in sport to make the case that it offers ‘an economy of solutions’ (Coalter, 2010, p. 303) to broader development movements, such as the ongoing attempts to meet the UN’s MDGs. And third, SDP is understood to be connected to the rise of the transnational civil society in which a variety of institutional and political forces, including NGOs, new social movements, and corporations, have increasingly taken an active role in the organization of global politics and, in the case of SDP, formulated sport-based responses to development inequalities (see Giulianotti, 2011).

I concur with all of these understandings of the social and political underpinnings of SDP. However, I suggest that the notion of global citizenship, the idea that humans are citizens of the world with global rights and responsibilities (Dower & Williams, 2002), also plays a constitutive role in the organization and mobilization of sport-for-development as a political philosophy and practice. This is because global citizenship offers a relatively stable and generally intelligible political basis for positioning global sporting forms, and international volunteering based on sport, at the service of international development. In other words, the concept of global citizenship, and support for its political effects, contributes, at least in part, to the socio-political ideology of compassionate, informed universalism or critical modernism (Hickey & Mohan, 2005), an ideology that is useful and even necessary for viewing sport, sport organizations and sportspersons as progressive forces for development. To date, though, this dimension of SDP has rarely been thoroughly or critically analyzed in academic circles (see Tiessen, 2011 for an important exception).

In the remainder of the paper, I explore the political ethos of global citizenship and its relationship to SDP and, in turn, offer a critical analysis of some of the implications and ethical dimensions of SDP as both a form and result of global citizenship. To do so, I explore the political underpinnings of the current momentum of SDP, and connect it to scholarship on global citizenship drawing, in particular, on the work of Nigel Dower (2002, 2003; & Williams, 2002). Based on
Global Citizenship and the Ethical Challenges of ‘Sport for Development and Peace’

These connections, I put forth seven sets of implications constituted along particular vectors of socio-political power that render SDP, like the concept of global citizenship itself and the field of development more broadly, politically ambiguous and a site for ongoing critical analysis (Black, 2010). While recognizing and acknowledging that there are numerous benefits and progressive underpinnings to the ethos of global citizenship, namely that it can support global solidarity and draw attention to the interconnected dynamics of global inequality and politics, I take this paper as an opportunity to argue that the universality and popularity of (dominant) sporting forms that are regularly positioned as the basis for the appropriateness, importance and novelty of SDP is not politically benign or neutral but instead directly connected to a very particular world view. This world view is one in which all persons are understood to be citizens of the world and to have a responsibility to and for issues of global inequality, but one that may also obscure transnational relations of power and privilege through recourse to depoliticized notions of universalism (Biccum, 2010). As a result, if we understand SDP as a form of global citizenship, and not merely as a by-product of the (global) popularity of (global) sport, it becomes increasingly important to think critically about the possibilities and limitations of mobilizing sport towards development. This necessity is also driven by the fact that the organization and culture of global sport itself often perpetuates and sustains unethical practices. The global governance of football/soccer is a prime example of this, evidenced by the repeated involvement of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) in scandals of bribery and corruption (Sugden and Tomlinson, 2005) and its complicity in the ongoing exploitation of global footballers as migrant labour (see Darby, 2001a and 2001b).

It should be noted, then, that this paper is not an attempt to ‘prove’ the existence of global citizenship or to establish whether or not, as increasingly connected inhabitants of the planet, contemporary subjects have actually achieved a standing as global citizens (see Dower, 2002 for an examination of such issues). Rather than debating the material or social reality of global citizenship, I proceed from a perspective that a strong ethos or support for global citizenship necessarily underpins much of the momentum towards SDP seen in recent years. It is this commitment to global citizenship as a basis for the activities of SDP – particularly the work of NGOs, supranational sporting organizations, and international volunteers – that I argue is worth unpacking and reflecting upon, particularly in terms of its political dimensions, ethical implications and challenges. The paper is intended for those who have an interest in the contributions that sport can make towards international development issues of sustainability, inequality and social justice and who also take seriously the importance of critical self-reflection upon the relations of power that complicate the field of sport, development and SDP. In turn, I argue that for those interested in the notion of global citizenship, and the critical examination of its mobilization and implications, global sport and the institutionalization of SDP offers an important opportunity for such inquiries.

It is also important to acknowledge that while recent analyses have argued that the use and support of sport for meeting development goals is often facilitated and championed at a local level, and not exclusively by trans-, inter-national or global interests or organizations (see Lindsey & Grattan, 2012), I do focus here on the global organizations and institutions interested in SDP and that are arguably recognized as the leaders of the SDP movement. This does not mean that local groups do not use sport-for-development but does recognize that international development inequalities exist, and are sustained, through differential power relations. In turn, I conceptualize my critical analysis towards people in positions of relative power, privilege and wealth – such as
international volunteers – who look to mobilize sport as a way to make a difference and are therefore implicated in the ongoing challenges of international development.

II. The Conceptual Basis of Global Citizenship

Dower (2003, p. 6-7) argues that the notion and practice of global citizenship rests on two components: the normative, existential and aspirational status of all human beings and the acceptance of these statuses on a global scale, albeit to varying degrees. In this sense, there is a strong ethic of universalism that runs through the notion of global citizenship, one that recognizes and positions the rights and responsibilities of the citizen as extending beyond the traditional community or nation and beyond the political confines of the state. In turn, the fact, need for and importance of global citizenship proceed from the political realities and demands of the world in the 21st century marked by sustained and severe inequalities, both material and social (see Judt, 2010).

Indeed, Dower & Williams (2002) make the case that the growth in the concept of global citizenship and its associated interest amongst scholars and critics, stems from the extent to which social and political problems of poverty, ill health and environmental degradation are increasingly global in their scope and pose threats to the planet and to all humans. This, combined with the processes of technology and mobile capital that facilitate globalization, has encouraged, if not necessitated a re-evaluation of the notion of citizenship and an interest in cosmopolitan or global ethics.

Importantly for this paper, the social, political and material components that Dower suggests give rise to the concept of and interest in global citizenship – namely global problems, processes of globalization, renewed interest in citizenship generally, and global ethics – can all be seen within sport and SDP to varying degrees. Not only is sport an increasingly global phenomenon (Andrews & Grainger, 2007), recognized by and for its intelligibility in various social, political and geographical settings, but global sport is also intimately connected to, and often responsible for, global inequalities of poverty, exploitation, migration, and environmental degradation (see Thibault, 2009). In turn, it is reasonable to argue that the political trajectory and ethos that spawned this most recent iteration of sport as a force for development proceeded from a recognition that social and political inequality was a global concern, that sportspersons, as citizens, had an opportunity and held a moral responsibility to act in a globally ethical manner, and that development and global citizenship offered a prospect for significant reform in the world of sport (see Kidd, 2008; Coalter, 2010; Maguire, 2011).

In fact, the components of global citizenship or of the typical global citizen, map rather tidily onto the work currently being done by many stakeholders within the SDP sector. For example, Dower (2003, p. 48) suggests that global citizenship can be seen in civil society organizations taking an active role in public affairs and doing so based on the “affirmation of the universal moral rights of all human beings as something widely recognized.” This aligns with Coalter’s (2010) examination of SDP that illustrates how the notion of human rights has served as a political anchor for the institutionalization of sport-for-development. Notable SDP NGOs like Right to Play fit this kind of framework as they position sport, physical activity and physical education as rights owed to citizens of the world (also see Donnelly, 2008) and then work, as civil society actors, to ensure these rights for marginalized populations.
In turn, analyses of global citizenship also call for differentiation between what is currently in place or practiced through and by global citizens versus what is aspired towards through a commitment to global citizenship (Dower, 2003). It is this importance of critical self-reflection that is here brought to bear upon how SDP is conceptualized, articulated and politicized. Even if global citizenship, as either a concept or an observable reality, proceeds from the relatively benign notion that human beings are indeed citizens of the world, there are myriad ethical and political implications that result. Chief among these is the idea that the responsibility to act as a global citizen when faced with, and implicated in, global inequality can often, and sometimes easily, slide into a politics of global entitlement, a tendency to essentialize marginalization or oppression as fundamental to racialized Others, or even reify relations of dominance over Others through the act of ‘helping’ (See Heron, 2007). As Dower and Williams (2002, p. 5) suggest, the rise of global citizenship calls for critical and sustained questioning of the ways in which a global citizen actualizes the notion of citizenship and what the ethical components of global citizenship should be. The purpose of such critical insights is not to establish a dichotomous relationship between championing and abandoning the concept of global citizenship, but rather to recognize the need for critical analysis and self-reflection amidst forms of global action. For SDP, some of the issues upon which this kind of reflection should be focused are of a particular nature given the specificities of physical culture and global sport. To that end, in the next section I explore the ways in which global citizenship underpins and connects to SDP, before critically analyzing some of the implications of positioning and mobilizing sport as a form of global citizenship.

III. Connecting SDP to Global Citizenship

With some of the main components of global citizenship in mind, it remains to make the case that an ethos of global citizenship underpins the current mobilization and institutionalization of Sport for Development and Peace. I suggest that it is possible to connect global citizenship to SDP on three conceptual levels – the organizational, the political/philosophical, and the cultural. Each is discussed here in some detail.

First, despite calls for caution about the extent to which SDP represents a stable, unitary global or international movement, and/or problematic form of ‘top-down’ development (see Lindsey & Grattan, 2012; Giulianotti, 2011), it is still reasonable to position SDP as constituting and constitutive of global citizenship. This is because of the extent to, and ways in, which inter- and supra-national organizations have taken an active interest and role in the movement. For example, the role of the United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace as a stakeholder in the broader SDP movement speaks to and represents a global vision of sport towards development that evokes key tenets of global citizenship, such as the institutional engagement and interest in global problems actualized beyond the nation state and traditional government actors. In this way, sport, through SDP, comes to represent a political ethos of global governance and international activism in which social and economic problems exist on a global scale and to which global organizations, often with standing autonomous to that of national governments, have an ability and responsibility to redress.

Such politics are clearly supported by the globalization of sport itself that makes sporting organizations increasingly transnational in their vision, reach and branding. In addition to the work of the UNOSDP, SDP as a form of institutional global citizenship is evident in the ways in which the International Olympic Committee (IOC), FIFA and various transnational organizations, like
Nike and adidas, contribute to the mobilization of sport towards meeting development goals (see Levermore, 2011; Hayhurst, 2011). SDP connects to global citizenship through the development interests and initiatives of these kinds of global sport organizations and stakeholders.

Second, there is a political/philosophical basis that connects SDP to global citizenship, one based on the championing and assertion of universal human rights and a moral commitment to supporting the development of people and communities internationally. Particularly from the perspective of young people in the Global North who consider themselves to be progressive members of a global community, the invocation of universal human rights – and sport as a human right – positions the organization and diffusion of sport as a way to support the achievement and realization of human rights for those around the world who are too often denied them. Sport and SDP connects to global citizenship not only as a philosophical basis for global awareness and action but also as a political tool to contribute to the sustainable achievement and realization of universal human rights to health, education and prosperity. In this way, programs under the banner of SDP can be seen to respond – through fundraising, organizing and activism – to the ongoing difficulty and challenge of finding ways to actually act on and achieve human rights amidst geopolitical hierarchies of inequality (see Teeple, 2005).

Third, it is reasonable to argue that there is a cultural dimension to the connections between sport, SDP and global citizenship, one that takes the hyper-visible popularity of global sporting forms, as well as the global reach of sports mega-events like the Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup, as a basis for global solidarity and global action focused on sport. In other words, much of the cultural rhetoric of SDP as a form of development and global citizenship continues to trade on and perpetuate the notion of sport as a ‘universal language’ and therefore as applicable and suitable for international development. In turn, political action based on the intelligibility and popularity of global sporting forms becomes a form of global citizenship and simultaneously supportive of it.

Of course, while these three bases of SDP as a form of global citizenship are separated into distinct categories for the purposes of this section, this should be considered an heuristic device and not mutually exclusive in practice. Rather, all three of these levels of understanding global citizenship – institutional, philosophical and cultural – interconnect, and often in supportive ways. However, they also interact in a sometimes contradictory fashion where global sport is positioned as a force for good despite sustained evidence to the contrary. Given this, in the next section, I examine some of the ethical and political implications, challenges and cautions of mobilizing sport, via global citizenship, towards meeting development goals.

**IV. Implications and Cautions of Global Citizenship in SDP**

To this point, I have described the organization and momentum of Sport for Development and Peace, drawn out some of the core characteristics of the notion and practice of global citizenship, and attempted to connect the two at a conceptual level. In this section, I suggest seven areas, intelligible along particular vectors of power and politics, which call for critical analysis when considering sport and SDP as a form of progressive global citizenship.

First, it is crucial to explore, and consider critically, the extent to which power is implicated in the globalization of sport and global sporting forms (Andrews & Grainger, 2007), if only because it is these global sporting forms – particularly soccer/football – that are regularly mobilized and
Global Citizenship and the Ethical Challenges of ‘Sport for Development and Peace’

championed through SDP. Key to such consideration is the understanding that the global presence and apparent universal appeal of many sporting forms is not a natural or benign fact of culture but rather the result of complex and inter-related processes of commercialization, the migration of people and movement of capital, media activity, as well as historical and neo-colonizing forces and local, cultural agency. There is a prevailing tendency to understand sporting forms as inherently universal, and therefore an appropriate cultural formation for development programs designed to respond to global inequality. However, popular global sporting forms are more accurately understood as forms of ‘glocalization’ because they are challenged and re-constituted at the intersection of the global and the local and result in recognizable yet distinctive sporting cultures and practices in different geographic settings (Andrews & Grainger, 2007). In turn, the popularity of these sporting cultures may be viewed as the effects of ‘glocalization,’ in which economically and culturally powerful global sporting organizations like FIFA, or sports marketing/merchandising firms like adidas, assert their interests across the world through branding, sponsorship, event hosting and now, through supporting SDP projects (Andrews and Ritzer, 2007). Andrews & Ritzer (2007, p. 135) illustrate that it is the interplay between the “glocal” and the “grobal” that gives rise “to the structure and experience of everyday sport cultures.” As a result, the tendency to universalize sport as a basis for SDP, one that references and is supported by a commitment to global citizenship, runs the risk of positioning sports like football/soccer as universal truths or human rights when their interest and popularity more accurately proceeds from, and reflects, the cultural, political and economic negotiations between local actors and global forces. Put differently, given that sport is intimately connected to the forces of globalization, it cannot be considered benignly universal. SDP is not immune from the potentially destructive and colonizing effects of globalization (see Thibault, 2009) even when the undeniable fact that sport is fun, popular and enjoyed by children and youth, positions sport as a useful and attractive means of supporting the goals of international development.

Second, and closely related, is the extent to which the globalization of sport (as both a driver and result of broader forces of economic and cultural globalization) means that sport is implicated, at a rather fundamental level, in the construction, maintenance and even perpetuation of the same development inequalities that many SDP programs and initiatives seek to redress. The irony that global sport is implicated in the politics of global underdevelopment, and that many SDP programs do not outwardly or directly proceed from the perspective that there are political antecedents and relations of power underpinning such development inequalities, is rarely explored or articulated in SDP research or critical analysis, despite the fact that critical scholarship in sport studies continues to elucidate some of the more deleterious effects of the globalization of sport.

Thibault (2009), for example, recently drew attention to four ways in which the globalization of sport produces negative or unjust relations, practices and material results, the negative effects of which, similar to development more broadly, are disproportionately experienced by those in the global South. In her analysis, she identified the use of sweatshop labour to produce sporting equipment; the exploitation of migrant athletes seeking employment in the well-paying professional leagues of the global North; the homogenization of sporting cultures through transnational media and corporatization; and the costly environmental footprint of many sporting practices and events. These negative effects mean that sport does not necessarily contribute to development, and may in fact exacerbate the processes and inequalities that sustain the need for international development programs, based on sport or otherwise. For example, growth in profits enjoyed by corporations like Nike and adidas have led to increased sponsorship dollars but not
improved conditions and wages for its international workforce (Thibault, 2009). Similarly, athlete migration disproportionately benefits established leagues and circuits in affluent countries while leaving sport under-developed in the global South and opportunities for sport-for-development significantly reduced. As a result, sport-based NGOs can be understood to be actually working to redress the kinds of inequalities that the organization of global sport perpetuates on an ongoing basis.

To be fair, it is not the case that such processes of exploitation and environmental degradation in and through global sport are necessarily exacerbated in and through SDP programs themselves, many of which do undeniably important work. Still, the effects of global sport beg for critical analysis of the extent to which sport organizations – particularly transnational sporting goods corporations like Nike and adidas that are increasingly interested in SDP – trade on a discourse of global citizenship and therefore invoke SDP as a way to position themselves as good corporate citizens without making significant structural changes to the political economy of development inequality (see Levermore, 2011). At the least, what is called for is a critical analysis that connects the ways in which the culture and business of global sport exacerbates development inequalities to the ways in which sport is currently mobilized to overcome these inequalities through a somewhat curious – if not counterintuitive – circuit of development politics. At the least, if the globalization of sport is part of what constructs the popularity of sport in ways that facilitate its support for development struggles, then the negative consequences and implications of these processes must also be taken into account.

Third, even though the notion and operation of global citizenship proceeds from and connects to the role of civil society in global affairs and responses to inequality, the rather exceptional combination of power and opacity enjoyed by many supranational sporting organizations should give pause to most progressive global citizens interested in the role of sport-for-development. Even casual observers of international sport will be familiar with the myriad of bribery and corruption scandals connected to the IOC and FIFA in recent years. The influence, affluence and prestige enjoyed by these fundamentally undemocratic Business International Non Governmental Organizations, or BINGOs as referred to by Sugden & Tomlison (2005), is at odds, and perhaps even diametrically opposed, to the social and political ethos of global democracy at the heart of much global citizenship thinking and SDP organizing. These two organizations are also both active in SDP initiatives – FIFA through Football for Hope and the IOC through Olympism in Action and its institutional ties to the United Nations – and therefore in positions to influence the funding and policy directions of SDP. It is important that scholars and activists are cautious if not vigilant about their involvement (see Peacock, 2011). Of course, small scale, independent NGOs and activist groups committed to sport-for-development may be able to carve out political space at arms length from such undemocratic regimes, but recent fieldwork suggests that the influence – institutional and financial – of sporting BINGOs and sports mega-events in the field of SDP make this an increasingly difficult proposition (Darnell, 2012).

Fourth, issues of local agency, values and demands, particularly as they are connected to struggles for sustainable, equitable and relevant development, call for ongoing critical analysis and reflection as SDP is mobilized through an ethos of global citizenship, and implemented in the global South. Recent research has drawn attention to such issues. Guest’s (2009) fieldwork found that community members in Angola largely rejected the cultural notions of development – such as the facilitation of self-esteem through sport – ascribed to and perpetuated by externally organized
and facilitated SDP projects. Similarly, Lindsey & Grattan (2012) drew on fieldwork with community organizers in Zambia to draw attention to local agency in the use of sport to meet development goals and to the ways in which community organizers largely eschewed an international model of SDP or a top-down chain of development aid. These analyses point not only to the importance of understanding glocalized and globalized sporting forms (as discussed above) but also illustrate that sport in support of development cannot be conceptualized as, or expected to follow in practice, a linear path of social improvement based on universal ideals of development. Sport and SDP, like development more broadly, is always open to cultural negotiation and therefore can be marked by ambiguity and political contestation (see Asher, 2009). As a result, the construction and mobilization of a global model of SDP, even one based on the progressive notion of global citizenship, will likely still be influenced by, or forced to confront, resistance to development and in turn, development as resistance to global forces (see McMichael, 2010). Those interested in championing sustainable, local development through sport will therefore be required to confront and reconcile such machinations of cultural and political agency and the limitations of global citizenship.

Fifth is the issue of social dominance, particularly at the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality and ability. Recent critical analyses into SDP have argued that the universalization of the sporting experience – a notion rendered intelligible and justified through the progressive ethos of global citizenship – can simultaneously support racial hierarchies, cultural essentialisms and the Othering of the global South (see Tiessen, 2011; Darnell, 2007; 2010b). Absent of critical analyses of the geographic, economic and cultural forces, both historical and contemporary, that construct and make intelligible such hierarchies, sport in SDP can actually come to stand as the operational basis for, or even ‘proof’ of, northern stewardship, and the dominance of Whiteness. It is a short step from the entry to SDP that global sport and global citizenship afford to the belief that the organization of, and participation in sport itself stands as a cultural marker of development, enlightenment and modernity.

Arguably, this tendency to essentialize sport and physical culture in ways that support relations of dominance such as hierarchies of race and gender is particularly accessible to the young and generally successful sports people who bring positive sporting experiences to the SDP encounter, and are drawn to SDP service as volunteers. Darnell’s (2010a and 2010b) analysis of the experiences of young Canadians who served abroad in the SDP movement, found that the universalization of sport (as well as that of international development) often offered recourse to an essentialist politics that precluded deeper analyses of structural inequality and transnational privilege. In turn, the tendency to view sport as a global experience, and to approach SDP as a form of global citizenship, likely make it more difficult to conduct critical self-reflection upon these process once young people find themselves in the field of SDP as staff or volunteers.

From this perspective, there is a strong post-colonialist, or Third Wave feminist, argument to be brought to bear on SDP, one that calls attention to the ways in which saving the distant Other, in this case through the privileging and mobilization of physical culture, does little to challenge – and may in fact reinforce – the racial hierarchies that have sustained global inequality since the original colonial projects. In turn, cosmopolitanism, or a belief in the right or need to be a member of the global community and act accordingly, arguably proceeds from, requires and eventually sustains geo-political hierarchies based on nationalism and the sanctity and hegemony of neo-liberalism within the global political economy (Grewal, 2005). The conceptualization of sport as a global
phenomenon, the physical and cultural mobility that this affords, and the ways in which sport brings people together literally and metaphorically, does little in and of itself to challenge relations of power and hierarchies of race, class and gender, relations that continue to sustain development inequalities on a global scale. Rather, critical analysis and challenges to dominance are required for such a project.

In a related manner, and sixth, is the extent to which SDP signifies a new approach to sport in the service of the social and political good. This is complicated by whether commitments to global citizenship in the 21st century actually represent new forms of development practice. As Biccum (2010) has put forth, the history of international development – particularly as a project supported by the global North – is best viewed as a series of ruptures that have served primarily to re-inscribe dominance and innocence for the world’s relative privileged and powerful. The ‘re-invention’ of development at various epochs arguably serves to construct the notion of northern stewardship in ways that ‘educate’ privileged citizens about the sanctity and entitlement of their transnational positioning. The extent to which SDP, as a form of contemporary global citizenship represents such a rupture, for both the history of sport and the history of international development more broadly, is worthy of ongoing analysis, as are the implications for SDP programs in sustaining and/or challenging the structures and antecedents of global inequality.

Finally, and seventh, the influence of neo-liberalism as a philosophy, worldview and means of political organization also calls for critical analysis in the field of SDP as it relates to global citizenship. As Falk (2002) has argued, global citizenship becomes more salient and necessary in a world where neo-liberal ideology is hegemonic and opportunities reduced for citizens to benefit or rely upon state-based support and the public sphere. In this way, SDP as a form of global citizenship not only proceeds from, but is also asked to respond to, the basic needs of human existence, needs that are made increasingly difficult to meet for swaths of the planet’s population within the competitive global political economy sustained by neo-liberalism. This paradox of global citizenship as a product of, yet also a response to the inequalities of the neo-liberal political economy, places SDP on political ground that is far from secure. This does not mean that SDP initiatives are inherently misguided, but that their progressive political orientation is not assured simply because of the popularity and intelligibility of sport around the world.

In turn, this paradox means that the practice and analysis of SDP need to be firmly situated within the dynamics of the global political economy. Some important case studies are beginning to emerge. For example, it is possible now to connect sport to movements of alter-globalization that seek to create alternative politics and social relations that are resistant to neo-liberal globalization (Harvey, Horne & Safai, 2009; Gruneau, in press). In addition, the use of sport by the Cuban state as a form of south-south solidarity, or counter-hegemonic development policy, offers a case of sport-for-development programming that potentially stands in opposition to the hegemony of neo-liberal economics and globalization (see Huish, 2011). Such cases are worthy of further analysis for the ways in which they inform and challenge the political orientation of global citizenship.

V. Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that the recent mobilization of Sport for Development and Peace can be understood as supported by, and furthering of, the notion of global citizenship or a commitment to being a citizen of the world. In turn, I have put forth a series of critical cautions
about the connections between sport, SDP and global citizenship and the tendency to obscure and therefore sustain global inequalities. However, given that the paper eschewed, from the outset, the notion of either championing or decrying global citizenship in SDP, I conclude here by arguing for the ethical and political components of an engaged and reflexive approach to SDP and global citizenship. Following Coalter’s (2009, 2010) critical analyses regarding policy development in SDP, what is needed for the success of SDP is not more technical solutions or ‘proof’ about what sport can or cannot do, but rather a more politically aware project that moves away from materialism and towards an “ethos of non-violence, sustainability, compassion and solidarity” (Falk, 2002, p. 28) and that can serve as a basis of progressive global citizenship.

As I have suggested through the preceding analysis, this kind of approach to SDP would benefit by taking into account the global and political forces that shape inequality around the globe – some of which are clearly exacerbated by global sport itself – and in turn positioning SDP as resistance to such forces and in solidarity with the members of the global community who suffer disproportionately as a result. At the same time, this kind of engaged global citizenship as a basis for SDP will need to remain vigilant regarding the ways in which sport, sporting cultures and sport-based economies, impose upon, and are resisted by, local interests and agents. A progressive global citizen in SDP will recognize that the popularity and universality of sport can be mobilized towards cultural and economic imperialism as easily as it can support local autonomy and culturally relevant understandings of development.

Important questions for those interested in supporting SDP through progressive global citizenship therefore emerge:

1. Why and how is sport popular in particular parts of the world? How is this popularity positioned in connection to sports’ presumed contributions to development?

2. To what development inequalities are SDP programs and policies responding? How did/do such inequalities come to be constructed and sustained in the first place? To what extent is the global sporting world implicated in such relations?

3. To what extent and how can sport be mobilized towards development in ways that support local autonomy and challenge relations of dominance, in social, political and material terms? In what ways can solidarity, rather than stewardship, be positioned and championed as the basis of SDP?

4. What draws international volunteers to service in SDP? What is the philosophical/political basis for their commitment and motivation to SDP and how is this complicated by the critical analysis of global sport?

In sum, the progressive mobilization of sport as means of supporting sustainable development relies more on the ways in which global citizenship is interpreted and acted upon by SDP stakeholders than it does on the popularity of sport as an entry into the field or context of international development. For scholars and activists interested in what sport offers to development and social justice, an ongoing commitment to critical self-reflection upon the notion of global citizenship will be of the utmost importance. That there is still relatively little evidence of such
sustained self-reflection currently occurring in the broader SDP field means that there is more work to be done in the ongoing struggle to mobilize sports towards meeting the challenges of development inequality. Of course, such efforts at critical self-reflection and reform of sport in the service of SDP and global citizenship are likely to be resisted and even rejected by the powerful interests who disproportionately benefit from the current structures and machinations of global sport. As a result, the real measure of SDP as a form of global citizenship may be the extent to which the sector is willing and able to take up and mobilize politically active responses to ongoing circuits of global inequality.
References


Endnotes

i Several scholars have pointed out that this recent momentum of SDP is but the latest incarnation of the positioning and mobilization of sport in the service of the social good and that SDP needs to be situated within an historical context connecting sport to social engineering, religious proselytizing, and political activism (see Giulianotti, 2004; Kidd, 2008; Levermore & Beacom, 2009; Spaaij, 2011).

ii There are several examples of the universalizing of sport within political discourses in support of SDP. One of the most frequently cited is the speech made by then U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan in 2004:

*Sport is a universal language. At its best it can bring people together, no matter what their origin, background, religious beliefs or economic status. And when young people participate in sports or have access to physical education, they can experience real exhilaration even as they learn the ideals of teamwork and tolerance. That is why the United Nations is turning more and more to the world of sport for help in our work for peace and our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. (UN, 2004)*

iii David Harvey has led the way in demonstrating how neo-liberal policies exacerbate inequality (see Harvey, 2007). While some discussion has considered the extent to which neo-liberalism continues to hold sway on a global scale after the 2008 global financial collapse (see Nedevereen Pieterse, 2010), it is reasonable to argue that the neo-liberal logic of efficiency, management and limited public spending remains hegemonic in the global political economy (Clarke, 2010). In turn, the extent to which SDP sustains or contributes to this current (re)constitution of neo-liberalism remains worthy of ongoing analysis.