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Television

Wider screens, narrower visions?

Moving images and home comforts

The global media sports cultural complex comprises many different forms, genres, technologies and practices that work together – and sometimes against each other – in remorselessly insinuating sport into almost every conceivable space of the contemporary life world. As I argued in Chapter 2, television has, since the middle of the twentieth century, occupied the prime position among sport media. As television passed from the status of luxury consumer durable to routine domestic technology, sport was made available in the home in a manner that brought vibrant stadium action into that mundane environment's most sociable space – the aptly named 'living room'. This was not an uncontroversial development, given fears that televising sport would drain the will to attend the unique stadium event and undermine not only the economics of sport but also, paradoxically, the appeal of a screen text that is highly dependent on the co-present crowd ambience. The first problem was partially settled when the sale of broadcast rights to sports events became more lucrative than the sale of turnstile tickets and the latter by the enduring social appeal of 'being there' and the improvement of the in-stadium experience including, ironically, the installation of large television screens.

But the media sport sphere, just like the wider world surrounding it, does not stay still for the convenience of its inhabitants. Sharing the handsome spoils of sport television is of necessity a contested process, and the contests between vested interests – including those of the state and the citizenry – have disturbed the relatively orderly arrangements surrounding airwaves and cathode ray tubes. Broadcast television itself has come under challenge from new technologies, especially the Internet, creating new points of reception and audience types. The globalization and marketization of television sport have posed problems for the nation state, which once exercised sovereign power over the delivery infrastructure and in many countries much of the content of television, and in variable ways across the globe is still a significant 'player' able to intervene in commercial relationships struck between sports, communications corporations and media organizations. It is impossible and, indeed, undesirable to underplay the economic forces at work in television and sport highlighted in Chapter 2, but also important not to be so dazzled by audience and broadcast fee numbers as to neglect the important interweaving of sport television and cultural citizenship that occurred and intensified once watching landmark sports events in the home mutated from elite privilege to common right (Rowe 2006).

The title of this chapter is a deliberate echo of Joseph Maguire's (1999) summation (itself drawn from Cas Wouters's (1990) conceptualization of trends in international class and state relations) of global sport as characterized by 'diminishing contrasts and increasing varieties', a dual process through which major differences between sporting forms and practices are reduced while smaller ones proliferate. Murray Phillips (2001: 27–8) sees this position as a useful 'mid-road' in globalization debates revolving around homogeneity and heterogeneity in explaining, for example, the development and diffusion of amateur sport:

[W]hile amateurism provided a degree of homogeneity to a range of sporting practices, there was an underlying diversity that enabled sports to maintain their intrinsic qualities, service the conflicting needs of their vastly different clienteles, and in fact to interpret amateurism in a number of ways. For these reasons, the mid road between homogeneity and heterogeneity – diminishing contrasts and increasing varieties – as articulated by some within the globalization debate, resonates particularly well with amateurism at the turn of the century. At the level of diminishing contrasts, very similar definitions of amateur sports are highlighted in key documents from local and national competitions. At the level of increasing varieties, the accepted definition was interpreted differently and selectively or was modified by adding a number of clauses that effectively differentiated within sporting activities, between sports, and in different geographical locations. (Phillips 2001: 27–8)

This model may also be applied in a qualified and specific way to sport on television. No one who has walked into an electronics store or private home in recent years (at least in the West) can fail to have noticed the growing dimensions of televisions. It is not unusual to see whole rooms in households dedicated to the home theatre for sport and film watching, the screen apparatus often of such size as to outgrow the traditional living room, and what was once 'the box in the corner' occupying an entire wall. Of course, this is not to deny that there are many smaller screen experiences increasingly on offer, from computer monitors to touch screen mobile phones. The biggest screen in the house, though, irrespective of its mode of delivery as broadcast televisions become increasingly Internet enabled, still stands as a key focal point for the moments when televised sport is at its most socially engaged. Screen size, however, is no guarantee of breadth of content or interpretation. That is, the privileging of some sports at the expense of others continues despite the increased number of TV channels (including those dedicated to 24-hour sport) and – despite the multiplication of camera angles, simultaneous viewing of different events and the ability to call up information – an overall absence of interpretive imagination to the point of presentational cliché. Criticism of sport television, especially of commentary, may have evolved into its own parlour game, but nonetheless, there are serious questions to be addressed about both the quality and purpose of sport television as it undergoes profound change in the digital age (Boyle and Haynes 2004). Before this analytical assessment takes place, though, it is necessary to take stock of its global reach and influence.

A world in transmission

According to a 2008 PricewaterhouseCoopers Report, and even taking into account the global financial crisis in the middle of the projected period (which, in any case, does not appear to have had a long-lasting deleterious impact on media rights), television and other media continued to expand the size of the global sport market (here to a projected US\$141 billion by 2012):

Growing broadcast rights deals, and mobile and Internet spending will help drive the expected compound annual growth rate of 6.5 percent from 2008 through 2012, the report by consulting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers said. That is comparable to the 6.4 percent rate seen from 2003 through 2007.

National sporting events also will boost revenue as companies look to align themselves with sports that draw consumer attention, PwC said. It cited international cricket rights boosting growth in Asia Pacific as an example.

The strongest growth will be seen in the Europe, Middle East and Africa, Latin America and Asia Pacific regions, all of which are expected to see annual growth in the range of 6.5 percent to 7.1 percent, the report said ...

Global revenue growth is projected to be strongest in Olympic years. PwC projected growth will hit 11.4 percent in 2008, 11.2 percent in 2010 and 9.9 percent in 2012, compared with growth of 0.4 percent and 0.3 percent in 2009 and 2011, respectively.

The U.S. market accounts for the biggest piece of the pie, as sports revenue there is expected to hit almost \$69.1 billion in 2012, compared with \$46.9 billion in Europe, Middle East and Africa, PwC said. Revenue[s] in Asia Pacific, Latin America and Canada are expected to reach \$19.4 billion, \$3.9 billion and 1.3 billion, respectively. (Cited in Klayman 2008)

The PricewaterhouseCoopers Report highlights several important characteristics of, and trends in, the contemporary sport economy: that it is an integrated market in which the media are pivotal; it is a mixed media market, still led by broadcast television; and that it is a global media sport but one in which there is historically inherited unevenness in development and intensity. Here I will concentrate on the resilience of sport television and so will treat with some scepticism diagnoses of its decline, although recognizing that change is happening and that the few-to-many broadcast model that provided its first platform of dominance must inevitably 'share the podium' with other, more flexible ways of seeing live sport at a distance. Thus, apocalyptic pronouncements that old or legacy media such as television are being swept away underestimate the power of media 'incumbency' and the capacity of established media to adapt and, in many cases, cooperate with new developments as well as the tendency of many media users to combine and mix media rather than make zero-sum choices between them. There is also a curious ahistoricism about much of the analysis of imminent decline when considering, for example, the ways in which newspapers, radio, television and online media across the past century have, even if uneasily, interacted, while what passes for assessment of media trends is

all too frequently special pleading by interest groups (either seeking protection in the case of older media or incentives by 'start-ups' marketing themselves in the case of newer media).

The media sports cultural complex is distinguished by an intricate network of different media forms feeding into, bouncing off and colliding with each other. Thus, a newspaper article about a sports team may encourage viewers to watch them perform on television, while encountering the team on television might draw the eye of the reader to a newspaper headline about it. Similarly, a radio news item may lead to a web search, which might stimulate an online purchase of a book on the subject. A visit to a website might prompt purchase of tickets to a game, watching an embedded video story, activating a hyperlink to a news story and so on and on. The key point here is that sport as a cultural item passes in and through the complex, attaching itself in some places, being modified in others and sometimes being diverted elsewhere. If sport is not, precisely, omnipresent, it is remarkably conspicuous – and much of the time, especially during global mega events like the World Cup and the Olympics, almost impossible to avoid.

Television plays a highly significant role in this cultural conspicuousness of sport, given its relative simplicity as a delivery mechanism and well-established place, as noted earlier, in domestic spaces and routines. There is a strongly habitual nature of media uses (Silverstone 1994), and levels of daily TV viewing indicate how the habit of watching television (or, perhaps more accurately, having the television on) is difficult to shake, even with many competing media and activities. As many authors have argued, sport is particularly well suited to television, especially in live form, as it concentrates attention on dramatic events happening in a delimited space in real time, drawing on, especially in international encounters, widespread passionate identification and a structure that enables anticipation and reflection, and which can be 'spun off' into many later uses, ranging from packaged highlights to the subject matter of quiz shows (see various contributions to Raney and Bryant 2006). There is no popular cultural form that regularly offers such a potent mix of 'liveness' and common language, the standardization discussed in Chapter 2 fostering sport participation and spectatorship as portable practice. When, for example, a tennis or football match is taking place on screen, those familiar with their fairly simple rules – the majority in most countries – can decode the fundamental elements of what is happening with ease. On the foundation of this common understanding is the necessary customization that might make it matter for more than the relatively small number of people around the world who will feel compelled to watch any tennis or football match because they are avid followers of the sport (fewer still of those people may be transfixed by *any* sport). This targeting of viewers requires them to be oriented by sport commentators – who is playing, why it matters, the 'back story' of the match, who should be supported or opposed and so on. Moving images of the most significant international sports, then, circulate the globe, with the 'live feed' provided by the principal broadcaster (such as NBC, which has had this role for the Summer Olympics since 1988) and local interpretation, in a language other than English where necessary, as well as an emphasis on the main concerns at

the point of reception, usually by concentrating on 'our' players and teams, and others with shared cultural sympathies (de Moragas Spà *et al.* 1995).

This arrangement, though, begs the question of how a sport becomes global. By definition, sports can only aspire to global status if they are played in many countries and watched by many people. Sports that do not 'travel well', especially indigenous or local sports, may still be very popular in some countries and regions, and also demand the attention of expatriates, but they will not be global in any legitimate sense and so cannot exact substantial overseas broadcast rights fees. This does not mean that these sports cannot be seen in many countries, as the space of televised sports through multichannelling is now very large and can be accessed by diasporic viewerships on television and Internet platforms. Sports of little local appeal can appear on far distant television screens as sports (especially subscription) television 'fodder' for no more compelling reasons than ownership of rights and the need to fill programme schedules on sports channels with *something sporting*. For example, Australia, uniquely in the world, has four codes of professional football which in size (i.e. 'turnover') can be listed in the following order: Australian rules, rugby league, rugby union and association football. Thus, the last, the 'world game', is currently far behind the code that is played almost exclusively in one country (Hallinan and Hughson 2010), while the second most international football code (rugby union) is currently behind one played professionally in only a handful of parts of only a handful of countries – rugby league (Rowe 2007b).

The Australian Football League (AFL 2010), which governs Australian Rules Football, lists several international broadcast partners on its website, including the American broadcaster ESPN, which showed, among its territories, four games a week during the 2010 season and live coverage of the Grand Final as well as one 'game of the week', the Finals Series and the Grand Final in 2010 in Africa, Israel and the Caribbean. The Orbit Showtime Network, the website states,

offers four dedicated sports channels featuring a wide variety of live international sporting action. We bring the best of the AFL to the Middle East and North Africa, including two live matches every round of the home and away season, plus the weekly highlights program showcasing all the action of the round every Wednesday evening on Show Sports 2. Our AFL coverage doesn't stop there – you can catch every moment of the Finals Series live, including the Toyota AFL Grand Final live from the MCG on the last Saturday in September.

In addition to the AFL, we bring you live and exclusive coverage of the Barclays Premier League, Scottish Premier League and Portuguese Liga, plus cricket, rugby, golf and explosive shows from the WWE Universe and UFC. (AFL 2010)

This information reveals how the idea of global television sport and the claims of individual sports to wide international coverage need to be treated with some scepticism. That a sport like Australian rules football and its principal competition the AFL can be accessed in some way in the Middle East and North Africa via television indicates that it can claim to be global in technical terms, but this does not mean that it is a global sport with regard to status. Evidence that the AFL is avidly watched – or played – in Saudi Arabia or Libya

is scant. So, although the total list of AFL international broadcast partners in television is impressive and also includes Australia Network (covering forty-four countries in Asia, the Pacific and the Indian subcontinent), Eurosport 2 (broadcasting a 'unique blend of team sports, alternative sports and new sports' to '40 million homes in fourteen languages across forty-six European countries'), Sky Television in New Zealand, TSN in Canada, MHZ Networks in Washington, DC in the United States and TG4 Television Ireland (AFL 2010), the reach of the televised game across the globe does little to disturb the status of Australian rules football as an overwhelmingly local game. Indeed, it is also available in live form online, either pay per view or without charge, through Big Pond TV and ESPN3.com in many countries and, no doubt, can be illegally streamed in many others. This could be seen as an example of niche TV sport in action using new digital technologies, but it can just as easily be characterized as a sport that is disseminated around the world because it *can be* – that is, the motive force is not demand but supply.

As the above quotation from Orbit Showtime Network reveals by mentioning – that is, advertising – other sports that it broadcasts (along with others on the AFL website, such as Sky Television New Zealand, which notes that it carries the Olympics and the Rugby World Cup in that country), Australian rules football is one sport among many that television makes available in many places but with highly variable levels of popular appeal. This is an unexceptional and even a desirable arrangement, provided that such global availability is not used to advance, either explicitly or implicitly, unwarranted claims about global audiences and also that the emphasis is on the practice and spectatorship of sport rather than its deployment as a vehicle for other commercial activities. Thus, for example, Tim Harcourt (admittedly, an enthusiastic follower of many sports), the Chief Economist of the Australian Trade Commission (Austrade), has noted that 'Aussie Rules Goes Global' and that, at the time of the AFL Grand Final,

there'll be parties all over the globe with the MCG on the screen from Rio de Janeiro to Romania. In fact, in my travels as The Airport Economist around the world, I have noticed that wherever there are Australian exporters there are expatriates and wherever there are Australian expatriates there is sport and it's often Aussie Rules ...

And thanks to the broadcast rights – through an agreement between the Shanghai Media Group (SMG) and the Australia Network, the game is being broadcast right across China. While Australian football contributes \$3.4 billion annually to the Australian economy, with seven million people attending AFL matches each year a bit of broadcast action in the Chinese market would certainly [sic] help the cause of footy exports. (Harcourt 2010)

In both servicing expatriates and enhancing 'footy exports' through broadcast rights (and through overseas development of the game), mainly nation-based sports like Australian rules football are inevitably drawn out of their home bases to varying effect. But to be able to boast of many broadcast partnerships and countries taking coverage of sports events and competitions attests to the seductive nature of global sport discourse. Few sports wish to be regarded as

hyper-local or even nationally confined, in that to be so suggests that they are backward looking and lack flexibility, portability and professionalism. As has often been pointed out, even a large national competition like US baseball is anxious to declare that it is, in fact, a World Series. Television (and increasingly online and mobile media) is, then, a highly effective mechanism for at least enabling a rhetoric of globalization that, while mostly unconvincing, cannot be simply 'laughed out of court'. Thus, another Australia-dominated football code of limited international appeal, rugby league, can declare, like the AFL,

The 2010 Rugby League Four Nations tournament [involving Australia, England, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand] is set to be broadcasted [sic] around the globe with thirteen broadcasters taking all the action to more than 60 countries. (Rugby League Four Nations 2010)

These countries and broadcasters include Brunei (Astro), Bosnia (SportsKlub) and Yemen (Orbit Showtime Network), which are not conventionally regarded as rugby league strongholds. The intention here is not to mock the size and status of countries or their standing in the sport but to re-emphasize that global sport television can mean very different things. In the case of major sports and sports events, simultaneous 'live' audiences that can be measured, as indicated earlier, in the billions, prompt declarations that the whole world (or at least a substantial component of it) has been brought together in a single screen spectator activity at the same time. The resultant image is of cultural globalization in its strongest sense of overcoming space, time and social division, if only temporarily, in the production of the universal human experience of the sports mega event (Horne and Manzenreiter 2006; Roche 2000). By contrast, minor sports servicing what are likely to be tiny audiences on specialist media platforms presents a much weaker picture of globalization as the provision of myriad cultural choices for increasingly fragmented audiences. Such provision is partly in response to the global circulation of 'home' audiences, the diasporic populations described above by Harcourt (although these can be very sizeable depending on the sport and the pattern of migration) and partly a matter of marketing and technological convenience. In this way, television sport emerges as little more than useful, inexpensive content for broadcasters in the digitized, multichannelled phase of television that began at the end of the twentieth century and for sports the exchange of broadcast rights for global bragging rights.

These arrangements ought to advantage sports that have had difficulties in getting on television in an earlier broadcast television environment of spectrum scarcity that revolved around established major sports and 'blockbuster' events. But although television is more extensive than before, it is nonetheless still hierarchical – as, of course, is sport itself. For this reason there is now less of a problem for many sports to be displayed somewhere on television, but in something of a replication of 'vertically structured' sport divisions and leagues, the key televisual allocations regarding national and international broadcast right payments, principal channels and time slots are concentrated on a relatively small number of sports such as association football and events like the Olympics, consigning most others to more marginal TV locations.

So, for example, the instance of Eurosport 2 (established in 2005) presented above, with its 'unique blend of team sports, alternative sports and new sports', is that of a supplementary channel to Eurosport (established in 1989). Such sports channel hierarchies on subscription platforms replicate those within the free-to-air sector, where digitization has advanced the stratification of content. When sports and sport events are carried live on general, major television channels rather than sport-specific ones, this is a sign that they are genuinely considered to have gone beyond the realm of sports appreciation and have assumed the status of national cultural 'property'. This is the value position, for example, behind the insistence that 'protected' sports events on Australian free-to-air television channels should in all but exceptional circumstances be shown on their main rather than subsidiary channels (Australian Government Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy 2009, 2010a). As will be discussed in detail later, the implications of this difference are profound because they draw sport television onto a highly political terrain of history, identity and citizenship that is nationally grounded but can also be global in scope as inalienable from the cultural commons of all peoples, irrespective of their material conditions.

The profile of sports within and across countries, though, is tied in various ways to deep, resilient structures of power across generations. For example, in a country such as India, which was once under the control of imperial Britain, popular indigenous sports played in the villages, such as kabbadi (which is popular also in other Asian countries and has its own substantial tournaments), were actively suppressed as 'uncivilized' under imperialism and struggle to match 'introduced' sports such as cricket in both their countries of origin and among diasporic (often socially and culturally marginalized) communities surrounded by Western sport (Johal 2001; Mills and Dimeo 2003). Such sports may survive and even to a degree thrive, but grass-roots popularity is no guarantor of elevation when confronted by sports that have the momentum of global television circulation and sponsorship. Thus, a sport like netball that is played predominantly by women in Commonwealth (i.e. former British Empire) countries does not generally receive the sustained, 'prime-time' television coverage that matches its player base, with consequent restrictions to professional sports careers for women (Coakley *et al.* 2009, Chapters 8 and 10). Such barriers of race and gender, therefore, operate in global media sport – although not uniformly or entirely predictably – to restrict opportunities while appearing to follow objective market principles of supply, demand and consumer sovereignty. Television, with its varying combinations of state control and regulation, public provision, and commercial oligopoly and competition, has from its base in individual nations fanned out across the globe, with major media organizations establishing the infrastructure and making the agreements that enable them, at least notionally, to be purveyors of universal media sport content. One company, News Corporation (as noted earlier, controlled by the Murdoch family and especially associated with its patriarch Rupert) has been particularly prominent as the first that could make a persuasive claim to be a truly global television sport entity. In the next section, I will consider what could be called the 'Murdochization' of media sport.

Towards a global sports network

Moving images of sport can now circulate freely around the globe, requiring little more than a small TV camera and a website. But broadcast television prides itself on being of an industry-standard broadcast quality – a standard that is constantly rising with the continual sharpening of images through high-definition and even 3D TV. Also, as argued earlier, the computer and the television are still largely distinct domestic technologies, and the cultural practice of television viewing so well installed in everyday lives that the design and layout of the main social and leisure space in the home (with the possible exception of the kitchen/dining room), the living room, are oriented around the world's most popular recreational activity – watching television. It can be objected that there are still many people across the globe who lack these 'creature comforts', but recent data on the diffusion of television indicate that it is still advancing rather than retreating. An article grandly announcing 'Revolution in a Box' by a development economist, Charles Kenny (2009), in noting the increasing television access and use across the world, is prefaced with the statement that '[i]t's not Twitter or Facebook that's reinventing the planet. Eighty years after the first commercial broadcast crackled to life, television still rules our world'. As both access and choice widen, Kenny notes that preferred viewing 'seems to be pretty much the same everywhere – sports, reality shows, and, yes, soap operas. Some 715 million people worldwide watched the finals of the 2006 soccer World Cup, for example' (Kenny 2009). It is probable that he is exaggerating the uniformity of viewing preferences and taking insufficient account of both local variations and the dynamic process through which different types of programming can emerge after an initial establishment period dominated by currently dominant, imported genres. Nonetheless, there is no reason to expect that major sports events will not be immensely popular as such television markets mature.

Many sports, as acknowledged earlier, are anxious to exploit new territories. Indeed, some major sports entities, such as the football clubs Manchester United and Real Madrid, have their own international subscription television channels. Cutting out the 'middle person' – that is, media companies – may be attractive in some regards (such as greater control and higher revenues) but also has many costs and risks. These include the cost of production, negotiating transmission and arranging marketing, and perhaps having to exchange 'blockbuster' broadcast rights revenue with major media corporations for a large number of smaller broadcast deals. It might also be argued that doing sport media 'in house' destroys any possibility of independent, fourth-estate vigilance in sport, if it were not for the fact that very little sport television has any journalistic interest in the ethics of sport (Boyle *et al.* 2010). Thus, while (inter)national sports governing bodies and clubs may have aspirations to become major media producers – indeed, in a recent Australian inquiry into reporting sports news and digital media this was precisely the accusation made by the Group Editorial Director for the Australian division of News Corporation (hereafter called News Corp), News Limited (Hutchins and Rowe 2009b) – the experience, expertise and

capital wealth of media corporations operating across many areas of sport invest them with enormous advantages in piecing together a global sport television network.

News Corp has been the most aggressive force in acquiring, solely or through partnerships, media sport properties around the world. I and others have previously noted the company's commitment to sport as its 'battering ram' and main offering used to break into television markets and to get through to consumers by offering sport-led subscriptions that would establish a relationship with the company that would facilitate their take-up of other television and new media services (Boyle and Haynes 2009; Rowe 2004a). The extent to which this relationship has been consensual is a matter of considerable dispute. Certainly, for example, nobody is forced to subscribe to News Corp's (majority-owned and, as noted, attempted-but-aborted sole-owned) BSkyB (generally called just Sky) to watch live EPL or England test cricket, but its exclusive availability on Sky demands a stark choice: subscribe, go to a commercial premises (and sometimes to a public viewing site) to watch or do something else. Although still the most powerful global force in sport television, News Corp has been contained to a degree by competition regulators such as the European Commission and Ofcom, and has been required to share some of its broadcast sports and platforms, while, earlier, seeing its attempted takeover of Manchester United Football club blocked in the United Kingdom. Its aforementioned (discontinued) attempt to assume 100 per cent control of BSkyB caused further argument about concentration of ownership and control in such key areas as television news (McVeigh 2010) and, of paramount importance in the context of this book, of sport.

These matters of access and equity are discussed in greater detail below, but they are noted here to counter the more benign, naive or self-serving emphases on freedom of choice. The advantages of News Corp and other media corporations such as Disney gaining major broadcast sport properties in one country are obvious. They are then well positioned to acquire international broadcast rights (if sold separately, as is now increasingly the case) and to 'populate' its screens around the world with both sports of international appeal and, as noted earlier, with a good deal of 'filler' material that can fill vacant slots on secondary channels and flatter nation-based sports that they are, at least technically, 'global players'. Their investment in broadcast rights is very considerable – according to the company's 2010 Annual Report at the middle of that year its total, multi-year commitments to sports programming were well over a billion US dollars (US\$13,320 million) and with further contingent guarantees of almost half a billion (US\$429 million) (News Corp 2010a: 70). Once total costs of programming are taken into account (including technology, salaries, buildings, travel and so on), the scale of News Corp's investment in sport (and especially in sport television) is shown to be massive, with the concomitant cost recovery and profit imperatives of even grander proportions. The global News Corp sport empire encompasses the United States, Britain, Ireland, parts of continental Europe and Asia, and Australasia, composed of sole-owned operations, coveted ones (as in the aforementioned case of News Corp's (abandoned) £12 billion full takeover bid for the remaining 61 per cent

of BSkyB, a company that made a profit of a little under £900 million in 2010 – Robinson 2010) and strategic partnerships. A key example of the latter is the ESPN STAR Sports joint venture with Walt Disney, which according to News Corp (2010b) was formed

to deliver a diverse array of international and regional sports to viewers via its encrypted pay and free-to-air services.

ESPN STAR Sports showcases a variety of premier live sports from around the globe, 24 hours a day, reaching more than 310 million viewers in Asia. ESPN STAR Sports has 17 networks covering 24 countries, each localized to deliver differentiated premier sports programming to Asian viewers. Networks include STAR Sports Asia, STAR Sports Hong Kong, STAR Sports India, STAR Sports Malaysia, STAR Sports SEA 2, STAR Sports SEA, STAR Sports Taiwan, STAR Cricket, ESPN SEA, ESPN China, ESPN Hong Kong, ESPN India, ESPN Malaysia, ESPN Philippines, ESPN SEA 2, ESPN Taiwan, MBC-ESPN (Korea).

Showing live sport from around the globe *to* the globe on a 24-hour basis constitutes a combination of Fordist continuous production and the ‘immaterial’ circulation of symbolic commodities that need not be constrained by the logistics of physical transportation that apply, for example, to bottles of wine or tennis rackets. Furthermore, as suggested in Chapter 2, there is comparatively little that needs to be done by means of customization, such as by ‘patching in’ some local commentary and context. While the product is at its most valuable in live form and so more ‘perishable’ even than fresh fruit or flowers, televised sport retains considerable value when it is replayed, discussed, summarized and ‘highlighted’. Each new event can be deployed to stimulate interest in the next and forms part of a massive archive that is available for multiple uses, from documentaries to replays of ‘classic’ sports contests and moments (Brookes 2002).

That there is regular movement and display of TV sport texts around the globe, though, does not reveal very much about which ones are most prominently screened. This question goes to the ‘narrower visions’ raised in the chapter title and, essentially, that there might be a privileging of a small number of sports, predominantly Western in origin, leading to overexposure of some and the marginalization of others. In order to explore the content patterns of News Corp’s global sports network, a detailed schedule analysis (executed by Callum Gilmour) was conducted of Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, India and the United Kingdom during one week (6–13 May 2008). By examining which sports appear courtesy of News Corp in national contexts, and their origins, the flows of global media sport can be traced and analysed (see Tables 3.1–3.6). For example, in Australia, the subscription Fox Sports One Channel’s (owned by the Premier Media Group, which is co-owned by News Corp and Consolidated Media Holdings, the main shareholders of which are Seven Network Limited, 40 per cent owned by media entrepreneur Kerry Stokes, and Consolidated Press Holdings, the private investment company of James Packer, son of the late Australian media proprietor and leading media sports figure Kerry Packer) sports by nation/region of origin is shown in Table 3.1:

Table 3.1 Fox Sports One (Australia), origin of content^a and programme hours, from 6 May 2008 to 12 May 2008

Nation/region	Hours	Percentage
United States	63.5	38
Australia	47.5	28
Europe (except United Kingdom)	25.5	15
United Kingdom	22.0	13
Asia	4.5	3
Middle East	2.0	1
New Zealand	1.5	1
South Africa	1.5	1

a. Origin of content can be difficult to determine in the case of inter- and transnational sports events and competitions. In this case, the location of tournaments, principal broadcasters and rights holders may be taken into account in making a judgement about points of origin. However, most broadcast sport takes place routinely within nations and regions.

Here it can be seen that there is considerable concentration in the origins of sports programming in this major subscription sports channel in Australia. It should be immediately acknowledged that, as will be discussed in greater detail below, there are strong ‘anti-siphoning’ regulations in Australia that prevent pay TV from exclusive broadcast of key sports, which must first be acquired by free-to-air TV channels. So there are key local sports such as Australian rules and rugby league that cannot be ‘monopolized’ by pay TV in Australia, as has occurred with major sports in other countries. Nonetheless, US-originating sports constituted 63.5 hours (40 per cent) of programme content on Fox Sports One in the sampled week. The asymmetrical nature of content is evident, for example, by comparison with the 4.5 hours (1 per cent) of sport content originating in Asia. This concentration of countries/regions of origins is, furthermore, reflected in the range of sport that was broadcast.

While seasonality must be recognized (May is late autumn in Australia, when three of the four local football codes are playing), it is evident that a small range of sports dominate the schedule, with golf alone (not in season in Australia in the sample week) absorbing 65 hours of content (39 per cent) and roughly corresponds with the US-originating content (although the data do not indicate precisely which sports emanate from which countries). This may only be one sports channel in one country, but it reveals something of the unevenness of the flows and content of TV sport – indeed, to a degree supporting rather traditional notions of media and cultural imperialism. This point is reinforced by considering the other two Fox Sports channels in the sample week – Fox Sports Two and Three. The former has more ‘local’ (in this case, Australian) content in the form of rugby league in particular, while the

Table 3.2 Fox Sports One (Australia), type of content and programme hours, from 6 May 2008 to 12 May 2008

Sport [content]	Hours	Percentage
Golf	65.0	39
AFL	35.0	21
Soccer	21.0	13
Other	12.5	7
Rugby Union	8.5	5
Motorsport	8.0	5
Tennis	7.5	4
Ice hockey	3.0	2
Baseball	2.5	1
Snooker	2.0	1
Poker	2.0	1
Athletics	1.0	1

latter is dominated by European-originated programming, especially tennis. When the three Australian Fox Sports Channels are combined, an overall picture can be gained of their sports television schedule in terms of dominant origins and sports.

Table 3.3 Fox Sports One, Two and Three combined (Australia), origin of content and programme hours, from 6 May 2008 to 12 May 2008

Nation/region	Hours	Percentage
Europe	157.0	31
Australia	149.5	30
United States	113.5	22
United Kingdom	51.0	10
New Zealand	13.5	3
South Africa	9.0	2
Asia	6.5	1
Middle East	4.0	1

Table 3.4 Fox Sports One, Two and Three combined (Australia), type of content and programme hours, from 6 May 2008 to 12 May 2008

Sport [content]	Hours	Percentage
Tennis	100	20.0
Golf	82.0	16.0
Rugby League	58.5	11.5
Other	51.0	10.0
Soccer	45.0	9.0
Rugby Union	43.5	9.0
AFL	36.0	7.0
Motorsport	34.0	7.0
Netball	17.0	3.0
Baseball	14.0	3.0
Ten-pin bowling	8.0	1.5
Ice hockey	6.0	1.0
Magazine/news	3.0	0.5
Poker	2.0	0.5
Basketball	2.0	0.5
Extreme	2.0	0.5

It is not my intention to produce large amounts of undigested and largely indigestible programme schedule data, but counting and aggregating broadcast sport in this way provides a useful take on the kinds of ‘choice’ made available under the rubric of global sport television. The combined Fox Sports channel data in Australia reveal that 30 per cent of the programming in the sample week came from the country in which it was broadcast, but that over twice as much (63 per cent) came from Europe (including the United Kingdom) and the United States, leaving only 7 per cent ‘sourced’ from the rest of the world. Of the 500 hours of sports TV on these channels, two sports (tennis and golf) accounted for over a third of them (36 per cent), and only seven sports providing almost four-fifths (79.5 per cent) of content. The category of ‘other’, representing 10 per cent of programming, constituted multiple, minor ‘snippets’ of many other sports barely covered during the week. Thus, this case – and it must be emphasized that it is a single case, although informed by other data

discussed at various points in this book – highlights how global television sport (here on a subscription platform) is highly concentrated in production and content terms (here exacerbated by a quasi-monopoly of sport subscription television), so challenging familiar claims of a cornucopia of varied sporting fare. As will be discussed below, state regulation does prevent pay TV from exclusive ‘capture’ of many key national sports and sports events in Australia, but this restriction applies overwhelmingly to the small number of sports, such as the four football codes, that are already well represented on subscription television. As a result, their removal would be likely to lead to more rather than less concentration of TV sport, with much ‘imported’ sports content of lesser local popularity only substituting for coveted premium content that is prevented from siphoning. Thus, as suggested in the introduction, there is no necessary correlation between expanding screen size and diversity of sport on screen.

So it is possible to travel around the world inspecting various sites and ascertaining the extent to which televised sport is inserted into other TV markets by the dominant ones, as well as the health or otherwise of local/regional sports broadcasting. The Asia-Pacific media sport market is especially alluring for those media and sport organizations that see in them an opportunity for lucrative expansion by, predominantly, re-circulating what has already been produced and sold at home base (Rowe and Gilmour 2008). Increasingly affluent and/or populous nations such as Taiwan and India constitute links in global chains that involve cultivating new sporting tastes, catering to established ones and providing surplus content to fill in the schedule gaps at negligible additional cost. In the same sample week, the combined statistics for ESPN and Star Sports in Taiwan are shown in Tables 3.5 and 3.6.

Table 3.5 Combined ESPN and Star Sports ESPN Star Sports, Taiwan, origin of content, from 6 May 2008 to 12 May 2008

Nation/region	Hours	Percentage
United States	159.5	48.0
Asia	118.0	35.0
Europe	27.5	8.0
United Kingdom	27.5	8.0
Middle East	1.5	0.5
Australia	1.0	0.25
New Zealand	1.0	0.25

Table 3.6 Combined ESPN and Star Sports ESPN Star Sports, Taiwan, type of content, from 6 May 2008 to 12 May 2008

Sport [content]	Hours	Percentage
Baseball	117.5	35
Other	46.0	14
Golf	32.5	10
Motorsport	30.5	9
Basketball	30.0	9
Billiards	21.5	6
Soccer	16.5	5
Extreme	16.0	5
Magazine/news	14.0	4
Table tennis	11.5	3

In the case of ESPN and Star Sports in Taiwan, almost two thirds of sports programming (64 per cent) came from the United States and Europe (including United Kingdom), with over a third (35 per cent) coming from Asia (excluding the Middle East, including Taiwan). This pattern appears to be common in global media sport that, in fact, is not so global – a high concentration of sports content from the region/nation and the main production centres in the West and negligible ‘transported’ sports material from Africa and South America. Sports are highly concentrated, with only four (baseball, golf, motorsport and basketball) responsible for 62 per cent of programming in the sampled week. In India, aggregating three channels (ESPN, Star Sports and Star Cricket), Tables 3.7 and 3.8 reveal some pattern variation, with Asia accounting for a little more sport (40 per cent) and Europe (including United Kingdom) and the United States rather less (48 per cent) – although even here local/regional sports content is outweighed by that originating in the West. The main variant here is the popularity of cricket, which introduces significant coverage from Australia, South African and the West Indies (as it is known in cricket but generally as the Caribbean) on its dedicated channel (18.5 per cent in total). Again, there is a tight clustering of sports, with four – cricket (unsurprisingly), soccer, tennis and golf – responsible for almost three quarters of sports content (72 per cent).

The sampled sports network schedule data (which took a considerable amount of time to assemble by, necessarily, a mainly manual counting method) make no claim to global comprehensiveness and clearly aren’t broken down further into individual nations or the precise origin of each sport, nor do they

Table 3.7 Combined ESPN, Star Sports and Star Cricket, India, origin of content, from 6 May 2008 to 12 May 2008

Nation/region	Hours	Percentage
Asia	199.5	40.0
Europe	88.0	17.0
Australia	77.0	15.0
United Kingdom	72.5	14.0
United States	55.0	11.0
South Africa	7.0	1.5
West Indies	4.0	1.0
South America	0.5	0.25
Central America	0.5	0.25

Table 3.8 Combined ESPN, Star Sports and Star Cricket, India, type of content, from 6 May 2008 to 12 May 2008

Sport [content]	Hours	Percentage
Cricket	189.5	38.0
Soccer	74.5	15.0
Tennis	53.0	11.0
Golf	40.0	8.0
Other	26.0	5.0
Magazine/news	26.0	5.0
Motorsport	25.5	5.0
Hockey	22.0	4.5
Basketball	21.5	4.0
Extreme	12.0	2.0
Baseball	12.0	2.0
Rugby Union	2.0	0.5

explore the intriguing areas of sports programming (only loosely defined as appearing on a dedicated sports channel) such as magazine/news, extreme sports and poker. Nor has there been any attempt here to probe questions

of sociocultural power, such as those revolving around gender, sexuality, 'race', ethnicity and class, as they relate first to which sports are shown in which context and how. I and other scholars address these vital questions in other places (see, for example, Birrell and McDonald 2000; Carrington 2010; Carrington and McDonald 2001; Caudwell 2006; Rowe 2004a; Wenner 1998), but my intention in this instance is to concentrate on the major flows of sports and its principal vehicles via broadcasting. Societies, nations and regions are not the only concerns for critical media sports scholars and are by no means the guardians of social progressivism. But they remain, despite strong criticisms of their analytical, explanatory and empirical integrity (see, for example, Urry 2000), significant reference points in seeking understanding of the global power dynamics in this field of culture.

What these statistics do reveal, then, is the complex dynamism of global media sport, which sees sports such as association football, motor racing, tennis, golf and basketball range freely around the world from their Western power bases but simultaneously having a differential impact in various regions and nations, and also having to come to terms with contextual preferences. For example, the historically US-dominated sport of baseball is popular in Taiwan but barely registers in India, while the historically UK-originated sport of cricket is of enormous interest in India but means almost nothing in Taiwan. Australian rules football and rugby league, however, do not 'travel well' outside that country to India or Taiwan. Media sports corporations such as News Corp and Disney, therefore, have considerable transnational power, but it is not unfettered. As noted, they can exert power over what is seen and this, undoubtedly, can encourage the popularity of intensively displayed and marketed sports, but there are historically inherited preferences, some of which have their origins in imperialism, colonialism and post-war occupation, that present considerable obstacles to the establishment of globally popular sports. There is also the apparatus of the state – much stronger in some countries than others in the field of national popular culture – that can still exert its authority on questions of cultural citizenship and the rights pertaining to broadcast sport viewing.

A screen with a view: sport television and cultural citizenship

In the previous section there was an examination of the flows of sport television across world zones through the agency of media sport corporations such as News Corp and Disney. This content is crucial in the more competitive television environment of the twenty-first century, when a familiar industry catchcry is that 'content is king'. It could be objected that this was always the case, but in a digital world where free-to-air and subscription broadcast television has splintered audiences through ever-increasing multichannelling choice menus, and television can be delivered by others means, especially through online and mobile platforms, and there are many other electronic media leisure options such as gaming and social networking, it has never been

more important to draw in viewers with screen material that is compelling and unavailable elsewhere. It is for this reason that there is such intense disputation over intellectual property (Hutchins and Rowe 2009a,b) and access to mediated sport texts. Sport, as we have seen, is just such content, but it is not only that – it cannot be approached exclusively in industrial and commercial terms. As an important popular cultural form, sport draws its content appeal precisely from the claims to ownership by those who engage in and identify with it. In the past century, as television became integral to national culture and sport a pivotal symbol of nation, sport television became part of the ‘national estate’ (Whannel 1992). There has been, though, considerable international variation as to the type of broadcaster that pioneered sport television. For example, in the United Kingdom, continental Europe, Canada, South America and Asia, national public, free-to-air broadcasters carried ‘emblematic’ sports events as moments when the nation could assemble in real time, while in the United States, in particular, commercial sports networks broadcast sport in the absence of a strong public broadcasting sector (Chandler 1988).

In countries where commercial free-to-air networks were given access to sport content and then came to dominate it, supporters of public broadcasters were unhappy about the marketization of sports television (with paying for sports rights initially resisted and then acquired for very modest sums) that saw them ‘dethroned’, but this discontent (spurred by unwelcome exposure to high levels of advertising) was greatly exacerbated when subscription television restricted access to those willing and able to pay for them. In many countries, therefore, and especially those with a strong history of public broadcasting mixed with commercial free-to-air television, there have been intense debates about protecting sports events of national cultural significance from exclusive capture by commercial pay television. These issues go to matters of cultural citizenship (Miller 2006; Stevenson 2003) – that is, the right of any citizen, irrespective of their class position or personal financial circumstances, to be included in mediated sporting festivals of nation. These questions are not exactly vital when television has failed to reach most households but become so when, as has occurred across much of the globe, it becomes an everyday domestic facility requiring only TV reception, a rudimentary device for screening it and the necessary electrical power to activate it. In such cases, the state or the market are put under pressure to ensure delivery of major sports events live and free-to-air to the citizenry at large.

Across the world, therefore, the right to watch global mega media events like the Olympics or sports of particular national significance without charge remains a highly ‘charged’ area. For example, the member states of the European Union are permitted under the European Audiovisual Media Services Directive to designate events of cultural, national or public importance (almost all of which are sports events, apart from state weddings and funerals, the Eurovision Song Contest and a smattering of other televised occasions of moment) that must be made available ‘live and free’. The EU framework enables parliaments to make such decisions, and as a result there is intense political lobbying by sport organizations that tend to strive for maximum broadcast rights, media

corporations who want to purchase them to their advantage, and fan groups and viewer associations who demand the right to watch without unnecessary impediment.

Two recent legal cases reveal the nature of conflicts over televised sports access and rights. FIFA and UEFA attempted to prevent the United Kingdom and Belgium from reserving all of the World Cup and European Championship for free-to-air television because they

wanted the freedom to sell certain matches within the tournaments to the highest bidder and have long argued that not all games can be considered to be 'events of major importance for the public' ...

But the general court of the European Union ruled that both tournaments could legitimately be classified by national governments as 'single events' that could be protected with free-to-air legislation.

The court said that it could not be predicted which games would be important for which country. 'It cannot be specified in advance – at the time when the national lists are drawn up or broadcasting rights acquired – which matches will actually be decisive for the subsequent stages of those competitions or which ones may affect the fate of a given national team', it ruled. (Gibson 2011)

Intriguing in this case is not only that the court ruled in favour of wider public access to major mediated sport events against FIFA and UEFA's argument that 'the current set-up interfered with their ability to sell television rights at the best price' (Wilson, B., 2011), but also that the competitive uncertainty of sport means that the importance of a sports contest to a particular member state viewership cannot always be determined in advance (e.g. they may wish to watch a match not involving their national team that is nonetheless relevant to their progress in the overall tournament). In a second ruling in the European Union in the same month, it was the subscription broadcaster BSkyB and the EPL that felt aggrieved when the Advocate General of the European Court of Justice, in the so-called *Landlady Case*, found in favour of a public house in the English coastal city of Portsmouth in overturning an earlier judgement that it had breached exclusive territorial copyright by showing EPL games using an imported satellite card from the Greek satellite broadcaster Nova (Fenton and Blitz 2011). Again, the contending issue was the capacity to maximize revenue from the sale of broadcast rights as opposed to its freer circulation among citizen-viewers.

This structural framework of interests and conflicts can be found in some form in all spaces of televised sport, irrespective of specific sports broadcast histories. For example, in the Middle East and North Africa, the Al-Jazeera Sports and ART Sports subscription platforms are challenging the traditional state-controlled sports TV sector, whereas in Argentina the reverse seems to be the case, with the ending of the *Torneos y Competencias* company's long-standing monopoly to broadcast football effectively 'nationalized' by the government in 2009. Meanwhile, the public Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) has managed to sustain its free-to-air telecasting of key National Hockey League (NHL) games. In countries such as Israel,

Singapore and Malaysia, subscription platforms have increasingly come to dominate sports television and yet, in the United States, with its prominent development of cable and satellite television sport, a 2008 House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee examined ways in which access to National Football League (NFL) and Major League Baseball games could be enhanced on free-to-air commercial networks (see various contributions to Scherer and Rowe 2012).

Countries as close (regarding regional location and broadcast history) as New Zealand and Australia have dealt with sports broadcasting differently in the past decade. The former has, since 1996, allowed the nation's dominant subscription broadcaster, the Murdoch-controlled Sky TV, to monopolize live broadcasts of the country's major sport, rugby union, and increasingly those of other sports, such as rugby league, cricket, netball and the 2008 post-Beijing Olympic Games. A 2009 change of government (from Labour to National) saw the abandonment of a broadcast policy review that might have legislated a place for free-to-air television. However, in Australia, the election and subsequent re-election of a Labour government (in 2007 and 2010) saw a review of sport on television reaffirm, while also to some degree reforming, the nation's anti-siphoning regime. Here a range of matters was addressed, including the rise of new media, digital multichannelling and programme hoarding as set out in its discussion paper (Australian Government 2009). It is worthwhile noting here what is described as the 'way forward' in the final report in reflecting both a continuing commitment to widely available sports television and a recognition of the changing environment brought about by digitization:

The Government remains strongly committed to the free availability of sport on free-to-air television. Sport is central in Australian society and the objective of ensuring free public access to events of national importance and cultural significance remains a relevant public policy objective. However, the media landscape is changing rapidly as a result of the shift to digital technologies and amendments to the operation of the anti-siphoning scheme are needed to keep pace with these changes ...

The Government's position is that nationally iconic events, such as the Melbourne Cup and domestic football grand finals, should continue to be shown on main channels first, and therefore be available in both analogue and digital until digital television switchover is completed in 2013. Even after digital switchover, the level of consumer awareness and broadcaster promotion of 'main' channels may still justify some retention of this restriction. However, there is a case for other events on the anti-siphoning list to be permitted to be shown first on digital multi-channels. This will provide free-to-air broadcasters with greater flexibility to utilise the capacity of the digital platform and enhance free-to-air coverage of significant sports events, and also drive digital take-up, which is a key priority for the Government.

Finally, the Government is alert to the potential for new media to challenge the effective operation of the anti-siphoning scheme. Platforms such as Internet Protocol Television provide the *potential* for sporting content to migrate exclusively from free-to-air television, and no longer be available freely to the general public.

While sports coverage on new media platforms appear to be predominantly supplementary to that of traditional television at this time, it is possible that in the future subscription-based new media services may indeed pose a threat to free access to sport for Australian audiences. (Australian Government 2010b)

While there is much here that is specific to the Australian context – its anti-siphoning regime being the most stringent in the world for a range of reasons, including the political influence of the free TV sector and the centrality of sport to Australian culture – it is also apparent that such issues of access, technology, culture, economics and citizenship register across all global sites where television shows sport – that is, almost everywhere. The rapidly changing media landscape discussed above has not seen the end of television, but there is no doubt that it is in transition. For example, the familiar idea of a ‘main channel’ on which to watch the main sports events may fade (like the concept of an ‘original’ paper document and its copies after word processing), although there is some industry concern that the resultant fragmentation of audiences across sport and non-sport platforms on the same day will lead to some viewer ‘churn’ and a reduction in the impressive audience figures on single channels that allow a premium to be extracted from advertisers and sponsors.

This discussion of sport television and cultural citizenship reveals that globalization is not about homogeneity but a highly contextualized and variable working through of responses to developments that are both endogenous and exogenous. As will be shown in Chapter 4, digital technologies both change the structures and relations surrounding sports media such as television and create permutations that seem in some ways to revive practices often deemed to have passed into history. Thus, the screens on which sport is watched become both larger and smaller, and what can be watched on them expanded and narrowed according to who controls the content supply chain and the outcomes of struggles over the relations of production and consumption. Sport television under a regime of digitization, therefore, is becoming more synthetic and its contexts and practices more variable. As Jinna Tay and Graeme Turner (2010: 46) suggest,

[A]s the consumers of digital television increasingly embrace the opportunities for customization and individualization and so on, it would seem reasonable to assume that some of the preceding versions of co-presence – the national, the local, the broader and less personal social framings – are likely to become less important to the experience of television than they have been in the past. This will vary, though, according to the social, political and regulatory context – and not just merely in relation to the actions of consumers or the enabling capacities of the technology. There are plenty of locations where broadcasting has declined in importance but where the embedding of the national has remained a major discursive component of the television programming produced.

Such uncertainty and analytical tentativeness about the consequences of globalization and digitization may be intellectually frustrating but is preferable to the wilder ‘apocalyptic’ or ‘utopic’ projections of television’s future – or, more accurately, futures – that have proved so consistently unreliable. As is

pointed out below, some of those agents and organizations closest ‘to the action’ have had great difficulty in anticipating the next shift in television in general and sport television in particular.

Global sports television and its futures

This chapter has concentrated on highlighting important aspects of how sports television is constructed as global but has developed in ways that are highly contingent and even idiosyncratic, the product of powerful forces that can shift both in-demand and incidental sports onto the screens of the world in a curious mixture of strategic placement and content ‘spraying’. It can lead to the massive over-concentration of some sports (such as association football) and a serious neglect of others (like most sports played predominantly by women or those deemed to be too localized and ‘downmarket’). In focusing on the broader processes out of which a global television sport apparatus is being constructed, the prospect of it being dismantled – or even dismantling itself – has come into view. Ironically, at the very historical moment when sport television is more watched and more valuable than ever before, the medium of television is often represented and represents itself as in crisis (see various commentaries: Spigel and Olsson 2004; Turner and Tay 2009) and, especially, under siege from what has come to be called new media, but which is in some respects becoming so familiar as to be losing its veneer of novelty. The more intense ‘competition for eyeballs’ created by many screen types and uses (computing, gaming, social networking, niche programming) is feared by sport TV programmers to be depleting the peak audience levels that deliver them cultural reach, economic prosperity and political influence. However, some recent evidence suggests that the social ritual appeal of television viewing can be supported rather than undermined by the very social networking that is predicted to dissipate it. Thus, for example, the 2010 Super Bowl between the New Orleans Saints and the Indianapolis Colts (with its post-Hurricane Katrina emotional charge regarding the former team) had a record audience of over 100 million people, and television executives partially attributed this success to the ‘grass-roots’ promotional impact of social networking:

CBS [the Super Bowl Broadcast Network in 2010] Chief Executive Leslie Moonves said social networking tools such as Twitter have encouraged TV viewing as Americans exchange opinions on what they’re watching:

‘They’ve bucked the trend,’ said Andy Donchin, director of media investments at Carat, a media-buying unit of Aegis Group PLC. ‘As much as we’re pulling away and watching different things, there are some things that we want to watch together.’ (Schechner and Ovide 2010)

Thus, although aggregate viewing may be falling to a degree in mature television markets like the United States, the sociality of televisions and its rituals (Silverstone 1994), and the relationships of reinforcement between media (as opposed to assumptions that they are always involved in zero-sum competition), means that the already socially engaged nature of major event

sports television reproduces and extends itself. In the following year, the Super Bowl audience for the Green Bay Packers versus Pittsburgh Steelers game was even larger, and there were frequent references to it 'making history', such as:

History was made last night on FOX when Super Bowl XLV became the most-watched U.S. television program ever, and FOX became the first network ever to exceed 100 million viewers (100.9 million) for a night in prime time, according to fast-national ratings released today by Nielsen Media Research.

FOX Sports' broadcast of Super Bowl XLV averaged 111 million viewers and is the most-watched television program in U.S. history, obliterating the prior record of 106.5 set last year during Super Bowl XLIV by 4.5 million viewers.

This is the fourth consecutive Super Bowl to set a viewership record, and attracted 13.5 million more viewers than FOX's last Super Bowl broadcast in 2008 (97.5 million) for the New York Giants upset of the undefeated New England Patriots. No other major sporting event has ever hit a record high in four consecutive years. This also marks the sixth straight year that Super Bowl viewership has increased, and over that span average Super Bowl viewership has increased from 86.1 million in 2005 to 111.0 million, a gain of nearly 25 million viewers.

The game posted a 46.0/69 household rating/share tying Super Bowl XXX in 1996 (Dallas-Pittsburgh) as the highest-rated since Super Bowl XX in 1986 (48.3/70, Chicago vs. New England). Only eight of the 45 Super Bowls played had a higher rating, and all were played in a nine-year span between 1978 and 1986.

Super Bowl XLV also set a new mark for total viewership of any program in U.S. history (persons age 2+ watching all or part of the game) with 162.9 million people watching, 9.5 more than the record set a year ago (153.4 million).

The airing of Super Bowl XLV goes down as FOX's most-watched night of prime time ever, as well as FOX's highest-rated night ever among Adults 18–49. It's also the most-watched night on any network in at least 20 years, and the highest-rated night on any network among Adults 18–49 in 15 years (dating to the night of Super Bowl XXX on NBC). (Seidman 2011a)

That Super Bowl continues to make history – of an approved kind, especially for the News Corp–owned FOX television network) – in US television, and the manner of its interpretation, reveals the close relationship between quantification in sports competition and television viewer ratings, both of which are presented in the form of scores and records (see also Buteau and Fixmer 2011; Schechner 2011). These statistics reveal the capacity of sports television to breach some demographic divides during events of national significance – for example, despite widespread perceptions that the United States's Hispanic population is interested in and watches association rather than American football, Super Bowl 2011 'reached an average of 10.0 million Hispanic viewers making it the most-watched show in U.S. television history among Hispanic viewers' (Seidman 2011b). It is for this reason that a 30-second commercial can be sold for between US\$2.5 and US\$3 million (Buteau and Fixmer 2011; Sweney

2011b), both displaying (in the form of film trailers) and connecting with other media (including online, mobile):

The 30-second TV spots for Super Bowl XLV cost about \$3 million each and sold out months ago. According to Kantar Media, the cost of Super Bowl ads has risen by 36% in the last ten years, with a 30-second spot costing around \$2.2 million a decade ago.

The biggest advertisers in 2011 include Anheuser-Busch (Budweiser beer), with the largest buy for the game. Dot-com firms also take a sizable portion of commercials from CareerBuilder.com to E*Trade. Film spots will include a preview of the sci-fi Western *Cowboys and Aliens* starring Daniel Craig and Harrison Ford.

The peak advertising event of the year is joining the digital age by going beyond the 30-second TV spot to include online features, social networks and mobile media. Ad agencies are incorporating Facebook and Twitter as well as contest sites such as <http://beonthe field.com>. (*The Independent* 2011)

On top of the very large US audience, Super Bowl is also shown live in over 200 countries and, while its international viewership is dominated by neighbours Mexico and Canada, the use of international pop stars in the half-time entertainment (in 2011, the Black Eyed Peas) helps to draw some international attention, although the actual international viewership is difficult to ascertain and historically prone to exaggeration (Martin and Reeves 2010).

The oscillation between excessive optimism and pessimism that pervades the occupational culture of 'legacy media' tends to forget certain sociological verities, such as that humans are social and capable of combinatory rather than sole-focused activity, and is also unduly focused on the West. The constitutive global sociocultural complexity means that the latest 'American way' of television and Twitter plays out quite differently in other social environments across the globe or within sub-environments within the same country (hence, while overall viewership for the Super Bowl has increased, the percentage of households watching has fallen below half (Schechner 2011)). As Raymond Williams (1974) influentially argued about the rise of television as a cultural form, and has since been borne out by the emergence of Short Message Service (SMS) and the Internet, very little can be reliably predicted or known about the uses and abuses of media until they engage, unpredictably, with those for whom they have been designed – or have appropriated them (see also Hill, 1988). In typically witty fashion, he states,

If we cancel history, in the sense of real times and real places, we can conceive of an abstract human nature which has specific psychic needs and which variable forms of technology and intercourse come to satisfy.

Any cancellation of history, in the sense of real times and real places, is essentially a cancellation of the contemporary world, in which, within limits and under pressures, men[sic] act and react, struggle and concede, cooperate, conflict and compete. A technology, when it has been achieved, can be seen as a general human property, an extension of general human capacity. But all technologies have been developed and improved to help with known human practices or with foreseen and desired practices. (Williams 1974: 129)

For Williams, the horizon of the 'original intention' of a technology's use is initially limited by the social group that first controls it, but this hegemony cannot be maintained perpetually, and other groups – often subordinate – find new uses for and adaptations of it. Indeed, its uses and effects may be quite different from the original conception and intention, unforeseen and unintended by any particular social group, but emergent in the relationships between them and in processes of trial and error (see also Hill 1988; MacKenzie and Wajcman 1998). Thus, in counselling against both technological determinism and 'determined technology', Williams shows how structural forces set limits to what can occur (it is not generally possible, for example, for individual sport fans to acquire the rights to sport) but that cannot police them entirely (that same fan might 'hack into' and distribute digital signals of sports contests). He sees television as a particularly striking case of a technology invented for 'military [as with the Internet], administrative and commercial intentions' (Williams 1974: 130) which became dominated by the commercial in some contexts (as in the United States) but for purposes of 'social training and social control' (which occurred in Britain). These 'conditions of complex or of privatised mobility' were also understood by 'the many people who were experiencing this process as subjects':

To controllers and programmers they might seem merely objects: a viewing public or a market. But from their own side of the screen there was a different perspective: if they were exposed by need in new ways, they were also exposed to certain uncontrollable opportunities. This complicated interaction is still very much in the process of working itself out. (Williams 1974: 131)

Williams's words, published in 1974 in the analogue era when colour television was still in its infancy, resonate even more effectively at a time when television is no longer the acme of communications technology. In late 2010 the television guide of the leading Australian newspaper, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, tried to replicate an exercise from the turn of this century of asking a group of television industry experts to predict what television would be like a decade later. Intriguingly, only one of its previous TV forecasters from 2000 agreed to go public again with their new predictions, such is the reputational risk of speculative forecasting in this volatile field. In an overview, its editor declared,

Live sport will become increasingly valuable. Water-cooler moments will become rarer, although viewers will continue to seek out the communal viewing experience, enhanced by social media. (Hassall 2010)

Here, the aforementioned experience of the Super Bowl, Olympics and the World Cup is predicted to continue, in that a fragmented television audience comes together for important collective rituals (notably, here, a great sporting occasion attracting global interest), and its 'buzz' is stimulated by the social media which were initially believed to be the enemy of an old medium such as television. In the same edition of the TV guide, Stephen Conroy, described as the Communications Minister but whose full title, revealingly, is Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, 'avoids saying how

changes in anti-siphoning laws might affect viewing in 2020 but does say: “The old regulations ensuring broadcasters produce and screen Australian stories won’t work in the broadband age” (quoted in Walters 2010: 4). As discussed earlier in this chapter, at the time that the minister made this comment he was involved in a highly controversial revision of the regulations governing the relationship between free-to-air and subscription television sport. In a nation such as Australia, where the state mandates the minimum proportions of prime-time and other hours of local content (which includes sport but privileges original drama) for commercial television providers, there is constant jockeying for position among established and emergent competing interests to change the rules in their favour and considerable pressure from less organized interest groups, such as sport television viewers, to maintain and enhance what they now regard as their established rights of cultural citizenship as they pertain to taking part by viewing, without an admission fee, in events of national cultural significance that, for most practical purposes, involve only sport.

But, in an age that has been characterised as both ‘digital’ and ‘global’, and so is less amenable to national government control, there is a (seemingly) perpetually confusing and contentious interplay of new possibilities, former entitlements and emergent opportunities for enclosure and exploitation. For example, the tension between showing the sports event ‘warts and all’ and dressing it up as ‘must-see’ television is constant. The live performance aspects of sport rely to a degree on faithful reportage – but what can be done when the action itself is underwhelming? Above, the advantages of sport’s competitive uncertainty were seen in a European Court’s rejection of FIFA and UEFA’s attempt to anticipate national audience interest in an unfolding sports tournament. But the same live, spontaneous uncertainty that may make sport compelling viewing can also turn it, during unequal encounters, into a non-event for all but the most sport committed. Here the contagious impact of the live, co-present crowd is crucial – a game is worth watching because lots of other people noisily, colourfully attest that it is so. So if the crowd is neither noisy nor colourful, within the available repertoire of television tricks are not only audio maximization, dramatic close-ups and rapid intercutting of images, but also ‘rent a crowd’ techniques by sponsors and broadcasters that engage people to simulate spontaneous, idiosyncratic fan passion. Better still, ‘some great technological innovations’ can be used that can, as one broadcast television executive in Australia has argued (although by no means the first – see Rowe 2004a), effectively separate the representation of a sports event to the distant audience from any requirement for it to be faithful to the context in which it was performed for those present:

CHANNEL Nine has revealed a bold plan to repackage its Monday night programming with live AFL matches complete with virtual crowds.

Nine’s executive director Jeff Browne said Monday night football was likely to underpin its push for a slice of the next AFL broadcast rights deal from 2012, but he regarded it as primarily a television game in which he would compensate for half-full stadiums with virtual crowds.

For example, if Etihad Stadium had a crowd of less than 20,000, thousands of spectators could be inserted into empty seats using digital technology.

'I think Monday night is the new franchise for the AFL, and we want it', Browne told *The Age*. 'It's a traditional timeslot in sports all around the world.'

'Obviously, being a Monday night, you'd attract less people to the match. But there are some great technological innovations we can put around it to make it a fantastic game for television, and we'd show it live.'

'People are being diabolically conservative about this. The fact is people are home on Monday nights and they are out on Friday nights.' (C. Wilson 2010)

This idea of 'made for television' sport, in which the authenticity of the live, in-stadium event is sacrificed to make the viewing experience more attractive in response to the rhythms of weekly leisure, exposes the dilemmas of a global medium for which digital innovation can turn to the faking of fandom. As we have seen, across the twentieth century, broadcast television sport became not only more accessible but also more commodified, more plentiful yet also more systematically rationed. Just as newspaper sport was confronted by the need for major adjustments to its *modus operandi* by the arrival of television, and the whole medium is now seeking to work out the terms of peaceful coexistence with the Internet, sports television faces a future in which its hold over major live mediated sports action is loosened. This adjustment is being made from a position of strength rather than weakness, but the combination of new, proliferating post-broadcast technologies and the difficulties of exercising proprietorial and territorial control are creating a very different, uncharted global media sport landscape. In Chapter 4, the ramifications of this struggle for possession in online sport, with its immediate promise of narrower screens but wider visions, are given further consideration.