

## EDITORIAL

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Dear Readers,

We are pleased to present the second issue of *Studia Territorialia* for 2024, entitled “Sport and Politics: Contexts, Connections, Confrontations.”

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, sport has become an inseparable part of modern life. It has played an increasingly important role in modern societies, from entertainment to commerce and public health. It has penetrated the institutional fabric of society and been more and more involved in the formation and expression of local, national, and even international collective identities. Prior to World War I, all these aspects of sport could be said to be *in statu nascendi*. However, after 1918, sport gradually evolved into an established phenomenon in contemporary mass society, with an increasingly strong link to politics.

In some instances, this evolution has manifested itself in the use of sport as a platform for promoting nationalist, racist, and colonial agendas. It has occasionally been exploited as an instrument of control in the social, gender, and religious spheres. Last but not least, it has become a big, profitable business.

In the period leading up to World War II, various social and professional groups pursued their political agendas through sporting activities. The rise of authoritarian and totalitarian dictatorships was accompanied by the politicization of sport. Such regimes valued sport as a means of self-promotion and for defining themselves vis-à-vis the outside world. During both world wars, sport was incorporated into the war effort. Strong athletes were promoted as heroes who embodied the best qualities of a given nation and team sports were likened to the combat activities of military units. Not surprisingly, sports activities were incorporated into military training.

After World War II, when the world was gripped by a bipolar power struggle, and later an unpredictable multipolar competition, sport fulfilled other

prominent political needs. From a socio-cultural perspective, sport was a stage for the emancipation of racial and gender minorities and the pursuit of other agendas. In the international context, attempts at using sport as a bridge between the two blocs alternated with celebrating international sporting events, including the Olympics, as opportunities to marginalize and weaken geopolitical rivals. In recent years, some autocratic regimes have continued to use sport as a tool for propaganda and the promotion of their power. These regimes' rivals have countered by excluding their national sports teams from participation in international competitions.

This special issue features three full-length articles that deal with the various entanglements of sport and politics. The contributions herein offer diverse disciplinary and methodological insights into sports as a political phenomenon, seen from the perspectives of historiography and sociology, and through an anthropological lens.

The opening article is a contribution to the historiography of the German Democratic Republic. In this study, Mike Dennis examines the role that sport played in the collapse of state socialism in East Germany. He shows how sport exacerbated existing tensions in East German politics. He further highlights how the state's prioritization of top-level sports fueled popular protests and clashed with growing individualization in lifestyles. He argues that young people's desires to shape their own lives, free from control by the state-party SED, led to increased interest in minor sports and soccer. Moreover, tournaments in these sports became common venues for private German-German encounters among their fans, thus undermining East Germany's communist rule.

German soccer fandom is also the subject of the second article. Focusing on the post-unification period, Arne Koch and John Hanson examine the interplay between soccer fandom and political activism in Germany. The authors trace the evolution of soccer fan engagement from sports-specific concerns to broader societal issues, to illustrate how supporters of select German soccer clubs articulate dissent against commercialization of sport and advocate for ethical governance within clubs. The authors conclude by arguing that in doing so, German soccer fans are increasingly challenging traditional notions of belonging and positioning themselves as active participants in club governance and societal debates.

Finally, in the third article, Lívía Šavelková provides an anthropological account of Indigenous peoples and their quest for sovereign representation at the Olympic Games throughout the last decades. She points to the structural setting of the International Olympic Committee as epitomized in its Rule 50 and

its requirement of “political neutrality.” She holds that this strict setting has been instrumental in preserving the unequal standing of Indigenous people in global sport and the predominant discourses related to them.

We hope you will find the contributions in this issue thought-provoking, and wish you an enjoyable read.

On behalf of the Editors,

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doi: 10.14712/23363231.2025.1