



## **SPORT MEGA EVENTS AND THE NEED FOR CRITICAL SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH: THE CASE OF EURO 2012**

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## SPORT MEGA EVENTS AND THE NEED FOR CRITICAL SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH: THE CASE OF EURO 2012

### Abstract

Euro 2012 was the first Sport Mega Event held in Poland. It has been presented in public discourse in Poland as unprecedented opportunity for modernization and unquestionable success. However, looking at a multitude of data concerning the political, economic and social consequences of the event, allows putting these opinions into question. The paper discusses these topics using the numbers and information from various resources, considering also uncritical support of political circles and mainstream media for the idea of hosting Euro 2012, as well as lack of critical scrutiny of academic circles into the real costs of the event.

**Key words:** Sport Mega Events, Euro 2012, Polish politics and economy, football, civic rights.

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most influential contemporary thinkers, the late Tony Judt, in his monumental “Postwar. A History of Europe Since 1945” analyzed the impact of football on the project of a joint Europe, particularly the creation of pan-European club competition in the fifties, which crossed the division marked by the “iron curtain”. Elaborating on the unprecedented role of this Europeanization of football competition, which created a common sphere for both institutions (associations, clubs, football-related enterprises) and the masses (supporters and spectators), he concluded: *What really united Europe is football* [2005: 782]. Undoubtedly, the

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role of sport went beyond the borders of just competition and spectatorship. As a cultural, anthropological, and sociological phenomenon influencing politics and economics it has been studied from the whole range of perspectives employed by social scientists.

One of the most prominent contemporary manifestations of the multidimensional and global impact of sport refers to the so-called Sport Mega Events (hereafter: SMEs), which are truly global events with the sport competition at the centre of their rationale [Roche 2000]. John Horne and Wolfram Manzenreiter underline that *two central features of contemporary mega-events are firstly, that they are deemed to have significant consequences for the host city, region or nation in which they occur; and secondly, that they will attract considerable media coverage*. What also defines certain sport events as ‘mega’ is that they are ‘discontinuous’, i.e. out of the ordinary, international, and simply very large in composition [2006: 2, see also: Whitson, Horne 2006].

Furthermore, Richard Giulianotti and Francisco Klauser claim that: *[i]n recent times, sport mega events have grown into major global spectacles that possess huge economic, political and social significance. Cities and nations compete intensively for the right to host mega events such as the Olympic Games, the Super Bowl in American football, the Champions League final in European football or the ‘World Cup finals’ of various sports. For the organisers, these events are seen as conferring high levels of national and international prestige on host cities, as well as a variety of other benefits such as urban regeneration, increased tourism and new partnerships with global corporations* [2011: 3157].

The UEFA European Football Championships are organized every four years in one or two countries, traditionally from the old continent. Since 1996, as many as 16 best national teams compete in one of the most prestigious sport challenges. Even though restricted to the participants from one continent, the tournaments are truly global events in terms of magnitude. Hence, they are perceived as the third largest SME after the Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup tournaments [see: Klauser 2011: 4; Gratton, Shibli, Coleman 2006: 41].

Contrary to the lack of interest among the academic sociological community in Poland, the issues regarding SMEs are approached and vibrantly debated from various perspectives in the international scientific discourse. The most convincing examples can be found in Periodicals, not just those specializing in social studies of sport. Within last six years a number of Periodicals have devoted special volumes to SME matters, namely: Sociological Review (2006, vol. 54, issue supplement 2), Soccer & Society (2010, vol. 11, no 6), International Review for Sociology of Sport (vol. 47, no 3) Global Networks (2007, vol. 7, issue 2),

Urban Studies (2011, vol. 48, no 15), British Journal of Sociology (2012, vol. 63, issue 2), Environment and Planning (2012, virtual issue: Sport Mega Events and the city), and the International Journal of Cultural Policy (2008, vol. 14, no 4).

This paper aims at presenting the most crucial contexts in which SMEs are analyzed in international academic debate and proving the need for critical research on the legacy of the European Football Championships held in Poland (and in Ukraine) in 2012 (hereafter Euro 2012). For this reason, a preliminary analysis of some publicly available data is undertaken. The article is descriptive and rather idiographic. It points out some contexts of SMEs which should be approached by independent researchers and are particularly important in those situations where most of the elaborations concerning the real outcomes of the event are commissioned by political bodies. Critical scrutiny is also required because the other bodies which could provide independent evaluation (mainstream media, opposition political parties) were, in the case of Euro 2012, unanimous in supporting the idea of hosting the tournament, presenting it as extraordinary opportunity for further modernization of Poland.

### **SPORT MEGA EVENTS IN POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS**

What allures governments and cities to the idea of hosting SMEs? Undoubtedly, apart from the event itself it is the number of legacies that they promise: *For the organisers, these events are seen as conferring high levels of national and international prestige on host cities, as well as a variety of other benefits such as urban regeneration, increased tourism and new partnerships with global corporations* [Giulianotti, Klauser 2011: 3157]. This goes in line with catchy paraphrase of the famous Carl von Clausewitz's quote: *Sport is the continuation of politics by other means*, offered by Xin Xu, who analyzed the role of the Olympic Games held in Beijing for Chinese politics during the past decade [Xu 2006: 91].

For some countries – the most notable case being the Republic of South Africa – hosting an SME became one of the major strategies of both internal and foreign policies. Since achieving both sport and political success during the 1995 Rugby World Cup, the South African government has participated in several bids to host other recognized tournaments. Despite unsuccessful campaigns for organization of the 2004 Olympic Games in Cape Town and the 2006 FIFA World Cup in football, RSA finally succeeded in its bid to organize the FIFA World Cup four years later. This experience was treated both as a way to promote the re-united

country all over the world, creating a new image of the post-apartheid democracy, and as a way of modernizing its infrastructure [Alegi, 2008, Cornelissen, Swart 2006, Cornelissen 2012]. This is just one example of the motivations behind the political rationale justifying participation in a bidding race to host a SME.

There are another sporting, social, political and economic attractions about SMEs that draw the attention of elites, yet as Horne and Manzenreiter [2006: 9] claim, the latter are the main motives behind the public involvement. However, in summarizing their review of a large body of literature in the field of SME legacies, these authors conclude that: *[a]t the same time it seems evident that forecasts of the benefits are nearly always wrong.*

Evangelia Kasimati, who has analysed all the studies on the economic impacts of Olympic Games between 1984 and 2004, notes that all of them were based on rough estimations rather than actual data and, consequently, were generally commissioned by the proponents of the events [2003: 42–43]. Both Kasimati and Andrew Zimbalist, probably the most prominent academics in the field of sport economy, note that the economic impacts of SMEs tend to be overestimated. They point to a lack of attention paid in advance of the games to the supply-side constraints, namely crowding-out effects, price increases, displacement of tourists, substitution effects, estimations which lump all spending in the course of event as being associated with it, or the exaggerated scale of multiplier effects. For instance, research on the tourist effects of the 2002 FIFA World Cup in football hosted by South Korea and Japan shows that the increase in the number of tourists from Europe was offset by the decrease of almost exactly the same number of visitors from Asian countries. The total number of foreign visitors to South Korea throughout the tournament was estimated at 460 thousand, a figure identical to the number of foreign tourists during the same period in the previous year [Matheson, Baade 2004a: 1090–1091; see also: Matheson, Baade 2004b, Lee, Taylor 2005].

John Siegfried and Andrew Zimbalist formulated a very definite conclusion in this respect: *Most empirical inquiries in economics generate ambiguous findings. In stark contrast, independent studies of the economic impact of sports stadiums and arenas uniformly detect no statistically significant positive relationship between sports facility construction and economic development. These results directly contradict the promotional studies that are typically done by consulting firms under hire by teams or local supporters of facility construction. (...) Yet there is virtually no evidence of any perceptible economic development benefits from sports teams or stadiums* [Siegfried, Zimbalist 2006: 421–422, see also: Noll, Zimbalist 1997].

Even in the case of the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games, which is often presented as the most exemplary success story (dubbed the “Barcelona effect”) there are “shadows of the victory”, mainly concerning the rapid increase in prices and gentrification of certain city areas [Munoz 2006].

The alleged significant economic benefit for local businesses from hosting SMEs is also frequently questioned. Due to the fact that main UEFA sponsors held special guaranteed privileges in terms of supplying products for trade during the event as well as the display of their brands, the promised revenues are significantly limited for local entrepreneurs, thus limiting their participation in the economic profits [see: Hall 2006]. In fact the economic interplay during SMEs has little to do with free competition, as a large number of local economic actors are structurally excluded from the market due to the privileges available only to the main UEFA partners.

There are several main themes which are frequently analysed in reference to the social costs of hosting SMEs. Most of them refer to their commercial character, which can lead to serious consequences for the local population. There are well researched examples of the commodification, segregation and privatization of previously public space in the cities organizing a SME [Klauser 2011a, 2011b, 2008]. Paradoxically, the pro-market discourse of entrepreneurialism and competitiveness is quite frequently in striking contrast with the semi- or openly monopolistic practices of the main partners of the UEFA. Potential benefits for businesses and the general public in host-cities may be overshadowed by the negative consequences of giving global players privileged inroads into local markets. The side effects of new investments lead, for example, to gentrification, causing massive increases in the cost of living in certain areas [Hall 2006, Munoz 2006]. These kinds of contradictions are quite typical of neoliberal discourse. In the first place, free competition in fact leads quite frequently to the dominance of global economic actors and the demise of local entrepreneurships. Secondly, the benefits of hosting a SME, which supposedly ‘trickle down’ to the general public, usually remain at the disposal of the key economic players involved in the preparation of the events. What’s more, the citizens inhabiting areas under the multidimensional influence of a SME are not perceived as important social actors, as this role is usually ascribed to the visitors-consumers who frequent the purposely-designed spaces in the cities.

Therefore, the expectations for community development or some massive advantages with respect to the social fibre of communities usually remain unfulfilled, and the outcomes could prove contrary: *[T]here are well researched examples proving that the ‘state of emergency’ leads to suspension of certain legal*

*provisions, even those treated previously as priorities referring to the security of citizens or ecological consequences of public investments [Hall 2006: 64]. This observation refers in the first instance to security and surveillance measures, which are embedded in a wider context of providing safety during a SME. The “state of exception” is deemed to call for exceptional measures. The discourse of ‘terrorist threats’ that always accompanies mass gatherings paves the way for acceptance of a growing number of actions which limit privacy, increase means of social control, allow for privatization of security systems, and lead to an increase in costs which exceeds the capabilities of local authorities, together with generally affecting civil rights. As Klauser points out [2011: 1]: [H]ost cities of sport mega-events powerfully exemplify the splintering of the contemporary urban environment into a wide range of more or less hermetically enclosed and tightly controlled enclaves that are supported by advanced surveillance technologies and increased numbers of security personnel.*

Another issue refers to the earlier-mentioned opportunity costs, which concern the potentially more effective uses of public money which is finally spent on SME preparations. Both at the national as well as local level these subjects need thorough investigation. Yu, Klauser and Chan, summarizing state of the art in the field, claim that: *First, a growing body of research has in recent years sought to investigate the problems and opportunities associated with the organization and staging of SMEs. In this field, two types of studies can be distinguished: one tends to be focused on the economic value of SMEs in terms of ‘urban entrepreneurialism’, promoting cities’ and nations’ tourist image, facilitating urban transformations, attracting financial investments and thus producing economic developments. The other genre tends to be more interpretative and qualitative, referring to the ‘sociology and politics of mega-events’ [2009: 391].*

One of the most important reasons independent research is particularly needed in the field concerns the lack of other control in the process of commissioning, planning, developing and evaluating the outcomes of these large investments. Fundamental research into the management and outcomes of so-called ‘megaprojects’ (publicly financed infrastructural investments, including sports stadiums and events) was conducted by the multidisciplinary team headed by Flyvbjerg [Flyvbjerg et al. 2003: 11–21 and 32–48]. Nevertheless the authors urged great caution in approaching the collected data, they went so far as to suggest that promoters of large public expenses *may often consistently, systematically and self-servingly mislead governments and the public in order to get projects approved*. Flyvbjerg also underscores that estimation of the real costs of megaprojects is very difficult to assess. The proponents are not interested in a thorough

and independent analysis, which could prove their incompetence and even false statements. Very rarely is any kind of funding subject to ex-post evaluation and verification of the previous statements. This could be exemplified, for instance, in the case of the IMPACT report, i.e. the study commissioned by PL.2012 (the special purpose entity of the Polish Ministry of Sport and Tourism created to organize Euro 2012). This report was hailed as *the only scientific and reliable assessment of the impact of Euro 2012 on the Polish economy* [Borowski 2010]. In the table entitled: “Impact of selected international sport events organized in the years 2000–2012 on the GDP of hosting countries”, the authors utilize (in 7 out of 9 cases) data from ex-ante predictions of impacts rather than the actual ex-post analysis of the real outcomes of the events [Borowski 2010: 33]. In other words, the predicted costs are not verified using the actual figures.

## **EURO 2012 IN POLAND AND ITS POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS**

### **1. Politics**

The Euro 2012, organized in Poland and Ukraine in the year 2012 (hereafter: Euro 2012) is unique in at least two aspects.<sup>1</sup> Firstly, it is the First large SMEs organized in Europe during the economic and social turmoil caused by the credit crunch and financial crisis. While the previous SME tournament was held in 2008 in Austria and Switzerland in the course of subprime mortgage banking crisis, it was held a few weeks before the collapse of Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers, events which paved the way for the forthcoming global financial meltdown. Bearing this fact in mind, there is undoubtedly a need for the permanent monitoring of both the social and economic consequences, as well as symbolic meaning, of this SME (Euro 2012) in the changing and uncertain situation of a global and European economic crisis. Secondly, for the first time ever an event of this scale was awarded to a country which was undergoing rapid political, economic and social transition from an authoritarian state and centrally planned economy to capitalism and democracy.

Even for such a time-specific event, its overarching consequences began years before the first game was played. Marek Belka, who served as Polish Prime Minister when the bid to host the tournament was submitted, recalls that no one

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<sup>1</sup> The topic of Polish-Ukrainian relations and the Ukrainian participation in the whole event undoubtedly deserves wide study, but this topic is beyond the scope of this paper.



believed there was any chance for it to win the competition over the proposal from Italy and/or the joint application by Hungary and Croatia. He admitted that the Minister of Finance, Mirosław Gronicki, had agreed to sign the financial guarantees after being convinced that it was impossible for Poland to be granted the tournament, as the country was participating in a bid of this nature for the very first time (Polskie Radio 2012a). Tax holidays for UEFA were among the privileges guaranteed by the governmental declarations, hence the main organizer and beneficiary of the competition did not pay any share of their massive income as a tribute to the state, which covered all the costs of hosting the tournament [Skwirowski 2012a].

Winning the rights to host the 2012 UEFA European Football Championship came as a surprise to many and created a new momentum in Polish domestic politics.<sup>2</sup> Perceived as an unequivocal success by all political parties, in both the political and media rhetoric it became another challenge for the country, following its fulfilment of its two main goals of the first 15 years of Poland's transition period, i.e. joining NATO and the EU. This could be exemplified by the fact that special legislation, allowing for exceptional legal solutions because of hosting Euro 2012, was submitted by the government on 3 of September 2007 and very quickly approved by the parliament, already on 7 September, 2007, then almost immediately (on 19 September 2007) signed by the President of Poland. There were 412 votes in support of the legislation and just 2 abstentions, proving the unprecedented unanimity existing between the bitterly conflicted political parties [Krawczyk 2011: 30]. Polish politicians were unequivocally acquiescent in accepting the rules imposed by UEFA and its commercial partners. Even right-wing politicians voted in favour of the law, which limits Polish sovereignty in certain areas, granting an external political actor (UEFA) an exceptional status. The issue of withdrawal from certain of its prerogatives and creating exceptional conditions for the UEFA did not raise any public concerns. Since the UEFA's creation in 1954 as a non-profit umbrella organization for autonomous European football associations, it has been transformed into supranational body with powerful financial resources. The income from just the organization of UEFA 2008 in Austria and Switzerland was estimated at €1,300 million [Włoch 2013: 98; Włoch provides a critical and precise analysis of the interrelationship between the

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that the popular support and public appreciation for the hosting of EURO 2012 was at its highest in 2007, immediately after the decision of UEFA. However, even at this time it never exceeded two thirds of the studied representative sample. In a forthcoming years it began to decrease, and two months before the kick-off of the tournament only 44 percent of Poles surveyed said that they are "happy" or "rather happy" that Poland would be hosting the tournament [CBOS 2012: 4].

Polish state and the UEFA, treated as a global political actor]. At the same time, UEFA is one of those supranational bodies which is outside any kind of democratic control, together with its affiliated national football associations. Poland witnessed a several cases of conflict between the government and UEFA, and all of them were lost by the Polish side. Several ministers of sport with various political affiliations attempted to intervene in the Polish Football Association in the course of numerous corruption scandals. All of their actions were blocked by the UEFA, which refused to allow any interference in the governance of football from democratically chosen and controlled bodies. Threats to expel the Polish national team and clubs from any international competition supervised by the UEFA and FIFA forced the public institutions to retreat from their attempted exercise of control over the way Polish football is managed [see: Woźniak 2013].

It also needs to be noted that all the large political parties in Poland were involved in either the preparations or organization of the tournament to some extent. Thus, politicians from all sides of political spectrum felt partially responsible for the success of the event.<sup>3</sup> This substantially impacted the “checks and balances” rule of mutual control by political powers. In addition, the critical approach of most mainstream media was aimed more at the way preparations of the tournament were carried out (to avoid fiasco and negative reaction from European public opinion) than on controlling the costs and consequences of the investments undertaken for this purpose. The-editor-in-chief of one of the Polish weekly magazines, whom I interviewed in connection with another research project, admitted that shortly before the kick-off of the Euro 2012, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk organized a secret meeting with the heads of 40 of Poland’s largest mainstream media (radio stations, TV stations, tabloids, broadsheet newspapers, weeklies). Asking for support and forbearance, he referred to the importance of the forthcoming event for the public image of the Polish state, and was met with understanding even from those representatives of journalism usually declaring full independence from political pressure and praising the media’s control functions. ‘Country branding’ was treated, in the course of preparations for the tournament, like one of the infinite goals of Polish policy and diplomacy, together with the issue of modernization of the country.

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<sup>3</sup> This is not a new phenomenon. Marivoet Salome, who analyzed the case of Euro 2004 held in Portugal, gives examples from the Portuguese political scene proving how publicly-declared aims were changed in the face of problems, and to what extent politicians were conveniently modifying their stances in order to sustain their positions as proponents of the great challenges and opportunities offered created by the SME [2006: 129–130].

Euro 2012 was perceived as an opportunity to modernize the country. Therefore, the acceleration of investments and growth in spending on roads and other infrastructure was unequivocally perceived as the positive fact. Issues concerning the quality and/or necessity of the investments were rarely raised. The full ex-post analysis of the economic costs of Euro 2012 is not yet possible due to the lack of sufficient data (several investments have not been completed), but some of already available statistics raise serious doubts, particularly with respect to statements made by the political promoters of the event. Institutional analysis of the involvement of various public and private actors in the process deserves a thorough and separate investigation, together with precise analysis of the discursive practice applied by the elites in order to convince the general public to support the great project. Modernization and its acceleration seems to have served as a particularly effective lever to convince otherwise hesitant and critical public opinion, media, and political rivals about the necessity to undertake actions in certain spheres or increase spending in some of the sectors of the economy.<sup>4</sup> The issue of opportunity costs is rarely challenged when most of the policy actors and stakeholders share the same view.

## 2. Economy

When taking into account the publicly available data, the conclusions must be that in many fields the promises made in advance of Euro 2012 were not fulfilled. The stands at the newly built stadiums are not filled with new spectators (Ekstraklasa 2013). The average attendance during the games of the highest echelon of Polish league decreased in the 2012/2013 season in comparison to the two previous seasons. Stadiums built purposely because of Euro 2012 in host cities are half empty (in Poznań, the stadium's capacity is 42 thousand, while average attendance is 22.5 thousand; in Wrocław capacity is 44 thousand, average attendance is 14.9 thousand and in Gdańsk capacity is 44 thousands and the average attendance is 13.2 thousand). The case of the National Stadium in Warsaw, which is not used for regular games by any sport's club, is also ambiguous. On one hand, the capital city needs the venue for hosting various large scale events and the year 2013 was marked by a variety of them. On the other hand, at least in

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<sup>4</sup> This is exemplified by the fact that in their official reports the public bodies proudly claim that the European supranational governance (in that case the European Investment Bank) exempted Poland from the necessity of compliance with legislation relating to environment protection [Borowski 2010: 47]. Thus, the need to accelerate the investments is used as an excuse to avoid keeping up the standards of modern ecological sustainable development. The "state of exception" creating by the SME provides perfect justification for creating this kind of loopholes in various spheres.

several cases the subsidization of private events from public money raises another doubts about the way public property is supervised. While the most spectacular and widely commented case concerned the Madonna pop concert, which was co-financed by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism with 6 million PLN, even more public money was spent on locally organized actions. i.e. the costs of the concerts by George Michael, Queen, the Polish Masters Football Tournament, the Adamek-Klitschko heavyweight boxing match, and friendly game Brazil-Japan, all held in Wrocław, amounted to the loss of 15 million PLN by the Municipality of Wrocław as co-organizer of these events [Kokot, Karbowski 2012, Weszło 2012].

This data at least is publicly available. The general public will never know what amount of money was paid by TVP SA, the Polish public broadcasting station financed from taxes, to UEFA, for the Euro 2012 broadcasting rights. Juliusz Braun, general director of TVP, admitted that even large revenues from advertising during the tournament (estimated at 83 million of Euros) and record breaking audience figures (more than 16 million during the Poland-Russia game), were not sufficient to cover the costs. This seems to support the hypothesis, deeply rooted in previous experiences, that Sport Mega Events create a 'state of emergency' in host countries. Some general rules (e.g. transparency of agreements signed by public entities) were questioned by the UEFA, which demanded full secrecy of signed contracts [Polskie Radio 2012b].

Even some of the infrastructural investments which seemed necessary for reasons other than the Euro 2012 turned out to be questionable from the perspective of ex-post economic analysis. Recent data produced at Technical University of Warsaw shows that the train connection between the Warsaw Central Railway Station and the Warsaw Airport, completed just before the kick-off of Euro 2012, has turned out to be loss-making. Only 3 percent of passengers flying to/from Warsaw use this means of transport, and on average just 4 percent of the seats on trains are occupied [Osowski 2013].

The preliminary evaluation of the tourist movement in 2012 also shows that the expectations regarding its impact formulated by the governmental Polish Tourist Organization were exaggerated. Occupancy rates were high only during match days, and most of the tourists came on one-night stays. The positive evaluations of their stays in Poland underscored in media reports do not necessarily translate into repeat visits [Borzyszkowski 2012]. It is difficult to verify the data inasmuch as the estimations are rough and imprecise. However, already published official statistics show that in June 2012 hotel services in Poland were used by 546 thousand foreign tourists during 1.3 million overnight stays. This is only a 17 percent increase in comparison with the corresponding period of the previous year (468

thousand and 1.1 million respectively) [GUS 2012: 8]. This is reaffirmed by the figures showing that the total number of tourists using hotel accommodation in June 2012 (including Polish citizens) decreased by 150 thousand in comparison to the corresponding period of the year 2011 [GUS 2013: 2]. This confirms the phenomenon of crowding out, observed during other SMEs. The number of tourists who come to the country because of the tournament is balanced out by the large number of those who resign from visiting during the period the event is held. It is also quite meaningful that the number of tourists which visited the Polish capital city because of Euro 2012 was lower than the estimated figures of tourists which had come there to attend the events organized in 2010 during the celebrations of the Chopin Year. This fact was scrupulously used by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage to promote its efforts [2012].

The UEFA and all bodies involved in preparations for the tournament were also granted a large number of tax exemptions. The Polish Prime Minister justified this to the public by referring to the national interest underlying the decision to host the tournament. These very general statements were neither accompanied by factual arguments nor rooted in any precise analysis of the tax law and the financial consequences of the decisions undertaken [Tetlak 2012a, 2012b]. The other Polish authorities, when responding to the public inquiries formulated by various bodies, felt these superficial and general responses sufficiently explained and justified the actions undertaken.

### 3. Civil rights

A very important context of both the preparations for the SME and the conduct of the actual tournament involves the twin issues of human and civil rights, particularly with reference to the “state of exception” created by the imposition of special legislation. According to the reports of non-governmental bodies devoted to human and civil rights, the tournament served as a convenient occasion and justification for increased spending on security and surveillance and the tightening of the control measures. More than 900 cameras were installed on the National Stadium alone. The purchase of some new devices (for example the sonic weapon LRAD – Long Range Acoustic Device) was opposed by these non-profit bodies, as it was not accompanied by amendments to the legislation which would otherwise not allow Polish military forces to use coercive means of this kind. Nevertheless, these devices were witnessed by the observers of civil rights organizations, ready to use before some of the “high-risk games”. The costs generated by the actions undertaken to secure the event were tremendous and

never fully disclosed. Massive police forces were used for this task, along with 3000 soldiers and advanced military equipment (including F-16 and MIG-29 fighters and attack helicopters). The Military Gendarmerie also supported the police with 1200 soldiers, which means that every second member of this force was assigned to secure the SME [Szymielewicz 2012].

Paradoxically, the increased monitoring and surveillance was not accompanied by strict controls on entering the stadiums during the games. According to the official rules of the UEFA, any person holding a valid ticket was allowed to enter the stadium and any searches or controls were undertaken in a very superficial manner, by the private security company employed by the UEFA (the presence of the police inside the stadiums was also very limited due to the rules dictated by the UEFA). In this case, the observations of the NGOs can be confirmed by my personal experience. I was allowed to enter the stadium before one of the Euro 2012 games without the necessity of presenting an ID (although I was required to submit a lot of personal data while purchasing the ticket), and neither me nor my bag underwent a thorough search, which is standard procedure for Polish League games.

The functioning of the “Law on the security of mass events” was among the legal acts that were suspended during the Euro 2012. This referred e.g. to the ban on the consumption of alcohol during the events, but also to the treatment of spectators. The police officer who was responsible for security issues during the Euro 2012 in the Gdańsk voivodship personally admitted to me that the police force was, during the tournament, supposed to act in accordance with direct guidelines from the UEFA and Polish authorities, which required a more forgivable approach to supporters, even in the event of their misbehaviour. Foreign fans were supposed to be treated less strictly than Polish citizens, who face harsh and sometimes brutal policing typical for handling crowds during ordinary football games held in Poland.

Accordingly to some legal experts, many aspects of the special legal acts introduced before the tournament would not stand muster in the Constitutional Court, but their short-term nature hampered the lodging of constitutional complaints [Szymielewicz 2012]. However, in several cases Polish courts have judged that the laws passed for the sake of organization of the tournament violated existing law. For instance, the District Court in Warsaw found that some of the rules regulating the purchase of tickets for the Euro 2012 were in violation of the Consumer Protection Act. All of them were formulated by UEFA, which granted itself the right to avoid any responsibility for the cancellation of an event and the right to unilaterally amend the conditions of sales agreements.

The issue of the exceptional approach toward human and civil rights is also exemplified by the case of Remi Fares, a 23-year old Pole living in the United Kingdom who, after successfully passing a multi-stage selection procedure, was finally disqualified by the UEFA from the list of volunteers due to the negative opinion of the police. The UEFA refused to reveal any justification for its judgment and the decision was declared to be irrevocable. Thus, Fares' speculation that the decision was connected to his Muslim roots (his father is Palestinian) can only remain speculation [Rogal, Borusiewicz 2012].

## CONCLUSIONS

Notwithstanding above mentioned circumstances, the Euro 2012 was presented as an unprecedented success during the numerous press conferences held by various governmental bodies. Some of the data which was used to confirm this success raises serious doubts. For example, one of the economists working for the Polish Ministry of Sport and Tourism presented information that *Analysis conducted by London-based Brand Finance Institute proves that Poland experienced the highest growth in the value of the national brand – 75 percent. Partially it was the effect of the good economic standing of our country, but the most significant was the impact of EURO 2012.* The lead to the article, which was reported in conference, was is straightforward: *Thanks to Euro 2012 brand value of Poland increased by 75 percent, up to 472 billion of PLN* [Skwirowski 2012b]. In fact, the report of “Brand Institute” [2012] is far more modest in attributing Poland's success to the Euro 2012, underlining that at the time when data was gathered for the purpose of the report, the Euro 2012 was still months from kick-off, and stating: *Poland has seen the greatest percentage increase in brand value in 2012 due largely to the expected long term GDP growth expectations. Poland's economy keeps on growing. Poland is a major exception in the EU – it hasn't been affected by the recession from the time of the first big crisis in 2008* [Brand Finance 2012: 12]. The only positive influence of Euro 2012 mentioned in the report also concerns its allegedly positive impact on the GDP growth.

Very soon after the tournament, the international consulting company Deloitte published a report praising the quality of management provided by the PL.2012 [2012]. The report was commissioned by the very same special purpose entity which was supposed to be evaluated by the auditors. The official website of Polish Ministry of Sport and Tourism, in an Internet-based publication titled: “The Polish effect - the success of Euro 2012 beyond expectations”, presents this report



as an independent evaluation. Furthermore, in the very same dispatch, the official body of the Polish government presents data from the aforementioned “IMPACT” report (which was an ex-ante prediction of the Euro 2012 and its consequences) as the actual figures [Ministry of Sport and Tourism 2012].<sup>5</sup> The publications, which are commissioned by the entities responsible for the event, clearly serve PR functions and marketing purposes rather than constituting a serious and in-depth analysis of the multidimensional legacy of Euro 2012.

Analyzing the consequences of a global event of this scale allows Polish sociologists to contribute to the international academic debate concerning this sphere of social life. So far, they have been absent from ongoing research in this field. What’s more, Polish academics were not even vocal in the admittedly not very lively public debate during the preparations to Euro 2012.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The article, even though published in November 2012, claims for instance that Poland *may* be visited because of Euro 2012 by 766 thousand tourists. This greatly exceeds the statistical data (at that time already published by the National Statistical Office), showing that throughout the whole of June Poland was visited in total by 546 thousand foreign tourists (using hotel services).

<sup>6</sup> It needs to be duly noted that there were two research projects undertaken on the topic of the Euro 2012. Since 2008 the research team led by Anna Giza-Poleszczuk tracked the social context of the preparations for Euro 2012 (brief versions of the team’s findings are available at: <http://www.ps2012.pl/>). Utilizing William Easterly’s concepts of social development, the researchers attempted to study presumptive cohesive or inclusive aspects of the Euro 2012. The project could be described as action research, as the efforts are both aimed at exploring various processes present in a public sphere as well as stimulating public debate, and included some social cooperation in the tournament’s host-cities. Another three-year research project financed by the National Centre for Culture is carried out by cultural anthropologists Wojciech Burszta and Mariusz Czubaj [2011]. Using ethnographic methods (in-depth interviewing and participatory observation) the authors attempt to track the cultural context of the SME with reference to the – well-established in anthropological studies – frames of carnival time, globalization of the sport, and the potential consequences of the Euro 2012 for Polish culture.

There were a few publications which concerned various aspects of the event, with the paper by Kozak [2010] being the most critical, raising doubts and questioning the alleged benefits from the hosting of the SME on the basis of previous research. Some of them projected the potential impact on local and regional economies by taking as a reference point previous tournaments [Daszkiewicz, Wasiluk 2011; Jedel 2012]; others attempted to calculate costs and benefits in purely economic terms [Wasilczuk, Zawadzki 2011] or with particular regard to Polish–Ukrainian relations, as in the case of the book, co-financed by the Polish Football Association and the Social Association Poland-Ukraine, co-authored by scholars from Polish and Ukrainian universities [Michałków, Kariagin 2011]. Several publications concerned issues of security during the Euro 2012. These were co-authored by the representatives of security forces (both public and private) and attempted to underscore the hazards of terrorist attacks during the tournament [e.g. Liedel 2007, Urban 2009, Krylowicz et al. 2011, Liedel, Piasecka 2011, Cieślak 2011]. Raising awareness of security risks was accompanied by postulates to increase public spending and tighten control in the sphere of



Public engagement by sociologists who are not indifferent to what is going on in their country and how the issue of public spending is addressed should particularly be aware of the aforementioned phenomena, and engage in critical scrutiny of the actions of political bodies. This is in accord with the demands for publicly-engaged sociology, as formulated by Michael Burawoy, the head of International Sociological Association [2009]. Particularly in the era of growing commercialization and marketization, accompanied by state retrenchment from many of its obligations, it seems essential to control the way scarce public resources are spent. A critical reappraisal of the actions of governments and private entities by independent scholars in this field could lead to significant effects.

It seems that in the last few years a growing number of politicians and policy-makers all over the world, and in Europe, have become more aware of the ambiguous impact of SMEs on national economies, at least to some extent due to the growing number of publications provided by sociologists, economists, urban scientists, geographers, and lawyers. The results are significant. Owing to the lack of interest among potential hosts, the UEFA has decided that the European Championships in 2020 will be organized in several countries, in 13 host cities (the official justification is that this is designed to celebrate the anniversary of the tournament). Some of the richer countries have officially declared that they are unwilling to spend money on these kind of enterprises; e.g. the Swedish and Swiss governments refused to grant financial guarantees, effectively blocking the initiative aimed at hosting the Winter Olympic Games in 2022. More and more often hosting of an SME is granted to non-democratic states (China, Russia, Qatar), where public control is limited and the events serve political purposes, as well as increasing the income of oligarchic elite circles. In other cases, rich democratic countries attempt to use SMEs as a tool to realize some pre-defined goals, fitting them into long-term strategies, for example concerning the revitalization of some areas (the cases of Olympic Games in London in 2012 and Tokyo in 2020).

At the same time, the most prominent Polish politicians have already declared their wish to host Winter Olympic Games in 2022 (jointly with Slovakia), justifying it by the unquestioned and unprecedented success of the Euro 2012. An official Polish-Slovakian inter-governmental committee for this purpose was formed in September 2013, and a bid is supposed to be submitted very soon [Kuraś 2013].

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security (one of them was titled: "Euro 2012 in a shadow of terrorism"). With the notable exception of the paper by Włoch [2013], there are no examples of independent ex-post analysis of Euro 2012 so far, apart from the regular reports by public statistical offices and bodies.

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## WIELKIE IMPREZY SPORTOWE I POTRZEBA KRYTYCZNEJ REFLEKSJI SOCJOLOGICZNEJ: PRZYPADEK EURO 2012

### Streszczenie

Euro 2012 było pierwszą Wielką Imprezą Sportową zorganizowaną w Polsce. W publicznym dyskursie prezentowano ją jako bezprecedensową szansą na modernizację oraz niekwestionowany sukces. Jednak, spojrzenie na różnorodne dane dotyczące politycznych, gospodarczych i społecznych konsekwencji tego wydarzenia stawia pozwala zakwestionować te opinie. Artykuł podnosi te zagadnienia wykorzystując dane liczbowe i informacje z różnych źródeł, rozważając także bezkrytyczne poparcie głównonurtowych mediów i kół politycznych dla organizacji imprezy, jak również brak krytycznej refleksji kręgów akademickich nt. realnych kosztów imprezy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Wielkie Imprezy Sportowe, Euro 2012, polska polityka i gospodarka, piłka nożna, prawa człowieka.