Technology and the Expansion of U.S. Sports in Asia

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1. Introduction: Momentum of Expansion of U.S. Sports in the 1990s

The aims of this paper are to study the developments of telecommunication technology and to examine the impacts of technologies in the processes of the expansion of U.S. sports in Asia in the 1990s. Although a couple of global sporting events such as the Olympics and World Cup have been broadcast on a global scale for decades, the export of U.S. sports gained momentum in the 1990s with the popularity of Michael Jordan and the NBA. The expansion of U.S. sports into Asia markets, including South Korea, followed similar steps, and it has precipitated its expansion and prevalence through different technologies and marketing strategies. The increasing proliferation of U.S. sports in Asia is based on several conditions: developments of telecommunication technologies, the increase of income and leisure time of Asians, the deregulation of broadcasting policies, the sweeping trend of globalization. It is also the case that the impact of development of new communication technologies enables U.S. sports to be spread in Asia in easier and more diverse ways.

Before delving into the procedures of globalization of U.S. sports in Asia, I want to add some explication of my position about technology. Following the precept of Feenberg (2002), I am going to take a position beyond a dualism between instrumental approach and substantive approach toward technology[1]. However, rather than make a compromising or eclectic pose, I want to make my commitment and elaborate it. In other words, I will do my research based on the tenet of social use of technology, but, at the same time, I will try to extend the notion of social use of technology through accepting its limits and adopting some flexible approach to capacity of technology. Instead of making a myth of social use of technology, I will insist that what matters is also technology itself, not only the social or economic system in which technology is embedded[2]. According to Winner (1986), the theory of technological politics suggests that we pay attention to the characteristics of technical objects and the meaning of those characteristics. In the context of the expansion of U.S. sports, I will examine capabilities of specific technologies which initiate or precipitate the flows of the globalization of U.S. sports. Rather than take for granted the roles of technology, I will deploy detailed actualization of technology and specific processes of the expansion of U.S. sports. Then, I will draw important aspects in relation to technology in this process.

In this era of rampant globalization, the phenomenon of the expansion of U.S. sports is no longer new and surprising. Through globalization of cultural commodities such as film, popular music, and television programs, the opposing disputes between cultural homogenization and heterogenization are fueled to a great extent. While the expansion of U.S. sports shares several similarities with ones of other cultural commodities, there are, I believe, some unique and different phenomena which should be emphasized in this process. Through a closer look into this process, this paper aims at examining particularities in the globalization of sports, and at relating those to general phenomena of the globalization of culture.

2. Development of Technologies and The Globalization of U.S. Sports

The relationship between sports and broadcasting is indispensable, mutual and even symbiotic, and such a relationship is still strongly applied to the globalization of U.S. sports. Given this circumstance, I will briefly examine the developments of technologies and their impacts from three aspects: namely, the development of broadcasting and telecommunication technologies, the innovation of the Internet, and transformation of the broadcasting business. Although such brief summaries cannot cover all the details of technologies and broadcasting systems, they would be necessary and helpful with examining the particular process of the expansion of U.S. sports into Asia.

2-1. Changes in Telecommunication Technologies

The development of telecommunication technologies particularly in the 1990s is crucial to understanding the expansion U.S. sports into Asia. As I mentioned before, a couple of global sporting events have been broadcast on a global scale, but it was not common to broadcast U.S. sports such as the NBA, MLB and NFL in Asia until the mid-1990s. Satellite and cable broadcasting are the major contributors to this process. I will trace the recent issues of these technologies briefly.

According to Herman and McChesney, it is in the 1990s that the decisive changes in global media become most apparent with the worldwide surge of commercial television (1997, p 45)[3]. Regarding globalization of sports, Westerbeek and Smith have identified technology as a shaping factor at the nexus of alternative global sport futures, and as such it is a pivotal driver of sport's global evolution (2003, p 153). The impact of technology on the expansion and popularity of sport through television and the Internet is established (ibid, p 131). Although such technologies had been

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a part of daily life in U.S. for decades, the situations are extremely different in Asia; namely, such technological evolution gained its momentum during the mid-1990s (Baker, 1997, pp 52-53)[4]. Such rapid diffusion of information technology through the sporting world could occur largely because hardware costs have dropped radically (Westerbeek and Smith, p 20).

The development of cable and satellite television is crucial to this process not only because such technologies overcome the obstacle of long distance in transferring programs but also because they make it possible to increase numbers of channels to a great extent (Baker, 1999, p 51). The emergence of and distribution of programs through satellites and cable have dramatically increased the number of channels and amount of programs[5] available in most nations in the 1990s (Herman and McChesney, p 45). This implies that some programs should fill the gaps or space of new channels, and it is not surprising that the sports that are usually imported from U.S., would be one of the easiest and most likely programs.

2-2. Emergence of Network Technology: the Internet

Another important innovation of technology is, of course, the expansion of the Internet in Asia as well as U.S. The pattern of its development and widespread use is much more similar to other broadcasting technologies. Although it is uncertain whether the Internet can become another public space or not, it is true that the Internet has connected billions of people in most of the developed nations around the globe (Westerbeek and Smith, p 158).

What is problematic and noteworthy is the convergence of the Internet with broadcasting systems[6]; that is to say, the commercialization of the Internet is exacerbated by such mergers with the other business. It is likely that the global media firms will be able to incorporate the Internet and related computer networks into their empires, while the egalitarian potential of the technology is minimized (Herman & McChesney, p 107). The sports realm also makes the space of the Internet much more profitable not only through attracting more sports fans directly to such web-pages as MLB.com and ESPN.com[7], but also through the sales of huge amounts of sports goods in that space[8]. Online shopping is increasingly explored and exploited by new sporting goods retailers (Westerbeek and Smith, p 139).

One of most salient examples is an online broadcasting service by MLB.com. MLB.com has broadcast almost every MLB game through its web-page since 2003[9]. An interesting point is that MLB.com does not provide its Internet service in the evening on Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday to protect network broadcastings at those times. What is more remarkable is that MLB.com adopted

a "black-out" system; for example, a fan cannot get the Internet service if their regional cable network is broadcasting the same game and such a "black-out" is activated through detecting his or her IP address and zip codes (Pressian, 03/31/2004). This example shows how the Internet or an online company can be co-opted within preexisting broadcasting systems, and exemplifies the liaison between television and the Internet for maximizing these companies' profit[10]. One of the great features of the merger in technology is that fans can be offered information that is highly personalized (Westerbeek and Smith, p 142). According to Andrejevic (2003), the advent of interactive media such as the interrelation between television and the Internet, embodies the emergence of flexible capitalism and mass customization[11]. Although viewers or fans can participate in choosing the programs or games, such participation doesn't necessarily correspond to viewers' or fans' empowerment.

Related to development of other technologies, the development of PC games and video games and its interaction with broadcasting play another important role in expanding U.S. sports. The roles of sports games are important not only because they have already become a large market but also because they attract new audiences and activate their relationship in online spaces[12]. Already most of broadcasting networks provide a 'Fantasy game' in which fans and viewers choose their own teams and players, and manage them through the season. Another aspect of such a global-local nexus is the development of online sport communities, which may well prove to be the most profitable and sustainable way of achieving online success. These communities are the life-blood of organizational websites, and are well suited to the sporting industry and its high involvement products (Westerbeek and Smith, p 169).

2-3. Transformation of the Broadcasting Business

The development of telecommunication has resulted in the transformation of the broadcasting business. New technologies with the aid of deregulation of television policy provided the basis for a striking new wave of corporate consolidation in the media industry (Herman and McChesney, p 39). The 1990s saw an unprecedented wave of mergers and acquisitions among global media giants (ibid, p 52). There were several types of changes and mergers between networks and broadcasting stations; among them, the expansion of global networks into Asia and the alliance between global and local networks are notable to the process of expansion of U.S. sports in other countries.

In the former case, a well-known example would be Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation (Baker, 1997, p 59). Murdoch's News Corporation exerts its influence not only through constructing

a global media empire but also through consolidating vertical convergence. Murdoch's power is no longer exceptional either in Asia or in the sports realm. The acquisition by News Corporation of the Hong Kong-based Star TV for $525 million has given Murdoch a satellite television footprint over Asia and the Middle East (ibid, 59). Moreover, Murdoch's News Corporation activities are also deeply connected to global sports corporations not only through making a breakthrough broadcasting contract with NFL, but also through purchasing sports teams such as the LA Dodgers[13] or through partial ownership in several professional teams (Westerbeek and Smith, p 45). Murdoch believes that sport "absolutely overpowers all other programming as an incentive for viewers to subscribe to cable and satellite TV" (ibid, p 90). Such an integration is a theme that runs through globalization, and the future of such integration should include the utilization of preexistent technologies (ibid, pp 17-18). The example of Murdoch's News Corporation's involvement with sports suggests not only that Asia is unquestionably the most coveted emerging market area for the global media giants (Herman and McChesney, p 67), but also that convergence between media through sports has become a prospective goldmine.

Another notable transformation within media business is the flourishing of new alliances between global and local media corporations. One of the representative examples would be MTV, the global music television service, which had begun to differentiate its content around the world and incorporated local music (Herman and McChesney, p 42). Such a trend is also salient in the sports media arena while more sports programs are transmitted on a global scale. This is also evident in South Korea where MBC-ESPN, was launched in 2001 as an alliance between ESPN, a global U.S. network and MBC, a local Korean broadcasting station. After MBC made a four-year deal with the MLB international bureau for broadcasting MLB games, ESPN declined a bid from its former local partner SBS, a commercial broadcasting station in South Korea, and, instead, launched an alliance company with a new partner, MBC[14].

Such an example suggests that globalization can be viewed as a global-local paradox: global markets are products, but local markets are people (Westerbeek and Smith, p 175). In other words, the expansion of U.S. sports and the following transformation of media cannot be regarded just as a result from one directional influence, i.e., from the global corporations and U.S. sports. Herman and McChesney (1997) insist that each nation's indigenous commercial and/or noncommercial media system responds somewhat differently to the encroachment of global market forces, leading to continued variation in local markets. In this sense, the success of global corporations depends on finding the right balance between market integration and market diversity. For example, Sony describes its strategy as one of global localization; that is to say, while it operates

across the globe, it aims to gain insider status within regional and local markets (Morley and Robins, 1995). Nevertheless, there is no reason to assume that such relations of the global-local will be symmetrical or equal; rather, it would be much more likely that those relations would be the reflection of existent hierarchies and global structures. In South Korea's example, ESPN invoked the rivalry and competition between local broadcasting stations and, as a result, ESPN could make the bid price for its sponsorship soar. Such a process becomes almost inevitable because global media conglomerates such as ESPN have more controlling power and potential capital in dealing with such negotiations with local companies.

3. The Processes of the Expansion of U.S. Sports in Asia

This section will examine in detail the phenomena of expansion of U.S. sports in Asia and delve into entailed issues, which are caused by the increase of broadcasting U.S. sports and sales of U.S. sports goods. This globalization of U.S. sports in Asia can be categorized into two stages; one is a globalized U.S. sports period which is represented by Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls during the early to mid-1990s, and the other is a localized marketing period which is represented by Asian players such as Hideo Nomo, Hideki Matsui, Chanho Park and Yao Ming since the mid to late-1990s.

3-1. The First Period: A Globalized U.S. Sports Period

The first period can be called a globalized U.S. sports period; in this period, the figure of Michael Jordan played a crucial role in transforming U.S. sports into global commodities. This period can be characterized in two ways: one is the milestone of Jordan as the incarnation of neo-liberal democracy and consumer capitalism[15] (Andrews, 2001) and the other is the emphasis on heroic persona, acrobatic movement and the dramatic nature of sports[16].

In the preface of his book, *Michael Jordan, inc.*, Andrews describes Michael Jordan as an embodied exaltation of the twin discourses of late modernity: Neo-liberal democracy and consumer capitalism. Jordan is a cultural product constituted within a larger context of the relationship of the American condition at the turn of the twenty-first century (2001). His exceptional success as a basketball player paralleled the myth of the swoosh and Nike as well as with the globalization of the NBA. The phenomenal success of the NBA as a globalized sport might not be imaginable without the mutual or symbiotic relation among Jordan, Nike and the NBC network, which paid $60 million

for broadcasting the NBA games from 1990 to 1994 (Cashmore, 2000). The NBA's shrewd manipulation of the promotional media is stimulating and has stimulated popular interest in the economy-sign system (Andrews, 1997). Regarding the commercialization of sport and sporting bodies in conjunction with consumer culture, the popular commercial media had articulated the body as the embodiment of individual accomplishment and personal success (Loy, Andrews and Rinehart, 1993). Such an articulation resonated with the political slogans of Reagan and Thatcher during the 1980s through an emphasis on competition, individualism and personal achievement (Cashmore, 2000).

Another feature of the first period is the emphasis on heroic persona, acrobatic movement and dramatic nature of sports. It is usual to describe Jordan as 'flying' and his nickname, Air Jordan, exemplifies his visuality. What is more, his charismatic postures and several clutch shots, from the 1981-1982 NCAA champion shot to the NBA champion shot that defeated the Utah Jazz in 1998 (LaFeber, 1999), excited fervent fans and made him an extraordinary symbol. The heightened visibility of the individual player, facilitated by television coverage of basketball, proved a pivotal factor in the rise of the NBA (Andrews, 1997). Through the use of vivid television simulations, the figure of Jordan became a public pedagogue (Andrews, 2001), and the attraction of sports as real drama appealed to global viewers and fans.

Although the expansion of the NBA was more rapid in Europe with the aid of the deregulation of European TV (Andrews, 1997), the appeal of Jordan and the NBA to Asia markets was no less significant. The burgeoning of the NBA and Jordan fans had risen since the early 1990s in Asia with the transmission of broadcasting satellites and the increased channels of cable television. Even in China which did not open much of its market to the world at this time, Jordan was much more famous than Bill Clinton and from a survey to name the best-known Americans by a Chinese firm, Jordan finished second (just behind Thomas Edison by a narrow margin) (LaFiber, 1999, p 135). Personally, many co-workers and I were riveted by watching Jordan's games during lunch breaks in 1997. Although globalized U.S. sports exemplified by Jordan and NBA had succeeded in attracting Asian viewers, their interest began to falter as time passed and, above all, after the retirement of Jordan from the NBA. Relatively limited numbers of fans of the NBA have continued their fervor and interest, and local broadcasting stations and cable networks reduced the number and time of NBA games. The second period of expansion of U.S. sports happened to be activated in such a context.

3-2. The Second Period: A Localized Marketing Period

The second period is characterized by localized marketing strategies of U.S. sports since the mid-1990s. In the first period, U.S. sports made efforts to globalize their sports into the world and to nurture loyalties, for example, to Jordan or the NBA itself, and that entailed profits from the U.S. sports fans who spread globally. In the second period, contrarily, U.S. sports began to try to penetrate U.S. sports into local markets in a more prevalent and grassroots way. While the first period can be featured as a uni-directional expansion from the U.S. into the world, including Asia, the second period would be regarded as another kind of local-global nexus; in other words, U.S. sports had adopted several strategies in local situations for reaching local audiences.

One of the most successful alternative strategies is to import local players into U.S. sports leagues. Although such exchanges of labor, e.g. sports player were already more widespread in the realm of soccer between European countries and between Europe and Latin America, U.S. sports actively adopted this strategy in the 1990s. For a global strategy of U.S. sports, the import of players had begun in basketball[17]; that is to say, several NBA teams recruited players from Europe (Andrews, 1997). In contrast, U.S. sports began to encroach into Asian markets through recruiting Asian baseball players from the mid-1990s. From the different regions and different sports, this strategy has proven effective.

In Asian markets, the breakthrough was Nomo, who had been a veteran Japanese baseball player, and moved to and succeeded in the MLB as rookie of the year in 1995. The brilliant debut of Nomo in MLB proved two things; Asian players could be competitive with American players and, more importantly, the Asian market could be much more lucrative than expected. The success of Asian players in U.S. sports and the profit of U.S. sports in the Asian market are in a reciprocal relationship. Another figure was Park, who is just one of good, not exceptional, players in Korean amateur leagues, but he surprisingly made his direct appearance in MLB in 1994. Although such a great move from Korean amateur league to MLB was just a gesture to make an issue, Park finally succeeded in performing well in MLB from 1997 to 2000. It was not coincidental that the MLB team was LA Dodgers which imported Asian players because LA is a city with one of the highest Asian populations. It was even not accidental that the LA Dodgers was owned by Murdoch's News Corporation in those years.

Another strategy is to hold MLB games in Asia. Although such a strategy would encounter more obstacles such as geographic distance and time lags, the MLB bureau decided to hold MLB games in Asia. MLB held special event games between the Seattle Mariners and Oakland A's in Tokyo in March 2003 and, recently, had its season's opening games between the New York Yankees

and Tampa Bay Devil Rays in Tokyo in March 2004. Although it is not certain how successful or profitable such a strategy would be, the stadium in Tokyo, which was filled with excited fans, indicated that MLB had become much more popular in Asian markets and, at the same time, the Japanese market also had become one very important source of MLB's income.

The huge success of such localized marketing strategies of U.S. sports in Asia inevitably entails the competition between local broadcasting companies for bidding broadcasting rights of U.S. sports. As a result, the money bid has soared since the late-1990s. According to an expert in broadcasting business, NHK, the public broadcasting station in Japan was supposed to pay $12 million per year in 2000 (Yonhapnews, 07/25/2000).

As an example, I will examine diversifying processes of broadcasting rights for U.S. sports in South Korea. As I mentioned before, the fees for broadcasting right of MLB games had be increased in an extreme way: The fee was increased from the initial contract of $ 0.3 million in 1997, to $ 1 million in 1998, $ 1.5 million in 1990, and $ 3 million in 2000. Although the final bid was not revealed for the four year contract from 2001 to 2004, it was assumed that MBC would pay at least seven million dollars per year (Kookmin-Ilbo, 11/08/2000). Although MBC made an exclusive contract, MLB had required an additional contract for the Internet broadcasting (Hankyung, 04/11/2001). As a result, MBC could not provide streaming services of only MLB games in online space. Rather, MLB diversified its income from the Internet. One portal Internet site in Korea began to provide its broadcasting service of MLB in 2004[18]. This service is limited to the games of Korean players, which are average two games per day, and total about 300 games in a season provided with Korean commentators. Such services can be called another type of local-global nexus in online space (Kookmin-Ilbo, 03/31/2004)

Presumably, the next important step of expansion of U.S. sports is move into the Chinese market, including the mainland as well as various diaspora population in different countries. Yao who was the first pick in the 2002 NBA draft, showed how influential the Chinese market could be not only in U.S. but also in the Chinese market. In baseball, Chin-hui Tsua who is the first Taiwan player in MLB, already made it possible for MLB to make $ 1 million deal broadcasting in Taiwan. The expansion of U.S. sports into Asia seems to be on track, and the extent and speed of expansion is unprecedentedly fast.

4. The Expansion of U.S. Sports: Capabilities and Constraints of Technology

4-1. Homogenization versus Heterogenization, or the Third Way?

In the previous sections, I examined the development of technology and the transformation of media business driven by changes in technology, and have summarized the detailed phenomena of the expansion of U.S. sports related in the contemporary Asian contexts. Advanced technologies also have paved a royal road which enables U.S. sports to spread out to the everyday lives of Asians and to exploit Asian markets. The nature of network technologies has exerted its influences in multiple ways; the changes caused by technologies are not just limited within the increased ability to transmit information or programs on a global scale, but are extended to vertical and horizontal convergences between corporations, and to naturalization of individualism and consumerism. The complexity, connectiveness, and pervasiveness of contemporary technology make it impossible to delve into technological, economic, political and cultural issues in discrete ways[19].

The concerns of cultural critiques about homogenization or cultural and economic imperialism have repeated in the recent changes in sports in Asia. Through the expansion of U.S. sports, the popularity of local professional sports leagues has decreased to the extent that their fiscal survival is an issue. Local broadcasting stations have paid too much for bidding broadcasting rights. Some worried that Asians have been naturally exposed to and adopted the logics of neo-liberalism and latent capitalism, and that, ultimately, the local or national identities have been dissolved and transformed into non-place or even Americanized identities. Nevertheless, it is too rash or careless to evaluate recent changes in Asia as just Americanization or homogenization. For such evaluation has a tendency to flatten out all the differences and unintended outcomes, to disregard the capacity of agencies and individuals, and to misunderstand the nature of culture and cultural identity. Put simply, this perspective can be regarded as a kind of essentialism or determinism.

Contrary to such concerns, many cultural critiques have provided several analyses to show that such globalization should not be regarded just as Americanization or homogenization but, rather, be understood as interaction between the global and the local. Although their diagnoses are at various levels, each study provides useful tools or insights such as deterritorialization, cosmopolitanism, hybridity, diaspora and the like. Similar analyses could also be found in a sports area. From the study about the expansion of the NBA into Europe in the mid-1990s, Andrews concludes that "the accelerated circulation of American commodity-signs in the postwar era has not only produced a circulation of global cultural products and practices, but also it has lead to the rearticulation of national and local identities" (1997)[20].

In spite of several examples of local appropriation and heterogenization, I think we should be vigilant about naïve or populistic perspectives which support every local adoption or action as

resistance and follow such a simple motto as "the local is a virtue." In other words, I insist that we should be careful not to fall into an obsession either with resistance or a fetishization of the local[21]. Rather than adopt an either/or way between homogenization and heterogenization, it is imperative and useful to delve into the concrete phenomena and to provide in depth analyses about given conditions; such an effort would be the first step to setting up practical and political suggestions. In this vein, I will pinpoint specific differences and examine particular contexts from the process of the expansion of U.S. sports in the next section.

4-2. Beyond the Technological Aspect

Technological influence is significant, but there are at least three additional crucial elements which should be taken into account for better understanding of this process; these are economic initiative, the role of the state, and national sentiment among people.

Regarding the expansion of U.S. sports, it is important to bear in mind the economic situation of U.S. sports during the early 1990s and the economic initiative to enlarge their consumer markets. Although the pursuit of profit is always an essential character in a capitalist society, it is worth asking why U.S. sports intensively sought to expand their consumer markets into the world, even into Asia, and how U.S. sports achieved excellent success in globalizing U.S. sports during the 1990s. Such phenomena cannot be explained only by one reason; rather, they could happen under a specific conjuncture among different layers between technology, ideologies such as neo-liberalism and late-capitalism, great sports players and the trend of globalization. During the 90s, the initiative can be attributed to economics rather than to technology. According to Miller et al., "U.S. professional sports utilize a global labor pool and audiences to supplement an over-supplied local market" and they insist that it is clear that the classic capitalist problem of over-production has forced US professional sports to transcend the geographic constraints of U.S. TV and arenas[22]. Although telecommunication technology had been developed to broadcast the Olympics and the World Cups, the global strategies of U.S. sports were not utilized until the domestic market had been saturated in the early 1990s (Andrews, 1997)[23]. Against the fiscal crisis of the NBA, the appearance of Jordan provided a breakthrough necessary to reach global audiences (LaFeber, 1999).

The reason I pointed out such a conjuncture is to show that technological possibility does not necessary determine or guarantee the globalization of cultural commodities. As much as technological development has been propelled by economic desire, the globalization of U.S. sports was initiated for economic reasons to overcome fiscal crises in U.S. sports.

Second, the roles of the state are crucial in understanding the peculiarities about the expansion of U.S. sports in Asia. One common prejudice about globalization or the globalized cultural commodities is that the state becomes less important, almost nothing, that the state is opposite to such a globalized flow. However, the state is still a crucial factor not only in the political sense[24] but also in a technological sense[25]. According to Castelles, governments are fatally attracted to economic globalization[26], and such states' interests are always perceived within an ideological framework.

Contrary to other global cultural commodities such as films, popular music and television program, sports frequently became the political preys for the interest of the states. In the second period of expansion of U.S. sports, the local states or governments tried to obtain ideological unity and loyalty among national population through broadcasting performances of local players in the U.S. sports leagues. Such liaisons between local governments and U.S. sports can be witnessed in an instance that publicly owned broadcasting networks are eager to pay huge amounts of money for broadcasting U.S. sports. For example, KBS, MBC[27] and NHK, which are owned by the state, are broadcasting MLB games to their local people. A more efficient way is to show the images or performances of their local players in the main news programs. States can gain ideological purposes through representing local players in U.S. sports as the examples of pride of their nation[28] as well as through identifying success of individual players with the excellence of their nation (Yoon, 1998, p 57).

One dramatic example could be found in South Korea during the IMF crisis. In the summer of 1998, Seri Pak, who was a rookie Korean golfer, obtained a championship title in LPGA US Open, whose tournament was really exciting; Pak won the tile after two playoffs. The Korean government made use of this dramatic image in a public advertisement which urged Korean people to overcome the IMF crisis with confidence and unification. Her image played a very effective role in invigorating patriotism and mirage which seemed to proclaim that Koreans could become the final survivor just like Seri Pak. Such manipulation of individual players in U.S. sports shows the complicit engagement of local states in the expansion of U.S. sports.

The third element is national sentiment among people, which might be the other side of the roles of the state in this process. As has been argued, nation is an imagined community and nationalism is a belief or belongingness about the territory, memory, and history about this imagined community (Anderson, 1983). Even in the era of so-called postmodernism, people are still buying into such national sentiment and, especially, sport functions as a major tool for invigorating such national sentiment as share-ness and belongingness.

One of the common responses of local viewers of U.S. sports is that they are extremely obsessed with their national players: the majority of the viewers are zealots about their national players, but some people hate national players more than other players. I think, however, that both hold similar approach to U.S. sports based on national sentiment. Nevertheless, it is necessary to remind that such national sentiment cannot be criticized just for the outcomes of political manipulation. Rather, national sentiment might be regarded as more voluntary and emotional response from people although it has been assisted by the effort of the government. This response indicates that consumption of U.S. sports in the local does not induce Americanization or homogenization, nor even blur the boundaries among nations[29]. Rather, such consumption can intensify national sentiments and makes the borders solid based on nationality. More important, such a phenomenon makes me ask whether several diagnoses such as hybridity[30], cosmopolitanism[31], heterogeneity[32], diaspora[33] and deterritorialization[34], are useful or applicable. Such appropriation of global cultural commodities is paralleled with the recent resurgence of nationalism[35]. Without taking into account of such national sentiment, the process of the expansion of U.S. sports into Asia cannot be understood properly.

5. Conclusion

I have examined the expansion of U.S. sports into Asia in the 1990s. I began my investigation from the development of technologies such as cable, satellite television and the Internet and the transformation of media corporations. Such global changes inevitably have affected specific processes of the globalization of U.S. sports; in particular, I investigated this process into Asia through categorizing it into a globalized U.S. sports period and a localized marketing period. Compared with the former period, U.S. sports could be much more immersed in the ordinary lives in Asia and exert their influence in more fundamental and pervasive ways in the latter period. From these detailed and concrete phenomena, I try to evaluate the roles of technology in globalization of U.S. sports and to discuss the controversies such as Americanization or homogenization through consuming global cultural commodities. Rather than to choose either homogenization or heterogenization for an answer to expansion of U.S. sports, I provided three important elements as follows: An economic initiative, the role of the state, and national sentiments. Through tracing concrete processes and in-depth analyses from them, I tried to provide a specific and accurate contour in relation to an umbrella issue of the globalization of cultural commodities and the appropriation of them in local circumstances.

From the analyses about the expansion of U.S. sports into Asia in the 1990s, I want to elicit several points and suggest them as a kind of further implication of this study. First, the concrete context and the conjuncture within different layers at that time are essential in analyzing cultural phenomena. The expansion of U.S. sports could not be understood without considering several contextual elements such as economic situation of U.S. sports, appearance of great players, deregulation of broadcasting laws, advanced capacity of telecommunication technology, and so on. Second, an either/or analysis between homogenization and heterogenization, and between techno-determinism and social uses of technology, cannot provide an adequate answer to the question of globalization of cultural commodities and the local responses. Rather, it would be more efficient and timely strategy to provide detailed and diverse phenomena, to analyze them under specific, material circumstances, and to theorize them in relation to broader theories about cultural globalization. In the case of U.S. sports in Asia, the role of technology is significant, not determinant; however, it is important to take into account the capacity of the new media and the convergence with existing technologies. Third, recent alternatives such as hybridity, diaspora, cosmopolitanism are not enough to explain globalization and cultural transformation in the local. As I examined, the consumption of U.S. sports in Asia's context doesn't work for precipitating hybrid, diasporic and cosmopolitan experiences and doesn't blur the national boundaries and national identities. Rather, the images of the local players are utilized by the states and governments to encourage national loyalty and belongingness. Such reflections require cultural critics to develop narrowed and concrete diagnoses and alternatives, which surely help to figure out practical strategies for appropriating global commodities and even for deploying resistance.

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[1] According to Feenberg (2002), the instrumental approach implies that people's will is involved in deciding which kind of technology will be adopted, and the substantive approach means that technology will change people's practices. To overcome this dualism, Feenberg suggests a critical approach, which means that once a technology has been implemented, it is virtually impossible for people to reject it, so careful consideration should be taken before we take the next step (ibid).

[2] I got such an idea from Wenner (1986), who insists that some technologies are by their nature political in a specific way although he is more oriented to the social determination of technology.

[3] Satellite services such as the Cable News Network (CNN), Music Television (MTV), and the Entertainment and Sports Network (ESPN) were launched in the United States and eventually grew into global enterprises in the 1980s (Herman & McChesney, p 38).

[4] According to Baker, the numbers of cable connections in Asia had extremely increased from 1991 to 1994. For example, the number of homes subscribing to cable increased from N/A (1991) to 57,850,000 (1994) and one of penetration of TV household from N/A (1991) to 19,14 % (1994) in Asia (1997, p 52).

[5] Broadband, through its high-speed data download capability, will offer sport fans all around the world almost absolute control over what they want to watch as well as when and how they watch it (Westerbreek & Smith, p 144).

[6] The effect of the merger between AOL and Time Warner will become increasingly transparent and, to a great extent, showcase the role that sport can play on the Internet (Westerbreek & Smith, p 156).

[7] US Major League Baseball has been able to attract over 110,000 online subscribers to MLB.com and ESPN.com was registering in excess of seven million users a month in 2001 (Westerbreek & Smith, p 156).

[8] According to Michael Rubin, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Global Sports Interactive, online sales of sporting goods will be worth an estimated US$4 billion in 2004 in the USA alone (Westerbreek & Smith, p 132).

[9] From the 2003 season, MLB.com charged $ 14.95 per month and $ 79.95 per the whole season (Prussian, 03/14/2003).

[10] Although MBC made an exclusive contract for broadcasting MLB games with MLB, MBC could not provide a kind of streaming service from the Internet like any other program because MLB had required an additional contract for the Internet broadcasting (Hankyung, 04/11/2001).

[11] Andrejevic (2003) suggests the mass customization is accomplished in a form of digital enclosure in online economy. Such term digital enclosure also refers to ways in which the online commons is being privatized.

[12] ESPN released a baseball game for computer and video-game. ESPN uses characters and images of its game in the programs on TV.

[13] News Corporation sold the LA Dodgers during the off-season between 2003 and 2004 seasons.

[14] Until 2000, the SBS sports channel, which is a local and cable channel, holds broadcasting rights of ESPN sports programs at the price of $ 1.8 million per year. However, this right was moved to MBC after MBC launched a new alliance company of MBC-ESPN at the price of $ 2.5 million per year (Hankyung, 01/03/2001).

[15] Andrews insists that the NBA became a commodity-sign, an imagined commodity (1997).

[16] According to Andrews, the proliferation of the NBA is from Jordan's most visible and invasive of imaged personas (2001).

[17] I have to make an excuse about it because the most visible and frequent immigrations of players are Latin baseball players. However, such a case should be treated in a different way because the main reason to import Latin players is to get cheap labors. This issue will be examined in another paper.

[18] This service charges $ 12 per month and $ 50 per season (MoneyToday, 03/31/2004).

[19] Castells (2000) describes technological revolutions as characterized by pervasiveness, process-oriented, the core of the transformation and technologies of information processing and communication. Especially, he emphasizes that the decisive qualities of the information technology paradigm are comprehensiveness, complexity and networking.

[20] Similarly, Andrews et al. insist "rather than contributing to the dissolution of local identities through the establishment of a homogeneous global culture, Michael Jordan, the NBA and other aspects of American popular culture are actually responsible for energizing multiple popular and local cultures (Andrews et al. 1996)".

[21] In this vein, Morley and Robins (1995) appropriately suggest that local sphere is not an ideal space, but a contested terrain.

[22] To explain the globalization process of U.S. sports, Miller et al. suggest the notion of the NICL (a New

International Division of Cultural Labor). They maintain that the programs of the NICL are aimed at Third-World states, and the flow of sport between the U.S. and the rest of the world is asymmetrical, exploitative, and likely to remain so.

[23] Andrews points out that "by the early 1990s, and after almost a decade of stupendous expansion, the U.S. market had been saturated by NBA products and became relatively stagnant in terms of the all-important indicator of percentage annual growth" (1997, p 78).

[24] Miller et al. insist that the state has not disappeared but becomes an aid to accumulation, and that capital markets operated internationally but with national supervision and regulations.

[25] Castells (2000) insists that the state both in America and throughout the world, was the initiator of the information technology revolution. He adds that macro-research programs and large markets are developed by the state.

[26] Castelles (2000) suggests four levels of explanation in this fatal attraction: the perceived strategic interests of a given nation-state: the ideological context: the political interests of the leadership; and the personal interests of people in office.

[27] One CEO from SBS, a national network which is privately owned, complained about the competition for bidding against MBC, saying that any commercial network couldn't afford such a high bidding price and such a price (approximately more than seven million dollars per year) was unreasonable.

[28] According to Lee, such a mechanism is accomplished by misrecognition of nationalism through sports, and such nationalism interpellates subject through identifying individual players with whole nations (1999, p 410).

[29] Similar to other critics, Morley (2000) thinks that satellite television enables him or her to reimage the boundaries of his own community and identity.

[30] According to Ang (2001), hybridity captures the complexities and ambiguities of any politics in an increasingly globalized, postcolonial and multicultural world. She argues for the importance of hybridity as a basis for cultural politics because it foregrounds complicated entanglement and together-in-difference.

[31] Tomlinson (1999) proposes that cosmopolitanism can function as a cultural resource and cosmopolitans need to have wider cultural commitment. Morley and Robins (1995) suggest an alternative basis for the new cosmopolis which underlines a recognition that collective identities are constituted in relations with others. Contrary to other theorists, Smith (1995) insists that a cosmopolitan flat culture remains a dream confined to some intellectuals.

[32] According to Baker (1999), the global spread of consumer capitalism encourages the needs of constant identity transformation so that heterogeneity arises in part as a result of the globalizing forces of consumer capitalism.

[33] Ang (2001) insists that diaspora is based on boundary and a concept of sameness-in-dispersal, not together-in-difference. Therefore, critical diasporic politics should keep a tension between where you're from and where you're at.

[34] Tomlinson (1999) suggests the notion of deterritorialization to grasp transformation of culture. Deterritorialization, according to him, is a way to understand transformation in the place-culture relationship in global modernity, which cannot mean the end of locality, but its transformation in a complex space.

[35] Smith (1995) suggests that recent resurgence of nationalism is a part of a long historical period, which is linked by the chains of memory, myth and symbol. In this sense, he insists that the nation and nationalism remain the only realistic basis for a free society of states, and provide the socio-cultural framework. Morley and Robins also point out that the resurgence of nationalism in Eastern Europe can be regarded as the response to globalization.